



REDUCE EMPLOYEE ATTRITION BY FOCUSING ON INDIVIDUAL CAREER PATHWAYS

A proactive way to retain talent and reduce
the heavy cost of high attrition rates



INTRODUCTION

The need to attract and retain employees has never been greater. Having access to the right people with the right skills at the right time is paramount in a highly fragile global economy and competitive business climate. But skills are in short supply.

This is especially true for in-demand digital skills. The Fourth Industrial Revolution means that digital is the area where many organizations gain their competitive edge; those unable to access digital talent are being held back.

There are additional pressures. Employees' shifting expectations of how they want to experience work, alongside groundswells of role re-evaluation precipitated by the pandemic, are contributing to a record number of voluntary resignations across the world. The organizations who aren't actively working to improve employee experience are in danger of falling behind.

Despite these difficult conditions, forward-thinking organizations are introducing measures to weather the storm.

Actively supporting career growth and leveraging the existing skills of employees is an effective and often overlooked strategy which meets challenges around skills shortages, talent retention and employee experience. It's a pragmatic, cost-effective and ultimately rewarding approach that reaps benefits in the short-, medium- and long-term at an organizational, divisional, team and individual level. Everybody wins.

By analyzing and mapping the skills you have across your workforce, identifying the gaps and then setting different programs in motion to support internal career growth, you can kickstart a journey that, over time, establishes a learning and development culture across your business, supporting talent retention and attraction.

In this paper, we examine the key challenges around skills and talent retention faced by organizations and how a three-stage skills and career support strategy can make a difference, along with some of the practical approaches to help make it happen.



87%

of organizations
report having skills
gaps or expect to
in the future.¹



ACCESSING SKILLS AND TALENT: FIVE KEY CHALLENGES

When it comes to talent retention and accessing the right skills, organizations today are facing five key challenges.



The digital skills shortage in the Fourth Industrial Revolution

The Fourth Industrial Revolution is with us. It's changing our economies and shaping our future. Digitization, automation, high interconnectivity, artificial intelligence, robotics and other rapid advances are influencing how we live and work at great speed.

The Fourth Industrial Revolution is producing opportunities and challenges simultaneously. To compete, having access to the right digital skills is critical. Data analysis, advanced coding, machine learning, cybersecurity, user experience design, blockchain: these are the kind of in-demand skills that businesses need to access. But it's proving hard, with multiple organizations scrambling to access a limited talent pool.

In the longer term, automation, new software, productivity solutions and the digitization of everyday work is putting pressure on organizations to upskill and reskill their current employee base to ensure higher digital dexterity and confidence, fill new job roles and evolve current positions. It's no surprise that "upskilling and reskilling" is the highest priority for the majority of L&D managers around the world right now.²



The great resignation is focusing efforts on employee experience

The pandemic has impacted every business. One outcome is what some have dubbed the "great resignation" – record levels of employees voluntarily leaving their role. In the US, 4.4 million employees quit their job in September 2021 alone – a staggering 3% of the working population.³ Some of this is due to a highly competitive job market, but it also reflects a strong desire for employees to seek a better experience at work.

For a long time, low employee engagement has been a systemic issue across multiple industries, but the pandemic has brought matters to a head. People are tired of stress, long hours, a lack of recognition and no career progression. During the pandemic, many experienced more flexibility through remote working, while those on furlough went through a period of reflection. Employers recognize that perceptions of work have shifted; research suggests that 92% of organizations are now prioritizing employee experience improvements, up from 52% pre-pandemic.⁴

To combat this trend, employers need to double down on employee experience and offer something beyond just a competitive salary. Employees want flexibility, recognition and contribution to their long-term job prospects.

A man and a woman are working together on a laptop. The man is in the foreground, looking at the screen, while the woman is behind him, also looking at the screen. They are both wearing blue shirts. The background is a bright, out-of-focus window.

3

Organizations need to be agile and unlock the potential of their people

Customer expectations around how they buy and receive products and services, interact with brands and consume information are forcing companies to become more agile. Customers want highly personalized experiences. Automation and the deployment of productivity tools at scale are driving opportunities for businesses to be more responsive to customer needs and increase speed to market. The need to innovate is driving a desire for agility.

Agility and responsiveness are dependent on having access to skills. Organizations struggle not only due to the general digital skills shortages, but also because they cannot leverage the skills they already have. Unlocking the potential of your workforce is powerful, but most organizations simply have no idea about the in-house skills they have, meaning opportunities get missed.



4

The shift in mindset to wanting more flexible careers and learning experiences

The “great resignation” shows there has been a change in how employees are viewing work, but the pandemic is only a catalyst for deeper-seated patterns that have been evolving for some time. A confluence of trends has driven more flexible and fluid attitudes to career development. The career expectations of younger generations, the growth of the gig economy and the perceived freedom it brings, the rise of “side hustles” and start-up culture and the easier ability to deliver work virtually are all influencing employee expectations surrounding more flexible work and career-building learning.

Research from Edelman suggests that “career advancement” is now the most important factor in considering taking up a position (82%).⁵

82%

While this definition incorporates competitive wage, it also covers valuable work experiences, training and internal mobility.

Younger employees are focused on the value of learning; 76% of Gen Z learners believe learning is the key to career growth – the highest of any generational group.⁶

76%

However, many companies are unable to deliver on expectations around career support and learning. They are stuck with inflexible approaches unsuited to the current digital age.



5

Skills assessment is not fit for purpose

There's also a more practical issue at play. Assessing a person's suitability to a role – especially when it comes to digital skills – is becoming more complex. It used to be easily done by focusing on qualifications and job experience, but now there are more inputs.

Qualifications and previous roles are still key, but portfolios of previous and current work, a variety of learning opportunities and even more left field “life experiences” can all demonstrate candidate suitability and skills. Relying on traditional qualifications alone is no longer fit for purpose, but the capacity to formally assess skills across these more informal and subjective inputs can be challenging. The inability to do this well is holding some organizations back.



34%

higher retention of employees
that have access to professional
development opportunities⁷

MEETING THE CHALLENGE: THREE CRITICAL STAGES

The challenges organizations face around talent retention, recruitment and resourcing skills are significant, but there are proven approaches that can make a difference. Forward-thinking organizations are solving their skills issues by following three evolutionary stages of maturity:



Knowing the skills inside your organization



Supporting the growth of your people



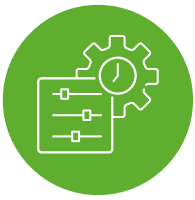
Developing a culture of growth and development

While every organization has a different and individual path, successful companies, certainly across our customer base, have broadly followed these three stages.

Critically, this can solve certain key challenges:

- ▼ Surfacing all the digital skills in your company and helping to reduce shortages
- ▼ Supporting career growth and positively impacting employee experience
- ▼ Providing visibility to an untapped talent pool that will support greater agility
- ▼ Providing more flexible approaches and development experiences to meet individual employee needs
- ▼ Revisiting skills assessment to ensure a wider range of inputs.

In this section, we explore each of these stages in more detail.



One: Knowing the skills inside your organization

The skills you already have across your workforce represent an untapped talent pool that can make a huge difference to your skills shortage. Employees pick up experience and skills in past roles and projects and even current side hustles, yet don't get the opportunity to demonstrate them in their role.

Most organizations can't capitalize on this because they don't know what skills they already have in-house. There may be informal descriptions of self-declared expertise on employee profiles, but these are seldom up-to-date or accurate. Learning functions may also have an idea of the skills of certain areas of your business, but these are often incomplete, bypassing the critical area of digital skills. Teams may have an ad hoc skills spreadsheet, but this is not shared to a wider audience.

Conducting a thorough, enterprise-wide skills audit and assessment with a validated methodology and framework, aided by an appropriate solution such as Talentwize (see back page), allows you to accurately record and map the skills of your people. This means organizations can start to:

- ▼ Identify skills gaps to support recruitment, resourcing, training and talent strategies, including digital skills
- ▼ Fill internal vacancies and project teams by matching people to opportunities
- ▼ Start a dialogue with employees about their skills and career aspirations that is engaging for them, and of high value for the organization
- ▼ Develop approaches to truly understand and assess digital skills, involving using inputs that go beyond just traditional qualifications.





Two: Supporting the career growth of your people

Having an accurate map of the skills of your workforce and identifying the gaps is just the start of journey. It sets the foundations for introducing a more structured, formal and standardized approach to recording skills and supporting career growth for your people.

Discovering available skills galvanizes stakeholders who can see the untapped potential inherent across your employees. The process of discovery can also stimulate ideas about skills and careers and start the kind of conversations that take on their own momentum, again leading to more formal initiatives.

Approaches to supporting career growth can vary, and might include:

- ▼ Creating or introducing a competency framework
- ▼ Reinvigorating learning and skills programs based on plugging gaps
- ▼ Providing structured career advice as a service
- ▼ Creating a portal with resources and advice
- ▼ Emphasizing career development and progression in talent review and appraisal processes
- ▼ Establishing systems that support career growth through reporting, analytics, onboarding and other related processes
- ▼ Introducing technology to support internal career processes and help fill roles, project team opportunities and secondments.

Outcomes of these actions can include:

- ▼ Providing clarity over career progression for every employee, liberating and engaging individuals
- ▼ Providing insights for managers to bring skills and learning into the heart of their team
- ▼ Communicating the competencies required right across the organization, supporting enablement and digital literacy
- ▼ Starting to reduce on-the-ground skills gaps while providing opportunities for individual employees, helping to drive tangible successes around efficiency, project delivery, agility and innovation
- ▼ Allowing you to incorporate an explicit commitment to support skills and career growth into your employee value proposition.



Three: Developing a culture of development and growth

Formalizing support of career growth has a deeper impact not only on individual employees, but on team dynamics and your organization as a whole. There will be ripple effects, such as on employee retention and even length of tenure. Research suggests that employees at companies with good internal mobility stay twice as long compared to those who have poor internal mobility.⁸

As employees put existing skills and new learning into action, everyday work and projects can be improved, inspiring others to follow suit. Employees will start to feel differently about learning processes. Managers will have a new frame of reference for the performance review cycle. What were previously box-ticking experiences take on new meaning. New ideas will continue to emerge. By kicking off the journey, you can start to develop a culture of learning and growth.

Although early results can be impressive, changing how an organization thinks and behaves does not happen overnight. It's important to continually evolve your processes and approaches and learn as you go, making incremental improvements informed by data and feedback. Continue to scale and extend communication programs to support employees while reaching all parts of your organization. Invest further in supporting technologies and underlying frameworks. By continuing to scale and mature, you can start to:

- ▼ Drive results that demonstrate how supporting career progression leads to greater employee retention
- ▼ Develop a reputation in the employee market that can help support talent attraction and generate employee advocacy
- ▼ Show a positive impact on employee engagement
- ▼ See unexpected positive results and outcomes across individuals, teams and functions
- ▼ Develop an overall culture of development and career growth that takes on its own momentum





MAKING IT HAPPEN: SEVEN ESSENTIAL TACTICS

1

Align your stakeholders behind a vision

Skills shortages and talent management challenges impact everybody, from IT functions, to lines of business, to your leadership team. Align your key stakeholders behind a common vision and narrative to ensure organization-wide and senior-led support.

2

Gain consensus for a strategy and roadmap

Gain agreement and consensus on a common strategy, with a roadmap to show the way forward. Make any necessary business case. When everyone has agreed on a common path, your goals are much easier to achieve.

3

Take a data-driven approach

Taking a data-driven approach to skills is critical. Actively uncovering, mapping and analyzing the skills within your organization is a game-changer. The collective skills and experience of your workforce are highly fluid through starters and leavers, but this fluidity means you're constantly gaining new skills. Ensure you stay on top of your in-house skills with consistent data, reporting and insights.

4

Use the right technology to enable the journey

Traditional HR management systems, learning managing platforms and collaborative technologies rarely have the capabilities or joined-up approaches to record skills and match these to individual learning journeys and transparent career paths. Ensure you invest in the right solution to best support your career and skills strategy.



5

Focus on personalized journeys for each individual

Workforces are incredibly diverse. Any approach to skills, development and career growth has to be tailored to every individual. This needs to be reflected in your overall approach, the frameworks and processes you set up to support career growth and your technology solutions. One size absolutely does not fit all.

6

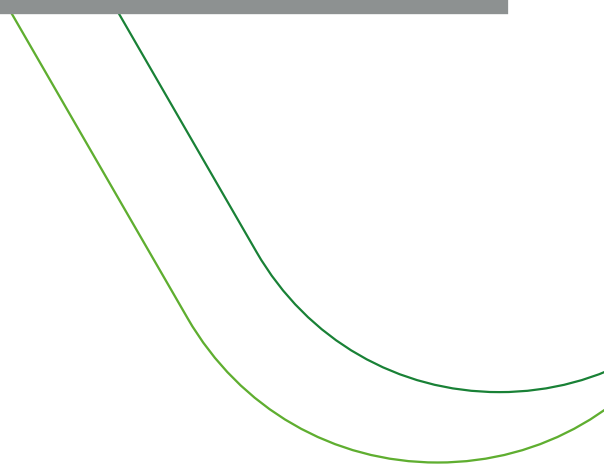
Involve your employees

Supporting career growth is for your employees - make sure you involve them. Allowing their real-world feedback and ideas to influence and validate your approach and the details behind it will always improve your program. It also gives it legitimacy and underpins adoption.

7

Involve your leaders

Having visible support from your leaders and getting them to model good behaviors relating to skills and career support will give any initiative a higher profile. It can also create a trickle-down effect, as layers of management follow this path and influence practices right down to the team-member level.





ABOUT TALENTWIZE

Talentwize is a talent growth solution that gives you a strategic way to know, grow and retain world-class teams through personalized learning journeys and career paths.

It shines a light on precisely which skills you already have across your teams. Our assessment tools reveal any skills gaps so you can easily develop the competencies you need to meet changing business needs. With insights into what already exists, you can establish upskilling and reskilling initiatives to address skills gaps at scale. And you can enable personalized learning journeys for every employee to boost loyalty and reduce attrition.

Put simply, Talentwize is a talent growth solution that helps you know your people, grow your people, and retain your people.

Get in touch to find out more

Request a demo

Visit wize-solutions.com

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