



How to succeed in the era of job change

Die Möglichkeit, ganz neu anzufangen, ergibt sich heute sehr häufig. Zwar bietet unsere Arbeitswelt keine Sicherheit mehr, aber dafür eröffnen sich einem jede Menge Chancen. difficult US

As we know from our history books, our planet has passed through numerous “ages” — the Stone Age, the Industrial Age, and the Information Age, to name just a few. So what’s next? Let’s call it the Age of Ability — or Adaptability — when success will depend on a person’s ability to adapt.

Skill is part of what people need to succeed, but it is not a new criterion for success. For example, the most skilled hunter among the cavemen ate the best meals and attracted the tribe’s hottest women. Later, highly skilled tradesmen were selected to be purveyors to the royal courts. And modern companies try to hire the most skilled person for the job, whether it’s a mechanic, an accountant, or the boss.

Today, though, having a skill is often not enough. Many people are losing their jobs because their skills are no longer needed. Those who have spent an entire career doing the same job, and who can’t or don’t want to change, are most at risk.

Society’s needs — and thus the types of jobs available — are changing rapidly. Students graduating from college today may find themselves in jobs they hadn’t even heard of when they started studying. In fact, former U.S. Secretary of Education Richard Riley has been quoted as saying that the top ten jobs companies will want to fill in 2010 didn’t even exist in 2004.

In these times of global economic downturn, with unemployment on the rise, the people who are most likely to stay employed — or find new jobs — will be the ones who can use their experience to work in a completely new position. In many cases, it might be something very different from what they’ve done in the past. This requires an ability to think creatively about

how their various experiences, those having to do with work and otherwise, might be of use.

A woman who has been working in a factory and taking care of her family, for example, probably has excellent time management and organizational skills. Should the factory begin laying off workers, she could decide to start her own business, such as managing parties and other events. It’s all about looking at the variety of skills one already has and recognizing where they might be needed.

When I returned to the U.S. after many years in Germany, jobs in journalism were hard to find. Needing to pay the rent, I took a job as a secretary with a German company, where my knowledge of German was a plus. When I tired of that job, I convinced management that they should consider having a more formal employee communications program, and that I had the skills to help them: a passion for

writing, knowledge of the company, and an understanding of what employees wanted to know. They agreed, and it started a new profession for me.

Thomas Friedman, a *New York Times* columnist and the author of several books on globalization, including *The World Is Flat*, recently wrote: “The ability to imagine and generate new ideas with speed and to implement them through global collaboration is the most important competitive advantage.” In the Age of Ability, this will be true for countries and for companies, and for each and every one of us as individuals. ●



“Your next job might be completely different from what you’ve done before”

accountant [ə'kauntənt]	Steuerberater(in), Buchhalter(in)
adaptability [ə,dæptə'bɪləti]	Anpassungsfähigkeit
caveman ['kævəmæn]	Höhlenmensch; hier: Höhlenmann
collaboration [kə,læbə'reɪʃən]	Zusammenarbeit
competitive advantage [kəm,petətɪv əd'væntɪdʒ]	Wettbewerbsvorteil
criterion [kraɪ'tɪriən]	Kriterium
downturn ['daʊntɜ:n]	Abschwung
generate sth. ['dʒenəreɪt]	etw. hervorbringen
graduate from college [,grædʒueɪt frəm 'kɒləɪdʒ]	einen (Hochschul) Abschluss machen
lay sb. off [leɪ 'ɔ:f]	jmdn. entlassen
purveyor [pə'r'veɪə]	Lieferant(in)
quote sb. [kwout]	jmdn. zitieren
secretary of education [,sekɹətəri əv ,edʒə'keɪʃən]	Bildungsminister(in)
tradesman ['treɪdzmən]	Geschäftsmann, Händler