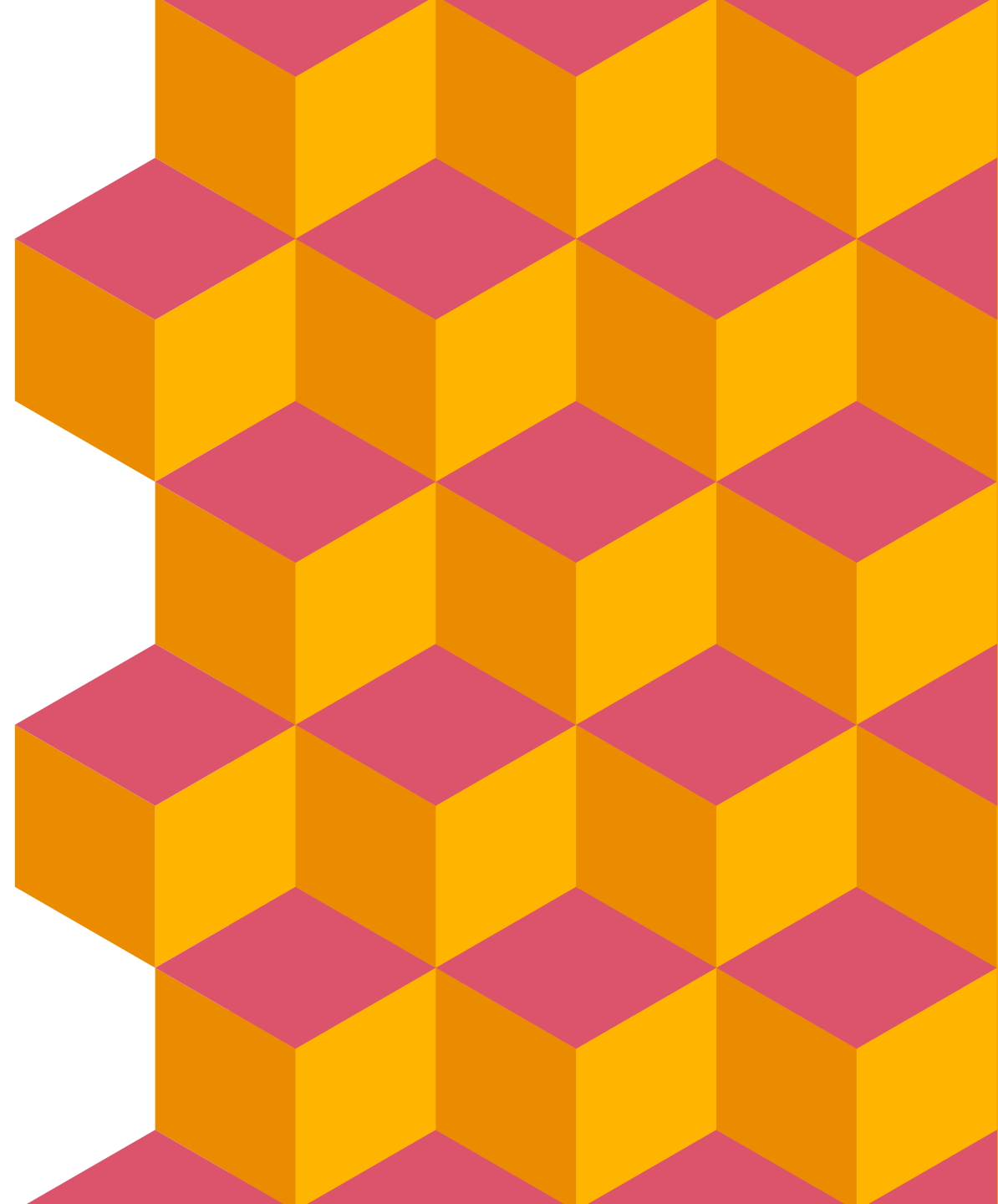# Making the case for a new upskilling platform

Four ways to demonstrate the benefits
of upskilling in GenAI, data visualization
or other digital skills

**ProEdge**

A PwC Product

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# Some of the biggest initiatives companies are considering in today's landscape involve upskilling.

Upskilling is a critical part of overall digital transformation efforts, and 69% of CEOs believe* that generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) will require most of their workforce to develop new skills in the next three years. So why are some business leaders still reluctant to invest more in upskilling? Most likely, they want to be able to quantify returns on those investments.

And the great news about upskilling investments is that they can accelerate ROI across your big rock initiatives.

Digital and workforce transformation. Winning the battle for acquiring and retaining top talent. These are often critical for future growth. And it starts with investing in your people's skills. Having a people-first mindset can make your company more attractive to prospective and existing employees and sets you up for success.

*Source: PwC's 27th Annual Global CEO Survey

## 69%
of CEOs believe that generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) will require most of their workforce to develop new skills in the next three years.

The urgency for upskilling is even more pronounced today, as GenAI stands to reinvent the way many organizations operate. Upskilling your workforce in GenAI is an investment in the long-term viability of many organizations.

When people are armed with the know-how that improves their job performance, and potentially advances their careers, they're more innovative. They can find ways to automate repetitive tasks and spend more time on value-add activities—like formulating and executing on the strategies that can drive growth for your overall organization. Employees who are keen to experiment with new technology advancements, such as GenAI, are the key to the future.

Communicating ROI on upskilling is critical to getting buy-in from leadership. They'll want to know what it takes to get results. Even when they generally advocate for learning programs, they may still need the hard evidence to nudge them to invest.

## You can make the case in a way that focuses on the benefits to people, in addition to the positive impacts on the bottom line, by:

1. Framing upskilling as a talent lever

2. Sharing a real-world success story of scalable, function-specific upskilling

3. Going beyond traditional professional development platforms and incorporating experiential learning that supports digital transformation

4. Proposing a viable, out of the box solution that can also be customized to your organization's needs

# 1. Frame upskilling as a talent lever

Many companies have seen the impact of upskilling firsthand—two-thirds of companies expect to see a return on investment from skills training within a year of their investment. This was found in increased worker satisfaction, worker productivity, enhanced cross-role mobility and more. In today's talent landscape where more than a third of job-seekers said they'd even be willing to sacrifice salary in exchange for skill-building opportunities, you want to be the employer who's offering that benefit.

For the post-pandemic workforce, upskilling is the new 401K. It adds a competitive perk that attracts and retains new talent—the kind who want to learn more and grow within your organization.

More than half (52%) of employees surveyed in PwC's 2023 Hopes and Fears survey expect to see some positive impact of AI on their career over the next five years, and many also view AI as an opportunity to learn new skills.

Upskilling also addresses CEO concerns around social inequality. This fear isn't unfounded, as 50% of workers say they've faced discrimination at work, which led to them missing out on career advancement or training. Easy access to upskilling can help address these challenges. When companies invest in their employees' careers, they can create a more fair work environment and drive diversity, equity and inclusion efforts.

## 52%

**of employees expect to see some positive impact of AI on their career over the next five years**

# 2. Share a success story of scalable, function-specific upskilling

A few years ago, PwC surveyed our leadership about internal processes that frustrated them the most. Nearly half of those processes were embedded in finance.

Many of our internal finance processes were still being conducted manually and the tech was in need of updating. Finance also lacked a unified repository for our staff to access the most up-to-date data.

We upskilled five hundred PwC finance professionals to learn how to build digital solutions that could automate their daily—and very repetitive—tasks. Account reconciliations, which previously took weeks to perform manually, were able to be completed in seconds.

In that first year of upskilling, we automated over 30,000 hours worth of manual work. Over the course of five years, we've now automated 75% of offshore transactional tasks, reduced our cash-contract cycle by 75% and replaced over 100,000 Excel spreadsheets— all thanks to the digital solutions our employees learned to create.

How do you repeat this kind of success? In many organizations, incremental change is often the most enduring. You can see what works, where to improve and what needs to scale. For PwC that meant a phased approach to digital transformation that began with upskilling our finance function.

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# 3. Go beyond traditional learning management systems

To gain the biggest benefits from your upskilling program, you should have an innovative upskilling platform that meets people where they are—no matter the role, learning style or time commitments. Relevant, experiential learning is what helps people grow in their jobs. Yet many executives struggle with finding a solution that sufficiently delivers and are unable to make significant progress.

This may be because many training platforms lack innovation when it comes to learning. They focus on general competencies and provide limited mediums of learning. Video courses and skills tests are only part of the equation. Unless they're relevant to someone's actual job, they won't necessarily boost engagement or participation.

The workforce of the future hould have an upskilling platform that can provide the proper balance of job-specific skills, critical thinking and digital acumen. It should speak to various learning styles and provide opportunities for scenario-based, interactive and applied learning so workers can demonstrate their competency and transfer skills into immediate business impact.

GenAI learning on ProEdge sources content from a network of leading providers, as well as PwC's own content, providing one source to address the breadth and depth of GenAI training. The content is continually updated and refreshed to keep pace with advances in GenAI and prevailing use cases.

# 4. Proposing a viable solution

To get leadership to take the upskilling plunge, you should have a worthy solution to bring to the table—one that can deliver the ROI. Consider ProEdge, the upskilling and citizen-led innovation platform we've designed based on key components of workforce development and retention:

• **Plan** helps organizations identify digital skill gaps and deploy learning pathways to close them. It also compares employees' skills against those needed for particular roles. Uncover areas of strengths and potential challenges and use that data to develop forward-looking plans for individuals, teams, functional groups and the enterprise as a whole.

• **Learn** helps people build the digital skills they need to drive innovation—and to give your organization a competitive edge. Highly personalized, function-specific learning is coupled with experiential learning activities to close skill gaps while increasing participation. Portable credentials give people the edge to expand their careers.

If you and your teams are considering implementing ProEdge and need to bring your cross-departmental organizations along for the journey, consider focusing on the elements that are likely to matter to them the most:

- Personalized plans that develop individual skills

- Building the skills that drive productivity, engagement and innovation

- Improving retention and happiness

- Preparing the enterprise for GenAI disruption with responsible AI practices

# Personalized plans that develop individual skills

Upskilling isn't just about preparing workers for new roles in the face of automation and technologies, such as AI. A people-first approach helps employees grow with their jobs. That way, they do more than learn new skills—they also learn how to continue learning and growing as their work evolves.

ProEdge helps support personalized learning so you can develop needed talent and invest in your organization's future success by:

- Leveraging hands-on coursework and training to support broad upskilling and credentialing; enabling employees to practice new skills by providing sandboxes or workbenches populated with digital solutions.

- Providing incentives that deliver certifications or credentials for your people and motivate them to leverage their new digital toolkits (outputs) to work smarter.

- Putting skills in context by supporting upskilling initiatives with an associated program on change management and adoption tracking, enabling employees to promptly see the relevance, and the benefits, of the skills they've learned.

- Developing the solutions your business needs by embracing upskilling and embedding digital champions within business units or departments.

# Build the skills that drive productivity, engagement and innovation

Giving people the space to experiment and apply their learning in ways that help the business can result in significant ROI—and creates an environment of sustainable productivity.

This is citizen-led innovation: the ability of employees to choose the activities, including the skills and the means of learning them, that can make a difference to them and their work.

This citizen-led approach also encourages participation in a community of innovators. Employees are encouraged to experiment with their own ideas for innovations and to find entirely new ways of working. With the right mindset, technological literacy and community engagement, employees can bring their companies into the digital future.

When individuals are decision-makers, they have the power to choose the projects they work on. It's a recipe for innovation—one that drives lasting engagement.

Particularly with GenAI, it's important to empower employees to adopt the solutions and discover next-level opportunities to transform their day-to-day tasks. Yet, GenAI requires a trust-by-design approach to confirm responsible AI practices and a safe, secure environment for GenAI innovation.

# Improve engagement and retention across the workforce

**Engaged employees can deliver long-term benefits to the business. Highly engaged business units tend to have less absenteeism and higher productivity.**

Because so much of GenAI is in the early stages of workforce transformation, employees who are encouraged to experiment—and even fail—will often pay dividends as the organization matures in its GenAI journey. Make it clear that, with proper guardrails and protections in place, failures mark innovation and are expected. Fostering a growth culture encourages employees to share their learnings with each other as they begin working with these solutions.
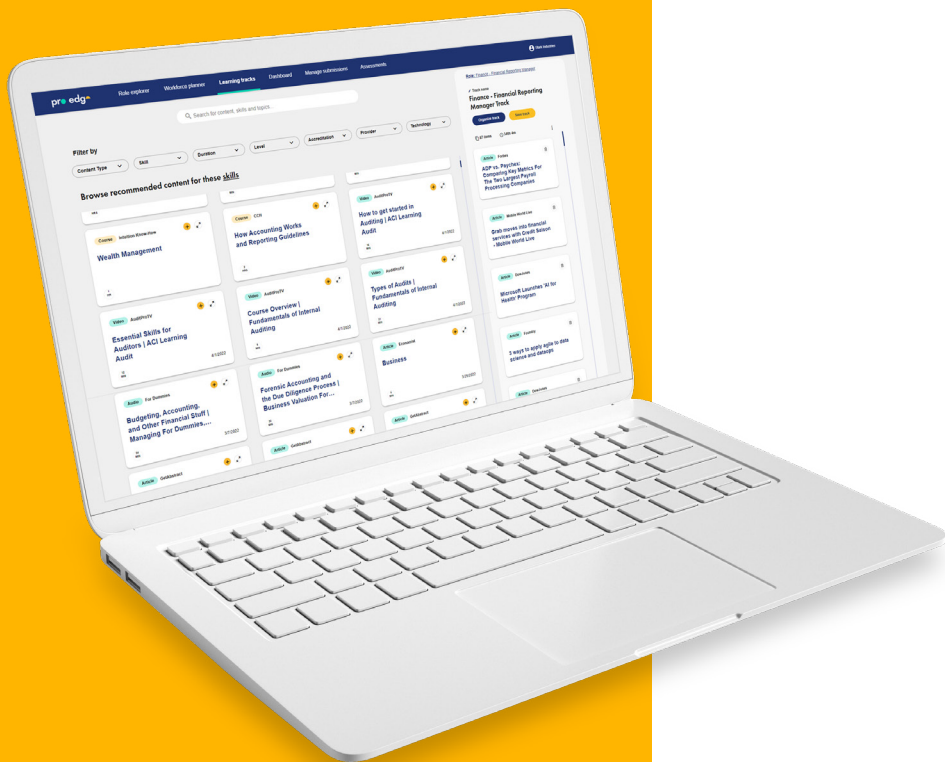
# Invest in Tomorrow

Accelerate your employees' learning and help drive scalable impact for your business with ProEdge—an intuitive, AI-powered learning platform that leverages hands-on experience and curated content to prepare your learners for real business challenges.

**Contact us**

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