



Working Group: Preparing the Workforce of the Future

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Participating Organizations:

Aetna
Boeing
Capital Group
E&J Gallo Winery
Fluke
Fortive
IBM
Microsoft
Nordstrom
Shell
Starbucks
Tektronix
Terex
TIAA

Key Takeaways:

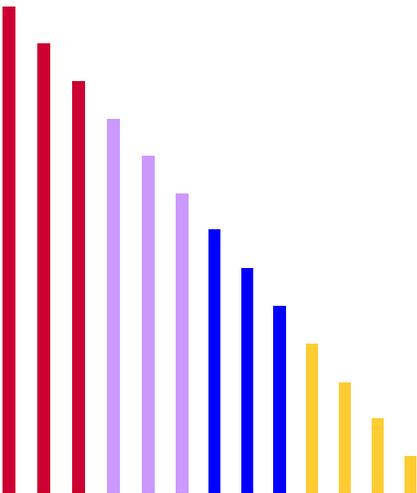
1. Organizations need to develop new capabilities or enhance existing expertise in order to be more effective at helping employees build skills for the future. Most importantly, companies need to improve their ability to identify future skills and current skills gaps, create personalized learning journeys, and more effectively track who has built required skills for internal movement and short-term projects.
2. Line leaders and managers will play an increasingly important role in skill development through effective career and skills coaching with their direct reports. This will require new skills and capabilities for many managers.
3. There are a number of interesting and best practices to more effectively build critical skills including use of multiple channels for learning delivery, use of internal knowledge experts, more effective workforce planning, and the development of external partnerships.

A host of technological and sociodemographic shifts, including digitalization, automation, Big Data, and globalization, are shaping the future of work. Analyses conducted by the World Economic Forum, Accenture, and other organizations project that, as a result of these changes, certain work-related expertise will be in greater demand in the years ahead, including systems, complex problem solving, social, and certain types of technical skills, while other skill sets will decrease in importance or become obsolete. Companies today find themselves in a race against the clock to prepare the workforce of the future.

This CAHRS working group explored the diverse and innovative approaches that companies are taking to help their employees develop skills for the future of work. It featured keynote presentations by Cornell\CAHRS, IBM and Boeing, along with best practice sharing from all of the participating CAHRS partner companies. Some of the key themes that emerged during the discussion are highlighted below.

Forces of Change

A number of forces of change are shaping the future of work and the demand for specific work-related skills. The most salient are those stemming from technological advances (e.g., artificial intelligence, automation, machine



learning, Big Data), although other forces, such as globalization and demographic trends, are also having a significant impact. The result is that the “half-life” of skills is compressing and there is increasing scarcity of certain critical skill sets, such as data science, technical design, systems analysis, and creativity/innovation. There is also a growing confluence of roles and skills across the business, technical, and human domains. For example, companies are increasingly looking for data scientists that can also engage in storytelling.

Organizational Capabilities

As organizations seek to respond to changes and pressures, there are some core capabilities that may prove vital to enhance the reskilling of the workforce.

- Skill sensing through external scanning: Organizations need to become proficient at collecting and interpreting market signals so as to be able to predict future skill needs. There is a great deal of market data available, so it is important to be able to determine what is most relevant for informing business unit skill strategies.
- Skill sensing through internal workforce planning: In addition to external scanning, participants noted it is important to be better at internal workforce planning, particularly leveraging the knowledge of managers who may best know how their business will be shifting and the changing skills that they need to support these changes. Some organizations have also found that leveraging the insights of employees closest to work can be an effective method of identifying future skill needs.
- Personalization: Organizations need to move from a one-size-fits-all approach to more personalized employee experiences. For example, organizations need to provide more simplified and prescriptive learning recommendations that are tailored to the individual employee. It is also important to use messaging that resonates with employees (e.g., people care about careers rather than skill gaps).
- Culture of skill relevance: Companies need to emphasize skill relevance as part of the employee value proposition. They need to be transparent with employees about skill trends and also communicate the expectation that employees will be self-initiated and life-long learners. These expectations need to be reinforced through the performance management process. That is, we need to assess, develop, and reward people based on skills.
- Better use of skill portfolios: Companies need to more effectively track and record the skills and capabilities of their employees in a real-time fashion to understand skill gaps, identify potential fits for open roles and projects, and determine where investments in learning programs might have the greatest benefit for the organization as a whole.
- More effective matching: Companies need to advance their capabilities in helping to match learning programs, on-the-job experiences, and project experiences to help employees understand how to build skills and capabilities for future or current roles.

Role of Leaders in Skill and Capability Building

One topic that was top of mind for many of the participants was the increased role of line leaders/managers in helping employees develop skills for the future. Increasingly, companies are relying on leaders/managers to be coaches who can shape the skill development of employees on their team. There were several key learnings from this conversation.

- Organizational leaders need to be aware of key skills and capabilities for the future, understand employees' career aspirations, develop deeper insight on the capacity of their team members to grow and learn, and be able to point employees toward resources that can help them identify how to best

build these skills.

- Companies need to help managers build the capacity to be coaches and have career and skills conversations with employees. Effective learning techniques include training to enable these conversations that may focus on building scripts and/or role playing these conversations, creating awareness of skill and career maps, and training on how to have coaching conversations.
- Leaders need better strategies and approaches to make employees more consistently apply new skills. This could include using rewards and recognition tied to building and applying skills, providing employees job opportunities to apply newly learned skills — effectively measuring skills and connecting this information to employee profiles for internal promotions, projects, or lateral moves — creating visibility for the new skills that are essential for the organization moving forward.

Building Critical Skills

The keynote presenters and participants shared a number of recommendations focused on how to build critical skills for the future.

- **Strategic workforce planning:** As alluded to in the earlier section, companies need to leverage market and jobs data to forecast future skill needs. Such efforts need to be grounded in clear jobs\skills taxonomies and companies should focus their efforts on a subset of critical roles that they deem vital to their future success.
- **Multi-channel reskilling:** Increased investments are needed in training and reskilling programs. These programs should leverage a range of different learning channels (e.g., mentoring, digital-on-demand, shadowing, on-the-job learning) that are matched to an employee's need (e.g., build awareness of a new skill vs. build deeper expertise).
- **Use of internal knowledge experts:** Companies would benefit from capturing the knowledge and insights of internal experts as part of on-demand or skills-based learning programs. It is critical for the company to be able to curate this content to make it easy to search, to identify the real experts, and to sort by content that other employees found the most useful.
- **Rotation programs:** For new or mid-career employees, rotation programs can help to build skill diversity and systems thinking.
- **Partnerships:** Companies have traditionally been remiss to form partnerships to address talent shortages because they want to maintain their competitive advantage. However, current skill challenges are beyond the scope of any single company to solve. Accordingly, companies need to explore potential partnerships with other firms (e.g., competitors, contractors, supply chain) as well as with educational institutions (e.g., Starbucks – Arizona State).

This Summary Report was prepared by Brad Bell and Chris Collins for participants of the Preparing the Workforce of the Future Working Group.

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