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Flip the switch on:

Re-energizing the workforce to power the
digital utility

Manon van Beek
Managing Director – Accenture Strategy, Utilities

What will the workforce of the future look like in utilities?

I think the workforce of the future in utilities will look very different than today. Various studies show that up to one-third of utilities' critical workforce will retire in the next five years. And with that a lot of valuable expertise will leave the company.

But you can also look at this development as an opportunity, rather than a problem. Because with the aging workforce you can see that as a catalyst for digital transformation. And rather than bringing all the skills back into the company, I think utilities should look at developing a smaller, more agile workforce. And also rethink how specific work gets done.

Let me give you a few examples. I think rather than developing products and solutions in house, utilities could look more at partnering – partnering with specialized companies around critical competencies, for example, battery development. Or they could use sites like Kaggle to find high demand skills on a project basis.

And thirdly, I think they could use technology more to augment scarce talent. And also to take over dangerous or very expensive work. And for example let the drones do the work when it comes to the inspection of power lines.

What steps should utilities take to build the workforce of the future?

I think in order to build the workforce of the future, to transform the culture of the utility and at the same time embracing digital—a strong commitment to action from the top is needed.

I think top leaders at utilities need to understand what skills are required, what skills are critical at all levels. And also understand the direct investments associated to building the new skills. Secondly, I think they need to have the right leadership in place to advance towards that vision. And skills like creativity, being dynamic and collaborative become more and more important to find a place in this new digital ecosystem. And thirdly, I think it needs to be place where people with the right skills want to work. So you need to be strong in communicating your vision. Combine that with dynamic leadership. But I think also utilities need to be very thoughtful on their employee experience. I think historically that has been built on stability, lifetime employment and a good pay. But this is not very well suited to attract and to retain skill talents in the new more digital age.

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