

Upskilling for the future: What you need to know

You might have heard about upskilling and its benefits – how staying up to date with your industry and learning new skills could help you move forward in your career.

And with so much change to how many of us are working and spending time lately, now could be a great time to think about what upskilling could look like for you.

It could also be an opportunity to look at [which industries are in demand now, and the courses that could help you upskill or prepare for them](#).

Whatever your focus for upskilling, here's what to know to get started.

There's a new trend in how people are upskilling

Rather than upskilling to help in a current role, more people are now upskilling to prepare for the future.

SEEK research published in December 2019 found that increasing numbers of New Zealanders (49%) are looking to upskill to prepare for the future, while those looking to upskill in their current role dropped from 75% to 67%. With the impact COVID-19 has had on the workforce, it's possible these figures will shift even more distinctly in the future.

So, what does this mean for you?

Automation and the digital transformation of many workplaces means that employees have to keep up with a rapid pace of change. "The world is changing constantly and New Zealanders are realising that it is vital to stay informed of the latest trends and sought-after skills in their industry," says Nicole Gorton, Director of [Robert Half](#).

The benefits of upskilling

Upskilling is valuable to not only you, but your employer as well.

Learning and applying new skills means you're more likely to be seen as a valuable employee. And by upskilling, you'll make yourself more marketable for new roles or promotions and stand out from your peers and colleagues.

"Employers often look favourably on candidates who demonstrate an appetite for learning and who have an agile mindset as it complements their desire to upskill and evolve their existing team," Gorton says.

Upskilling for the future of your career

If you're looking to upskill to prepare for the future, you need to understand how your industry is changing and what [skills are in demand](#). While in your current role, Gorton suggests looking at research trends and seeing what industry bodies are saying. She also suggests speaking to your employer to understand what continuous learning opportunities they offer and the different ways they can support staff development.

"Once you've developed a roadmap of the skills you would like to learn and improve, you can identify the best avenue to undertake learning," Gorton says. "This could include joining professional associations, advancing education with a degree or certifications, seeking out internal professional development opportunities, finding a mentor, volunteering, or even just subscribing to industry news and journals to stay abreast of trends."

The best upskilling opportunities

Upskilling is a cumulative process and there are many different opportunities, such as:

- Short-term training
- Keeping up to date with changes in your industry
- Attending virtual conferences or networking events
- Participating in formal feedback sessions
- Volunteering
- Being mentored.

"Upskilling does not necessarily mean achieving accreditation in the most up-to-date technical skills, although that does hold value," Gorton says. "Businesses will look to complement an increasingly automated business model with a workforce equipped to provide strategic and human insight so you should [hone your soft skills](#)."

As well as focusing on developing your soft skills, consider participating in digital conferences and networking opportunities. "These can help you to have your finger on the pulse of industry trends, cross-pollinate ideas and resources with peers, build your interpersonal skills and expand your network," Gorton says.

While upskilling can undoubtedly help you in your current role, it's important to know that more and more people are upskilling with an eye on their future. No matter whether you want to upskill for your current role or expand your capabilities for a potential role, knowing how you can develop your skills is a great step to get you on your way.