

# Now: The Information Age

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## WHAT'S COVERED

In this lesson, you will learn about one of the fastest growing forms of work. There have always been, and still are, different types of work. Sometimes it is easiest to understand these types by looking at how work has changed in the past. Five to ten thousand years ago, the world experienced an agricultural revolution where farming became the dominant form of work. Two to three hundred years ago, the world experienced the industrial revolution which made manufacturing the dominant form of work. Over the past few decades, the world has started experiencing the information revolution.

Specifically, this lesson will cover:

1. The Information Age
  - a. Types of Jobs
  - b. Understanding Information

*"If I get home and one of the kids is sick, I don't have to go out driving."*

Donald Lohr, Uber Driver



## BEFORE YOU START

How has the reliance on the internet affected your personal and professional life?

## 1. The Information Age

The economic stage we are in now is often called the **Information Age**. Since the early 1990s, when the internet first became widely available, more and more aspects of our lives have shifted online. We use the internet to work and study; to order food, clothes, and books; to get around in our cars; to communicate and to create. Our newfound reliance on the internet has had major impacts on the economy and the nature of the workforce.



## TERM TO KNOW

### Information Age

A period of rapid change in the late 20th and early 21st centuries when the economy shifted its focus from manufacturing to information technology, fueled largely by the creation and widespread use of the internet.

#### 1a. Types of Jobs

The first impact is related to the nature of jobs themselves. In recent decades, the percentage of U.S. workers in manufacturing has dropped. This is due partly to a globalized economy that moves jobs overseas, but also to the growing use of robots and other types of automation in factories. Sectors like the service industry and healthcare, meanwhile, have grown much larger. So have short-term “gig” jobs, such as driving for Uber, working for TaskRabbit, or performing a wide range of freelance roles. These “gigs” offer workers the benefit of flexibility but don’t offer the same stability of more traditional employment. They don’t guarantee a steady paycheck, paid time off, or long-term job security. The new “gig economy” and the growth of automation are affecting industries from taxi services to fast food, replacing traditional services and workers with a new system.

### 1b. Understanding Information

The second impact is that information has become even more important. With so much information at our fingertips, our success in the Information Age relies heavily on understanding the information around us and being able to decide whether it is credible. This is particularly true in the workplace. In the Information Age, your **communication skill** is critical. The workplace is full of opportunities for good communicators; as the service economy outpaces the manufacturing economy, there is increased demand for people with strong interpersonal communication and customer service skills. The boom of the service economy is tied to a boom in new kinds of businesses that are rapidly adapting to keep up with customer demands and beat the competition. Presentations, project management tools, and team collaboration are big parts of work in the Information Age.

As we work to stay agile in the new economy, it will help to consider some other times when the workplace changed dramatically. First, let’s take a look back to the Industrial Revolution, when factories were the latest workplace innovation.



## SUMMARY

In this lesson, you learned how the current economy - known as the **information age** - differs from that of the past. Firstly, the **types of jobs** being created in the information economy tend to be in service, healthcare, or freelance “gig” work, rather than in older industries like manufacturing. Due to the current economy’s reliance on the internet and its focus on customer service, **understanding information** and mastering communication are skills that are in strong demand in the workforce.

Best of luck in your learning!

Source: Strategic Education, Inc. 2020. Learn from the Past, Prepare for the Future.



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