



# UPSKILLING AND RESKILLING TECH SUPPORT STAFF

A guide for Tech Support Leaders on how to overcome barriers and seize opportunities





# INTRODUCTION

Ensuring Support Engineers are equipped with the right skills is critical to the success of every tech support organization. The rapid deployment of new releases requires constant investment in training to stay ahead of customer needs.

Many tech support leaders have identified reskilling and upskilling as a top priority to meet these challenges head on. But without the right approach, a commitment to skilling initiatives can be hard to execute, with several practical barriers to overcome that can impact long-term success.

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Many skilling programs don't get off the ground because they don't have the right foundations: skills prove too hard to identify, employees do not trust the initiative and the approach is fragmented. These common hurdles lead to short-term fixes and limited approaches with poor ROI and dwindling success.

When organizations take a structured, evolutionary path focused on three stages (“know, grow and retain”) that is also supported by the right tools and technology, they can deliver far more impactful results, filling skills gaps and retaining top talent.

This eBook looks at barriers that can derail skilling efforts, and the associated opportunities to overcome them to drive long-term sustainable success through improved employee engagement and better customer service.





# BARRIERS AND OPPORTUNITIES

On the following pages we've identified five key barriers to successful skilling efforts and opportunities to overcome them.



## **1 Skills are hard to identify**

Knowing current skills is the essential starting point for any skilling initiative



## **2 Skills are not validated**

Establish a robust approach to classifying and validating skills



## **3 You can't create personalized learning programs**

Support the growth of your people, focusing on the individual



## **4 An isolated or fragmented approach to skills**

Take an approach that everyone buys in to and drives enterprise-wide benefits



## **5 It is hard to get learner buy-in**

Connect learning to individual career paths



## BARRIER 1

### Skills are hard to identify

Do you know what existing skills you have in your organization? Many leaders don't, hindering their ability to identify gaps, focus their efforts on skills that fulfil ongoing business needs or create skills programs that have traction. When establishing a skilling initiative, you need to identify skills gaps across many levels – by person, by team, by department, by country. A fragmented, partial or assumed view of skills cannot be turned into a successful, systematic approach.

## OPPORTUNITY

### Knowing current skills is the essential starting point for any skilling initiative

A successful and sustainable approach to skilling must be data-driven. Knowledge is power. When you have a reliable overview of the state of skills across your workforce, you are in a position of strength when filling immediate positions, remedying skills gaps and planning for the future. Introducing a systematic way to record the skills of Support Engineers can be the trigger for multiple skills initiatives and sends employees a strong signal that their skills are valued.

A global survey of HR leaders from PwC found that identifying the future technology skills of employees was their **second most significant challenge**<sup>1</sup>.

1. <https://www.pwc.com/gx/en/issues/workforce/future-of-work-and-skills.html>

## BARRIER 2

### Skills are not validated

Sometimes, an organization's only way to record skills is for them to be self-declared. Invariably these are not validated. The problem with this self-reported approach is that the information is subjective; one Support Engineer's definition of "expert" is another's definition of "basic". Information is also often incomplete or out of date. Self-reported skills can not be trusted and offer little value.

## OPPORTUNITY

### Establish a robust approach to classifying and validating skills

The best way to ensure your leadership trust the data is to introduce a standardized approach to classifying employee skills that involves validation, ensuring there is consistency and accuracy in how staff report their skills. Any associated process needs to be robust and thorough, but also practical and transparent. Here, technology solutions can help by guiding users through skills reporting and initiating any approval workflow required. A standard, validated approach helps increase adoption and trust, ensuring your overall skills data is complete, accurate and valued.

High-performing customer service and support operations are

**6.4 times**

more likely to have plans in place to extend skills training opportunities for their support agents<sup>2</sup>.

2. Zendesk 2022 Customer Experience Trends report, <https://www.zendesk.co.uk/customer-experience-trends/>

### BARRIER 3

## You can't create personalized learning programs

When you invest in skilling programs, you want to make sure the right learning is focused on the right people. Too often hundreds of people are put through the same training program, whether an individual has a skills gap or not. This is both highly inefficient and disengaging; how can you match every individual Support Engineer with an exact skilling plan based on their ability, needs and aspirations?

### OPPORTUNITY

## Support the growth of your people, focusing on the individual

When you design a skilling initiative based around each individual learner rather than generic needs, the results are powerful. People have different learning needs, goals, styles, interests, and preferences. A skills initiative should put the individual learner at the center with the creation of personalized learning journeys with relevant choices that resonate and are fit-for-purpose for that individual's short-term needs and longer-term career aspirations. This will result in more meaningful and impactful learning at scale, wider engagement from employees, and retention of your very best performers.



**40%**  
of employees  
who leave their role  
cite lack of career  
development as  
a factor in their  
decision<sup>3</sup>.

3. Sarah Morris, Lack of career development drives employee attrition, Gartner, 25 September 2018, <https://www.gartner.com/smarterwithgartner/lack-of-career-development-drives-employee-attrition>

## BARRIER 4

### An isolated or fragmented approach to skills

When there isn't an organization-wide or standardized approach to capturing, assessing and improving skills, departments and teams often implement "local" solutions. A piecemeal approach to skills involves duplication of effort and significantly inhibits talent mobility. Taking a siloed and fragmented approach to skills makes it harder to implement a systematic approach that will drive wider and deeper value.

## OPPORTUNITY

### Take an approach that everyone buys in to and drives enterprise-wide benefits

Establishing an enterprise-wide and transparent approach to capturing, assessing, and validating skills has a truly galvanizing effect. An overarching approach establishes a level playing field, ensures people aren't wasting their time on localized and ineffective solutions, and drives stronger buy-in right across your company. It also opens the door to increased talent mobility within your organization, as teams can identify employees' skills beyond the limits of their team.



Research from McKinsey shows that **between 71% and 90%** of organizations who undertake an enterprise-wide skills program enjoy a range of positive strategic outcomes<sup>4</sup>.

4. Building workforce skills at scale to thrive during – and after– the COVID-19 crisis, McKinsey & co survey, 30 April 2021, <https://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/people-and-organizational-performance/our-insights/building-workforce-skills-at-scale-to-thrive-during-and-after-the-covid-19-crisis>

## BARRIER 5

### It is hard to get learner buy-in

Any successful learning and skills initiative requires employee buy-in and good levels of adoption. Many programs do not promote their learning objectives by highlighting the benefits to employees, resulting in poor take-up. If Support Engineers feel a skills initiative does not provide personal value, is a “tick-box” exercise or is something that they have been co-opted into, they will be less likely to report their skills or approach training with the right mindset.

## OPPORTUNITY

### Connect learning to individual career paths

To drive the desired adoption of a skilling initiative, employees need to see “what’s in it for them”. When staff can see a clear link between acquiring new skills and their own career and personal growth, they will be compelled to embrace learning. The best way to do this is to establish clear learning paths that show potential progression in terms of career opportunities, the current options available, and how these link to specific skills. When these learning paths are shaped around each individual, that’s when the magic happens, with learners far more likely to buy in to and adopt your program.



**Only 62%**  
of customer service  
agents believe that more  
skills-based training would  
improve their individual  
performance<sup>5</sup>.

5. Zendesk 2022 Customer Experience Trends report, <https://www.zendesk.co.uk/customer-experience-trends/>



# TAKING A SYSTEMATIC APPROACH TO SKILLS: KNOW, GROW, RETAIN

Taking a more systematic approach to skills means you can overcome barriers, and seize opportunities to reskill and upskill your support engineers.

**Our tried and tested approach is based around three steps:**

## **KNOW TALENT:**

Start by assessing and uncovering your staff's skills at the individual level in a standardized, robust, and validated way that provides insights into skills gaps, future needs, current opportunities and more.

## **GROW TALENT:**

Based on knowledge and data, design and implement a range of reskilling and upskilling initiatives which provide growth opportunities for every individual.

## **RETAIN TALENT:**

Further evolve your approach to skills so there is a clear link between career paths and skills, establishing a culture of learning that helps you retain your very best talent.

Taking this evolutionary three-step approach to organizing and managing skills will build a more sustainable program that lays the foundations you need, builds on early success and then continually improves and widens in scope.

**The Know, Grow, Retain approach is built on three core principles:**

## **DATA-DRIVEN:**

Maintain continual access to accurate, complete and up-to-date data on your employees' skills to provide the granular insights required to design impactful skills programs.

## **FOCUS ON THE INDIVIDUAL:**

Learners are at the center, with skills, learning paths and career progressions suited to the needs and preferences of each employee.

## **CORRECT TOOLS AND TECHNOLOGY:**

Invest in the right tools and frameworks, and implement the right technology solutions to support an enterprise-wide skills program.



# BENEFITS

When you take a comprehensive, systematic and robust approach to recording and updating internal skills, multiple benefits will follow.

## Fill skills gaps and plan around career paths

By knowing your internal skills, you can match people to opportunities and introduce specific learning for upskilling and reskilling to bridge any skills gaps across your tech support team.

When everyone has their own personal goals, you can start to pinpoint plans around individual needs and career paths. Resulting in the development and plans of your very best performers being met, and the more granular needs of teams addressed.

## Increase talent retention and reduce attrition costs

With a clear career path for everybody and a transparent commitment to growth and skills, you can start to increase talent retention for your very best performers.

As recruitment can be expensive, improving internal talent mobility to fill roles from existing staff, as well as being able to pinpoint the skills needed for any new roles, can start to reduce your attrition costs in the medium to long term.

## Support the employee experience and create a learning culture

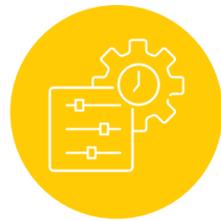
With clear opportunities for internal career development and personal growth, it supports wider HR strategies to improve the overall employee experience for your people. And with a better ability to view the skills in your organization, future planning provides support for product launches and updates with greater confidence.

When learning and skills are transparent and valued, this can support an overall culture of learning and continual improvement, as well as driving excellent customer service.



# INTRODUCING TALENTWIZE

Investing in a solution like Talentwize can substantiate your skilling and reskilling program, as well as support HR & Learning leaders on their journey to a skills-focused learning culture.



## KNOW TALENT

- ▼ Assessment tools give you a breakdown of all the skills across your organization. A comprehensive suite of dynamic dashboards and reports allow you to analyze skills gaps, identify time-to-competency for different reskilling initiatives and more.
- ▼ Assessment and onboarding tools help identify and validate technical and soft skills for every individual.
- ▼ Development tools suggest targeted training for each employee, and visualize progress towards individual career paths.



## GROW TALENT

- ▼ Comprehensive tracking tools allow tech support leaders to identify when new competencies are required, as well as monitor the success of upskilling programs.
- ▼ Individual, personalized learning paths can be viewed by every employee, while opportunities for just-in-time learning at the point of need help support continuous learning.



## RETAIN TALENT

- ▼ Tools and reports enable leaders and managers to track their top performers so they can retain the best talent, and make the necessary interventions when people are at risk of leaving.
- ▼ Create individual career paths with discernible options and opportunities to provide clarity for employees, helping to boost internal talent mobility.



[Request a free Talentwize demo](#)



# GETTING STARTED

Here are some tips on getting started on your journey to knowing, growing and retaining your talent.

1

## Align your stakeholders

Designing a skills initiative for technical support requires buy-in from tech support leaders, customer service departments, HR functions, learning teams and beyond. Align your stakeholders and get a consensus on your skills roadmap so everyone is on the same page.

2

## Involve your employees

Always involve your employees in designing your skills program. Getting their input and feedback will not only give you valuable detail to shape and improve what you do, but also helps drive buy-in and adoption.

3

## Investigate solutions

Technology and tools can make a real difference, particularly in helping record and assess skills, produce insights and ensure skills are kept up-to-date in a consistent way. Investigate solutions like TalentWize to find proven platforms that can make a difference to the specific needs of your organization and its people.

4

## Make a business case and roadmap

If necessary, make a business case for any investment and plan a related roadmap to kick-start your skills initiative. Consider using our three-stage approach - Know, Grow, Retain - as a starting point for your planning.

5

## Build the right team

Make sure you build the right team to implement the different stages of your skills program. This is not only about your core program team, but also the wider group of people who need to be involved. Consider all the things that make a great team - diversity, cross-functionality, passion and persistence.

6

## Give yourself adequate time

Skills programs are designed to be sustainable for the long-term. While it's possible to gain some quick wins, don't expect overnight success. Give yourself adequate time for programs to scale so you experience deeper benefits such as increased talent retention and reduced attrition costs over time.

7

## Be flexible

Expect surprises along the way. Approaches that work unexpectedly well or things that don't quite work out will arise. Being flexible and learning as you go can help you implement the skills program that is right for your organization and your people.

INTERESTED IN TAKING  
THE NEXT STEP?

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