

To be sure, dealing with change is an inescapable aspect of competition in a market-driven economy. But knowing what changes have been made, and the forces that have shaped them, may help you better adapt and benefit from them. Interviews with professors, consultants and experts point to at least six major transformations that have begun and will continue to reshape our work, our workplace and our career prospects.

## 1. Diversity in the workplace

While the workplace has never been the exclusive domain of white, native-born men, the office population is more diverse than ever before. Demographic trends and corporate efforts to recruit more women and minorities have combined to alter racial and gender balance.

"The graduates of today have a much greater probability of working with or for people who are not like themselves," says Roosevelt Thomas, president of the American Institute for Managing Diversity, an independent affiliate of Morehouse College in Atlanta.

Over the next 10 years, only 15% of new employees will be native-born, white males, according to the Hudson Institute, a think tank. The Bureau of Labor Statistics agrees, predicting that in the next decade the white male workplace population will grow only at 9%, compared to increases of 22% for white women, 29% for blacks, 71% for Asians and 74% for Hispanics.

But diversity isn't defined only by race, gender or national origin, says Thomas. "In the past, most managers have been able to assume their subordinates were like themselves or aspired to become like them," he says. Now, race, gender, lifestyle, work-function and geographic origin are just a few of the "diversity dimensions" a manager has to deal with. For example, lifestyle differences are a major issue at one of Thomas's client companies, where a communication gap exists between the senior and junior white male managers.

## 2. Atomization of business

Corporate giants may still get most of the press coverage, but small businesses are the unsung heroes of employment growth, generating a disproportionate share of the new jobs created during the past decade. According to the Small Business Administration, small businesses provide two out of three new workers with their first jobs.

Cognetics Inc., a Cambridge, Mass., marketing consulting firm, expects the trend to continue. It predicts 4.9 million jobs will be created between 1988 and 1993, the vast majority at companies with fewer than 100 employees.

On college campuses, the thought of working for a small employer—or trying something entrepreneurial—is coming into vogue. "The myth of having to go into the big corporation has been broken because there have been so many success stories—not only the high-tech ones like Apple Computer and Microsoft, but from Famous Amos and David's Cookies," says William Lawrence, director of the Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship at Pace University in New York.

"If a young person has the drive and ambition to want to go into business for himself, the opportunities that exist are far superior to the ones 20 years ago," he says.

Improved access to venture capital plus the acceptance of small business are primary reasons. "You don't have to work for IBM or Citibank to get recognition and satisfaction," Lawrence adds.

But Lawrence doesn't wholeheartedly recommend the entrepreneurial route. Although the career risks aren't any higher than working for someone else, an entrepreneur "ends up working much harder and putting in many more hours," he says. Two requirements are mandatory: health and patience. "If you don't have really good health, you can't do it. If you want everything to happen tomorrow, it just doesn't work that way."

## 3. Globalization of business

Twenty years ago, foreign competition meant Volkswagen Beetles and Sony transistor radios. Oil was so cheap and plentiful that import controls were necessary to protect domestic drillers. No one cared about currency values, and international interest rates were of academic interest only.

"Certainly the U.S. wasn't as globally connected in the international economy in the 1960s when we had a surplus balance of trade," says Jeffrey Arpan, professor of international business at the University of South Carolina. "Things have changed radically over the past two decades, when we pretty much were the dominant international power that dictated the way to do business."

"This country was so big and so isolated we didn't have to confront the world," Mitroff agrees. "Now, with the cost of transportation and communication dropping, long dis-

tances—even two oceans—are no longer a key factor."

Two percent of the U.S. workforce is employed by a foreign-owned company, and the Department of Commerce says one in four jobs is related to foreign trade—so at least a quarter of all jobs are directly related to international business, says Arpan. "Everyone's life and livelihood is affected by international developments. The quality, quantity and variety of goods available in the U.S. is heavily influenced by international trade, and so are interest rates."

Boris Yavitz, professor and former dean of

Columbia University's Graduate School of Business, sees global competition as an inevitable consequence of doing business. "People entering the business world simply can't succeed unless they can deal effectively in a world of international competition," he says.

Even if your employer isn't mounting an export offensive for overseas markets, he says, it needs to be attuned to competitive threats in its domestic markets.

"It's absolutely essential to understand the forces behind international competition and the impact they will

have on companies in terms of warding off threats or taking advantage of opportunities to develop and reasonably protect a market niche in the global market," he says. "People who don't have that understanding and exposure will be in very serious trouble, and so will the people who work for them."

Additionally, he sees two technological developments—the personal computer and the facsimile machine—as tools that have had the most radical impact on how the world is changing. "You have to be flexible enough to get information from Pakistan or Brazil as fast and accurately as information from down the hall," he says. "If you can get information faxed from Brazil today and take advantage of it to do your job, you can become much more

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**Be forewarned,  
the landscape on  
which you'll plot  
your career path  
has changed  
radically**