

How futurists think we will be working after the coronavirus pandemic is over

By [Rebecca Turner](#) about 9 hours ago

Posted



Photo: [Gerd Leonhard says the pandemic has led to the widespread adoption of remote work practices.](#) (Supplied: [Gerd Leonhard](#))

The speed with which the world of work has changed since the introduction of coronavirus restrictions has been breathtaking, even for futurists whose job it is to anticipate developments ahead of the pack.

Key points:

- Even futurists are having to adapt to the changes brought on by

COVID-19

- But they say those changes will create an opening for a raft of new jobs
- Black swan scenario planners and privacy guardians are two examples

Technology futurist Shara Evans is used to travelling the world to deliver keynote speeches at slick corporate conferences and government events, but has just spoken at her first online conference from her Sydney home office.

"Transformation has been brought on by things beyond our control," she told her global audience, including viewers from Istanbul to Tokyo.

Even futurists are having to adapt, as noted by her fellow presenter, Swiss-based futurist Gerd Leonhard, who joked that it had taken their team three hours to perfect the technology to deliver their Zoom conference on the future of work.

Mr Leonhard, whose clients include big companies like Google, Sony and Visa, runs a company which specialises in providing futurists to speak at conferences, something which travel bans have made impossible.

Stay up-to-date on the coronavirus outbreak

- [Download the ABC News app and subscribe to our range of news alerts for the latest on how the pandemic is impacting the world](#)
- You can also get up-to-date information on the Federal Government's Coronavirus Australia app, available on the [App Store](#), [Google Play](#) and [the Government's WhatsApp channel](#).

So his business has now shifted fully online to offering remote presentations and digital conferences, joining a webinar marketplace which is becoming crowded as businesses seek information to deal with a fast-changing environment.



[Photo: The use of technology is accelerating the digital economy. \(ABC News: Rebecca Turner\)](#)

The role of a futurist is to look broadly at today's trends and data to describe what could happen in the future. They can include weather forecasters, economists, political commentators and even science fiction writers.

As Mr Leonhard explained to his audience in the webinar, he believed the biggest trends to have emerged from a world dealing with a pandemic, economies in crisis and many citizens in lockdown were:

- Increased global collaboration
- A widespread adoption of remote work practices, from home offices to Zoom meetings
- Travel bans and an acceptance of remote working crippling the travel industry
- The use of technology for remote work accelerating the digital economy



[Photo: Gerd Leonhard says the old way of presenting at conferences has been eclipsed by circumstances. \(Supplied: Gerd Leonhard\)](#)

Although some workers were busier than ever in the new environment — for example, those in healthcare, delivery supply chain and online collaboration businesses — Ms Evans said others were suffering, including her own events and conferences industry, as well as tourism and spectator sports.

These may be the jobs to watch out for

A former technology consultant, Ms Evans also believed dramatic changes in the way the developed world was now living and working would create an opening for new jobs.

[Coronavirus questions answered](#)



[Breaking down the latest news and research to understand how the world is living through an epidemic, this is the ABC's Coronacast podcast.](#)

Take the example of a black swan scenario planner, someone who helps governments, businesses and organisations plan how to deal with so-called black swan events.

These are unpredictable events which have the potential to devastate society, such as pandemics, a meteor hitting the earth or a solar flare knocking out our electricity grids.

Ms Evans said the coronavirus pandemic, with worldwide shortages of medical supplies and crippled economies, showed there was a need for people who could help to anticipate unexpected consequences of black swan events.

"I don't think anyone gave any thought to having to shut down all but very essential businesses," she said.



[Photo: Shara Evans believes black swan scenario planning could be a job of the future.](#)
[\(Supplied: Shara Evans\)](#)

As governments around the world roll out tracking apps to monitor the incidence of COVID-19, Ms Evans said there could be strong demand for privacy guardians, who could monitor whether citizen data was being used appropriately.

"Because we've reached a global pandemic that is having the world teetering on a massive health crisis as well as economic crisis, this could be the reason to force almost every person in the world to update their phone's operating systems and allow government tracking for health and safety," she said.

At a more grassroots level, Ms Evans speculated about the potential for new jobs to help with our new ways of living such as:

- Personal economic recovery specialists to help people who had fallen behind on their mortgages and other debts as a result of coronavirus-related economic restrictions
- Virtual reality real estate specialists who could use high-quality

virtual reality tools to conduct remote property inspections

- Immunity booster consultants to help people keep their immune systems in peak condition in a bid to prevent infection

What you need to know about coronavirus:

- [The symptoms](#)
- [How to self-isolate](#)
- [When to wear a face mask](#)
- [The number of cases in Australia](#)

Video: [What can the Government learn from other countries scaling back their lockdown restrictions? \(ABC News\)](#)

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