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## DID YOU KNOW??

### A LOOK AT THE ECONOMIC TRENDS



All economic indicators show a positive view of the U.S. economy in 2018. The Bureau of Labor Statistics predicts that the unemployment rate will continue to decline from 4.3% in 2017 to 4.2% in 2018, with an overall projection of 20.5 million jobs being created by 2020. While the majority of occupations are projected to grow, those that will experience the fastest growth next year are healthcare, personal care, social assistance and construction. The workforce participation of older workers will increase, yet the overall labor force growth rate will decline by next year. U.S. salaries are predicted to increase from 3.1% in 2017 to 3.2% in 2018. Gross domestic product is expected to increase from 2.3% in 2017 to 2.5% in 2018.

While the political discussion is focused on bringing manufacturing jobs back to America, and the news media continues to publish articles on how automation will eliminate jobs, we should really be focused on the growing skills gap. There are currently 6.2 million job openings in America that are unfilled, which is up from 5.6 million during the same time in 2016. Companies can't find employees with the needed skills which has slowed growth in the economy.

AT&T, for example, notified 100,000 of their employees that their job roles wouldn't be relevant in ten years and then subsequently created the Workforce 2020 initiative, with over \$1 billion invested, to help increase the skills of their employee base. We not only lack the right set of skills, but the ones we currently are becoming less relevant over time. Almost half of all tasks people are paid to do every day are at risk of being automated and multiple studies show that total headcount will be decreased by between 12% and 50%. Employers will be investing more money into their training and development programs in 2018 in order to fill their skills gaps and reach their full capacity. As Generation Z enters the workplace, they face an even greater skills gap, where 65% of the jobs they will need to fill don't even exist yet.

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