

#CAREER

Most In-Demand Workforce Skills

Want to make yourself indispensable to future employers?



It's not just technical skills you need to cultivate. As we move into the new industrial revolution and the pace of change continues to accelerate, the skills you need to thrive in the workplace are shifting, as well. We will also need to cultivate critical soft skills so we can do the things machines can't.

Let's take a look at some of the skills that will be in demand by employers in the next years.

Digital Literacy
Digital literacy encompasses the skills that will be in demand by employers in the next years. These skills include the ability to use devices, software, and apps safely and with confidence. People with strong digital literacy skills can communicate and collaborate easily using digital tools, and they keep on top of new technologies and understand how they might impact their job and their business.

Data Literacy
For most companies, data is now one of their most important and valuable business assets, which means organizations will want to employ people that are able to take data and use it effectively. In the average business context, data literacy means being able to access appropriate data and work with it confidently. To cultivate data literacy, working on extracting meaning from data and communicating data-based insights to others. With data literacy, you'll also be able to question the integrity and validity of any data you are working with rather than just blindly following the information you are given.

Critical Thinking
In this era of fake news, social media bubbles, and information overload, critical thinking is at the top of the list of the most vital skills to cultivate for success. Thinking critically means analysing issues and situations based on evidence rather than hearsay, personal opinions, or biases. When you are practicing critical thinking, you can question the validity of evidence and figure out what's true and what's not in a variety of situations.

Emotional Intelligence
Emotional intelligence is the ability to express and control our emotions. An emotionally intelligent person is aware of how their emotions influence their own behaviors and impact others around them and can manage those emotions accordingly. I believe empathy - the ability to see the world from someone else's perspective - is a key component of emotional intelligence.



#CALCUTTA



Salil Dutt
Hospitality and Travel Raconteur

The schooling years progressed. Sulakshana had yet to appear for her matriculation. The deep-rooted conservative customs of her community, followed strictly by Harry's family elders, cut short her budding education. Being the eldest son, the reluctant yet obedient Harry, had to bow before the strong will of his tradition-bound father. Sulakshana was married off to the scion of a large Brahmin zamindar family in their native village, far from the secure surroundings she grew up in, along the river. Her heart wrenched when she had to leave her home, barely into her teens, torn from her loving family, away from the friends she studied and played with. Her life changed overnight from a progressive thinking environment, to a more cloistered and traditional one in the large joint family of her in-laws. Her schooling stopped, deprived of the books she loved to read. She became the youngest member among the women folk, joining them in their household duties. Gradually her care free, fun-loving nature transformed with new domestic responsibilities.

But ill fortune befell Sulakshana. Her young husband, a medical officer, was suffering from a congenital disorder. This condition was concealed from her parents before her marriage. In less than two years, her husband died while on out-station duty. Sulakshana was numbed when the sad news was broken to her. In shock she passed out. Being in an advanced stage of pregnancy, she gave birth to a child - a son.

Conservative Customs
When the news reached Gourepore, there was a sense of deep shock and grief. With a small baby in her arms, her life changed again to one of despair, gloom, and uncertainty. Her distraught parents, far away from the village she was living, were shattered. Harry was devastated. He became a shadow of himself. It affected his life. His bosses were sympathetic, but how long could he continue, to meet her parents "who were passing through the village". Her dogmatic in-laws did not suspect anything.

Unaware of what was afoot and lest her in-laws became alert, her grandmother took the precaution of telling her to come as she was. There was no time to change. Though it would only take an hour to the station and back, still Sulakshana could not leave without taking her infant son with her. She wrapped him in a soft blanket, tucked him close to her heart, and as the rickshaw sped towards the railway station with her grandmother and her little did she realize that it was the last she was seeing of the village of her late husband. It was only when she reached the platform, and saw her anxious father, that realization started dawning on her. With bated breath, her waiting father quickly bundled them into the compartment.

As the train chugged away from her village station, her eyes welled up with happiness being reunited with her parents again. The secure feeling with them, made her sob inconsolably. There would be no more looking back for her. Much later, when she regained her composure, she realized it was only maternal instinct, that reflexively made her carry her baby with her - an inseparable part of her? What would have happened otherwise?

Resuming Normal Life
Sulakshana was a beautiful girl with a pleasing temperament. She had a lot of courage and was determined to complete her graduation well. Picking up the pieces from where she had left them, she added reading the works of the great social reformers of Bengal, the inspiring stories by Sarat Chandra Chatterjee, Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay and Rabindranath Tagore. She graduated from Calcutta University and started teaching in a local Harijan school for the backward. Her old friends in Gourepore Jute Mill rejoiced to have her back amidst them.

Sulakshana's son, the little boy from Gourepore, started going to kindergarten school, ferried in the same row boat by a happy Sadhu Baba, who had earlier ferried his mother. His steps through the garden walkway in front of Neechu Kothi to the waiting "nauka" boat, were small but definite. He was dressed in his spotless white school uniform, followed by an attendant. He never looked back and it was something he would never do in all his

"After our stay at the Gleneagles Club and Castle, a high-end country estate in Auchterarder, a part of the PGA golf circuit; our travelling partners from London - the Todiwalas, OBE, drove us through picturesque small towns, encircling the Loch Earn. We ate the popular "haggis" in quaint restaurants, visited the distilleries at The Famous Grouse, and the Tullibardine. Notable visits were to the Edinburgh Castle atop a hill overlooking the old city, and a luncheon of a bucketful of mussels at "Moules" with loaf bread and crisp dry white wine. We walked in the parallel road behind the High Street in Callander, a small town close by, famous for its very beautiful shops selling brushed cotton shirts, twills, woollens, homemade fresh breads, local souvenirs..... and the Loch Lomond".

Scotland Along the Hooghly

Gourepore Jute Mill (...2)

accompany her to the local station, to meet her parents "who were passing through the village". Her dogmatic in-laws did not suspect anything. Unaware of what was afoot and lest her in-laws became alert, her grandmother took the precaution of telling her to come as she was. There was no time to change. Though it would only take an hour to the station and back, still Sulakshana could not leave without taking her infant son with her. She wrapped him in a soft blanket, tucked him close to her heart, and as the rickshaw sped towards the railway station with her grandmother and her little did she realize that it was the last she was seeing of the village of her late husband. It was only when she reached the platform, and saw her anxious father, that realization started dawning on her. With bated breath, her waiting father quickly bundled them into the compartment. As the train chugged away from her village station, her eyes welled up with happiness being reunited with her parents again. The secure feeling with them, made her sob inconsolably. There would be no more looking back for her. Much later, when she regained her composure, she realized it was only maternal instinct, that reflexively made her carry her baby with her - an inseparable part of her? What would have happened otherwise?



Edifices of Gourepore Jute Mill.



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The Verdant Works Museum at Dundee.

years later. Sulakshana started her Mahjong sessions with the other ladies of her age group in the club. She was back to her normal life, after a gap of two years. Her happiness returned. For her play school son, the only parents in the household were his grandparents. Like parents to the others three siblings, they became "Daddy and Mamma" to him. Through the entire process, Harry stood like a solid pillar, a support, a guide, and a constant inspiration to his daughter apart from being a man rejuvenated.

In the interim, much had changed in the mill. The Superintending Manager Mr. Robertson, returned to Dundee with his family, as did the other British, Scottish and Irish staff. The ownership changed over to a traditional Indian business entity. The old professionalism started fading, and labour problems started increasing, as profit became the only criteria for the new owners. Many facilities were withdrawn. As time went by, Sulakshana weighed the options before her and a future for her 5-year-old son. She contemplated teaching in a good residential school in the hills. She applied in a few places. Her indomitable spirit and courage, prompted her to plan for an independent life, for a better future for her innocent child.

The British Management gradually changed over to Indian replacements even before

they got married. Sulakshana's child, the little boy from Gourepore, witnessed the rituals with wonder.

The next year, Sulakshana bore a daughter. Decades passed as her two children grew to become independent young professionals. They excelled in academia, and now lead successful lives overseas.

Years passed as Sulakshana kept in touch off and on. She often found herself looking back on her pristine growing years in Gourepore. Since then, many mills once owned by the Sterling group of companies, had changed hands to multiple Indian business houses. Jute mills of yore are a bygone story, most moving from glory to decadence. Many have become ghost houses, left to ruin. They have become a sad reflection of archaic government policies, inability to find solutions to litigations, union lockouts and closures. The healthy trees that once shaded many passers-by, have spread their roots deep into the factory edifices. Thousands of workers and their families are left to the mercy of disputing parties. They have been seeking salvation since long, in the corridors of Justice. Assets worth crores have vanished due to corruption. The once beautifully landscaped gardens and the living atmosphere of happiness, prosperity, and healthy activity, had disappeared leaving behind painfully distressing memories.

Years later Sulakshana asked her father about the Gourepore Jute Mill. Harry's eyes moistened with a far melancholic look. His silence spoke volumes - never to visit the jute mill in Gourepore again.

The Scottish Managers, have gone back to their land, leaving behind beautiful memories in the minds of their successors, like Harry and his colleagues. Stanley Clarke passed away in 2008 at 83, survived by his son Jeff, seen in the photo with him. Their children, like the 5 years old Sulakshana (kneeling in the pic next to Mrs. Robertson), and her 2-year-old brother (standing against Mr. Campsie); meet their old friends from Gourepore in Calcutta. They reminisce those wonderful years that have become a past dream, knowing that those halcyon years would never return. A few Anglo-Indian fami-

lies have migrated to Canada, Europe or Australia. Most of the Bengali distilleries at The Famous Grouse, and the Tullibardine, have closed down or faded into oblivion.

Tail piece - Dundee
As she recounted to me years later Sulakshana had to fulfil her father's unfinished dream to visit Dundee, the epicentre of the Jute mills of the Sterling group of Companies - to see "The Verdant Works". The group had converted the old Jute mills are in disrepair, have closed down or faded into oblivion. The former were the Jute Mills..... till her eyes read the letters - Gourepore Jute Mill. Having understood her long journey in the jute mills, I realized how nostalgic this must have been for her to narrate. Visiting the Heritage Jute museum was completion of a full circle. Inside the museum, she sat down on a wooden bench in one of the dimly lit rooms surrounded by old maps and photographs, absorbing all her thoughts transported to a different time, connecting her to so many memories of the past, and her late father, who stood like a strong pillar in her journey. Her eyes grew moist and she cried silently in the dark, in memory of her beloved father "Harry" Hari Shankar.

Harry passed away in 2000. His dream of visiting this Mecca of international jute trading, was fulfilled by his daughter.

In 2011, I chanced to visit Dundee with friends. It was only curiosity that made me seek the Jute Museum at Dundee that Sulakshana spoke about.

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Operator at the Dundee Museum, demonstrating jute sack weaving in an old machine model.

#COVID-19

Overcrowded Animal Shelters

Along with veterinarian and staff shortages, the missing surgeries are contributing to widespread overcrowding at pet shelters.



Progress made over decades to control overpopulation of dogs and cats through high-volume spay-neuter surgeries is now at risk thanks to the ongoing pandemic, researchers say.

The impact felt both at community shelters and veterinary clinics includes sharp declines in spay-neuter surgeries after the initial pandemic-triggered lockdowns, followed by staffing shortages in clinics and shelters, overcrowding, and lagging pet adoption rates.

All of these problems are compounded by a nationwide shortage of veterinarians, which has been felt even more acutely in shelters and spay-neuter clinics, according to the study in Frontiers of Veterinary Science.

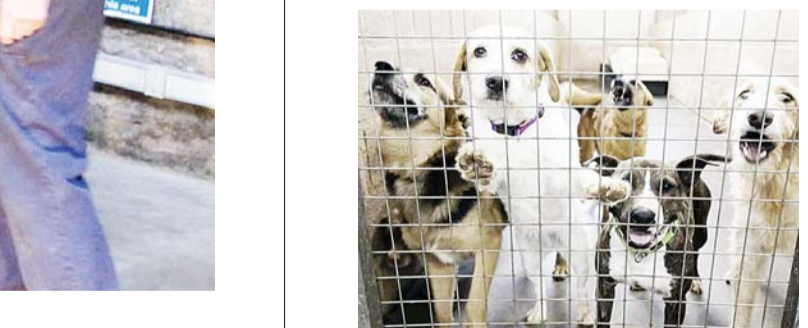
The study focused on the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on the volume of surgical procedures performed by spay-neuter clinics, says lead author Simone Guerios, a clinical assistant professor of shelter medicine at the University of Florida.

The team drew its research from 212 clinics nationally, all of which make use of the cloud-based clinic management software program Clinic HQ, which is specifically designed for facilities that focus on spay-neuter and preventive health care services.

"The high level of spay-neuter achieved over the past five decades is the single most important driver of reduced pet overpopulation and euthanasia in animal shelters," Guerios says. "The rise in subsidized spay-neuter access helped drive the euthanasia of shelter pets in the United States from an estimated 13.5 million in 1973 to 1.5 million in 2019." Using 2019 as a baseline, the researchers aimed to determine the impact of the pandemic on the volume of spay-neuter procedures performed in 2020-2021 at the 212 clinics, which collectively performed more than 1 million surgeries per year and were on track to increase surgeries by 5% over the previous year.

But in the 24 months from January 2020 through December 2021, 190,818 fewer surgeries were performed at the clinics studied than expected had 2019 levels been maintained, the researchers found.

"If a similar pattern was experienced by other spay-neuter programs in the United States, it would suggest there is a deficit of more than 2.7 million spay-neuter surgeries that animal welfare organizations have yet to address," says co-author Julie Levy, professor of shelter medicine education. All the impacts of the pandemic combined have the potential to undermine progress made in controlling pet populations and euthanasia in shelters, Levy adds.



Operator at the Dundee Museum, demonstrating jute sack weaving in an old machine model.

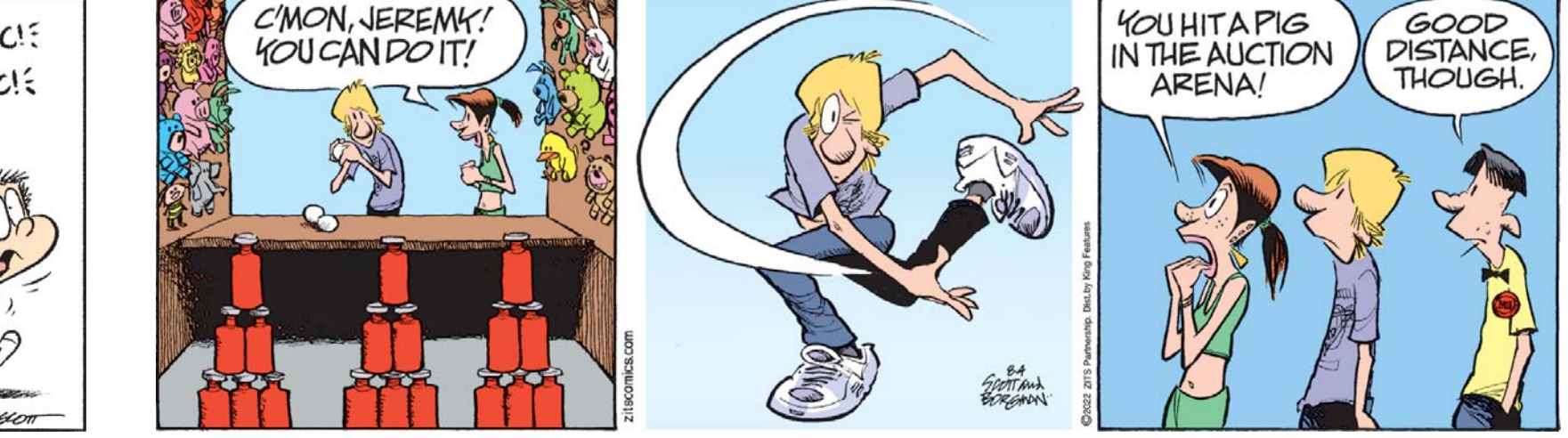
THE WALL



BABY BLUES



ZITS



By Rick Kirkman & Jerry Scott

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