

SHAPING THE

AGILE

WORKFORCE

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Shared economies. Technology advances. Changing demographics. The world today is not as it was a decade ago, a year ago, a week ago.

And it will not be the same tomorrow.

Businesses must be agile to succeed in this changing world. And an agile business requires an agile workforce.

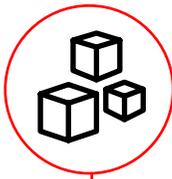
Shaping that workforce can be a company's greatest differentiator: leveraging predictive intelligence to build a more adaptive workforce, securing talent from emerging sources, and reskilling current workers for their digital future.

Bold leaders create a future workforce that can adapt itself to the world as it changes. By focusing on their people, leaders will create a company that quickly executes its digital strategies, forming and reforming itself in this new world of constant change.

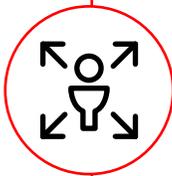
Henry Ford, founder of Ford Motor Company, did much the same thing. He took stock of a changing world and designed to it. Ford created the moving assembly line to capitalize on massive industrialization and a population that was increasingly urban, rather than rural.

Ford understood that success required a people-first strategy. The assembly line itself was a marvelous innovation, but the strategy behind it had to cover more than just the way work was done. He began offering a US\$5 daily wage, nearly double the norm at the time, and reduced the workday from nine to eight hours. Ford leveraged the prosperity generated by the assembly line to lift his entire ecosystem of employees and the business. Ultimately, he reduced employee turnover and created an entire market for himself. All the while, he created work principles still in use today.

Most C-Suite executives assume their workforce will keep pace with rapidly transforming, digital advancements instead of purposefully designing their workforce to keep pace with these changes. Following in Ford's footsteps, C-suite executives must champion creating an agile workforce. Technology plays an important role but is no longer the competitive differentiator it once was. Instead, the key to workforce agility lies in a strategy that puts people first, enabled by technology—to amplify workers everywhere.



To remain competitive, companies will need to **build a workforce shaped by insights**—investing in predictive intelligence that lays the foundation for improved decisions, supports a more agile workforce, and is scalable across the business.



They also must **expand the concept of a workforce**—realizing that a worker goes beyond a 9-to-5, brick-and-mortar setting. They will redefine what classifies a worker, recognizing that the ability to source talent in new ways is key to competitive agility.



And last, these innovators should **prepare existing workers for the digital future**, continuously reskilling them to create a sustainable workforce—in the process, emphasizing human strengths in the collaborative relationship between people and machines.

In short, they will look to reshape their talent strategy to utilize the best of people and technology. With an eye on business outcomes, the Henry Fords of today—the new leaders—will help liberate human potential to create an agile, adaptable workforce that can shape itself to a world that continues to shape shift.

**A wise man adapts himself to circumstances,
as water shapes itself to the vessel that
contains it.**

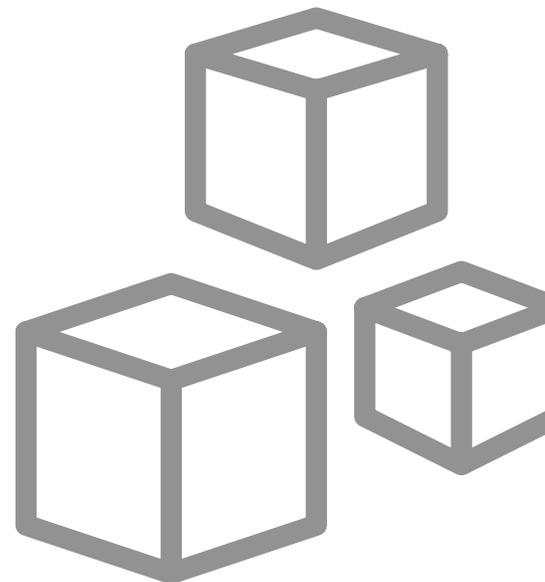
– Chinese proverb

PREDICTIVE INTELLIGENCE, **POWERFUL INSIGHTS**

To support agile growth, companies need to build the workforce of tomorrow. C-suite executives need to be able to predict their future workforce needs today—which is where technology plays a key role.

Predictive intelligence not only provides an understanding of future workforce needs, it guides workforce requirements up to 18 months out. These insights provide a valuable map to guide significant enterprise transformations and answer key strategic questions: How will you deliver your next product or service? Do you have the workforce to deliver your growth agenda in a way that bests your competition? How are you prioritizing your people during this transformation?

As Chicago's economic development organization, World Business Chicago (WBC) is committed to ensuring inclusive economic growth by identifying, attracting, and preparing all companies and workers for the jobs of the future. The use of predictive technologies allows WBC to help industries and talent providers understand and respond to future job market needs and ensure all residents have access to the jobs they deserve.



While predictive intelligence can aid in planning for a future workforce, it must be continuous, iterative, and remain a closed-loop process that involves all parts of the organization to remain effective. Having reliable predictions that guide an organization into the future will require constant investment—for data and insight gathering, continuous adjustments to workforce modeling, and breaking down siloed business systems.

There is no “finish line” or “small-scale pilot” for predictive workforce intelligence. But done correctly, and scaled across the organization, predictive intelligence is the first step to creating an agile workforce that can shape itself to the world as it changes.

Keeping people at the core at the Dock

At Accenture’s incubation hub in Dublin, the Dock, clients are reshaping their future workforce by using a variety of technologies—from AI and analytics, to the Internet of Things (IoT)—keeping people at the core. By combining industry benchmarks and market trends with unique company data, leadership teams engage in scenario planning to address the workforce implications over time from strategic business decisions, such as reconfiguring global manufacturing capabilities or expanding into new markets.

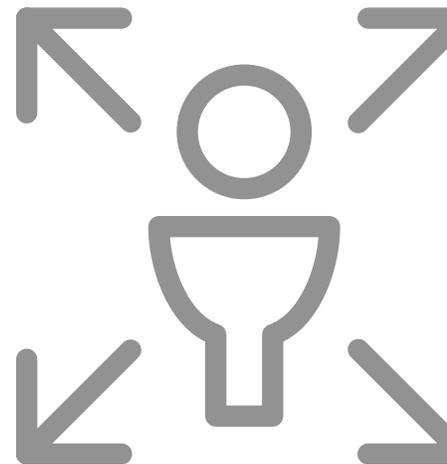
EXPANDED WORKFORCE, **UNLIMITED POSSIBILITY**

As predictive intelligence helps companies chart their future workforce, boundary-less access to talent and new models of employment help them source it. From new digital talent marketplaces and job sharing, to pooling talent with ecosystem partners, enterprises now have a multitude of options for expanding their workforce model.



FREELANCERS

Wise leaders are now starting to look beyond traditional organizational constructs—where a full-time employee fills a permanent job—to a more boundary-less workforce where a freelance worker is as critical to the core operations of a business as a full-time employee. As talent and skills gaps grow, as many as 40 percent of companies experience shortages that drastically impact their ability to adapt and innovate.¹ Freelancers bring the flexibility to meet business goals, with the added advantage of scalability to meet fluctuating demand.





MACHINE CAPITAL

In addition to freelancers, many companies are already augmenting their human workforce with machine capital. AI has the potential to boost labor productivity by up to 40 percent in 2035 in the countries Accenture studied. This rise in labor productivity will not be driven by longer hours but by innovative technologies enabling people to make more efficient use of their time.²



DIGITAL MARKETPLACES

As large organizations compete with more entrepreneurial competitors for desired skills, those that tap into the rising number of workforce marketplaces will be able to mobilize quickly to capture new opportunities. For example, 79 percent of executives surveyed by Accenture Technology agreed the future of work will be based more on specific projects than roles.³ Some companies have already turned to freelance digital talent platforms such as Upwork to help fill the gap. Procter and Gamble (P&G) used the platform for new product development R&D needs, supplementing their internal teams. Sixty percent of the products developed with this approach were done at a lower cost than traditional methods.⁴ P&G is not alone. An increasing number of Fortune 500 companies are experimenting with workforce marketplaces.

As the “one role, one worker” approach gives way to more fluid and task-based ways of approaching work, the term “employee” will encompass a broad spectrum spanning internal to external, human to machine, and short-term gigs to full-time work. Leaders now need to address the needs of diverse talent inside and outside the traditional boundaries of the organization.

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RESKILLING FOR **SUSTAINABLE OUTCOMES**

Advanced analytics help companies predict their future workforce. Emerging talent platforms help them source this competitive advantage. But reskilling will help a company best utilize its existing workers to sustain desired business outcomes in a digital world.

Beyond simply attracting workers, workforce strategies of the future need to incorporate new methods of reskilling them as automation handles an increasing portion of the workload. For example, Arizona State University (ASU) utilizes an adaptive learning platform that brings human instructors and technology together for the best of both worlds. ASU is not replacing instructors, but they are working with them to offer students a personalized curriculum that adapts in real-time via the learning platform. Instructors are free to spend more time supporting students and less time lecturing.

In addition, predictive analytics provide instructors with real-time student progress information so they can intervene before a struggling student falls behind or an advanced student disengages. After implementing platform bot tutors in select courses, pass rates rose by 11 percent and withdrawal rates fell by 56 percent.⁵

Beyond laser-targeting specific technologies to workforce approaches, leaders looking to drive cutting-edge business innovation will need to invest in technology to reskill their people. Forward-thinking organizations must provide opportunities that prepare employees for future jobs they will perform – inside or outside the company.



It's fair to ask why a company would invest a large amount in re-skilling in an era where Millennials are job hopping.⁶ But organizations must take a more macro perspective: every company is facing skills challenges, and providing training at scale will ensure the marketplace has a healthy supply of skilled workers. And just as important, this is a critical benefit to workers seeking to maintain marketability. In addition, university graduates who do choose large companies as their employer of choice are doing so in part because of the training and development opportunities available.⁷

Fortunately, creating these solutions at scale is cheaper and more deployable than ever before. Pathgather, for example, is an enterprise learning platform that hosts both internally developed modules, as well as external learning opportunities like Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs). Users can self-select and create their own learning journey, while receiving course recommendations and reviews from their peers.

More needs to be done in most organizations to create breakthrough advantage with existing workers. Organizations need to consider new ways to engage, mobilize, reskill and energize the extended, multi-generational workforce. Those that begin now will position themselves as leaders in the future.

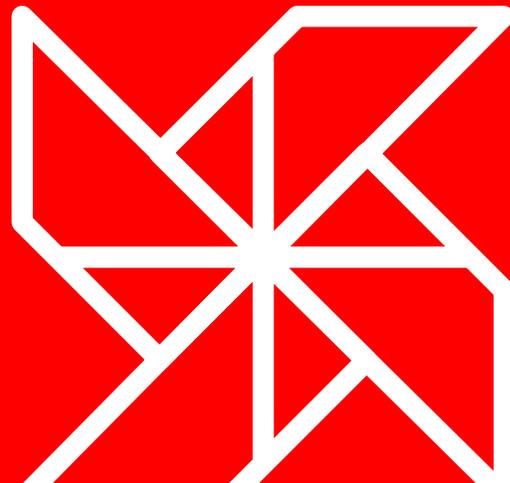
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AUTOMATION AS A CATALYST FOR A NEW **SOCIAL CONTRACT**

Companies are reshaping their talent strategies, workforces and organizations to be more dynamic. But, true leaders will also reshape their entire ecosystem to better compete in a digital world.

Automation will play a key role, but that does not mean that human employment must suffer. The end of a job is not necessarily the end of employment. Wise leadership teams will review the social contract they have with their workforces in order to manage the social impact of new modes of work. Proactive steps to support an agile and relevant workforce will play a large role in the success or failure of business's drive for growth.

Amazon is among the most prolific companies in their robotics efforts. Despite a sharp increase in the number of robots used in 2016 (growing from 30,000 to 45,000), the company has kept the same rate of hiring new employees, increasing employment by 50 percent with plans to add an additional 100,000 new employees as well. What Amazon highlights is that automation – deployed intelligently – can be a means to lift the entire business, and workforce, to unprecedented heights.⁸



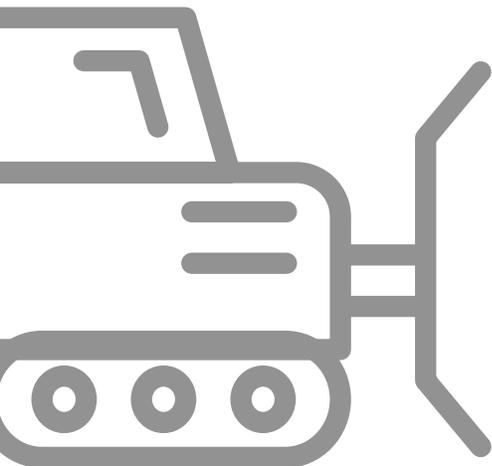
MOVING FORWARD

The implications of the demographic and technology trends shaping businesses and the workforce are profound, yet organizations have been slow to respond. Of the responders, most have not moved beyond pilots to full-scale organizational change.

Many organizations are investing in multiple IT strategies to support their increasingly complex and dynamic operations, but when it comes to the workforce most still rely on a single inflexible talent strategy.

The C-suite needs to employ a more comprehensive and holistic approach to predicting, sourcing and reskilling talent. Tweaking is insufficient in a work world that soon will look nothing like it did a few years ago. A more responsive and personalized approach to talent management will ensure that businesses have the right people, with the right skills, supporting the right priorities, to create change at scale.

But, that full-scale organizational change will require C-suite leaders to ask the hard questions: Do we have the right capabilities across the organization? Are they available at the right time and the right cost? In the same way that smart spending and Zero-Based Budgeting (ZBB) have become every employee's responsibility, but the CFO's domain, talent issues need to be owned by executives across the corporation. But, the Chief Human Resources Officer (CHRO) must oversee an integrated effort to keep all teams moving in the same direction.



Dynamic talent strategies, by their very nature, require experimentation. For instance, railway company Deutsche Bahn is using technology to help it attract new talent in a competitive German labor market. The firm uses virtual reality to give potential employees an opportunity to “experience” a job before applying. Via virtual reality, candidates can experience driving into a train depot and inspecting the underside of an express train.⁹ Taking this type of technology experimentation into all areas of a talent strategy—from the factory floor to the executive suite—is what can really drive organizational change in leaps and bounds.

Today’s world has its own Henry Fords—leaders who change the face of business while putting their people first. Leveraging predictive intelligence as the foundation for workforce planning now and in the future, expanding talent sourcing strategies to find the right skills at the right time, and reskilling the existing workforce for better outcomes, are key to the agility most organizations desire.

As the newest innovative leaders create this agile workforce—one that adapts to our constantly changing world as a matter of course—they use technology to help put people first. And, as Mr. Ford has already proven, that strategy can produce huge wins not just for an individual company, but for the world at large.

Leveraging predictive intelligence as the foundation for workforce planning now and in the future, expanding talent sourcing strategies to find the right skills at the right time, and reskilling your existing workforce for better outcomes, are key to the agility most organizations desire.

HUMAN INGENUITY + TECHNOLOGY = **INNOVATION**

The velocity of technology is currently surpassing the potential productivity boosts it should be creating. On the workforce side of the organization, most companies have some catching up to do. The good news is, human ingenuity and technology make it possible. To create your company's path to greater productivity and innovation via talent:

TAKE STOCK OF CHANGE GAPS AND USE TECHNOLOGY TO PREDICT TOMORROW

Many companies have changed dramatically in the recent past. But at many of these same firms, workforce and talent practices have likely not changed in decades. First look at your business objectives. Then, leverage predictive intelligence to understand your skills needs now and over time. From the traits and behaviors that make for a successful leader at your company, to how to tap into a growing freelance pool, leadership teams must consider how to address the new reality.

EXPLORE DIGITAL TALENT PLATFORM OPPORTUNITIES IN DEPTH

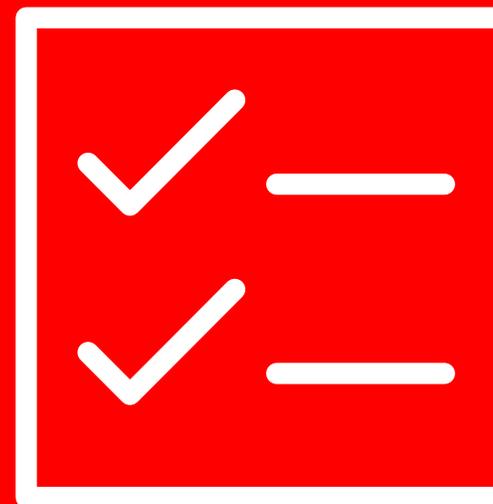
Creative sourcing of talent must now include digital platforms, as well as creative engagement with talent ecosystems. Companies will need a plan for how to increase their presence and participation. Savvy organizations will create physical and virtual networks to facilitate community building, deliver access to valuable skills training, generate feedback and create access to potential new roles and projects.

EXTEND THE EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCE BEYOND TRADITIONAL BOUNDARIES

Your future workforce is a mélange of full- and part-time employees, freelance talent and ecosystem partners. Companies have traditionally kept freelancers or part-time workers at the fringes of their organization, but as such workers increasingly make core contributions, this trend must change. Organizations need a detailed approach for integrating all types of new talent across the workforce, expanding collaboration and integration, and creating a consistent experience.

CULTIVATE DEVELOPMENT AND RESKILLING AS CURRENCY

Today, in-demand skills rotate with more frequency, and the advent of talent marketplaces has the individual poised to interact with more companies than ever before. To that end, training, mentoring, coaching and reskilling will become a currency — as critical as delivering a paycheck — and employers will be differentiated by their ability to deliver against that demand.



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NOTES

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