

If you want your kid to get a good job, let them play more

March 20, 2018

Fears about automation displacing workers around the world ranked high on the list of Things to Be Very Worried About [at the World Economic Forum](#) in January. “At the end of the day, we have to fire a lot of people,” [said Ursula Burns](#), chairman of the supervisory board at telecom group VEON, and former CEO of Xerox—which, indeed, recently [had to fire](#) a lot of people.

Most of the remedies on offer were the usual high-level suggestions: re-train workers, offer some kind of universal basic income, design a “new social contract” that requires companies to factor in the needs of workers along with maximizing shareholder value. But one group of CEOs looked a little further down the supply chain, offering a scientifically grounded but under-appreciated solution to the problem: play.

Helping kids play more “will equip them to be relevant to the workplace and to society,” said John Goodwin, CEO of the Lego Foundation and the former chief financial officer for The Lego Group.

That may sound self-serving coming from a Lego executive. But [research shows](#) that play is [crucial in establishing](#) the foundations of social, emotional, and academic learning. [Dressing up like Batman](#) or building imaginary cities with blocks [help young children cultivate](#) creativity, [develop emotional intelligence and regulation \(pdf\)](#), and build empathy—the very skills that robots can’t replace.