

Youth upskilling in the age of AI: where to begin?

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The new reality, however, demands something different. It requires self-directed learning, rapid adaptation, and intellectual humility. That's why employers today are having to train their employees in using AI for daily work tasks. Employees themselves are working out ways to accommodate AI tools in their day-to-day workflow.

Young people who are curious can succeed in such an environment, where continuous learning is a core component. They experiment with new tools, follow emerging trends, and are comfortable being beginners repeatedly. This mindset shift can be difficult, especially in cultures where failure is discouraged and linear career paths are celebrated.

Also, upskilling today does not happen once. It

Think about it: an AI system can generate content, but it cannot read a room. It can analyse data, but it cannot understand social nuance or moral consequence.

For youth upskilling, this means investing time in skills that are transferable across roles and industries. Writing clearly, thinking logically, working with diverse teams, and managing uncertainty will remain valuable regardless of how technology evolves.

TECHNICAL SKILLS STILL MATTER

None of this is to say technical skills are irrelevant. On the contrary, technical literacy has become a powerful enabler. Skills such as data analysis, basic coding, digital marketing, UI/UX design, and AI tool integration can significantly expand opportunities.

The key is to learn these skills with purpose, not panic. Chasing every trending technology leads to shallow competence and burnout. Instead, young people should identify how technical skills complement their existing interests or academic backgrounds.

A student of economics who learns data analytics gains analytical depth. A journalism student who understands AI-assisted research gains speed and reach. A business graduate who understands automation gains a strategic advantage.

Upskilling works best when it builds on a foundation, not when it tries to replace one overnight. Institutions are lagging; individuals cannot afford to. One uncomfortable truth is that formal education systems are struggling to

keep pace with technological change. In Bangladesh, especially, curricula move slowly, while AI evolves rapidly. This gap leaves students underprepared for the realities of modern workplaces.

But waiting for institutions to catch up is a luxury young people cannot afford. The most effective upskilling today happens outside classrooms: through online platforms, open-source communities, internships, freelancing, and self-initiated projects.

Thankfully, institutions are starting to catch up. For instance, many universities in Bangladesh now offer courses and programmes on AI, data science, and so on. It's a welcome shift from the traditional computer science programmes that focus on generalised courses and topics.

That being said, those who have already graduated or are looking to stay ahead of the curve need to take it upon themselves to keep learning new things.

ETHICS AND RESPONSIBILITY

Upskilling in the age of AI is not only about employability. It is also about responsibility. As young people gain access to powerful tools, questions of misuse, misinformation, bias, and environmental cost become unavoidable.

Understanding AI ethics, data privacy, and social impact is not reserved for policymakers and technologists. It is part of being an informed citizen in a digital society. Youth who engage critically with these issues will be better prepared to shape technology, rather than simply adapt to it.

WHERE SHOULD THE YOUTH BEGIN?

In the age of AI, youth upskilling begins with awareness. Understand how AI is reshaping work and society, build digital literacy, and strengthen human skills that machines cannot replace. At the same time, choose technical skills strategically, not impulsively.

Remember: there is no single roadmap when it comes to upskilling in the modern day. Young people need not know everything, but they must remain open to change, adaptable, and willing to grow.

Upskilling in the age of AI is not about racing machines at what they do best, but about leaning into what they cannot easily replicate.

happens in cycles. You learn, apply, unlearn, and relearn. A tool or algorithm you used yesterday will start becoming irrelevant today and become completely irrelevant by tomorrow. Hence, you learn, unlearn, and relearn. That is how you have to approach upskilling in the age of AI.

HUMAN SKILLS WILL NEVER LOSE VALUE

Communication, critical thinking, collaboration, adaptability, and ethical reasoning are no longer treated as soft skills that are simply tucked away in job descriptions. They have turned into core competencies in the AI era.



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