

If robots take our jobs, responsible leadership is critical

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Managers are not prepared for the moral questions that rapidly advancing technologies pose, according to a roundtable held at Nyenrode Business Universiteit (<http://www.nyenrode.nl/Pages/Default.aspx>) recently.

The roundtable concluded that, with large numbers of employees set to lose jobs to AI and robotics technologies, only responsible leadership can manage these changes effectively, both societally and environmentally.

Present were 24 managers of prominent, ethically responsible Dutch firms, as well as 24 outstanding students from seven Dutch universities, who met to discuss these developments.

Bob de Wit, Professor of Strategic Leadership at Nyenrode Business Universiteit and organiser of the event, says,

“Advancements such as AI, robotics and big data will be the catalysts for a societal revolution. As businesses increasingly adopt them, huge numbers could lose their jobs, affecting both work and economic structures globally.

“It is likely that the new jobs that these technologies create will be high-skilled and too few in number. And when every economy relies on its citizens having income, once these job losses start hitting – purported by consulting firm, CBRE, to be half of professional jobs by 2025 (<http://www.business-standard.com/article/pti-stories/50-of-occupations-today-will-no-longer-exist-in-2025-report-1141107012>) – then spending will stop, taxes will plummet and the economy will suffer.

“Although every business wants to keep up with the digital revolution, cutting corners ethically could result in far worse consequences for us all.”

Without commitment to responsible leadership, sectors such as oil and energy could harness tech advancements to protect their interests at great future cost.

Bob says: “Businesses, societies and governments are not fully prepared for the speed of the advancements we are making in work-related technology. The next generation of managers need to prioritise ethical, social and environmental responsibility when making big decisions, perhaps even putting these above profit. The power tech affords us is immense, but if misused, the consequences could be irreversible.”

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