

Curiosity: A critical future fit skill for the evolved world of work

Unpacking 'curiosity' as one of the 15 'future fit skills' that are critical to being relevant and competent, if not advanced, in the future of work.

JOHANNESBURG, GAUTENG, SOUTH AFRICA, May 6, 2022

/EINPresswire.com/ -- "We live in an ever-changing world of volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity, often referred to as a 'VUCA' world. To stay relevant and add value in a VUCA world, you cannot rely on existing skills. Your propensity to ask questions, try new things and suspend judgement is what matters," says Dr Eric Albertini of the [Future Fit Academy](#). "The ability to learn faster than others is another distinct competitive advantage, but while learning enables change, it is [curiosity](#) that underpins an intentional learning mindset," he adds.

Research by Dr Mathias Gruber at the University of California revealed that curiosity prepares the brain for learning and fortified long-term memory.

"Simply put, curiosity is about wanting to know more about something or indeed, someone. Curiosity is about willingly embracing new experiences, unknown situations and different, varied environments. Indeed, it is the



Dr Eric Albertini, Future Fit Academy



Future Fit Academy

fundamental foundation for discovery,” says Dr Albertini.

Harvard Business School reports that cultivating curiosity throughout an organisation helps leaders and employees better adapt to uncertain and changing market conditions and external pressures. Curiosity allows for one to think more deeply and critically, without judging too quickly, and arrive at more creative solutions.



For businesses, the benefits of an organisational culture that supports and encourages curiosity include:

- Fewer decision-making errors as a result of reduced confirmation bias. Confirmation bias occurs when one looks for information that supports one’s beliefs rather than for evidence suggesting that they are wrong.

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- Increased innovation - when we are curious, we view tough situations more creatively and it makes us more observant of new ideas. This opens us up to new worlds and possibilities.
- Reduced group conflict - curiosity encourages members of a group to put themselves in one another’s shoes and to take an interest in the ideas of others rather than their own perspective. This allows groups to work together more effectively, conflicts are less heated and groups achieve better results.
- It encourages openness and transparency - curiosity encourages communication and hence better team

performance. With increased curiosity, people are more willing to share information openly and tend to listen more carefully to understand the perspectives of other people.

- Curiosity brings excitement and optimism into life – the curious mind is always attracted to new things and ways of doing things. Instead of feeling bored, stagnant and “empty”, curious people live a more adventurous life and more readily explore the unknown and uncertain.

“Interpersonal curiosity is also the key to building meaningful and lasting relationships. Recent research has found that high and consistent levels of curiosity correlate with mental well-being and life satisfaction. Curious people also seem less susceptible to depression. Curiosity may indeed be critical in managing one of the vagaries of the post Covid-19 pandemic - that of mental illness,” adds Dr Albertini.

"The good news is that curiosity can be nurtured. We are all born with an innate ability to be curious. Research shows that the average four-year old asks an astounding 200-300 questions a day. The bad news is that the average adult asks only around 20! Seemingly, advancing age and a complacency that 'we've seen it all' dulls our natural curiosity," he adds.

Robert Stokoe, director of the Jumeirah English-Speaking Schools in Dubai nailed it when he said "the creative adult is the curious child who survived."

Why has curiosity been devalued in our society, and why this ten-fold decline in curiosity from childhood to adulthood?

At a business level, a Harvard Business School study revealed that:

- Although 92 percent of workers credit curious people with bringing new ideas into teams and profess curiosity is a catalyst for job satisfaction, innovation and high performance, 70 percent state they face barriers to asking more questions while only 24 percent claim they feel curious in their jobs.
- C-level executives often shy away from encouraging curiosity because they believe the company would be harder to manage if employees were allowed to ask too many questions, challenge the status quo and explore their own interests. The pressure of meeting short-term business goals is another inhibitor to deployment of curiosity-driven initiatives which often have longer and more intangible outcomes.

"However, the quashing of curiosity often begins way before entering the workplace. Research done by Susan Engel, a Senior Lecturer in Psychology and Founding Director of the Program in Teaching at Williams College, found that in our traditional schooling system, 'sitting still, being quiet and not wasting time' are valued far more than fostering and allowing curiosity.' This 'sausage factory' mentality still dominates in many educational environments," he adds.

The good news is that you can reignite and nurture your curiosity.

Dr Todd Kashdan of George Mason University refers to the five dimensions of curiosity:

- Joyous Exploration - the desire to seek out new knowledge and information and the subsequent joy of learning and growing.
- Deprivation Sensitivity - it refers to the pondering abstract or complex ideas, trying to solve problems and seeking to reduce gaps in knowledge.
- Stress Tolerance - this dimension is about the willingness to embrace the doubt, confusion, anxiety and other forms of distress that arise from exploring new, unexpected, complex, mysterious or obscure events.
- Social Curiosity - wanting to know what other people are thinking and doing by observing, talking or listening in to conversations.
- Thrill Seeking - the willingness to take physical, social and financial risks to acquire varied, complex, and intense experiences.

Based on these 5 dimensions of curiosity, Dr Kashdan formulated four types of curious people:

- The Fascinated - high on all dimensions of curiosity, particularly Joyous Exploration
- Problem Solvers - high on Deprivation Sensitivity, medium on other dimensions
- Empathisers - high on Social Curiosity, medium on other dimensions
- Avoiders - low on all dimensions, particularly Stress Tolerance

At a personal, individual level, Kashdan suggests that you can foster curiosity by:

- Staying foolish. Maintain a sense of humility and a teachable spirit.
- Asking the Big Why? Don't focus on the WHAT of things, but rather the WHY.
- 'THINKERGRATE' - learn to think in an integrated way and use storytelling to re-write your story using the knowledge you have in an integrated way.
- Question your teaspoons – in other words use the “transformative power of attention” to make interesting what is typically boring! Direct attention to the NOW!

From a business perspective, employers can foster and encourage curiosity in its people by:

- Hiring for curiosity and modelling curiosity,
- Emphasising continuous learning and learning goals,
- Making room for mistakes and taking care not to stigmatise failure,
- Setting goals but allowing teams to achieve these goals based on their own ideas and talents,
- Empowering employees through ownership, encouraging and facilitating hobbies outside of work,
- Embracing and creating cross-team/functional communication and idea-sharing,

“In the new world of work, curiosity is one of the most needed and employable skills in any industry, at every level. It is a rare skill that promotes growth and development. Reignite it!” concludes Dr Albertini.

To learn more about the [15 future fit skills](https://www.futurefitacademy.com/), visit <https://www.futurefitacademy.com/>

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