

part 1

We are not robots

Everything special about humans – our capacity for love and art and friendship and stories and all the rest – is not a product of modern life, it is a product of being human.

Matt Haig, author of *Notes on a Nervous Planet*

Robots will make work more human, not less; as they take on the boring mundane tasks you will be free to do what humans do best. This is why standing out by being a superhuman is more important than ever before so you can make the most of any opportunities that are coming your way and stay ahead of your competition – other humans! Skills such as empathy, listening, social connection and collaboration will sit at the top of skills required alongside science and technology. Are you ready?

chapter 1

We're only human

We just need a wake-up call

Pre corona virus and social distancing I am on the Jubilee Line in London heading to work, the carriage is packed, and people are standing desperate not to invade each other's personal space and avoiding eye contact. The only sound is the oscillating whoosh of the train, no one is talking to each other. This is the norm on the underground; it's part of our survival instinct to protect ourselves in these situations (even more so since the pandemic). The tube suddenly comes to a sharp stop and all the lights go out. It's pretty dark and then people start to turn on the torches from their phones, and there is a magical moment as the carriage lights up, but what's even more magical is people start to talk to each other.

It is as if a switch has been flicked as strangers start to connect, sparking the conversation around what is happening, to general chitchat once we are told it's an electrical fault and we will be on our way in five minutes. The lady I'm sat next to tells me she is on her way to meet her daughter who she is surprising with afternoon tea at the Ritz for her birthday. And a young man opposite me says how nervous he is for the job interview he's going to, having been out of work for six months after leaving university.

It was heart-warming to see people's empathy for each other kicking in once the ice was broken. It was just five minutes, but

it was a fantastic reminder of how important connection is for us and how we just need the permission or the confidence to make it happen. After all, we are only human.

We sometimes need a catalyst to remind and encourage us to engage and empathise with others especially in our modern world, where we are bombarded with distractions from our technology and environment making it more difficult than ever before to be human. The corona virus was a real wake up call and I remember in the first couple of weeks of lockdown it was like the world had woken up. Ironically the imposed isolation brought people together, neighbours talked for the first time and offered each other help, and communities arranged socially distanced street parties during the Jubilee. Technology like Zoom and WhatsApp kept people connected and we talked to more strangers than ever before.

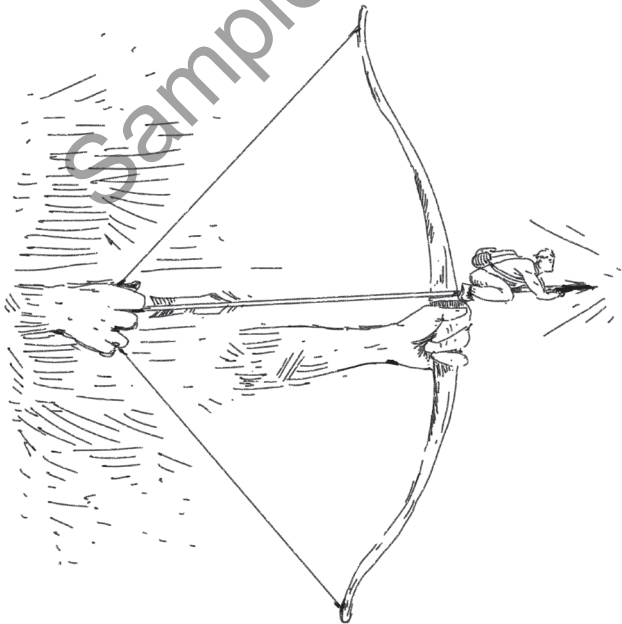
The danger is that as things have gone back to normal, we have fallen back to sleep and with the added challenge of being even more reliant on technology. So I have written this book to be another catalyst, as I believe now is the time to celebrate and embrace humanness, warts and all, because it's those very warts that will help you to stand out and keep you competitive now and in the future. You're wonderful, emotional, imperfect and vulnerable and that's great.

The robots aren't coming – they are already here!

There is no denying automation: AI and robots aren't just coming, they are already here. Something moves in the semi-darkness of a closed shopping centre. As it comes to a clothing store it stops, flooding the window display in intense light. No alarm bells sound, no security guards rush forth. The Sunburst UV Bot, with its 1000 watts' worth of UVC light capable of 'tearing apart strands of virus DNA', comes here every night, as well as to a few other malls and hospitals in Singapore. It is doing something that human workers would have done before the covid19 pandemic: cleaning.

Before the corona virus the estimate in the UK was the predicted loss of 9 million jobs to AI and automation by 2030 and this is for both 'blue collar' and 'white collar' workers. This is now set to be accelerated as businesses look to protect themselves against future pandemics and let's face it robots don't get sick. Also, we are more accepting of automation now and some people even prefer it as it makes them feel safer to be served by a robot rather than a human.

Think robotic and data driven and it gives you a clue to the types of jobs and tasks that will be vulnerable, such as warehouse and factory jobs, drivers, agricultural jobs, lower-level manufacturing, checkout and check-in staff, call centre advisors, admin and sales support, order takers, recruitment admin and research assistants. And the list goes on. In the current environment with competition for jobs at its highest, for decades it might feel daunting, but at times like this I go back to the analogy of the bow needing to be pulled back to its most extreme tension before it can propel the arrow towards its target. We all need to be ready for that force for change and now is the time to get ready and stand out.



There will be new jobs created such as in store influencers, robot managers and management in general, media, healthcare, super sales-people. And there will be jobs we haven't even imagined yet.

Top tip

Go to the website <https://futureskills.pearson.com/> It has a really great function where you can put in your current job and see if it's likely to shrink or grow, and it also tells you what skills you need now and the ones you'll need to develop.

The upside to this is that our unique human skills have become sought-after talents and are now being given the centre stage they deserve. These need to be super human skills if we are to stand out as we are all humans and in the current environment competition for opportunities will be tough. Automation will also create new jobs and make a lot of the work we currently do more enjoyable. For example, if robots take on the boring routine tasks, nurses and doctors will have more time to listen to patients' stories and address their concerns with understanding and empathy. Teachers can focus on the children, with more time to give extra support when needed. Lawyers can focus on their clients and salespeople can sell, rather than get bogged down with prospecting or using a CRM, and people in retail and hospitality will have time to engage with customers genuinely.

These are interesting times because there will be numerous opportunities and possibilities for everyone in the future including you. You don't have to go to university to learn human skills – you can do it every day on your way to work, in the coffee shop with your friends, at the supermarket, when having dinner with your family or Zooming with your customers – and it costs nothing except commitment and practice. If you start now you will be ahead of the curve.

Develop skills that are uniquely human. Although the advance and automation and artificial intelligence may feel

like a losing battle to some, individuals will need to focus on the uniquely human skills.

**The Future of Skills: Employment in 2030,
Pearson, Nesta and Oxford Martin School**

Use them or lose them

The quote above from The Future of Skills report backs up my point. Now is the time to develop your super human skills, like engaging, listening, empathising, collaborating and inspiring, all of which you will focus on in the masterclass in the second half of this book. The challenge for us all is that market research has found people spend more time on social media every day than they do on eating, drinking and socialising combined.

It's called social media but we're socialising less, talking less and connecting with people consciously less and it may be harder for us to take advantage of the new job opportunities. Do you find it hard to get anywhere on time without your SatNav or it's harder to remember your phone number? Maybe you can't read your own handwriting or do mental maths. These are all skills we used to have but they have been eroded because we don't use or need them anymore. The difference is we can't afford to lose our human skills.

Isn't it ironic that for the last 20 years we have been going through a technological revolution, with the focus on learning technical skills, IT, STEM (science, technology, engineering and maths), coding and so on and now we are being told if we want to survive automation, we need to shine at being human. Yet this same technology has given us smartphones and mobile devices leaving us with less time to practice the very skills we need now.

At the beginning of 2000 there was no YouTube, vlogging, Wikipedia, WhatsApp, Snapchat, Skype, Spotify, Siri, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Netflix, broadband, 4G, SatNav, AirBnB or Uber. The list goes on and on. . .

All of the above are fantastic and magical, helping to make our lives richer and definitely easier. I still shudder at the memories of panic I felt missing meetings because I got stuck in traffic or couldn't find my way, trying to read a map and drive at the same time. The traffic app Waze has changed my life. We also have the opportunity to connect to loved ones all over the world. My daughter is working abroad on superyachts, meaning she is travelling ten months of the year and I miss her terribly. Without WhatsApp, Instagram and Facebook I would have no connection with her. Technology allows me to share the amazing places she is visiting, and even more importantly for her, she is able to keep up with the milestones in her niece's and my granddaughter's development. She could even be at her second birthday party via WhatsApp.

Finally what would we have done without video conferencing platforms such as Zoom and Teams during the coronavirus demic? A lot of people's work communication depended on them and still does, but that doesn't mean we shouldn't use super human skills when using such technology; its just as important to stand out on a Zoom interview as it is face to face.

But we need to be careful because it's addictive. When you get a like on your latest photos on Facebook or Instagram, your brain creates dopamine, the hormone that controls pleasure and reward, and the brain always craves more. A friend of mine told me she became acutely aware of this addiction one night when her six-month-old baby daughter woke her up. She found herself sitting in the rocking chair phone in one hand, baby in the other, checking in to see who had liked the cute photos and videos she had put up earlier. She suddenly realised the opportunity to be conscious, present and in the moment with her little one was being sabotaged by social media. Its more important than ever to be aware of our addiction, as post corona virus the research showed that during lockdown our use of social media was up by a staggering 20%.

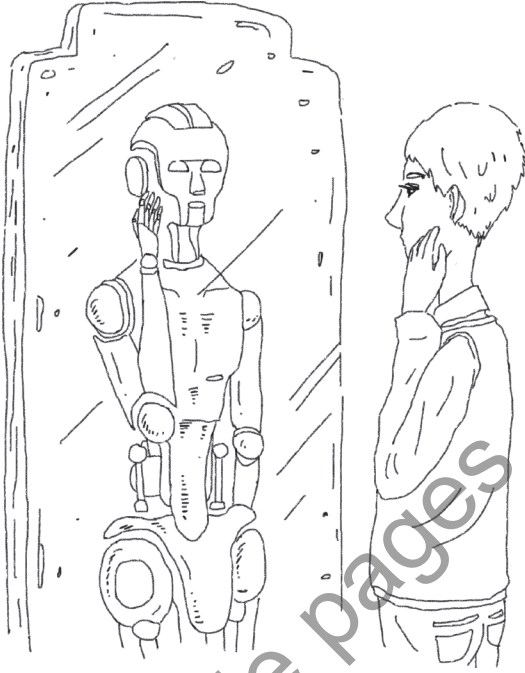
We've only got ourselves to blame

Despite all of this we just can't blame technology for the eroding of our human skills – we only have ourselves to blame. The hard facts are that company heads text or email during corporate board meetings, (face to face and even more on video conferencing) employees shop online during office hours or in the middle of presentations, students go on Facebook amid class hours, and parents text, talk on their mobile devices or email at mealtimes. And children complain about not having their parents' full attention. But at the same time, too, these same children deny each other their full attention.

All skills – technical, practical or soft – will be affected by not using them. This is why over half of this book is an experiential masterclass exercising your human skills so they can improve. We need to be actively practising our social skills if we want them to be natural and easy. Think of what happens when you get on a train or a bus. Do you look, smile and acknowledge the person near to you, or go straight to your phone and check social media instead? I know I do the latter and I bet you do too. Since the pandemic it is even more tempting to hide just like we did behind the masks. As humans we need to find a way to navigate the advantages of technology and the effect it can have on us if we rely on it too much as the way to connect and communicate.

The rise of the human robot

The Killers released a song over 10 years ago with a controversial lyric questioning our humanness in the face of conforming to rules and processes in our lives. This song's title was inspired by a quote from American Journalist Hunter S Thompson who said, 'America is raising a generation of dancers afraid to take one step out of line', which is a really interesting idea. I believe we're all in danger of becoming like this. Technology and the very structure and processes



we've put in place to make us better managers, leaders, customer service advisors and salespeople or business owners are turning us into human robots.

There is no judgment in that we can all be guilty of it sometimes including me. Often it is the pressure we are under to be quick and efficient. Have you noticed that at most airports there are very few humans present as they have become so automated? If, like me you're not an expert at printing baggage labels and attaching them to your case, you're bound to need help. First, you need to find someone, and when you do are they smiling, giving you eye contact and being supportive and empathetic? Probably not if it's anything like my experience (and I travel a lot). They will hardly acknowledge you, robotically dealing with your issue and moving on, almost as if they're sleepwalking, going through the motions, and you end up with a cold, detached human, and no connection.

Or you walk into a retail outlet to be greeted in a singsong almost automated way, dishing out the same old greeting they use on

everyone and we all know it's because they've been told what to say and how to say it. Sadly, I'd prefer a real robot any day than either of these. Wouldn't you?

On top of all of this during the corona virus panemic we experienced a very mixed bag. At some retailers and service providers we were treated like potential criminals and the interaction was rude and aggressive and in others it was the opposite, warm, authentic and full of understanding. I don't know about you but I know which brands I am now more loyal to.

Don't leave your humanness at the door

For some reason over the years we have been led to believe that at work we must diminish our humanity, behaving (and appearing) like robots prized for their automation and conformity. When we are in a work space (home or office), we leave our real and authentic selves at the metaphorical door, ramp up our 'professional' mindset and keep our human traits gagged until we leave or switch off for the evening. This isn't just face to face it's the same when working from home and using video conferencing. One of my most popular courses is in helping people to be more real and human when in a video meeting. The belief that we need to be as efficient as an LED bulb, as knowledgeable as Wikipedia, as productive as an assembly line, and as human as a doorknob might have worked in the industrial age, but today, we can't afford to forget the one ingredient that's essential for business success – humanness.

So, could we be on our way to becoming human robots? You are a human robot when you're not present, when you're going through the motions, putting efficiency before connection, or you are flicking from one social media app to the next and then back to the first one again to see if anyone else has commented on your video in the last 60 seconds. It's also when you're not listening and you're in your head thinking about what you're going to say or avoiding eye contact. It's not only customer service people who act this way. A lovely lady working on the checkout at Morrison's supermarket

told me how soul-destroying it was for her when so many customers are on their phones when checking their shopping through and don't even look at her. How much more important was eye contact when wearing a mask and yet it felt even more difficult to give.

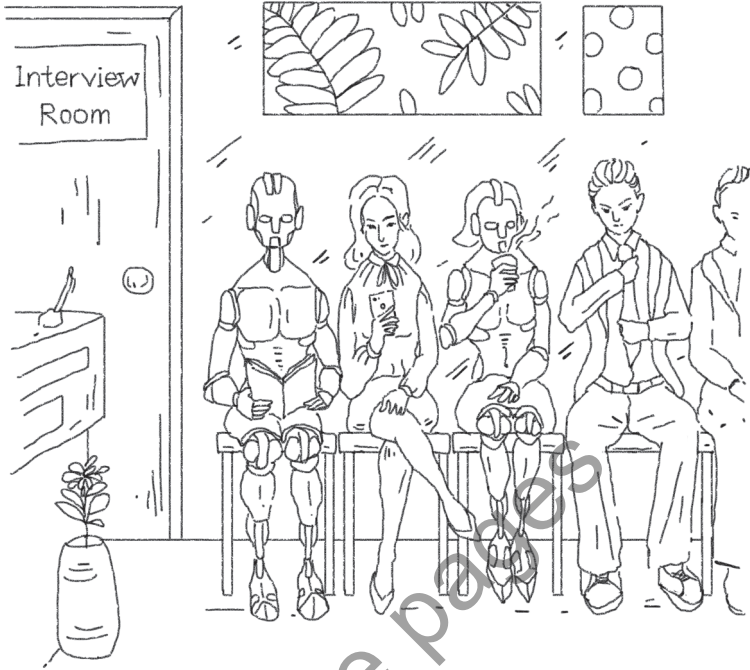
You might be familiar with the Turing test (developed by Alan Turing in 1950) as an important way to test artificial intelligence against humans, to understand how well robots are able to mimic our behaviour. But some experts are putting forward the case that we need another type of test that tells us to what extent we are becoming like machines. Our processes and the need to make things efficient and cheap are taking away what we crave: real human connection. That's not just because the robots are more like humans – it's because we are more like them.

We need to raise our awareness and take action to relearn our human skills now before we get left behind. This book is a practical way to do this, giving you control of your future, enabling you to be happier and find and do the work you love.

How to get the most from this book

The most likely scenario for the future is humans working alongside robots and automation. Based on the research I've done and my experience, listed below are the five key 'human only' skills (AI and robots can't do them) that you need to develop right now. These skills are transferable from job to job as the working landscape changes rapidly. They will complement automation as it takes on the repetitive tasks, giving you the time and space to maximise these skills. They are in high demand and short supply, so if you want to get ahead and stay ahead you need to:

- Engage: Your social skills and the ability to connect authentically
- Listen: Slowing down and asking questions from a place of curiosity
- Empathise: A genuine desire to understand someone else's experience



- Collaborate: Build, manage and collaborate in the teams of the future
- Inspire: Storytelling, influencing, persuading and articulating your ideas

The above are the foundation stones you will develop as you work through the book. But I don't want this to be just another self-help book that you buy because the title and the cover speak to you and after just a few chapters it ends up in a bedroom draw or on the shelf of a charity shop. I want this book to really make a difference to your life. This means this is more than just a read – it's an experiential journey. That is why more than half this book is a human master-class and you will need to participate actively, use it as the catalyst to develop your confidence and bravery in these five future-proof human skills.

The opportunities

There is a lot of doom and gloom in some of the headlines – fear sells newspapers and gets blogs read. But there are exciting opportunities coming for those that are ready, so the research I have done is based on how you can make the most of what is coming. There is a scent of opportunity in the air and you will be in the know and ahead of the game so you can develop the five super human skills that keep you afloat and make you stand out.



The human robot quiz

This is a fun way to do some self-reflection and have some awareness on where you might be developing some human robot