

The Future of Work podcast is a weekly show where Jacob has in-depth conversations with senior level executives, business leaders, and bestselling authors around the world on the future of work and the future in general. Topics cover everything from AI and automation to the gig economy to big data to the future of learning and everything in between. Each episode explores a new topic and features a special guest.

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00:02 Jacob: Hello, everyone, welcome to another episode of the Future of Work Podcast. My guest today is Dr. Tomas Chamorro Premuzic, the chief talent scientist of Manpower Group and professor of Business Psychology at Columbia University and the University of College in London. Dr. Tomas, thank you for joining me.

00:20 Tomas: Thank you for having me.

00:21 Jacob: Well, first question for you is, how does one become a chief talent scientist?

00:27 Tomas: Well, I can only speak for myself, really, because I think I'm the only one in the world with that title. So in my case, my expertise and background is in two main areas: Organizational psychology and then analytics and assessments. And if you combine both things, and an interest in understanding human performance, then you get the kind of interface or the main area niche that I specialize. And at Manpower Group, our agreement is to really use all of our data, our tools and expertise to predict performance and understand human potential in a deeper way. So that's what my role is about and how I ended up in my current job.

01:12 Jacob: What about Manpower Group? Maybe for a couple of people who are not familiar with the company, can you give us a bit of background information about who you guys are, what you do, how big you are?

01:21 Tomas: Yeah, so it's... We're about 20 plus, 21 billion in revenues and we are a workforce solutions company focused on all areas of talent. We've been around for 71 years, headquartered here, but very global. And if you think about it, today people talk a lot about different areas of staffing, but temporary work and temporary staffing was more less invented by our business 71 years ago. The story is our founders couldn't find someone to finish a job, and then they realized that there was an opportunity in the market to actually connect people to jobs in a much more flexible and agile way. And today we cover all verticals of talent... Of the talent or human capital industry, we do leadership assessment, development, coaching, workforce solutions, staffing, permanent, temporary recruitment, you name it. And so, yeah, so it's a global firm focused on really improving people's careers and jobs and helping organizations manage their people and

talent.

02:38 Jacob: So I would imagine that in your particular role and position, you probably get access to tons and tons of data and information that you get to look at and sort of play around with, right?

02:51 Tomas: Yes, so to give you an idea of the numbers, in one way or another, we more or less have contact or touch about 10 million people a year, and we more or less place 3 million people in jobs of all sorts. As an aside, we probably have something like 50 or 60 million people who touch our apps, websites and digital ecosystem. So our model is pretty simple, it's understand where people can be deployed most effectively, and where people will be thriving, and what role, job, or capacity. And then helping organizations not just deal with their current talents, but predict what their future talent issues might be. And one of the most interesting questions that we're trying to answer is, how you can work out whether somebody has potential for a job they never did in their lives. So imagine you take somebody from an advertising or marketing background, and you wanna work out if they could be a cyber security analyst, or a CEO. And so for that, you can't really rely on what they have done in the past, but you need to have a deeper understanding, use data assessment, and increasingly AI to really get what their potential is, and where they can be deployed, and also what you could potentially train them in.

04:19 Jacob: Okay, we're definitely gonna jump into some of those things because I actually saw a couple of articles that you shared and some interviews and podcasts that you did where you talked about that, which I thought was extremely fascinating. But maybe before we jump into some of those things, let's start really big picture and high level. With all the data and information that you have access to, what are some of the big macro trends that you are paying attention to that you think are gonna disrupt work?

04:46 Tomas: Well, the the biggest trend for me is that paradoxically as technology automates or disrupts many tasks, jobs, and even industries, there is more of a premium on what we would generally call soft skills. So as machines, AI, and data become a more prevalent or ubiquitous aspect of tasks, jobs, or roles, the last frontier for automation will always be things like soft skills: EQ, resilience, empathy, people skills. The last things machines are going to be able to do is to show respect, appreciation, or care for others. So in a way, even though you would think that as technology and AI becomes a more prominent aspect of jobs and careers, we should all become data scientists, geeks of one sort or another, and learn coding, actually the real need is for people who develop and boost their human skills, the soft side of talent, which is actually the hardest one to develop and to find. So we're seeing that trend.

06:04 Tomas: We're also seeing, from a wider kind of labor market perspective, that even though technology eliminates some jobs, it creates a lot more jobs than it eliminates. Having said that, you can't automatically place people who have been displaced by technology in some jobs into the new jobs, so that's why reskilling and upskilling is so important and why we're focusing so much on that area.

06:27 Jacob: When you look at organizations now, how ready do you think we are for any of this stuff? So the emotional intelligence, the soft skill stuff, the reskilling and upskilling? Are we doing a pretty good job of that today?

06:39 Tomas: Well, I think we are mostly theoretically ready, so I think it's not a narrative or an argument that surprises people. And you don't find many people who will actually tell you, "Look, I disagree. I think people skills are not important or EQ is irrelevant, and I only hire people based on their university credentials or their past expertise." But there's a difference between saying that, agreeing with that, and actually doing what it takes to achieve it. Fundamentally, I think... Well, I think you can say this about any kind of times of change, disruption, or even crisis occurs when the new hasn't quite pushed in and the old isn't ready to leave. And I think that's where we are, or where most organizations are in their talent management processes; they're still too focused on the past or the present, and even though they seem to obsess about the future in what they discuss, they're not ready to make that switch. And fundamentally, they're not ready to become less intuitive and more data-driven in their management of people and their workforce. And that's really what we try to persuade in them, just like there is a formula to biology, chemistry, and rocket science or astrophysics, there is also a formula and a set of principles, scientific principles for predicting human behavior and managing people at work.

08:07 Jacob: Let's talk a little bit about that, because I find that very fascinating, and I'm sure people listening to this will find this quite interesting as well. So let's jump into some of those principles. You mentioned earlier that one of the things that you're working on is trying to determine if somebody who doesn't have any particular experience or skills in a particular area would succeed in that kind of a job. So how do you go about trying to determine that?

08:33 Tomas: So you have to learn as much about the person as you can. And so imagine if you're only focused on doing this for one individual, we are still at a point in time where putting them through a long psychological assessment, psychometric tests, reading or inspecting their resume, and designing a well-designed, well-structured interview will probably give you the best answer to that. And of course, you're not assuming... It's very easy to predict whether somebody will be good at something they have done all their lives; for that, you don't need assessment, you don't need an expert, and you don't need data. But if you want to understand whether somebody can be reskilled or upskilled or has certain skills adjacencies, whether you can retrain them in a different area, then you still use this process, but you make inferences based on the similarity or the parallels between, for example, the soft skills they have and the soft skills that are needed in a different area.

09:36 Tomas: It's a lot more challenging and less simple to do this intuitively when you're trying to do it for millions of people. Then you have to work with the signals or impressions or data that you have, and you basically... You're still comparing, so imagine how Netflix, when they recommend you a movie, say, "Well, people like you who watch the movies you watch may have also watched these movies, so you should do the same," or how Amazon, when they recommend you a book or a pair of sneakers, looks for lookalikes. We're doing the same, but for work. So imagine if we find that people who have been deployed as customer service managers have certain characteristics that are also shared by drivers or computer scientists. We find parallels and we look at what some people are beginning to describe as a Waze for careers: Here's where you are, you might be good at that, but if there is a high chance that your job doesn't exist in the future, here are different career paths that you should be considering based on your potential and based much less on what you learned and much more on what you're likely to learn. So we focus a lot on learnability, an individual's potential to learn something new and develop their skills so that they can remain

employable in the future, even if it means changing careers.

11:00 Jacob: How do you measure learnability? Well... And I suppose this is interesting from two perspectives: As a leader, how do you know if your employees have learnability, and also for people just listening to this podcast, how do they know that they have learnability themselves?

11:16 Tomas: Yeah, so they can ask themselves a really simple set of questions, which, by the way, are similar to the questions that we use in our assessment when we evaluate learnability. So for example, do you always hang out with the same type of people? Do you sometimes consume news or content that you disagree with? Do you question things? Do you seek negative and critical feedback from others? Do you start new hobbies or activities on a regular basis? Are you interested in meeting people who have very little in common with you? So it's manifested in a whole range of environments, it involves social curiosity, which means being interested in people who are different from you, not just demographically different, but also cognitively diverse and different from you. It's manifested in experience-seeking, so seeking experiences that are different and that basically force you to go outside your comfort zone and break your routine. We're all routine creatures, and we optimize our life based on how predictable things can be so that we don't stress out or have to think much in adapting to new environments.

12:37 Tomas: And finally, of course, it's also about intellectual curiosity. It's one of the paradoxes of the digital age that in an age of information abundance and information surplus we have such little incentive to actually learn, and we spend more time trying to find out what our neighbor's cat had for breakfast than reading Wikipedia articles or watching some talks on TED or YouTube. So it has never been easier to access all the knowledge of the world, and yet, ironically or paradoxically, that actually makes us lazy from an intellectual curiosity perspective. So we're trying to seek for people who go against this trend and who have a hungry mind, and are continuously developing themselves and their intellect, which means that they don't need to have a boss or a manager that is chasing them and telling them, "Hey, why don't you go and enroll in this training," or so forth. So we really see it as a kind of autonomous and self-driven or self-motivated learning.

13:41 Jacob: So this doesn't need to be super complicated, it's just about people who are willing to, I guess, embrace a little bit of the uncomfortable, push themselves, and learn new things, basically.

13:52 Tomas: Exactly, learn new things, understand that there's another perspective, understand that... I always find it interesting, when people blame social media, Facebook or Twitter, for the filter bubble, and the fact that we are bombarded with opinions that are aligned with ours and which promotes confirmation bias, and then we end up distorting reality in a way that makes us feel smarter. But actually, it's humans who create the filter bubble, and to break it you just need to decide to actually go [14:27] ____ your own core values, interests, and preferences, and become a more complete and broader version of you, and understand that maybe your perspective is not the correct one, it's just a perspective.

14:39 Jacob: How do you do that? So for people listening to this or for leaders who are listening to this, and they're thinking about those questions, and they're thinking no, no, no, no, no. [chuckle] They're probably wondering, okay, I don't have any learnability. How do you change that? Is it just a matter of making new friends, reading different articles? Is there some sort of a process that... Or

some steps that you can take to become more learnable or to grow that skill?

15:07 Tomas: Yes, so the examples you just mentioned are correct. And on the one hand, it's so easy to do it. On the other hand, any new habit requires some discipline, willpower, and motivation. I always give the example of New Year's resolutions: About 80% of people break their New Year's resolutions within the first two or three months. The things that they really want to change that they have recycled from previous years: Exercise more, eat less, smoke less, drink less, etcetera. And yet they don't have the willpower to follow them. So the same applies with learnability or developing your own curiosity. It's very easy, but you have to discipline yourself, you have to say, "Okay, for 15 minutes a day, instead of wasting time on Instagram or Facebook, I would actually look for articles in Wikipedia, or read a book, or watch a talk, or maybe learn to play an instrument, or learn a little bit about a different culture or language."

16:11 Tomas: And the social aspect is really important. We all hang out with people who look a lot like us. It's actually sort of a subliminal way of unleashing our own narcissism because if you are very similar to me, then when I say, "Oh, I really like you," it's like a socially legitimate way of saying, "I love myself." So when somebody annoys you and you disagree with them, that's one opportunity to learn about different perspectives, different way of thinking. And you're always likely to have something in common with people; it will help your collaboration and teamworking skills if you can understand people who think differently. So again, all you need is a little bit of willpower, discipline, and then pick small thing, nudges, and nudge yourself to implement these new habits.

16:58 Jacob: I see this all the time. Actually, I've experienced this, too. Sometimes, especially in social circles, when you don't get along with somebody, or when you have different perspectives, you tend to shy away from them. But it sounds like your advice is the exact opposite: Don't shy away from them, you kind of turn towards them and [chuckle] try to build a stronger relationship instead of a weaker one.

17:19 Tomas: Exactly. If you think even about the beliefs that you have and that you violently agree with, the stuff that constitutes your inner compass, your framework, or model that didn't come out of the blue. At some point, you were persuaded about these things, and instead of just sticking to a very rigid code, imagine that you're adding new rules for understanding the world, for understanding others, and for understanding yourself. Think about even situations where people told you something about you that you didn't like, when they provided you with uncomfortable feedback because they told you you behaved in a very self-centered way, or you didn't let other people talk, or you have no attention to detail, whatever it could be. Even though it makes you uncomfortable, the smart reaction is not to then be defensive and think about those people as your enemy, but actually assume that they might be right, that they may have highlighted aspects from you that you want to improve, and then work on those elements to become better. So it's a lot nicer to think very highly of you, even if you're wrong, but then that doesn't make you a better person, a high-potential employee, or somebody who is going to be more employable in the future. So it's about being a broader and more complete version of you.

18:53 Jacob: And don't take things too personally [chuckle] it sounds like is another... But that's also a skill, too, being able to... If somebody's giving you feedback or criticism, it's a skill to not take it personally and to actually look at that feedback or criticism as something you should improve on

instead of assuming that somebody's attacking you. A lot of people are not good at that.

19:12 Tomas: Correct, and I would even say, not only should you not assume that they're attacking you, but actually negative and critical feedback, when it comes from a place of good intentions, so not when somebody is trying to bring you down or competing with you, but when people provide you with honest critical feedback, negative feedback, you should see it as a gift. We live in a world that is mostly very nice. People today live in organizations where there is a very positive, nice and altruistic code of conduct, and where people will automatically praise you and provide you with positive feedback, even if they think that what you did is actually not very good. And plus, you go and seek feedback from your colleagues who work with you. So if you tell them, "Was this presentation good?" or "Did you like my sales pitch?" or "Do you think I did well?" they're gonna say, "Yes, yes, yes," just like your best friends are gonna tell you yes if you ask them, "Did you like this meal I cooked for you," or "Do you like my new shirt?" However, you can break that pattern and you can deploy your curiosity in ways that make you a better employee and a better... A more talented person at work if you actually embrace criticism and negative feedback and learn that.

20:43 Tomas: So people... We even often hear people say, "Oh, it's critical but actually, it's even more critical and harder to learn from your successes because when something goes right or goes well, you automatically praise yourself. What if, even in those situations, you found people who are very critical and you actually ask them, "What could I have done better? In what areas can I still improve? What would you have done in my situation?" And so that creates a very humble habit of seeking feedback, of trying to learn what other people are thinking of you, and that just... It can only make you a better person.

21:22 Jacob: I think this is probably especially important for leaders because leaders tend to have a very, very difficult time with doing that.

21:30 Tomas: Exactly. One of the things we always find in our consulting business, when we are advising leaders or coaching leaders and executives on how they can get better, is this other paradox, that the best way to evaluate leadership performance is if you ask the leaders' direct report, so his or her subordinates, how that person is doing. So if I'm your manager, and somebody came in and tried to evaluate my performance, they're better off asking you how I'm doing and everyone else who works for me than asking myself or my bosses. And yet paradoxically, everybody gets promoted based on managing up and based on what their bosses think of them. And we see differences very clearly: Some leaders or managers, when you present them with information from their 360s, so 360-degree feedback, they're evaluated especially by their direct reports, and we show them that this aggregate anonymous feedback suggests that they could improve in areas such as strategy, innovation, or providing feedback. You can see some leaders and managers that get very defensive, they don't like it, and they are in denial, in effect, and some, even if they don't like it, they take it onboard in a very constructive way, and say, "Okay, clearly I need to change." And of these two types, you can imagine the latter type will always develop and get better.

23:00 Tomas: So the other added complication here is that leaders have generally been successful in their past performance, or at least they got promoted to where they are, so that reinforces bad habits. So it's much harder to change somebody and improve somebody when they are in their 50s or 60s than when they're in their 20s or 30s, and yet most development budgets and talent

development resources are spent on people who are at the top. We should start developing people much earlier. One of the things we do when we deploy assessment or analytics of scale is we try to provide people with this developmental feedback from a very, very early age so that they get into the habit of incorporating it and getting better and working on themselves.

23:44 Jacob: I was doing some research 'cause I have a new book on the future leader coming out in January, and I was doing a lot of research on this, and I actually found that... I think it was the average age for people who get into leadership development programs is actually in their mid-40s, like 43-45, which I thought was insane, that you're that old getting into a leadership program when really most people end up leading others much earlier in life, in their 20s, in their 30s, but they don't actually get into these official programs until they're much older and later in their careers.

24:21 Tomas: Correct. Yeah, I absolutely agree. Firstly, most people become leaders or least managers without ever being told how you do it, you're just promoted based on what you did before. And it's sort of ironic that you would actually move somebody away from a job they have done pretty well and put them in a role that they might not be equipped for. And then secondly, there's nothing, no area of knowledge, skill, expertise, or competence that people are better at learning in their 40s than in their 20s. And already after... We know from neuroscience research after the age of 25, 27, our brains start to slow down. They resemble a kind of... The processing speed or the processor of an older computer. So we rely much more on what we already learned, and on our experience, and we are much slower at learning new things, whether that's a musical instrument, a language, or how to behave in different ways because the environment is changing. So absolutely, if anything, we should reverse the trend and spend most of our development and coaching monies when people are very young and much less when they're already very experienced.

25:42 Jacob: Seems like we have things a little bit backwards, [chuckle] which is, I think, maybe why so many companies are struggling with this. I did have a lot of leadership questions that I'm gonna ask you in just a couple minutes 'cause I saw you did a talk on this, and you had some really interesting articles about this. But I first wanted to ask you about something that I think a lot of people will find controversial or they'll pick one side or the other, and it's this idea of science versus intuition when hiring the best person. So I know you're very much on the side of science, and I've actually had some people who are podcast guests who are very much on the side of intuition.

26:18 Jacob: And the one story that I always share, and people who've listened to the podcast will hear this story, is when I interviewed Nolan Bushnell. And he was... Or he's the creator of Atari, Chuck E. Cheese, and he was actually the first boss of Steve Jobs. And when I interviewed him on the podcast, he was telling me this story of how, when he first met Steve Jobs, he only knew him for a couple hours before he offered him a job. He didn't take any assessments, he didn't... He had no data on him. He basically spent some time with him and then shook his hand and said, "You're hired." And of course Steve Jobs went on to do all these wonderful and great things.

26:55 Jacob: Meanwhile, you have other companies... I know Unilever, for example, where you have to take assessments, you play games, you interface with AI, you talk to a chat bot, you go through all of these things, your resume is viewed by an algorithm, by AI that determines keywords and stuff like that. And so you have these two very different sides: Some people who believe that

you need to take somebody out for lunch, spend some time with them. Meanwhile, there are other companies who are just going... Double down on the technology side. So I'm really curious to hear your perspective and where you think that balance is.

27:31 Tomas: Look, I think this is a really, really important and complex issue, and I'm fully aware of the fact that whatever I answer now will probably not convince your skeptical listeners who are on the side of intuition. But mostly because I'm gonna try to provide some data, and they trust their intuition. So I love the Steve Jobs story, but the plural of anecdote is not data. And for each and one of these stories, I can give you 100 horror stories where managers, sometimes well-meaning, sometimes not, in the process of just having a quick chat with someone or taking them out for lunch, made prejudiced, sexist, racist, ageist hiring decisions, which were then hidden by the fact that, six months later or a year later, those same managers were tasked with evaluating those same candidate's performance. So imagine you come in, we like the same football team, we're from the same town. And after a five-minute chat I say, "Well, you're doing an amazing job." And a year later I'm tasked with evaluating your performance. Well, you're still doing an amazing job, right?

28:54 Tomas: So for sure the method that worked for Steve Jobs, if we can assume that was indeed the case, isn't scalable. Some people might have remarkable intuition, but the vast majority of people who trust their instincts and their intuition are not experts, and that is the problem. So by the way, it doesn't mean that Unilever or any company trying to leverage data and assessment at scale will always get it right, but the big advantage is when we are implementing systematic and at scale methods is we can find better ways of being wrong over and over again, we can build incremental improvements. And when the decisions go wrong, when an algorithm makes a mistake, we know why it made a mistake. Usually, by the way, that's because it was trying to predict human bias to begin with. Whereas even when humans get it right, we can't look inside their brains and understand why they got it right and teach others to imitate them. So I think... I'm a huge admirer and fan of expertise, and when you're a real expert in any area, I think your intuition becomes data-driven. In most people, the problem is they trust their instincts because it's the lazy and quick option, but most individuals, most people, are not as intuitive as they think.

30:20 Jacob: You also mention an interesting point, and there was a good book called... And maybe you've read this, called Weapons of Math Destruction. It was written by Cathy O'Neil, and she was also a podcast guest a little while ago, and she shared this really cool story. And you mentioned this as well, the dangers that sometimes algorithms can have bias as well. And she shared this really interesting story of how a particular school district, they deployed an algorithm to figure out which teachers were lowest-performing. And what the algorithm did is it looked at test scores of students over a certain period, and they determined that when scores dropped it was the teacher's fault. But what the algorithm failed to understand is that students that came into this new school, their previous test scores... The school where they came from had a high incidence level of cheating. And basically what was happening is that the teachers were actually erasing the incorrect answers of the students and marking them correct; that way the teachers would look like they were doing a better job.

31:23 Jacob: And then so all these students then went from that school into this new school, and in this new school there was no cheating going on, and the scores of all of these students dropped. And if you... And the algorithm said, "Okay, these teachers must be bad because, look, their scores

dropped." But it didn't understand, obviously, that it was because the previous school had a high incidence level of cheating. So I suppose maybe that's one of the dangers of when you rely only on the algorithm, it can miss things too, right?

31:52 Tomas: Yes, and I think if people have the patience to engage with the problem and understand what happens, then we wouldn't get the shock factor or the scandalized reaction that we get when you see apocalyptic news of either algorithms or AI being sexist, racist, or indeed a self-driving car crashing. There are some clear double standards here that when technological innovations go wrong, immediately we say, "Okay, we should never use this." But in the meantime, we are happy with humans making horrific decisions and very bad mistakes on a daily basis, and we're okay with it. So the analogy with self-driving cars, I think, is very pertinent. Humans kill 2 million people a year through being bad drivers, or being reckless, or drinking and driving, or you name it, and we're okay with it, but the thought that a self-driving car might kill one person is enough to completely eliminate the possibility of self-driving cars.

33:12 Tomas: I give you... The same happens when you hear stories of AI going wrong in recruitment. So we know that, for example, AI is mostly pattern matching, pattern finding. So machine learning consists of rewarding a computer for classifying certain things correctly and punishing it when it doesn't. So if we train a machine or a computer which interview candidates will be liked or positively evaluated by humans, surprise, surprise, you will find that maybe males over-index, or whites over-index, or... But let's not call the AI or the computer sexist or racist. AI doesn't have feelings, it doesn't have a fragile self-esteem that it needs to boost by bringing other people down, humans or women. If we train AI to replicate or imitate human thinking, human decision-making, it will not just reproduce bias, it will augment it and do it at scale.

34:17 Tomas: So the big opportunity here is to realize that actually organizations have to improve when it comes to measuring actual performance, when it comes to evaluating how much employees and leaders are really contributing to their organization and when it comes to indexing or capturing objective metrics for people [34:40] ____ work. If those measures are fairly reliable and valid indicators of somebody's performance, then there's no question that AI will predict them better than humans, especially if you wanna do it for thousands or millions of people. So you might be better off... You might be more accurate predicting what your best friends do than AI, but that knowledge will stay just with you. And we live in a complex virtual big interconnected world where we need to use data and technology to teach other people about themselves and others so that we can boost understandings. The fundamental problem or challenge in the space of talent that organizations have is they don't really understand their people, the potential, and the talent that they have. So that's where technology assessment and AI can play a really, really important role. And by the way, if we use that same data to boost people's understanding of themselves, they will make better career decisions, they will end up in jobs or roles [35:44] ____ more engaging and where they can thrive.

35:48 Jacob: Maybe the problem is that we just assume that algorithms are perfect. When we think of a self-driving car, most people assume there should be zero accidents. When we think of an algorithm that's trying to predict candidates' performance, we just assume that because it's math and science and data that it's gonna be 100% correct all the time, and when it's not, we're very quick to jump on it and say, "See, it made a mistake. That's why we shouldn't be using it." So maybe we just need to change our perception and understand that nothing will be perfect, but it is

still better than purely relying on just that kind of human intuition.

36:29 Tomas: Exactly. I think that's the correct way of putting it. Furthermore, in any area of knowledge, we're still at a stage... And maybe we'll stay in this stage for five, 10, or 50 years, where data and AI on one hand, and human expertise on the other... And you can call it intuition if the person actually has developed some good intuition in their field. But the combination of human expertise and AI produce better results than one without the other. And I'll give you really simple examples. If, when you're going on vacation, you want to decide on what hotel to stay, or what airline to use, or what restaurant to eat, nobody will be as naive and pro-technology to assume that technology alone will make infallible and perfect decisions. So even if we use Expedia, TripAdvisor, OpenTable, and all the services and platforms that are out there, we can still trust the wrong reviews, reviews can be faked, and we may make mistakes. At the same time, it's very unlikely that you're gonna make better decisions by completely ignoring the data that is out there. So sometimes you have to spend a lot of time digesting the data and the information that is out there to curate and understand what you pay attention to.

38:02 Tomas: But we are in a position today where we have so much information, so much data, and with the right expertise and time investment we can translate that data into better expertise and make better decisions. It's much harder today to stay in a bad hotel, to eat in the wrong restaurant, or to find... To date the wrong person, to go on a date with somebody who isn't a good match. We're still making mistakes and we'll continue to, but aided by technology and data, we're actually... Our rate of prediction or of accuracy matching ourself to products, services, and other people, and jobs and careers will be the next frontier, is higher and has improved significantly. Which is why I think organizations at least know that they shouldn't say, "Oh, we're just making intuitive decisions," or "We're playing it by ear." They know that data could provide more valuable information, but they're still working out what to do with it.

39:04 Jacob: Are you worried... And I know this might sound like a weird Black Mirror episode, for anybody who's seen those shows, those episodes. But are you worried that maybe in 5, 10 years we're just gonna be slaves to the algorithm? In other words, we won't go on a date with somebody unless the algorithm says so. We're not gonna hire somebody unless the algorithm says so. We won't eat at a restaurant unless the algorithm approves it. Are we gonna get to a point where we're just walking around and waiting for an algorithm to say, "This is okay, you should do this?" We use basically software and technology for everything, even now. So what happens in 10 years when we're just... Turn-by-turn directions, the way that we navigate to get to a certain location by using Waze or Google Maps, what if that becomes the new way that we live our lives? We wake up in the morning, something tells us when to wake up, what we should be eating. That's kind of freaky to...

40:08 Tomas: Yeah, it's a really interesting question, and I think it's important, or at least my perspective is that it's possible for people to still have the freedom to decide how to make these decisions. So sometimes... I actually have this argument often with my wife when we go on vacation or visit a new place because I'm still... Maybe because I'm a little bit older, or more spontaneous, or I grew up in South America, which is a more improvisational environment where decisions are often less organized and less predictive. But we go somewhere and I wanna walk around and decide, "Oh, this cafe looks good," or "This restaurant is nice, can we just eat here?" Whereas my wife would be armed with... Ironically, because I'm in the data analytics business

[41:05] _____. But she will be like, no, let's study everything, read the review that lots of people have written on different sites and platforms before we decide whether we will invest 20 minutes to have a coffee.

41:16 Jacob: Oh, man, we're... My wife and I are kind of the same. Even a couple days ago, we were walking around San Francisco, and we're trying to think of which restaurant to go to, and immediately the first thing we do, it's like, "Okay, let's open up Yelp and see what's good." And we sort of... And I remember a time before Yelp when... And especially in Europe and different parts of the world, you would just walk around and see what looks good. And now, you can't even make a decision on where to eat without having some sort of an algorithm, without having some piece of software tell you where you should be eating. It's kind of weird, actually.

41:52 Tomas: Exactly. So maybe if this becomes the trend, and everyone does it to an exacerbated degree, maybe in the future we will get some secret pleasure from tricking the algorithms, being recommended something that we don't really wanna watch or that we don't really wanna buy, and actually switching off Waze and spending an extra hour in traffic. Maybe we'll feel good, we'll feel free from data. But it's important to understand that we have this freedom today. Nobody's forced to consult information, and at the end of the day, I think people use data in most of these different aspects of their everyday life because they wanna make their life more efficient, and they wanna optimize for time, or money, or pleasure, which still means, okay, so what are we doing with the time that this frees up? Well, we're probably spending it reading other reviews, and interacting with technology, and maybe you could argue we are becoming a little bit alienated by it. But it's absolutely possible to think of a world where people... Where you do it for certain things and not for others. Music would be an example where [43:11] ____ say, okay...

43:15 Tomas: And you can still use technology, you can... I often go to a shop or place and if I hear a song that I like, I just Shazam it and know what it is. And then I might learn about that artist, about that band, etcetera. And so you can see how your... You can still make decisions in a more spontaneous way but at the same time increase your expertise and knowledge if you combine your intuition with technology.

43:40 Jacob: And I think another challenge is it sort of forces us to constantly seek out perfection. When we... The food example, if you're in a particular part of the world and you're looking for restaurants, you tend to only look at the restaurants that have the highest reviews, who has the highest review, who has the most reviews? You're constantly trying to seek out perfection. Even when you're using these online dating apps: Who's the best match, who's number one? And I don't know, it kind of forces us, I think, to just seek out perfection in every area of our lives, and even in business. Who's the best candidate to fit? And I don't know, a part of me wonders... It'll be really interesting to see how this plays out over the years as it really forces us to constantly look at the best and what's perfect and better than everything else.

44:32 Tomas: Yeah, I agree. And to go back to the world of talent and work, let's not forget that even before algorithms arrived, and AI arrived, or assessment tools arrived before, people would still want to make these decisions and would want to have, let's say, a reputational model for others. Companies still need to decide whom they hire for a job, whom they promote. And if you remove data, tools, technology assessment, the way or method that you're left with is probably worse, because not only is it less predictive, it ends up being less meritocratic. You are relying then

more on things like education, social class, social demographic categories. So let's not forget that technology and data also give us the opportunity to have a really granular understanding of who the individual is, and the same applies for the individual song, movie, product, restaurant, city, etcetera, which is something that the human mind cannot do so well.

45:44 Tomas: We actually put people in buckets, we classify them based on nationality, gender, etcetera. Where with technology, you can get to a level where you actually understand and predict human behavior at the individual level, and also ignoring or being blind to these big demographic categories that humans will always rely on because we're trained... We are taught these categories from a very, very early age, and it's very, very hard to unlearn them.

46:13 Jacob: What about from the prospect, or from the perspective of the candidate? So one of the other things that I think is interesting is that, let's say you apply today, or today I'm looking for a job. Today you probably have to apply for a lot of jobs before you get one. I know people who are applying for 30, 40, 50 plus jobs in order to be able to get interviews. Let's say all of these companies have this process where all of them want you to play a game, all of them have an algorithm that looks at your resume, all of them have a chat bot they want you to interact with, all of them have a video that they want you to record that an algorithm then looks at. From the prospect of a candidate, I would imagine that you would get very overwhelmed and burned out from playing 40 games, recording 40 videos. It seems like if it's just one company, okay, maybe it's fine. But if you have to do this over and over and over and over again, and every company starts using these algorithms and these games, doesn't that make it weird or tough from the prospect of the candidate?

47:30 Tomas: In our case, we know that it's absolutely essential to provide candidates with a good experience in the process. So when we are evaluating candidates for a potential job training or career, even when we don't have a specific role for them in mind, we know that historically the process was very different from what it is today. Historically, people would be forced to complete a long and tedious assessment, then not get any feedback, and then maybe they got a job, but most likely they got a rejection letter saying, "It's not you, it's me, I don't deserve you," the HR equivalent of that. Today, when labor markets are tight, and when you have more job openings than candidates looking for a job, and we're especially at the level of the knowledge economy, people are evaluating and judging the brand, and the company, and the potential employer more than they are evaluating the candidate, the experience is a critical part of the process. And we know that providing candidates with useful and constructive feedback on their potential and their career is likely to engage them and want them to work for a potential employer or to maintain a relationship with us as recruiters, let's say.

48:58 Tomas: So I think the whole field of gamifications and game-based assessment actually is an attempt to address this. How can you provide the best user experience or candidate experience while extracting the most meaningful information about a candidate, and actually place them in a role that is perfect, or least ideal for them? I think we need to move beyond this dichotomy that if the company or an employer has a lot of information on you, they're gonna either put you through a very long and tedious interview or ask you to complete a long assessment, and [49:35] _____ for you, and also that if the organization doesn't know anything about you, then it's good for you because you might end up in places that you don't belong to.

49:44 Tomas: Now, there's the win-win situation here. Organizations and employers benefit from knowing the person as well as they possibly can with minimal interaction and not boring interaction, and candidates benefit if they're understood. Now, the issue that is important to understand is that there are today ways to make it even quicker, faster, and less intrusive that would not be ethical. So people have left so much data behind already that you could imagine a world... And again, Black Mirror here comes to mind as the kind of dystopian illustration of this, where all the data that you produce is somehow organized, crunched, and interpreted, and you are shown jobs or you are pushed to certain careers, etcetera. That actually has the best candidate experience, because you have to do nothing, and imagine you wake up and you have new jobs that are being offered to you. Pretty creepy, not very ethical, and it raises a lot of legal and ethical questions, which I think we need to focus on and try to answer.

50:49 Jacob: Yeah, yeah, no, that could be pretty interesting to see. And it sounds like... So you're not worried necessarily that from a candidate to go through the same process for maybe 30 companies, you think it would actually be easier for them than not having that and just having lots of conversations and the traditional route.

51:09 Tomas: Yeah, I think in an ideal world, because this still happens this and this has always happened with traditional assessments, you might need very experienced, seasoned and successful workers who will tell you, "Oh, this is like the fifth time I complete this assessment, the Myers-Briggs or something, and I did it four times in the last five years." Surely, that doesn't make sense. Surely, if the scores aren't designed to change very much because they're evaluating your personality, your values, your ability, you should take it once, take that information [51:45] _____ and that becomes part of your own talent passport or personal data. But for different reasons, sometimes commercial sometimes data ownership, sometimes because employers can afford to ask you to do the same thing, you end up doing it a lot.

51:57 Tomas: Well, doing it many times its better than not doing it at all, but ideally, there will be a compromise and we would actually build on the data that exists on you. Think about how Glassdoor and comparable sites are indexing the reputation and past performance of leaders. Imagine that for employees; in academia, you always had Rate My Professor, where you can read and sort of like a TripAdvisor for academics and see what people say about them. Again, we are probably going to move to a place where people are going to have employer reviews and manager reviews made public if they want to share it and where, if they want to share it, there will be a bigger benefit for them than if they decide to not share it, because if you have no reputation or feedback at all, people will not trust that actually you can contribute.

52:52 Jacob: Yeah, no, that makes sense. Well, I know we just have a couple of minutes left, so I wanted to ask you, what does all of this stuff that we've been talking about mean for the candidate? So, for people and we're probably all gonna be candidates at some point. Even if you're employed now, chances are, at some point in your career, something will happen at your company and you will need to find a new job or reinvent yourself, changed careers, something. So what does this mean for all of us? How do we think differently about looking for jobs, looking for careers, even how we create resumes? Should we change anything in our approach in looking for jobs and careers or do we just do the same thing we've always been doing for the last 50 years?

53:38 Tomas: I definitely think that things will change, that you're gonna have to think of yourself if

you're thinking of yourself as a candidate in a much less rigid and more fluid or [53:50] ____ way, that your qualifications, the skills and knowledge that you have will have a very short or at least a much shorter expiry date or expiration date and that you're going to market yourself much more based on your soft skills and on things that you may not even have today, but you will have to develop in the future.

54:18 Tomas: So creating your own personal career and ensuring that you stay relevant and valid and that you don't just bet on one thing and put all your eggs in one basket will be the decisive kind of approach or the most adaptive approach for being successful or effective in the future. And certainly having the curiosity and the flexibility to go into directions that you may not have predicted in the past is going to be more important. So very different from even like 15, maybe even 5 years ago, people heard from their parents, their uncle, their cousin, "Oh, you should be a doctor like your dad or a lawyer like your aunt." Because you'll make a lot of money.

55:04 Jacob: Yeah, I was told lawyer for myself when I was growing up, it was like you should be a lawyer, that may happen.

55:10 Tomas: So working out what all of the possible options are and what the implications would be of going into one area or another and keeping an eye open and an open mind for jobs that haven't even been invented today is going to make you more successful as a candidate and more employable.

55:31 Jacob: And I like that you put the emphasis on the individual, because I feel like a lot of us always assume that whatever we learned in schools, our companies will teach us whatever we need to know to be successful. But, it sounds like now, and especially in the future, the focus is on you as the individual. You gotta take more control over yourself, and not just kind of be like a leaf blowing, in the wind, so to speak.

55:54 Tomas: Exactly, and you know, although it's easy to be [56:00] ____ and kind of confused or perplexed by the almost infinite number of options and careers, and certainly new titles and labels come up all the time, and the vast universe of skills; fundamentally, we believe that there will always be three core employability skills that will continue to matter in the future. This is what we use when we assess candidates, when we evaluate potential and when we try to almost distill all the different jobs and careers to their fundamental core elements. These are learning ability, so the ability to learn new things, reason and acquire new knowledge and expertise. The second is work ethic or drive, determination. And the third is, people skills. So likeability and although it sounds so simple, right, being nice, able and hard-working will probably make you more [57:02] ____ future. If you think about it, there's not that many people who have three out of three.

57:09 Tomas: So you can probably think of and your listeners can think of which of these three do they need to work on more, do they need to work on their learning skills, do they need to work on their work ethic or do they need to work on their people skills and likeability, and that's a really simple but effective framework or plan to develop your potential.

57:28 Jacob: I love that. I think that's a very, very, like you said, simple and practical framework and I suppose the good news is we have so many resources now to work on those things. Classes, YouTube, Khan Academy, Coursera, there's no excuse to not be able to work on those things today.

57:42 Tomas: There's no excuse, there's absolutely no excuse. So if you really want to get better and if you really want change, as opposed to having change, then there's so many resources to achieve that change.

57:57 Jacob: Well, this has been a really, really fascinating discussion. Where can people go to learn more about you or just any of the stuff that you've talked about? I know you're on LinkedIn, where you frequently share some of the interviews and articles that you've been featured in, but anything that you wanna mention for people to check out, please do so.

58:16 Tomas: Yeah, yeah, so they can find me on LinkedIn or Twitter or if they go to my website which is drtomas, with no "H", dot com. They can find some recent talks, even some links to some assessments and... Yeah, I think most of what we discuss in one format or another, they can find there.

58:39 Jacob: We didn't even get into the leadership stuff. You had a... I recommend people to check out, you had a really good TED talk that you did on men in leadership and a new book on that. So hopefully people can check that out as well. Well, Dr. Tomas, thank you so much for joining me and for sharing your insights and ideas.

58:56 Tomas: Thank you so much for having me.

58:58 Jacob: And thanks everyone for tuning in. My guest again, Dr. Tomas Chamorro Premuzic, chief talent scientist of Manpower Group, check out his site, check out some of his talks and his books and I will see all of you next week.

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