# How to build a learning mindset— and unleash innovation

Empower your people with hands-on learning and upskilling they can use immediately

**pwc** **ProEdge**
A PwC Product

Providing opportunities to learn and get new skills can keep people engaged and make employees more loyal while also helping companies keep up with must-have skills they need to grow. But it's not just a "nice to have." It's good for business, too.

A recent **PwC CEO Panel Survey** found that 93% of CEOs who introduce upskilling programs see increased productivity, better rates of talent acquisition and retention, and a more resilient workforce. Despite those possible benefits, **82% of CEOs still haven't invested in upskilling programs**.

That leaves an opportunity to close that gap— and get it right. Simply providing educational opportunities isn't enough. It's essential to create a culture of learning—one that empowers employees to use tools and solutions that make it possible to quickly apply what they've learned in new ways, driving innovation and delivering results.

# 93%

of CEOs who introduce upskilling programs see increased productivity, better rates of talent acquisition and retention, and a more resilient workforce.

What does it take to develop that kind of learning mindset in your organization? At PwC, we've been undergoing our own upskilling transformation, and we've learned a lot. We've invested in learning applications and immersive training programs so our people can develop important skills like data analysis, visualization and automation, as well as presentation, collaboration and storytelling. We've also seen that employees appreciate and respond positively when they see their company is investing in their skills and in their future.

There's a significant benefit to giving people the space to experiment and apply their learning in ways that help the business. At PwC, we call this <u>citizen-led innovation</u>: The ability of employees to choose the activities, including the skills and the means of learning them, that will make a difference to them and their work. Employees are encouraged to experiment with their own ideas based on what they've learned, be it a tech tool or a new way of approaching a problem. They are doing just that, both finding innovations and entirely new ways of working.

Over the course of our upskilling journey, we've identified three key areas that help develop a culture where learning is considered an essential part of the workplace and a key competitive differentiator in the marketplace. We've learned that organizations should:

- Create an environment that rewards learning

- Empower people with hands-on tools

- Provide real-world challenges to solve

Let's unpack what it takes to put these three strategies into practice across your organization.

# 1. Create an environment that rewards learning

The modern working environment demands flexibility and resilience. We all need the ability to build new skills and adapt to new ways of working. Technology continues to fundamentally change how and where people work, making upskilling a necessity, not just an advantage.

By 2025, employers expect to offer reskilling and upskilling to just over 70% of their employees, according to The **Future of Jobs Report 2020** from the World Economic Forum. However, only 42% of employees engage in employer-supported reskilling and upskilling opportunities.

If learning isn't a core organizational value, employees won't feel as though they have the time—or the support from leaders—to learn. Even in organizations that recognize the value of agility and adaptability, leadership isn't

## 79%

of CEOs are concerned about the availability of key skills, but only 8% have made significant progress in establishing an upskilling program.

necessarily following through. Only 8% of CEOs in the US say they've made significant progress in establishing an upskilling program, even though 79% of them are concerned about the availability of key skills, according to **a recent PwC survey**. It's more than a missed opportunity: It's a gap that can separate successful companies from the ones that fall behind.

Employees are looking for chances to upskill, with 77% saying they're ready to learn new skills or completely retrain, according to a **PwC global survey of workers**. Yet the same survey found that younger people are twice as likely as older people to get opportunities to improve skills. How can your organization help employees of all ages—and at every stage of their careers—make successful transitions? Emphasize the importance of diverse experiences and a culture that values lifelong learning by delivering training that's tailored to individual needs and providing upskilling opportunities that keep pace with the shifting landscape of jobs and skills requirements.

It's also important to make learning relevant to people's jobs and to provide hands-on ways for them to quickly use what they've learned.

Employees are looking for chances to upskill, with 77% saying they're ready to learn new skills or completely retrain.

## 2. Empower people with hands-on tools

Learning the theory behind automation without having the tools to practice those skills will likely mean the knowledge begins to fade over time. Hands-on experiences help learning stick. To move from learning a skill to implementing it into your business environment, you need to provide people with ways to practice what they've learned.

Give employees spaces to use their new skills, such as workbenches populated with digital tools and time to practice using them. Doing so can help people build confidence by giving people a secure place to build a prototype, test it out, iterate and try again. It also makes it possible to fail quickly and learn from mistakes, and fail forward by knowing when to abandon or rethink ideas that sounded good on paper but

didn't work out in practice. And it encourages collaboration—if a person can't quite get an idea to work, they may know a colleague who can. In short order, those ideas are likely to turn into innovations your business can use.

The right digital training solution should be interactive, with hands-on practice and do-it-yourself activities that allow people to explore their new skills along the way. It's a much different approach than providing employees with a static learning library and expecting them to navigate it themselves.

Hands-on skill acquisition will be critical to the success of organizations of the future. But in addition to interactive learning, employees need practical applications for their new knowledge.

# 3. Provide actual challenges for people to solve

Citizen-led innovation empowers employees to take control of their own upskilling journey. Leaders need to give them permission and roaming room to indicate, and work on, the challenges they need to solve in their jobs. After all, they're the ones doing the jobs.

Take automation, for example. It's a key focus area for upskilling. More than **three-fourths of CEOs in a recent survey** said they believe the move to embrace automation initiatives will endure well beyond the pandemic.

Let's say you have an employee in your marketing department who decides to learn how to automatically sort and normalize data while importing external lead lists into marketing automation solutions—without creating duplicates or overwriting existing data. These

> With targeted, hands-on learning, employees can build skills relevant to the tasks they want to get done.

data automation skills could be acquired in a day, or in smaller blocks of time across a couple of work weeks.

With targeted, hands-on learning, the employee can build skills relevant to the tasks they want to get done. Rather than a theoretical course on automation, they can learn a specific skill that will solve the challenges they face on their job. When your workers have the technical know-how to match their domain expertise, your company will reap the rewards.

Once that employee learns how to cleanse lead lists automatically before import, they'll likely have new ideas for building on those concepts to create more sophisticated bots (essentially automated workflow software) to automate other tasks related to their role. This means they can free up more time to spend on creative or strategic work.

In this kind of practical learning environment, you can also encourage crowdsourcing to gather ideas and encourage collaboration across the organization. Employees can post requests for digital assets they need but can't build themselves. If they can connect with colleagues who have the know-how to solve their problems, they can gain the benefits of those skills as well.

When employees use newfound abilities to solve their own challenges—or those faced by their colleagues—they can instantly see the value of continually upskilling. And your business quickly gains the benefits of those skills through increased productivity and, often, time savings and deeper insights.

# A culture that prizes continuous learning

Now that you know the three keys for building a learning mindset, you should develop an environment that values continuous learning and upskilling.

Here are the steps to get you there:

| Provide personalized learning | Award credentials for learning achievements | Lead (and learn) by example |
|---|---|---|
| Make learning available in the ways people want to consume it, whether that means short videos they can watch on their mobile devices or in-depth, interactive coursework. Deliver content tailored to each person's previous experience and skill sets as well as their future career goals. | Provide employees with the chance to earn certifications or credentials for their newly developed skills, to build their confidence and to leverage their new digital toolkits to work smarter. | When employees see their leaders learning and developing their own skills, it reinforces that continuous upskilling is the right thing to do. Managers can also let employees take ownership of their own educational journey and encourage them to take courses that interest them. |
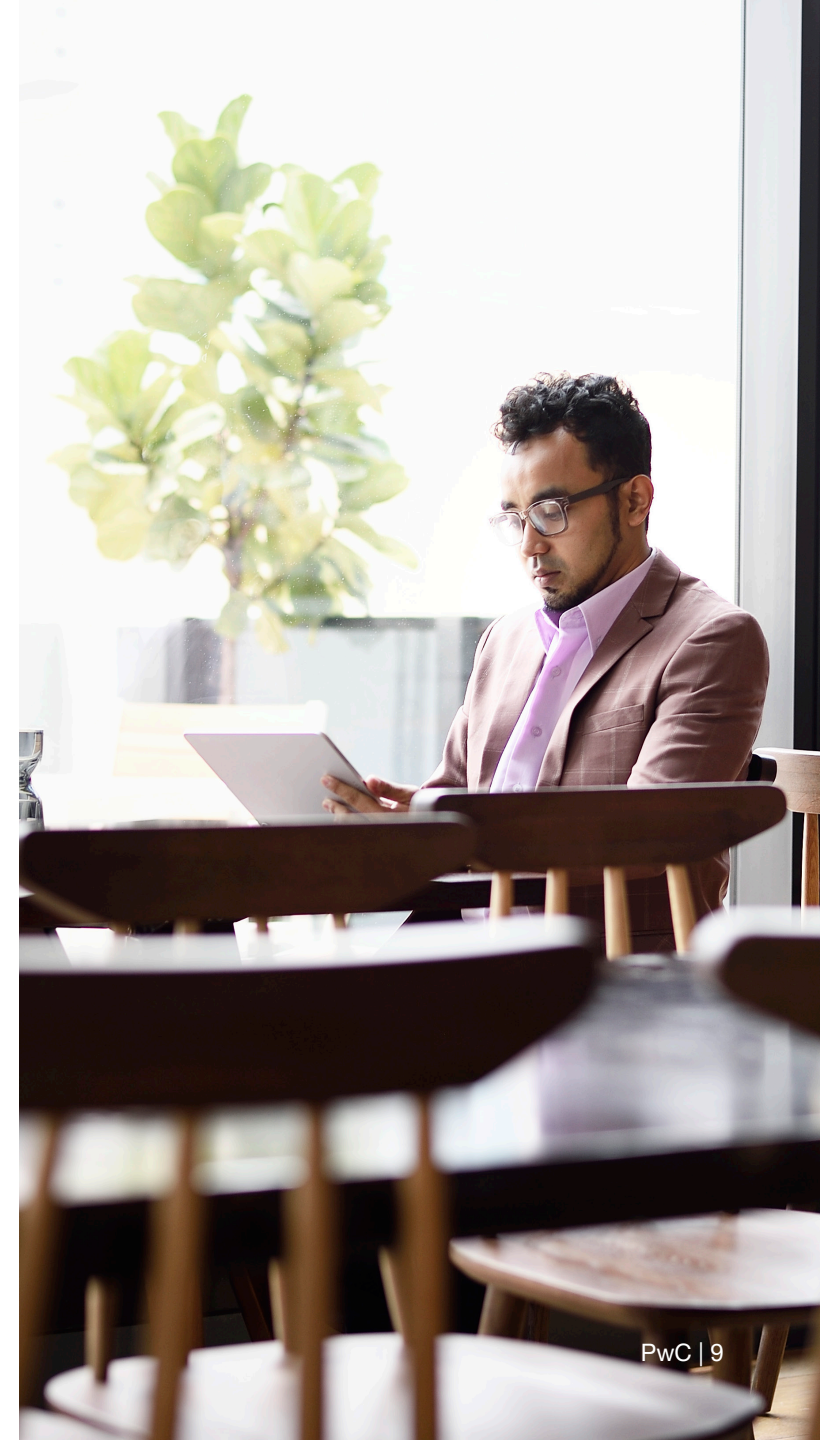
# Accelerate your transformation

To get employees excited about starting their digital learning journey, it's critical to choose an upskilling platform that supports a culture of learning. Find one that provides interactive tools and real-world applications to help employees build their skills. A solution that's powered by high-caliber content and provides opportunities to earn meaningful credentials benefits individuals and the enterprise.

An upskilling platform that supports a culture of learning should:

• Provide personalized learning pathways

• Award credentials for learning achievements

• Provide tools for hands-on, active learning

# Invest in tomorrow

Stay ahead of the curve with PwC ProEdge, the revolutionary way to upskill your people and prepare your organization for tomorrow. This unique platform allows you to pinpoint critical skill gaps and effectively help close them with automatically generated personalized learning pathways. Leading curated content, coursework and hands-on learning empower your workforce to make an immediate impact through citizen-led innovation. Access to digital tools enables solution-building that scales across teams. This is how ProEdge helps your people to perform at their highest level—giving them the power to help transform your entire organization.

Learn more at **ProEdge.PwC.com**

Additional resources:

• Discover the **keys to unlocking your employees' true potential** with upskilling.

• Get more information about the **benefits of curated content and credentials**.

• Find out how **citizen-led innovation** can empower your employees and drive innovation for your organization.

**pwc** | **ProEdge**
A PwC Product