

Over the past two years, my firm has recruited two recent graduates into their first jobs. Both earned good 2:1 degrees in very different fields, one in Human Resource Management and the other in Statistics.

They settled into the organisation well, and we recruited them because we saw potential beyond their academic qualifications. We believed they could learn, grow, and take on new challenges.

One thing that stood out to me over the past year, however, was how long it took them to become comfortable with technology, particularly the various AI tools we use in our work processes to improve efficiency and support delivery.

I found this interesting because it made me reflect on how the education system prepares young people for a world of work that has changed significantly over the years. Technology now plays a much bigger role in how organisations operate and how work is done.

What also became clear to me is that AI use can be taught. The challenge is that for someone entering the workplace for the first time, the learning curve can be quite steep. Perhaps that curve could be reduced if universities approached workplace preparation differently.

Whether we like it or not, AI has become part of the modern workplace. Employers are embracing it for the speed and efficiency it brings. Tasks that once took hours can now be completed much faster. It can support drafting, summarising information, analysing data, coding, and research, changing



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expectations in many workplaces.

At the same time, it has highlighted the gap between what many students learn at university and what employers increasingly expect of graduates entering the workplace.

Theory remains important because it provides the foundation for understanding concepts and principles. However, I think there is room for universities to place greater emphasis on practical learning, exposure to real-world work environments, interdisciplinary learning, problem-solving, and digital literacy.

This is where stronger partnerships between universities and employers could become important.

Private-sector organisations can play a much bigger role in supporting learning by exposing students to real-world workplace challenges before they graduate. Employers and universities could work together to design learning experiences that enable students to apply judgment, communica-

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THE FUTURE

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I appreciate that changing how universities teach and structure learning is not simple and certainly cannot happen overnight. However, institutions that respond to evolving ways of working and prepare students for the realities of today's workplace are likely to

produce graduates who are more confident and more competitive.

At the same time, I recognise the other side of the debate. Part of professional growth has always come through coaching, mentorship, making mistakes, and learning from experience.

The journey of mentoring our two youngest team members has been challenging but rewarding. If you asked

them, they would probably say it has not been easy. Some may even argue that this process is exactly what helps build resilience, discipline, and character in young professionals.

I agree with that. But I also believe that the transition into the workplace could be less overwhelming if what students learn and how they learn it were more closely aligned with the realities of today's world of work.