

The Future of Employment

Policy Possibilities for Public Discussion



April 2015

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The Future of Employment

As an Area of Concern



Do you wonder what the future of employment holds in store?

Employment has always been an area of concern for many people. But in recent years we have seen dramatic shifts in employment trends in the United States, with sudden increases in the number of people who are unemployed, underemployed, or unemployable. Many of the pathways to employment are changing, along with the status and security that employment once offered. All of these factors combine to heighten the need for a renewed exploration of the future of employment.

There are many possible causes for the changing landscape of employment. Some cite the

opening of China and the transition of formerly communist economies into market economies. Some cite advances in information technologies, robotics, and automation. Some point to globalization and the increased mobility of capital and workers across borders. Some point to our educational system's shortsighted focus on the pursuit of advanced degrees to the exclusion of vocational training, trade skills, and preparation for jobs that do not require a college degree but might be a better match for some students. And some point to the different pay expectations that American workers may have in comparison with foreigner workers, and to various

problems that American workers might have in meeting job requirements. But whatever the causes, American workers now find themselves in an increasingly competitive global labor market in which they are forced to compete with highly motivated foreign workers living in countries with cheap labor and low taxation, and with immigrants who are willing to work for less.

The upshot is that we now live in a world in which the future of employment seems very hard to predict. Requirements for entering the job market are changing. College degrees may now be required for jobs that used to require high school diplomas. Some forms of work have disappeared entirely. There are jobs that some American workers refuse to do. And gains in productivity mean that our economy can produce more and more with fewer and fewer workers.

How might we, as a society, approach the future of employment in this uncertain situation?

This discussion guide is intended to help you explore various emerging concerns about the future of employment—and contrasting conceptual policy possibilities for addressing them. As you consider the future of employment, you might want to explore the following questions about employment as a matter of public concern:

- What does it mean to be an employee or an employer—and how might this change in the future?
- What moral values, cultural beliefs and societal goals might relate to employment?

- What is the value of employment—and is being employed valuable in and of itself or only as a means to some other end?
- What are some of the different dimensions of employment, and what conflicts might emerge due to them?
- What are some of the different perspectives we might have to take into account when thinking about the future of employment?
- What role might technology and globalization play when we think about the future of employment?
- What are some of the different ways public policy might address concerns about the future of employment?
- What other questions or concerns might we consider about the future of employment?

A group of your fellow citizens struggled with these questions—and many others—through a series of intensive exploratory discussions. The group developed the seven contrasting policy possibilities contained in this discussion guide as a result. These policy possibilities represent different ways of thinking about the future of employment. They arise from different concerns and embody different values, goals, and interests. They are intended to stimulate your own discussions about the future of employment. They are not intended to advocate for, or persuade you to adopt, any particular approach. We present them in the hope that, by considering them and discussing them with your friends, neighbors, and fellow citizens, you will come to a better understanding of what you think about the future of employment and about what we, as a society, might do to address that future.

A. Support People to Manage the Decline

This possibility would rethink the relationship between money and work in an effort to manage the decline of future employment opportunities in the private sector.



Do you think that our private economy will produce enough jobs in the future for everyone who needs or wants one?

Supporting People

This possibility maintains that the development of information technology and robotics, together with the opening of global markets, means that we will not have as many middle-class job opportunities in the future as we had in the past. It would thus try to find ways to help people who are unemployed, underemployed, and unemployable in the private sector adjust to their “new normal.” One way to do this might be to commit our society to a fundamental redistribution of wealth that would provide all of our citizens with a minimum income and standard of living regardless of their employment status. Another way might be to provide people who cannot find jobs in the private

sector with public service jobs instead of just economic security. And yet a third way might be to help people to lower their expectations about their future employment opportunities and what they need to live happy and productive lives.

Managing the Decline

Private industry does not exist to create jobs, but to make profits for those who invest in it. This possibility maintains that the decline in future job opportunities will be due to the success of private industry rather than its failure. There can be little doubt that private industry is becoming more and more efficient. And

it will simply offer fewer jobs in the future because it will be able to produce what we need with fewer workers—thereby creating greater profits at less expense. Most people would probably regard this as a godsend—especially since it means they will not need to work as much or as hard as they once did—were it not for the fact that they have to work for a living and might be out on the street without a job. We will thus need to find ways to manage the decline in future employment opportunities in the private economy so it does not spill over into social unrest.

Rethinking the Connection between Money and Work

Today, most of us regard our work as both a moral responsibility and the primary way to make the money we need to support ourselves. We thus regard someone's failure to find or keep a job as either a failure of our economy or a failure of personal morality. This possibility would rethink that idea. We may, in the future, have to find ways to support ourselves without the jobs we had in the past—and, perhaps, without working at all. This possibility maintains that we are wealthy enough, as a society, to do so. But it also maintains that doing so will require a cultural shift in our attitudes toward the relationship between money and work. We will, simply put, need to rethink the idea that the failure to find or keep a job is a failure of our economy or a failure of personal morality. And we will need to grow accustomed to supporting people who cannot find work without imputing blame to them.

Other Perspectives

But even if you agree that job opportunities in the private economy will decline and that the greater efficiency made possible by information technology and robotics will make the trend

difficult to reverse, you may not feel that this possibility is the best way to go. You may think that the future is not determined and we should not regard a loss of jobs as either inevitable or irreversible. You may think that adopting a defeatist attitude is more likely to make the decline of jobs and employment opportunities a self-fulfilling prophecy. You may think that the traditional relationship between money and work is the one that has produced the greatest economic engine that the world has ever known. Or you may think that the decline has been greatly exaggerated, that our economy can reinvent itself, and that our best years are still to come. But if you think any or all of these things, you may also think that instead of taking the decline as a fact, and instead of thinking that the best we can do is to manage it, we should roll up our sleeves and think about what we can do to invent new industries, create new jobs, compete with other countries, and win on the global playing field.

Questions for Exploration

- If this possibility were in place, what effects do you think it might have?
- How might it affect employment over time?
- What broader impacts might it have on our society?
- In what other ways might this possibility be implemented?
- Can you think of ways that it could be improved to help it achieve its goals?
- What unintended consequences might it have?
- What trade-offs might it require?

B. Celebrate the Intrinsic Value of Work

This possibility would celebrate the intrinsic value of work as a good in itself and not simply as a means to another end. It would also take steps to promote the value of conscientious and diligent work, to reestablish pride in every form of work, and to celebrate individuals' personal contributions to the economy.



Do you believe that work has an intrinsic value that conveys a special dignity on the people who do it?

The Intrinsic Value of All Work

This possibility would try to create and sustain a culture that values all forms of work as a good in itself—instead of regarding work as valuable only for the material rewards it may bring. It maintains that we should value work both for its own sake and for the special dignity that it bestows upon those who do it. It would thus orient public and private efforts around supporting pride in every form of work. It would support public programs to expand work experiences for all. It would celebrate the intrinsic value of those experiences. And it would encourage and support private sector efforts to pay tribute to the value of each worker's contributions to his or her organization.

Raising the Status of All Work

There can be little doubt that we are happiest and most productive in our jobs when we feel that our

work is meaningful and that we are valued for it. There is, however, a tendency for some people to value certain kinds of work more highly than others, and even to look down upon some kinds of work. This possibility would raise the status of all work, including jobs that some people might see as demeaning. It might do this by encouraging or supporting private sector programs that offer social recognition for the contributions of each employee and each kind of work within an organization. It might also provide a guaranteed minimum income for all, so that concerns over wages and the material rewards of work might play a lesser role in the personal and social perception of its value.

Finding Your Work Passion

Finding work that is personally meaningful is the surest way to find the intrinsic value of work. This

possibility would thus encourage people to find their own particular work passion. Finding a work passion fosters self-motivation and self-reliance. It can also transform work into an opportunity to improve your life and experience personal growth. This possibility would thus support public education programs that help students identify and develop their passion for a certain kind of work. Such programs could involve mentoring, internships, or other real-world experiences where students can experience the reality of particular kinds of work. This possibility might also provide public funding, through grants or tax incentives, for feature films and other artistic creations that portray the value of finding one's work passion. Such art works—in which the stars find their ideal work interests instead of their ideal love interests—would simultaneously celebrate the value of work and provide our culture with work heroes for our young to emulate.

More Work Experiences

One way to promote a culture of valuing all work is to provide more opportunities for work experiences for all members of society. This possibility might do that by establishing a national jobs program, with special support for the long-term unemployed or for those who have never had a job. It might provide public support for work programs for ex-convicts to help them re-enter society and develop a positive sense of contributing to their communities. It might also require some form of work service, in the public or private sectors, for anyone receiving public assistance. Such programs could be a real boon to our society, since they would ensure that a lot of work that currently gets neglected actually gets done, while simultaneously helping individuals who have been out of work to build and retain their mastery of a job, their dignity, and their sense of contributing to society.

Other Perspectives

But even if you agree that we should celebrate the intrinsic value of work, you may think that its intrinsic value lies not so much in what you do, but in how you do it—and that it is counterproductive to celebrate the value of an individual's work if it is not done very well. You may think that it is leisure, and not labor, that most people value as a good in itself. You may think that if all work were really valuable in itself then we would compensate all workers equally, regardless of what they do. Or you may think that the idea that all work has value and dignity is just a story that we have told ourselves to make us feel better about having to work for a living. But if you share any or all of these beliefs, then you may think that we should accept the fact that most people regard work as a burden to avoid if at all possible and do our best to promote the value of work by fostering workplace happiness instead.

Questions for Exploration

- If this possibility were in place, what effects do you think it might have?
- How might it affect employment over time?
- What broader impacts might it have on our society?
- In what other ways might this possibility be implemented?
- Can you think of ways that it could be improved to help it achieve its goals?
- What unintended consequences might it have?
- What trade-offs might it require?

C. Foster Workplace Happiness

This possibility would encourage employers and employees to work together to foster workplace happiness.



Do you believe that the traditional employer/employee social contract has eroded over the years, and that employers and employees today feel little or no loyalty toward each other at all?

The Importance of Workplace Happiness

This possibility flows from the belief that employees are most productive when they feel happy in their jobs, and it would take steps to ensure their happiness. It would thus help employers and employees to recognize multiple forms of compensation besides traditional wages and benefits. And it would encourage them to acknowledge that workplace happiness is important for both their personal well-being and the well-being of their companies; to reflect upon their mutual concerns about things that might affect their workplace happiness, such as productivity, workplace environment, compensation, benefits, work-life balance, and job satisfaction; and to communicate those concerns to each other in appropriate ways.

Responsibility for Workplace Happiness

There can be little doubt that employers and employees are both responsible for workplace happiness. But workplace happiness is a function of many different factors. Some of them are clearly more important

to employers than they are to employees. And some of them are clearly more important to employees than they are to employers. Such factors may vary from employer to employer, and from employee to employee. But generally speaking, employees are happier when they feel that their workplaces are stimulating environments. When they feel that they fit into the culture of the company. When they feel that they are fairly compensated for their work and have rewarding, satisfying, and productive careers. When they feel that their employers value them as persons and encourage their autonomy and creativity. When they feel that they are safe and secure both in and on their jobs. And when they feel that their companies are doing good things in the world and that their jobs are important. Employers, on the other hand, are happier when they feel that their employees are real assets to them and are worth the money they pay them. When their employees are not causing problems in the workplace. When they feel that they can trust their employees with their property. And when

they feel that their employees are working diligently and conscientiously in the company's interest, and are not there merely to collect their paychecks. The importance of these factors may, once again, vary from employer to employer and from employee to employee. But the absence of any one of them could be enough to make some employees feel that their workplace is hostile, oppressive, and unhappy—and some employers feel unhappy with their employees and the work they are doing. This possibility would help employers and employees to recognize that workplace happiness is important for them to achieve maximum success in their work, that they are mutually responsible for it, and that they should take steps to foster it. It would also help them to communicate their concerns about workplace happiness and what they can each do to improve it.

Communication is the Key

Fostering workplace happiness will require employers and employees to communicate more with each other about their mutual concerns about workplace happiness and the ways to improve it. This can be done by creating discussion forums and frameworks for both employers and employees to communicate their expectations and concerns: to say exactly what they expect, what would make them happy in the workplace, and how to work with each other to achieve their goals. But it will also require employers and employees to take each other's concerns about workplace happiness seriously, to acknowledge that workplace happiness is a prerequisite for the productivity and success of their work, and to invest in each other by addressing their mutual concerns in a serious and appropriate manner. This possibility maintains that investing in each other may go a long way toward rebuilding mutual trust and loyalty between employers and employees, and toward building a new social contract between them that will, in time, help to restore the workplace happiness that may have been lost over the years.

Other Perspectives

But even if you agree that workplace happiness is essential to productivity and that fostering it is in the interests of both employees and employers alike, you might also think that actually doing it may be much more difficult than this possibility pretends. You may think that times have changed, that employees are no longer as easily satisfied as they once were, that they are no longer in as much demand as they once were, and that they can no longer make the demands they once could. You may think that most employees today are too afraid of losing their jobs to worry about workplace happiness. Or you may think that employers no longer worry about employees they can replace at will. But if you think any or all of these things, then you might also think that instead of worrying about their workplace happiness, employers should simply try to get the employees who will best serve their needs—and that employees should suck it up, stop their whining, lower their expectations, and try their best to maximize their own human capital.

Questions for Exploration

- If this possibility were in place, what effects do you think it might have?
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- What broader impacts might it have on our society?
- In what other ways might this possibility be implemented?
- Can you think of ways that it could be improved to help it achieve its goals?
- What unintended consequences might it have?
- What trade-offs might it require?

D. Invest in People to Maximize Human Capital

This possibility would invest in people to maximize their human capital by realigning their knowledge, talents, skills, and motivation to the changing nature of employment. It would thus try to close the widening gap between those who have the work tools and personal qualities they need to find and keep a job, and those who don't.



Do you believe that there is a widening gap between those who have the knowledge, talents, skills, and personal qualities that it takes to find a job and stay employed, and those who don't?

A Serious Mismatch

This possibility maintains that many people are unemployed because they are not prepared to fill the jobs that our employers have to offer. It holds that the knowledge, talents, skills, and abilities that they have are simply not the knowledge, talents, skills, and abilities that our employers need. And it worries that the gap between those who have what it takes to find and keep a job and those who don't is widening. It would thus try to do something about it by investing in people in an effort to maximize their human capital. It would reform our educational and job-training programs to prepare people to be employable over their entire lifetimes. It would try to build a workforce that would attract foreign businesses, investments, employers,

and jobs to our shores. It would also try to identify talented and highly motivated people around the world. And it would reform our immigration system to allow them to work here.

The Changing Nature of Employment

This possibility maintains that our economy is a robust creator of jobs and will continue to be a robust creator of jobs in the future. But it also recognizes that the nature of work and employment is changing, and that it will continue to change in ways that may be difficult to handle. People in the future will generally have several different jobs over the course of their lifetimes. These jobs will often require different kinds of knowledge, talents, skills,

and abilities than most people have now. And most people will probably have to move several times during the course of their lifetimes in order to fill them. This possibility maintains that we must begin to maximize our human capital so that we will be ready for these jobs. But it also maintains that there is a big difference between getting a job and keeping it, and that maximizing our human capital is the single most important thing for doing both.

Here, a person's human capital goes well beyond the specific kinds of knowledge, talents, skills, and abilities he or she might have. It also includes the personal qualities and work habits that make some people desirable employees that employers want to hire and others risky employees that employers do not want to hire. Maximizing our nation's human capital thus means more than providing ourselves with the professional work tools that we will need to fill the jobs of the future. It also means closing the gap between those who make desirable employees and those who don't by identifying and inculcating the personal qualities and work habits that make for good employees who not only are able to find a job, but are able to keep it too.

Learning How to Learn

Any attempt to maximize human capital will require a massive work-over of our education and job training systems. But this much-needed reform is not limited to job training or education in the usual sense of these terms. Instead of preparing people to be "cogs in the machine," it would aim at preparing people to be employable over the course of their entire lifetimes. Here, preparing people to be employable over the course of their entire lifetimes means shifting the focus of educational and job-training programs from providing institutional certification that their graduates can do a particular job to developing individuals who know not just how to do this or that job, but how to learn the new

things that will be necessary to do new jobs. It will also require them, and us, to learn how to anticipate the jobs of the future, and to develop our talents and motivation for doing them.

Other Perspectives

But even if you agree that there is a mismatch between the human capital we have and the human capital we need, you might not think that this possibility is the right way to go. You may agree that our economy is a robust creator of jobs, but think that it will not be creating as many jobs for humans in the future as it has in the past. You may feel that it is difficult to learn how to learn, let alone to anticipate the jobs of the future, and that it is much easier to program machines to do those jobs once they are here. Or you may believe that we are actually headed for a future in which fewer people will be working because robots will be doing most of the work for us. But if you believe any or all of these things, then you may think we should exercise our technological capital instead.

Questions for Exploration

- If this possibility were in place, what effects do you think it might have?
- How might it affect employment over time?
- What broader impacts might it have on our society?
- In what other ways might this possibility be implemented?
- Can you think of ways that it could be improved to help it achieve its goals?
- What unintended consequences might it have?
- What trade-offs might it require?

E. Work With Technology

This possibility would focus upon using our technological advances whenever and wherever possible to reduce human inefficiencies and maximize production.



Do you believe that artificial intelligence and robotics will offer us opportunities in the future that we cannot even imagine today?

Our Robotic Future

This possibility flows from the belief that artificial intelligence, robotic systems, and technology in general will offer us untold opportunities for productivity and efficiency. It maintains that they will continue to develop and that they will fuel our economic growth in the future, regardless of whether or not we try to resist them. And it would try to further the development of technology and to work with it instead of resisting it. It would thus support scientific and engineering education in an effort to create more and better technology creators and users, and to prepare us to live in the robotic world of the future. It would also remove legal barriers, such as intellectual property laws, that inhibit employees from creating and controlling new technologies. And it would explore opportunities to enhance human performance, efficiency, and productivity by fusing our new technologies, wherever possible, with the human body.

Making Human Jobs Obsolete

Technology has always made some human jobs obsolete, and it will most likely displace more and more human workers as it continues to develop. That, indeed, is the whole point of developing it. It is also the reason why some people have tried to resist it. This possibility recognizes that many people have lost their jobs due to the development of technology. It also recognizes that those who lose their jobs to technology are often unable to find new ones. But it maintains that technology has created more jobs for humans than it has lost over the years, and that it will continue to do so in the future. It would thus try to address the concern that technology puts people out of work by regulating its adaptation to support workers instead of replacing them. It would pass laws that prevent existing employees from being fired solely due to the advance of new

technologies. And it would design and support a comprehensive system of reeducation and job training to compensate for humans' loss of jobs to robots.

Creating New Jobs

Technology may make certain jobs obsolete. But it also creates new jobs by lowering production costs, by making us more efficient, and by creating new needs and desires for us to meet. Information technology, in particular, can help us to process information about job opportunities more efficiently, thereby building a better job market to connect employers and employees. Indeed, this possibility holds that information technology will ultimately prove more and more beneficial to workers as the “digital immigrants” die off, that it will help to reduce the split in the quality of our workforce, and that even our lower-skilled workers will find themselves in a better position to develop their skills as a result.

Working with Technology

This possibility may ultimately require us to rethink the whole idea that human beings must work in order to meet our needs. This has generally been true in the past. But in the future, we may find that robots are doing more and more of the work that humans used to do. We may find that they are also displacing more and more human workers despite our best efforts to ensure that they don't. We may ultimately need to find new ways to organize our society so that we can continue to buy all the goods and services the robots produce after they have replaced us on the assembly lines, in the fields, on the roads, and in the offices. And we may need to do it without presuming we will have jobs or job-related incomes of our own.

Other Perspectives

But even if you agree that technology can be a boon to economic growth, you may not think that we should necessarily embrace and support its further development. You may think that humans are bound to lose more jobs to technology than this possibility pretends, and that we should take steps to stop it from happening before it's too late. You may feel that rethinking the idea that we must work to meet our needs is a bridge too far. You may think that we should encourage people to purchase only those things that are made by humans, or that we should allow the development and use of technology only if it helps human workers to produce things instead of replacing them. And you may think that we should limit and control the development of technology to maximize human employment. But if you think any or all of these things, then you may also think that we should at some point just say no to technology instead of trying to keep step with it.

Questions for Exploration

- If this possibility were in place, what effects do you think it might have?
- How might it affect employment over time?
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- In what other ways might this possibility be implemented?
- Can you think of ways that it could be improved to help it achieve its goals?
- What unintended consequences might it have?
- What trade-offs might it require?

F. Unleash the Power of the Market

This possibility would minimize government intervention in the labor market, and in matters pertaining to employment more generally, in an effort to unleash the power of the market to create more jobs.



Do you worry that government labor regulations are redundant, inconsistent, and so burdensome that they often lead employers not to hire people at all, or to send the jobs they have abroad?

The Power of Government

This possibility maintains that government interference in the job market prevents it from working the way it should, that it stifles the growth of jobs, and that it is actually a major cause of unemployment. It also maintains that many, if not most, of the concerns that people have about the future of employment—including the costs of hiring employees, the regulatory burden on employers, the bifurcation of the workforce, and the insecurity of future jobs—are all unintended but foreseeable consequences of government interference. It would thus limit the power of government and unleash the power of the market. It would generally minimize government regulations pertaining to work. It would also streamline them

to reduce redundancies and inconsistencies. It would ensure that the ones that remain are both feasible and affordable for employers. And it would encourage governments to allow and employers to conduct experiments in self-regulation pertaining to them.

The Cost of Government Power

The costs that employers must bear to comply with government regulations can sometimes be so high that they threaten the profit margins of their businesses. This can actually prevent them from hiring new employees, and sometimes even put them out of business. The upshot is that government interference and regulations are often the cause of unemployment, regardless of how well-intentioned they might be.

This possibility would thus try to minimize the power of governments to regulate private employment and to interfere in employment practices more generally. It would also aim at removing, or at least reducing, governmental policy barriers and artificial stimulants that distort the job market and prevent it from working the way it should. And it would encourage experiments in self-regulation. It recognizes that self-regulation will not work perfectly, let alone in all cases. But it also recognizes that we do not need, or want, a “one size-fits-all” regulatory system. And it thus envisions an increased role for self-regulation in the future—which it regards as preferable to a costly and coercive government system, especially if it is supervised and periodically reviewed.

The Trouble with Regulations

This possibility does not maintain that we can do without government regulations altogether. But it does maintain that government regulations almost never get at the root cause of a problem, and almost always put a damper on the creation of new jobs. The reason is easy to see. The more regulations we place upon our employers, the more costly it is for them to comply with them. And the more costly it is for employers to comply with regulations, the fewer employees they will hire. This possibility thus maintains that the benefits of most government regulations are simply not worth their costs. And quite aside from that, we simply can no longer afford them if we want to have greater employment and a healthy economy.

Other Perspectives

But even if you agree that labor regulations place too great a financial burden on

employers and are often counterproductive, you might also think that they are more necessary than this possibility pretends. You might think that the reason we now have so many government labor regulations is because our previous experiments with self-regulation did not work. You may think that workers would have little recourse against unfair wages, unsafe working conditions, workplace harassment, and discrimination without them. You may think that there would be no such thing as job security without them. Or you may think that our companies are drowning in profits and that their talk about “the high costs of hiring employees” is a fabrication they use to disempower their employees and exert control over them. But if you think any or all of these things, then you might also think that we should have government set acceptable profit margins on businesses, and then regulate their hiring practices to keep their costs in line with the profit margins.

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- What trade-offs might it require?

G. Embrace Freedom—and Discover Your Inner Entrepreneur

This possibility would encourage people to develop their entrepreneurial skills so they can create their own jobs and shape their own futures.



Do you believe that job security is already a thing of the past, that people in the future will typically have several different jobs over the course of their lifetimes, and that it will as often as not be up to them to create their own jobs?

The End of Job Security

People have often sought jobs that offer them security—both in the duration of the job itself and in the salaries and benefits that come with it. They have sought such jobs because they make it easier for them to structure their lives and plan for their futures. Many people in our society used to take pride in the fact that they worked for the same company their entire adult lives, and many companies used to take pride in the fact that they were able to offer their employees jobs with the expectation that they would last their entire work lifetimes and provide them with benefits that would continue to support them long after they retired.

This possibility, however, maintains that job security in the future will be remembered as a thing of the past, and that our children will simply not be able to find work that will offer them the stability and benefits their parents could expect. It instead envisions a future in which most people will shape their work lives around a series of short-term tasks that will require several different kinds of knowledge, talents, and abilities to do them all. And it envisions a future in which the most successful people will be the ones who can develop the entrepreneurial, practical, and social skills they need to create their own jobs.

This possibility would thus encourage us to embrace our freedom, instead of trying to hold on to our vanishing security, and to think of ways we can create our own businesses and employment opportunities. It might encourage us to find ways in which we can work from home on a freelance basis via online private networks. It might offer public-supported “how to” courses and programs to show us how we can transition our existing knowledge, skills, talents, and hobbies into profitable business enterprises. And it might encourage people who have similar talents, skills, and interests to create entrepreneurial associations, co-ops, and other such unions so that they can learn from and support each other. But it would, regardless of whatever else we might do, try to help us to discover our inner entrepreneurs.

Freedom and Entrepreneurship

Job security has always meant a certain loss of freedom and the subordination of our own creativity, ideas, goals, and interests to the creativity, ideas, goals, and interests of our employers. This possibility maintains that we should forget about our security and embrace our freedom instead. Here, embracing freedom means relying more upon ourselves, accepting more responsibility for our lives, and looking less to employers and governments to provide us with the necessities of life. It also means developing our entrepreneurial skills and creating our own jobs instead of waiting for someone else to create them for us. It means relearning how to do things we have forgotten how to do or never learned how to do in the first place. And it means continually searching for new opportunities to improve our lives. Most important, it means trusting in our own values and ideals as the true measure of our

achievement, instead of relying on society to tell us what counts as success.

Other Perspectives

But even if you agree that we should embrace freedom, you may not think that this possibility is the right way to go. You may think that the more insecure we are in our jobs, the less freedom we will have to do the things we need to do to provide for our futures. You may think that embracing freedom is just a fancy term for embracing insecurity, giving in to bosses, and giving up the salaries and benefits that our parents fought for and earned during their lives. Or you may simply think that there must be a better way. But if you think any of these things, then you may also think that we need to find a way to reclaim job security, and to improve it, so that we can leave a better world to our children.

Questions for Exploration

- If this possibility were in place, what effects do you think it might have?
- How might it affect employment over time?
- What broader impacts might it have on our society?
- In what other ways might this possibility be implemented?
- Can you think of ways that it could be improved to help it achieve its goals?
- What unintended consequences might it have?
- What trade-offs might it require?

