Technology in the Workplace

Technology has affected the world of work since the rise of factories in the 19th Century. For example, a machine called the cotton gin, that removes seeds from cotton after it is picked, made cotton manufacturing quicker and easier. When we talk about technology today, we usually mean hardware, such as hard drives and monitors; software, such as word processing programs; the internet; or networks, which allow computers to communicate with one another. Technology also refers to data (information, statistics/numbers) collection (gathering together), analysis (study) and storage. It affects today's labor market in many ways: the way we find work, the types of jobs we do, the education and skills we need, the way we do work, and the way companies operate.

1. **The way we find work**
    Long ago, people often looked for jobs in local newspapers, but today they use technology. Job search websites such as Monster, Indeed.com and Glass Door have become popular. People use social media sites (places/locations on the internet) like LinkedIn and Facebook to make themselves known, connect to others and find opportunities (a break or a chance to do something). Employers use these sites (places/locations on the internet) too, to find employees (workers) and research job applicants (people who are applying for a job).

2. **The type of jobs we do**
    Advances (developments) in technology have made some jobs disappear (go away) and others appear. For example, because companies like Netflix can offer movies on the internet, there are fewer video rental stores. We used to see a travel agent, baggage (luggage, suitcase) collector, porter (someone who stands by the door in a hotel or fancy apartment building to greet or help you) and ticket agent when we traveled by plane or train. There are fewer of those jobs now that we use websites to book our tickets, and electronic machines to get our tickets and to check our bags. Advances in technology create new jobs too, like 'app developers', social media specialists, and health information managers.

3. **The education and skills we need**
    A lot of work relies (depends on) technology. We use it to do simple tasks like answering phone calls. More and more employers rely (depend on) people to do more difficult (harder) work that requires (needs/demands) innovative (new and interesting) thinking, flexibility (being able to change or do different things), creativity (ability to create interesting new things), and social skills. You need a person to plan the layout of products in a store so customers can find them easily and you need a person to provide hands-on (direct, person to person) care for sick patients. You need technology, for cashiers to use during transactions (when the cashier rings up the sale) and to store medical information of patients. In this technology driven labor market, individuals (people) who want to get,

keep and advance (move up, get a promotion) in a good job need to make sure that they have the education and skills that employers are looking for. This means knowing how to use technology and learning the skills that must be done by people.

4. **The way we do work**
Technology has also changed the way we work, by:
- Making workers more productive (do more work) -- Using technology can help you do your job better. You can complete more tasks, do them faster and sometimes more accurately (in a way that's more correct/right). For example, with programs like Word (a computer program that you type letters and papers like this in), you can create and edit (make changes) a letter more quickly than if you were to do it by hand or on a typewriter.

- Reducing (making less) the tasks workers do themselves -- Some tasks that workers used to do themselves are now done by technology. For example, lawyers can use computer programs to search through thousands of documents to find certain information. This allows them to spend more time doing work computers can't do, such as developing arguments for the courtroom.

- Replacing some workers -- More and more, we rely (depend on) machines to do work without any help from humans. This is called automation. Many people wonder if machines or even robots will one day replace workers. Right now, machines can assemble (put together) car parts, answer customer calls and check passengers in at airports. Robots can work together to fulfill (satisfy, get done) warehouse orders. Experts disagree on what kind of impact (effect, result) automation will have on work in the future.

- Making some workers more mobile -- Mobile phones (cell phones), computers and the internet have allowed employees (workers) to do work from almost anywhere at almost any time. For example, some office workers can work from home for a local company or for a company based in another country. And, they can check email after the official end of the workday. Because of videoconferencing (where you can work with someone in another place or even country by using a computer), we can even have meetings with people who are in different places around the world.

- Directly connecting people who need goods (products that are bought and sold) or services to people who can offer it -- Businesses like Uber, Airbnb and Ebay allow sellers to connect (work with) with customers in moments. They offer transportation, accommodations (a place to stay like a hotel or motel) and products (things that are bought and sold) to potential (possible) buyers through the internet.

5. **The way companies operate**

   With technology, organizations can produce (make) goods (products/things that are bought and sold) and provide (offer) services more quickly, more accurately (correctly), on a larger scale and in new and improved ways. They can reach more customers. And, they can use huge (a lot, very big) amounts of information about individuals (people) — known as 'big data' (information) — to help them sell more to customers. For many organizations (business, company), the way they use technology is what sets them apart from the rest (makes them stand out from the others).

Technology has changed the world of work in these five ways, but not all types of technology have the same impact (effect). Some technologies totally transform (change) the way people and organizations work. The internet is a good example; it changed everything. Other technologies that may transform (change) our lives include driverless (without a human driver) cars and advanced robots that can work alongside (next to) or replace employees (workers) altogether (completely). And, some jobs seem to be effected (where something happens that makes it change) by technology more than others. For example, jobs that involve (include, contain) activities (goings on, events) such as data entry, assembly line work (where things are put together step by step) or routine (not changing, stays the same) design work have all become reliant (depending on it – rely on) on technology.

Technology has had many positive effects, but it has also had some negative (bad, harmful). For example, the internet has allowed a wide (big, large) range of individuals (people) to access (use) an incredible (amazing, unbelievable) amount of information quickly, but it has made security and privacy (secret, confidential) an important issue. Hackers (Computer criminals) now can get confidential (private) information that they were not intended (meant to, supposed to) to have. Governments are catching up to these changes by making new laws and regulations (rules) to keep people more safe.

Jobseekers and employees (workers) in today's labor market must make sure they are tech-savvy (smart with technology or know a lot about technology. This can include:
   • knowing how to operate (use) a computerized cash register
   • being proficient (skilled) in Microsoft Office including Word and Excel programs
   • operating medical technology that can require ongoing (happening now) training as the technology evolves (changes and gets better)

Employees (workers) can raise their awareness (knowing about something) by staying current (up to date) with technological (related to computers and science) trends (popular things, the way things are going) in their field, by reading online or print materials about their industry (business or trade). Jobseekers (people looking for a job) can prepare (get ready) for interviews doing job research (finding out about things) and getting training. Jobseekers who are not tech-savvy (not smart about computers) may be at a disadvantage (difficulty, not do as well as other people) to their more tech-savvy peers (a person who works in the same type of job or field as you). •