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Opening teaser:

The truth is that we no longer learn, nor do we learn how to learn. At a time like this, when everything is changing and no one truly knows what the next two, three or five years will bring, it is difficult even to predict what will happen in the next three months. The only tool we have is to learn, and to keep learning continuously.

Teaser:

Since 1893, we've been telling the story of a changing world, one Bollettino at a time. Through revolutions and innovations, people and ideas. Today, that story continues in a new format: six episodes, six voices, and six themes defining our present. We approach them with the same spirit as always: to better understand the present, so that we can better face the future.

In this episode, Davide Dattoli talks about the future of work and artificial intelligence.

This is Connessioni, the voice of Bollettino Generali.

Episode:

I'm Davide Dattoli, co-founder of Talent Garden. Technology is changing our lives, but it's important to remember that we are the people who create it. This is even more important to bear in mind today, as we often think of technology as something detached from us. Over the past two and a half years, although the foundations have been laid over the last two decades, AI has become part of our daily lives through hundreds of tools and applications. And the truth is that very few people are truly making the most of it or understanding how it can change our lives.

We're all fascinated by it, and we've all used it a bit like a search engine. We go to it and ask questions. We ask it for answers, or simply satisfy our curiosity.

But there's another level to this. Many people are beginning to use AI to take care of the more repetitive and tedious tasks. Think about all the documents, spreadsheets, presentations and other activities we've already started handing over to it. But the real potential of this technology is much, much greater. We're beginning to see it in what we read and hear, and even in the concerns about what AI and AI-powered robotics may bring.

Because the truth is that the job market is being completely reshaped. I started working in 2008, straight out of high school, just as mobile technology and social media were becoming part of our lives. I kept asking myself: how are they changing the world? What impact are they having? I built my entire career watching those two technologies become woven into everyday life. But what is happening today is on a completely different scale. Perhaps the closest comparison is with the generation that started work without computers and then, one day, found a computer on every desk. But what is happening today is on a completely different scale. Perhaps it's similar to what happened when a generation that had worked without computers suddenly found one on every desk. Except that computer wasn't the complex, difficult machine it was back then. Imagine it had been something like the systems we have today. A leap from zero to one hundred. And that leap may become greater still.

The truth is that AI is a bit like an exoskeleton. It takes our skills and capabilities and dramatically amplifies them. It enables us to create more, inspire more ideas, and develop many more products and solutions. But before anything else, we need to unlearn many of the ways we've been working up to now. The risk is thinking, "This is how I worked yesterday. I can keep doing things the same way and simply add AI to the process. After all, it's just a tool."

No, it's not a tool. It's a complete rethink of the way we work. It means rethinking the structure of our teams and organisations. Today, I may work alongside a number of colleagues, but in the future, I'll be working with those colleagues and with many more AI agents interacting with me, carrying out tasks, launching initiatives and supporting a wide range of activities. And that requires, first and foremost, a completely different set of skills and capabilities. Technology is no longer something I can delegate to IT or leave to someone else to manage while I simply use it.

Today, with AI, we become both creators and users of the same technology. We can bring our ideas and projects to life end-to-end, from start to finish. This tremendous opportunity undoubtedly requires new skills, but it also demands a different way of thinking about our professional lives and the way we operate. And, as I've said, we've seen a similar shift before. It happened around thirty years ago, when computers first appeared on our desks. But this time, the change will be far greater.

First of all, because it is reshaping both the services economy and the work carried out by knowledge workers, while also transforming robotics, which is finally becoming intelligent and making its way into factories and production environments. And this is changing the way we work, as well as the work of our customers and suppliers. It is transforming the entire way we buy and sell.

Today, companies sell to individuals or to other companies. Tomorrow, they will be selling to agents acting on behalf of people and businesses, capable of evaluating a product or service, purchasing it, paying for it and ultimately assessing it from start to finish. And this is not science fiction. It is already here. We'll be seeing more and more of it in the months ahead. In fact, it is already happening.

But with that comes responsibility. We need to decide where people should remain at the centre, and where we are willing to delegate to machines, allowing AI and its tools to manage processes autonomously. To do that, we need to understand what these technologies are capable of and decide what should remain human and what should not.

But it also means recognising that there will inevitably be employment, economic and broader macroeconomic challenges to address. And that places a great responsibility on organisations, governments, businesses and individuals alike: first, to help people understand this change, and second, to provide them with the tools and skills they need to shape it, rather than simply be shaped by it.

But it also demands a great deal of personal responsibility.

For years, we've been talking about this powerful idea: lifelong learning. The idea that we should keep learning throughout our lives. Well, perhaps never more than at this moment has lifelong learning been so essential.

Each of us, whatever our role, profession or field of work, needs to stop and ask: "What do I need to do differently? How do I need to change?"

A few weeks ago, a mother told me something really nice. Every Saturday, at lunchtime, she and her family sit down together and each person shares something they've learned that week.

The problem is that, as individuals, we tend to get a little too comfortable. At school, learning was simply part of life. Then we start working and, caught up in our jobs, family and a thousand other responsibilities, we stop learning. We stop learning how to learn.

The truth is that we no longer learn, nor do we learn how to learn. At a time like this, when everything is changing and no one truly knows what the next two, three or five years will bring, it is difficult even to predict what will happen in the next three months. The only tool we have is to learn, and to keep learning continuously. And even if it's just over lunch on a Saturday, stop for a moment and ask yourself: what did I learn this week? Have I learned enough? And if, for three or four weeks in a row, the answer is nothing, then maybe it's time to get back in the game and ask yourself: what do I need to change?

When we think about going to the gym, it's easy. We set ourselves a goal: twice a week, we show up and work out. So why don't we do the same when it comes to learning, something that has an even greater impact, not on our bodies but on our minds? Our minds need training too, especially at a disruptive moment like this, when everything is changing so rapidly. And I think that's where we struggle most, from a cultural perspective.

We're seeing this in more and more organisations. It will take a huge effort at every level, from the ground up and from the top down, involving governments, institutions and businesses alike. Choosing not to understand isn't the answer. And neither is ignoring a challenge that we know is coming, especially when it comes to jobs.

There is a solution, but we have to find it together and work out how to make the most of this technology. Today, many of us still use AI as little more than a search engine, but we're starting to see much more practical uses for it. I recently became a father, and balancing work and family life is becoming more and more challenging. So this weekend I built an AI agent that collects all the information coming from my son's child's daycare, organises it, and every morning tells me what I need to do, what I need to bring and anything else I need to remember.

It reminds me about parent-teacher meetings and birthday parties, which, with three kids, there's one almost every week. It also keeps track of what the kids eat at daycare, so we can make sure they have something different for dinner. It keeps all our bills, household tasks, car paperwork and everything else in one place. And every morning, I get a message saying: "This week, don't forget to take care of this, this and this."

This isn't science fiction. It's something you can build yourself. I'm not a software developer or an IT specialist, but the truth is that, by talking to AI, I started to understand and analyse how I work, where my inefficiencies are and what's not working. And that's where it all started.

If you think about it, one of the biggest uses of AI today is as a psychologist. In a world where everyone wants to be heard, people are using AI to talk, to feel heard and understood. It's fascinating, worrying and dangerous all at once. But that's the reality. That's what people are doing with AI right now. So it's changing the way we work, it's changing us psychologically, and it's clearly having an impact on the job market.

A few weeks ago, I was talking to the CEO of a company and he said: "The fear around AI is a bit like what it was at school when you copied someone else's homework. If you didn't do it yourself, it doesn't really feel like your work." The truth is that every company is using AI, will continue to use it, and will use it even more in the future. It's not a cheat sheet. It's an accelerator for your skills.

If you ask AI stupid questions, you'll usually get stupid answers. If you understand what you're asking, what you're trying to develop and provide the right context, the quality of the output will be ten times better. So AI creates enormous value. It levels the playing field across an organisation, giving everyone access to an incredibly powerful tool, regardless of their role.

At the same time, it makes the knowledge that already exists within an organisation even more valuable. People who have spent 10, 20 or 30 years in a company bring experience that allows them to develop better solutions and make better decisions. The challenge is that we're going through the same kind of transition we went through when computers first appeared on our desks.

There was a whole generation of people who said: "I'm sorry, but I just can't do this." Not older people, just ordinary people. Many retired, while others had to find their place in the world. Today, we're at a similar moment. The difference is that this time it's happening across generations.

I'm a millennial. Even my generation didn't start out in a world this digital. We talked about digital transformation and were seen as the digital experts, but the truth is that we were only at the beginning. What we'll see over the next three to five years will be ten times bigger than what we're experiencing today.

And we're the first ones who need to change, just like the younger generations entering the workplace today, and perhaps even more so those who came before us. But our experience, our understanding of how things work and the fact that we've already spent years working can make AI even more powerful and give us even greater superpowers. The real challenge isn't just what's happening around us. It has to start with us.

And that's why those Saturday lunches, when we take a moment to reflect on who we are, who we've been and, above all, what we've learned, may become one of the most important habits we can build for our future.

See you next time, and until then, stay connected with Bollettino Generali.

Credits:

This episode of Connessioni was written and performed by Davide Dattoli.

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