

PSA LINK

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How the Fourth Industrial Revolution impacts on Shop Stewards



The Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) is driven by the coming together of physical and digital technologies. Change is often seen as a good thing that will improve our livelihood or work environment, but that's not always the case. Technology seems to be taking over the world at a rapid speed, especially with the 4IR that is affecting both the private and public sector. Workers are fearful that the income of future generations will be eroded.

Governments will face pressure to change the current approach to public engagement and policy making as workers are in panic mode because of impending changes. Unions must start doing thorough research on upcoming technology to be a step ahead and not wait until the 4IR affects us. This includes, for instance, re-skilling workers and workplace structuring.

Devices or technologies that will be used for the 4IR are making a huge impact on businesses and soon this will also affect most public-sector employees, e.g. health-sector workers who are dispensing medication, etc. Currently, doctors are using devices for heart-failure patients and rely upon machine-to-machine communications to alert them to potential problems. Also, smart-city technology is increasingly being used to improve public safety by monitoring areas of high crime to improve emergency preparedness.

Another challenge is for researchers in relevant sectors to make artificial intelligence increasingly sophisticated and useful for manufacturing, planning and direct service of society.



The question is: Are we as South African workers ready for these **CHANGES** and will we be ready to **ADAPT** to the **4IR** environment?

Labour relations and collective bargaining are also influenced and affected by technological, socio-political and economic development that bring about changes in the nature of work and workplace restructuring. Membership could start to deteriorate if there is not representation of workers, with shop stewards losing their role in the workplace. **It is crucial for unions and shop stewards to start doing research, acquire more information about the 4IR, identify jobs likely to be affected and engage with employers so that workers are at ease.**

