

Phil Croft

Preparing for the long-term by embracing the short-term



Seventeen year old Phil Croft has a passion for art and drama, and has been involved in a number of theatre productions. He is currently studying for his A-levels and plans to go to Exeter University to do a degree in Theatre Studies.

As I write this, one thing is certain: when I am halfway through full-time work in 20 years' time, it will be a completely different type and way of working from today. Things that we currently see as efficient will quickly become old-fashioned – just as using typists for memos and letters now seems out of date.

Using new technology isn't always the quickest way to do things, and the use of email and other electronic means of communicating have created their own issues. My dad, for example, is a database designer and spends most of his time answering or writing emails. Is that efficiency? In the near future, I think voice technology will develop

so that you will be able to speak into your computer, and it will then write the words for you. After all, saying something is immensely quicker than typing it. Although these systems do exist today, they are currently not developed enough to be used on a wide scale.

Most of our parents and grandparents have or had a job for life, where they started a job and learned the skills needed as they went along. This is no longer the case. My weekend job in a children's play centre is probably not going to be my lifetime career. Even when I start full-time work, I don't always expect to be in the same job. The future workplace is likely to

A photograph of a hand reaching up towards a blue sky. Three colorful balls (one red and blue, one yellow and green, one red and blue) are floating in the air above the hand. The background is a clear blue sky with a few wispy clouds.

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be based on short-term contracts, where a person is hired to carry out a particular job because they have the skills needed. Someone I know works in television and is always moving between different companies that use his skills only for the time they need them. He will work as an assistant producer on Big Brother for a few months and then move on to Celebrity Scissor Hands for another few. I really think that this way of working will take off in the future, which is why it is important to make sure that youngsters have a wide range of knowledge so they can move from contract to contract.

One way for young people to prepare for this is by doing project work in school. Another suggestion would be to offer a series of short courses instead of university, so that people can develop skills in more than one area.

This style of working will also have an effect on how, when and where the job is done. If people are on short-term contracts, the focus is on getting the job done. So, more and more people will work from home rather

than in a traditional office. Employees will probably not have to do a formal nine-to-five working day, and instead will be able to choose when they do their work. This is made easier by technology.

I think that in 20 years' time live video-links will be so advanced they will be the norm in most companies, and people across the world will be able to speak to each other extremely easily. China and India will be our main manufacturers, so this type of technology will be useful in communicating with other companies.

All of these changes are down to advances in technology, so knowing how to use this technology is essential, and this can be taught in schools from a young age.

I also believe learning foreign languages will become even more important – and not just European languages. It might be useful for schools to teach Chinese, for example, as within 30 years most of our goods will be coming from China.

In the future, the skills needed will be more diverse than now. People will have to be much more versatile and adaptable, because their jobs will be always changing and they will have to have skills for all of them. Computing will perhaps be the most essential skill of all because almost everything will be done using computers. I expect most employers will require people to have a high level of IT skills. It is also important to have a wide range of experience gained through voluntary work and work experience, and there needs to be more opportunities for this both inside and outside of school.

The world of work in the future will, without a doubt, be very different from today. It's important we recognise this so we can keep up with the rest of the world.

