

“Excellence is an art won by training and habituation. We do not act rightly because we have virtue or excellence, but we rather have those because we have acted rightly. We are what we repeatedly do.

Excellence, then, is not an act but a habit.”

- Aristotle, Philosopher

The Maine Center for Career Preparation is a private, non-profit committed to improving the economic prospects of Maine citizens.

Improving the linkages between education and workforce development is our goal.

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# Education Works!

## Employment DNA

By Tom Broussard

### The End of Job Security

Work used to be a lot easier. You either had a job or you didn't.

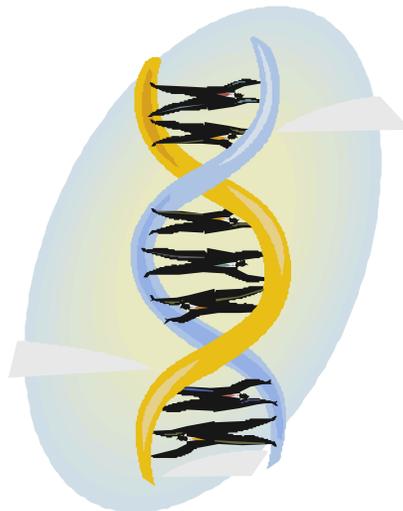
Now what passes as work—the definition of employment—is becoming more and more complicated. Employment in the global economy is defined by all kinds of new arrangements such as part-time, contract, temporary, seasonal or contingent work.

The epicenter of this change is that lifetime, permanent employment with just one employer is almost surely a thing of the past. Today, jobs come and go. Employment (of one kind or another) comes and goes. Nothing is secure.

### Employability is King

Where employment was once valued, employability is now the coin of the realm. That is not to say that having a job isn't important. It certainly is. But

what is even more important is not necessarily that you have a job today as much as you have the ability to get a job tomorrow. Today's job is only good for today. You may very well be working somewhere else tomorrow. Or to be more accurate, you may very well not be working where you are working today, tomorrow!



*To be employed* is a statement about what you are doing today.

*To be employable* is a judgment about what you are capable of

doing tomorrow.

### The New Job Security

Given the current (and increasingly fragile) conditions of employment today, employability has moved up in the food chain of working worries. When employees were employed for life, the question of employability was not an issue. Given today's employment landscape, workers must spend time and energy preparing for their next job while in their current position. They must

spend time improving their employability while they are employed.

Employees investing in their own future through education and training benefit their current employer and all future employers. But most important, they benefit their own employability—the new job security.

### The Good Old Days

In some ways the relationship between employment and employability hasn't changed all that much. The same conditions must be met today. Thirty years ago a worker still had to be considered employable in order to get a job.

### We Are All Self Employed

What has changed so dramatically is the number of times a worker's employability will be reconsidered in their lifetime. Being employable once, was once good enough. Today, globalization and technology have changed the economy into a marketplace where change truly is the only constant. Consequently, workers may lose their employment for a host of reasons—and lose it with little or no warning—time and time again.

### Learning Never Ends

Each time an employee is displaced, their employability—

their capacity to learn—is up for review again. At these points their employability is a function of two things—how much the world (its technology, products, services, etc.) has changed since their last job loss and what they have done to improve their skills since then.

### The Path to Higher Skills

Think of employee skills as one line and employer needs as another. Parallel lines never meet, so diverging lines certainly never will. If employees are not constantly upgrading their skills,



each job loss will put them further and further behind. In a world of regular (some might even say, predictable!) job losses then lower employability is the equally predictable result of each job loss. Under these conditions, each new job will be more difficult to find and will pay less as the divergence between

employee skills and employer needs grows. This chain of events can lead to a trend line from which recovery gets more difficult with every passing day. The good news is that it doesn't have to be this way.

### Employment DNA

Falling wages and rising employment insecurity is not inevitable. Employability is analogous to employment DNA but unlike the DNA in your body, we can change our employment DNA. Your employment DNA can be, and must be, altered through lifelong learning.

### Death, Taxes & Globalization

With the advent of globalization, the tasks that *can* be done cheaper elsewhere *are* done elsewhere. Consequently, the kind of work that requires less skilled workers is being exported from the developed world to the developing world. There is less and less work left in the U.S. for low skilled, manual labor and more and more requiring higher skilled *knowledge workers*. And because of advancing technology, all workers must be in the

habit of learning and re-learning the requirements of a job that are always just one click away from the next software upgrade—call it, **WORK-LIFE, Version 21.0.**

*“Being employable once, was once good enough.”*