

A Work Project, presented as part of the requirements for the Award of a Master's degree in  
Management from the Nova School of Business and Economics.

**TALENT MANAGEMENT PRACTICES FOR THE FUTURE OF WORK:**

**Work Flexibility – A Research Overview**

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Group part

## **Abstract**

Over the years, the academic field has been coming up with new studies, frameworks, and definitions of what work is and, consecutively, what its future is, taking into account all the technological evolution and disruptors, such as the case of Covid-19. In this way, it is necessary to follow what are the new trends in the market and be able to adapt. This project is then based on an in-depth analysis of the Company XYZ to understand its readiness for the Future of Work within Talent Management, as in Recruitment, Onboarding, Learning & Development, Reskilling, and Flexibility.

**Keywords:** Future of Work; Human Resources; Talent Management; Technological Evolution; Disruptors; Recruitment; Onboarding; Learning & Development; Reskilling; Flexibility.

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## **List of Abbreviations**

ABC - Agile Business Consortium

AI - Artificial Intelligence

ANN - Artificial Neural Network

D&I - Diversity and Inclusion

EVP - Employee Value Proposition

EVs - Electric Vehicles

fMRI – functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging

FoW - Future of Work

FSSC - Financial Services Skills Commission

FTEs - Full-Time Employees

Gen Z - Generation Z

HBR - Harvard Business Review

HR - Human Resources

HRIS - Human Resources Information Systems

HRM - Human Resource Management

IBM - International Business Machines Corporation

IT - Information Technology

KPIs - Key Performance Indicators

MBA - Master of Business Administration

MIT - Massachusetts Institute of Technology

NWM - New Work Model

P&O - People and Organization

STEM - Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics

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VR - Virtual Reality

WEF - World Economic Forum

WOW - Ways of Working

## **1. Introduction**

Talent Management is a term that has steadily risen in popularity over the last year; reading news about the current talent war (or shortage), about how specific jobs are in extreme demand, or about new work models and environments that companies are experimenting with has just become part of everyday life. Although talent management has been out there for a while, it became a big trend when McKinsey consultants first called attention to managing talent in 1998. Since then, a large amount of awareness has been raised of the topic, which is becoming particularly popular in academic and business institutions (Gallardo-Gallardo, Dries, and González-Cruz 2018).

A large amount of information only sometimes results in clear definitions and scopes or structured research and frameworks applicable to actual companies' talent management, making it both complex and frustrating for companies to come up with inventive, well-informed decisions on managing their talent. Notably, Covid-19 has triggered the need for companies to consider their human capital as a critical competitive advantage for the future (Tomcikova, Svetozarovova, and Coculova 2021). More than ever, employers feel it is time to be proactive in this topic.

Overseeing the market trends and the rise of new agile competitors, several companies are leading the path of preparing their workforce, reviewing their ability to attract and retain the best talent, and keeping up with all changes centered around the objective of becoming a future-proof company.

The current research aims to understand the main trends and paint a view of the future of work, deep-diving into different human resources (HR) policies, processes, and procedures related to talent management, hearing various internal stakeholders on their opinion about internal and external outlooks and, finally, defining how a company can be ready for the future of work.

## 2. Research Question

This project and report aim to assess how company XYZ can position itself as a successful employer for the future of work. Next to that, we want to extract some additional insights into how Talent Management will or can develop in general given the trends of the Future of Work.

To do so, we painted a picture of the future of work based on academic and professional literature and analyzed one target company to use as a case study. Becoming ready for the future of work includes understanding how to attract, retain, and develop human capital, learning what the trends of the future are and how the target company can face them, and evaluating how they can prepare to adjust to the circumstances that are inevitably going to be different from what we expect and predict. The final research question is: *“What changes should Company XYZ make today to become ready for the future of work regarding talent management?”*.

## 3. Methodology

This section describes the methodologies used to answer the posed research question. Moreover, it develops the basis for why the methods were chosen, their limitations, and preferred characteristics in light of the topics this paper aims to explore.

The focus was put on answering and exploring the readiness of our case study target Company XYZ: A large multinational insurance company’s talent management practices, considering the challenges of the Future of Work. In particular, how ready are Company XYZ's recruitment, onboarding, training, and learning practices for future challenges, trends, and alternations of working conditions, technology, demographics, and economics. An explorative, qualitative approach was chosen due to reasoning much in line with Burns and Grove's (2001) thoughts that exploratory research is best practiced under circumstances where one aims to

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explore, find insights, and describe new phenomena, such as in the characteristics and uncertainty in the future of work field (Mansourian 2008; Ponelis 2015).

### ***3.1. Data Collection***

Primary and secondary data were used in this research. Firstly, primary data was collected through semi-structured, in-depth interviews with a sample of employees and managers from the company. Interviews were held to gain insight and knowledge from within the company regarding its readiness and standings of current talent management practices. As Bryman and Bell (2011) suggested, this type of interview gives the best opportunities to receive sincere, detailed, and personal answers. It is essential to explore perceptions, attitudes, and current knowledge internally. It served as a more company-specific reflection of the topic that has been covered before in a general, inter-industrial sense globally. Lastly, secondary data was derived from existing company documents - reports, and literature on the topic. The secondary data was later used with the interviews' findings to create a situational analysis of the Company XYZ. After collecting and summarizing the essential factors and findings suggested by existing literature on the topic of the Future of Work, we aimed to use this lens to look at the extracted data from interviews and internal metrics from the company to define our problem set. Examples of internal metrics came from the company reports regarding compensation satisfaction, demographic data, and talent retention indicators.

### ***3.2. Sampling and Subjects***

As mentioned, interviews were conducted with employees and managers of the multinational insurance company. Ten interviews were conducted in November 2022. The company itself made the selection criteria. Four of the ten interviews (See Table I) were held with individuals from the People & Organization (P&O) department to get high-level insights into the company's talent management practices. Additionally, six more interviews were held

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with employees and team managers from different parts of the company. The selection criteria were based so that the two employees in more junior positions could give insight into their recent recruitment and onboarding processes. In contrast, the two in senior roles - who had more experience and were not managers yet - could give insights into their learning and training experiences. Lastly, the two employees who were in managerial positions could provide insight into all three pillars of talent management due to their involvement in recruitment, onboarding, and training within their respective teams. Due to this work's nature and access to classified company insights, information about the interviewed subjects is to remain anonymous in this work as requested by the company.

*Table I - Interviews*

<b>Interviews</b>	<b>Profile</b>	<b>Criteria Contribution</b>
Interview 1	People & Organization Team	Give a broad perspective & overview of human resources and current talent management practices.
Interview 2	People & Organization Team	To gather a specialized view of recruitment, onboarding, and learning & training to understand the particularities of the processes.
Interview 3	People & Organization Team	To gather a specialized view of recruitment, onboarding, and learning & training to understand the particularities of the processes.
Interview 4	People & Organization Team	To gather a specialized view of recruitment, onboarding, and learning & training to understand the particularities of the processes.
Interviews 5 & 6	Employees with < 2 years of employment	To get insight into recent employees' personal experiences regarding the recruitment, onboarding, and training process.
Interviews 7 & 8	Employees in non-managerial positions with > 5 years of employment	To get an insight into employees and their experiences regarding

		training and skill development within the company.
Interviews 9 & 10	Employees in a managerial position	Gain insight into how managers perceive XYZ's future needs. Also, how they perceive the processes that involve recruiting, onboarding, and training the employees they manage.

**3.3. Interviews**

The interviews were conducted online via Microsoft Teams conference calls as in-depth, semi-structured interviews with open answers. A script was prepared for each interview that contained open-ended questions exploring the relations between the interviewee’s own experiences within the company and their thoughts regarding the impact of future trends on talent management practices within the company (See Appendix 1).

**3.4. Coding**

Data were extracted from the qualitative interviews with Open Coding (Glaser 1978). Open coding is the process of labeling and extracting information from qualitative sources (Huq Khan 2019). The interviews were first recorded into audio and then transcribed into text. After that, Open Coding was conducted to extract general insights, context, and underlying meaning from parts of the interviews. "In the open coding process, the concepts emerge from the raw data and are later grouped into conceptual categories. As it is built directly from the raw data, the process ensures the work's validity." (Huq Khan 2019). The now-structured results of the interviews were then compared to secondary data from existing literature and internal documents from the company itself.

Table II - Codes with Examples

Codes	Examples from the Interviews
Culture Learning of	"It's not just about training them in the sense that they really have to be digital, it's more, I think we have to install a culture of learning, people have to understand that they have to be learners."
Efficiency	"We have to solve for efficiency as a layer in again, when we talk about recruitment, looking for people that are bringing the skill sets that our business needs and need to find the right people."
Internal Relationship	"Offboarding is also very important, because you have to retain the relationship so that when the person leaves, there is the high probability that they are not a detractor but someone who says good things about the company and maybe would like to come back in the future."
Brand Positioning	"We also are going to be always replacing people that leave, we have to assume that we're going to lose people, but we have to solve by retaining the relationship and building the brand positioning in the market that says we're a good place to work, and people want to stay here and want to come to work."
Consistency	"At the moment, we have a very centralized onboarding process, which I think works very well, but then the onboarding of each department works very differently, so is where we need to normalize more."
Flexibility	"I don't think that money is always the most important thing." "And people want flexibility today, right? The world changed massively, in two years, probably the biggest social experiment in the last centuries, and people want different things."
Evaluation Surveys	"94% of our admitted employees classify the process overall as good or very good. So I think it's a good indicator. Of course there is always one or the other improvement situation and improvement aspects that are mentioned and that we try collaboration. But in general the feedback is positive."
Unpredictability	"Because the problem that we have with working online is that is very easy for you, for everybody to get disconnected." "You can do everything, almost if you take off the speaker and the camera, you may not be there."
Planning	So what can be improved, planning, in the sense that we have to strike a balance between the time we have available to receive these people well, knowing that by giving them this time we have less time for our routines, but being sure that in the near future this time we spend with people will be repaid with the individual and collective well-being of the team.
Proactivity	"The only competence that could be strengthened more would be in the sense of people being even more proactive, so creating the conditions so that the company, regardless of the possibility of people being genuine and expressing their opinions, be clearly recognized and valued for the spontaneity of the contribution they can make."
Criteria	"In terms of recruitment, to seek to recruit people with potential and a set of characteristics, both personal and professional, who, whether we like it or not, add value to the company through their characteristics, and therefore to achieve better results for the organization itself."
Creativity	"I think onboarding is very good, but I think it should be even lighter, it should be a more creative process."

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Interactivity	"This house cannot say it lacks training, we have a lot of internal training, so for me the training process to evolve is in interactivity."
Team Expansion	"Prospects also to increase the team here, also in view of the volume of processes that we have in progress."
Recruitment Process	"It was very clear, it was all quite fast and transparent and the expectations were, I think, very well managed from the beginning."
Outsourcing	"Outsourcing services has not gone directly through us in recruiting itself, although it is something we want to control."
Bureaucratic	"14 contents of mandatory training just for being in the insurance sector, things like ontological projects, things like anti money-laundering, so some things about how to be in the insurance sector." "For everyone who has contact either directly or indirectly to a client, we still need to provide an initial training of 80 hours and then annually another 15 hours."
Future Challenges	"In terms of format, I think we've all seen a lot and we're all always looking forward to new things and things that impact us. A training that is a more classic type ends up not getting our curiosity and our attention as much. So, anything that is a little bit off the beaten track, I think will be a greater value for us to be awake and attentive, and for it to be a training that impacts us and for us to be an ambassador for that training itself."
Onboarding Process	"I joined 100% remotely, at the time I invite, there was really no one in the office, but it was very good." "I got insurance notions in all areas, and I think this is quite important." "There was a lot of openness in transmitting knowledge to me and making me comfortable with the dynamics of the team and the company."

From aggregating the insights into these codes, it was possible to take some preliminary conclusions:

- What really has to be implemented is a learning culture that does not exist yet, in the sense that people have to get the habit of training themselves by their own initiative in order to be in constant development and personal and professional evolution, instead of being something imposed by the company.
- There needs to be more flexibility in terms of the employees being able to have a balance between working from home and going to the office, because although this is already slightly implemented, some people still feel the need to be more from home.
- As far as recruitment is concerned, there should be more criteria in the process, in order to reach exactly the objectives intended for the position and the company. In this case, it should

prioritize the characteristics and qualities of the candidate instead of looking only at the background, as it does not always confer potential.

- As for onboarding, it is necessary to offer a more integrated experience, where new employees can experience what the different areas of the company really are, in a more creative way. In terms of training, this should become more interactive, as this is how we gather more knowledge.
- It is necessary to come up with more dynamic, disruptive, and innovative trainings with a focus on the future market needs, so that the employees can keep up with new technologies and new ways of doing the same thing. In order to create these trainings that will impact people AI can be considered. Also important, investigate the possibility and feasibility to have a company manager that keeps track of your trainings and suggests you relevant trainings.

### ***3.5. Definitions***

To set the proper context for the remainder of this paper, this section is going to discuss some basic definitions that guided the development of the work:

- **Future of Work** - According to Deloitte, the future of work is a result of many forces of change affecting three deeply connected dimensions of an organization: work, what work can be automated and done by/with intelligent machines; the workforce, so who can do the job and how to leverage ongoing talent; and the workplace, so how they look like, how work practices are reshaped, and where and when work is done (Schwartz et al. n.d., 2).
- **Talent** – There are two views on talent:
  1. **Something That the Person Has** - Nijs et al. (2014) introduced that talent refers to systematically developed innate abilities of individuals deployed in activities they like, find important, and want to invest energy in. It enables individuals to perform excellently in one

or more domains of human functioning, operationalized as performing better than other individuals of the same age or experience or performing consistently at their best (Nijs et al. 2014, 182).

2. **Being a Talent** - Collings and Mellahi (2009) allege that talent refers to individuals with high potential who have the ability and inclination to systematically develop the necessary skills and expertise to fill critical roles within an organization (Singh 2021, 44).

The first view was taken as the primary reference to develop this project.

- **Talent Management** - Gartner (n.d.) states that talent management is the attraction, selection, and retention of employees, which involves a combination of HR processes across the employee life cycle. It encompasses workforce planning, employee engagement, learning and development, performance management, recruiting, onboarding, succession, and retention. It is also about ensuring that the right person is in the right job at the right time (Jackson and Schuler 1990, 235).
- **Talent Lifecycle** - The talent lifecycle encompasses all stages of interaction between an organization and its human capital (Schiemann 2014, 282).
- **Human Capital** - It consists of the knowledge, skills, and health that people accumulate throughout their lives, enabling them to realize their potential as productive members of society (The World Bank, n.d.).

## 4. Literature Review

### *4.1. The Relationship Between the Future of Work and Talent Management*

The opportunities and complexities of the world of work have gained increasing attention in recent years from academics, policymakers, and the public (Balliester and Elsheiki 2018). Today, the topic of the future of work and what phenomena impact employers and

employees in times ahead builds a network of possible outcomes and topics. Hence, there needs to be a clear definition or shared view of what the future of work embodies. Therefore, the stature of the discussion also reflects the typical uncertainty of what might lie ahead.

The future of work can be seen as an evolution of themes, as suggested by Singh et al. (2021). Their analytical literature review of the most researched topics and their expansion brings forward the complexity of the future of work topics. Research has, since the early 1980s, taken shape to what we today call the future of work (FoW), focusing its analysis on the impact of technological inventions such as the computer and data storage, as well as their effects on labor (Van Der Zande et al. 2019).

Manual jobs became increasingly impacted by computerization and brought forward a more extensive discussion and interest in the field until the early 2000s. Moreover, as technologies evolved, so did their complexity and impact through the development of software that aided work processes and made manual job tasks more efficient and effective (Devlin 2017). It is from the understanding that the impact of changes in demographic needs, technology, medicine, and economic trends on human labor holds a large part of the discussion and research being held today (Zimmerman 2014; Bozio et al. 2016; Borland; Coelli 2017). This is in tandem with significant interest and the recent focus on the fourth digital revolution, a term brought forward by the World Economic Forum that aims to describe technologies such as robotics, artificial intelligence, and machine learning and their impact on labor standards and practices (Schwab 2018).

Later, Schmidt (2017) wrote about a particular subset of subjects from the fourth industrial revolution. In particular, the emergence of platform economies, crowd work, and gig work, where most contributors argue for the deterioration of labor laws, employee bargaining power, and earning capacity (Codagnone, Abadie, and Biagi 2016). Moreover, tied to the discussion around platform economies and work flexibility lies arguments for diminishing

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productivity due to a lack of organization between colleagues without a shared physical workspace (Sokas 2017). However, contradictory statements have been put forward, such as by Brookings (2016), which captured the benefits of labor market flexibility and its positive effects on the free labor market.

The opposing views within the topical publications reflect the positive and negative impacts. Indeed, the writings of Sachs, J. et al. (2015) portray these characteristic reflections regarding technology and labor in their work to understand robotics' impact on companies and working conditions. Moreover, in trying to map the growing, multifaceted structure of the future of work as a topic, International Labor Office (2018) created an exhaustive literature review from over 250 authors. It worked on the topic focusing on the impact on workers. They narrowed down the possible effected or affected factors of future work outcomes: Labor force, jobs, and development; Working Conditions; Social Protection; and Wage growth (International Labour Office 2018). Some limitations to the review, as described by themselves, were the overrepresentation of studies from developing countries.

Naturally, as emphasis and development and interest grew for the focus on human resources, more inclusion of human resource management tools and their impact on companies' resilience towards future implications on economics and working conditions flourished.

Talent management, particularly recruitment and onboarding, has had a minor contribution to the topic compared to learning. In this case, learning has been seen as a significant possibility or facilitator for companies and human resources to become more agile in navigating future eruptions in the external environment, according to the Global Human Capital Trends Report (2021) recently published by Deloitte. Here, they found that over 70% of executives saw upskilling and reskilling as the single most vital tool to meet future talent pool difficulties, taken from their career experiences and, in hindsight, the effects of Covid-19 on remote work.

However, the OIGP Global Research Study (2019) shed light on talent management processes. The authors highlighted that less than half of the sampled companies had talent management systems, such as succession planning, skill development, continuing education, and certifications in place. They argued that these are particularly important for organizations to be prepared for future uncertainties and strongly affect the company's employee value proposition to the potential talent pool.

Publications from business analysts and consulting firms, like the previously mentioned, are the most common regarding how Talent Management tools and processes are tied to solving future needs problems such as competitive advantages, future skill needs, and strategic agility (Sharma et al. 2021). For example, Jeff Schwartz, a familiar figure in strategic human resources consultancy, is a prominent figure and has been a bridging figure within the field of the future of work and talent management. He specifically focuses on the effects of technology and the internet on work flexibility, talent pools, and HR strategies.

A significant contribution by Jeff Schwarz (2021) is his thoughts on the emerging global talent pool that is growing in size due to the borderless landscape caused by globalization and remote work. Additionally, he further bridges the gap through his consultancy work, such as in his articles where he describes companies with a successful learning program, with reskilling and upskilling opportunities as a good facilitator of increased employer value among talent but also as a hedge towards the emerging future which holds needs unforeseen today (Schwartz 2022). He further describes future needs as parts of the companies that can be met by learning agility in company culture, which organizations should focus on.

From a human resources-focused point of view and assuming that a company or organization is prevalent in literature on the topic, Hagel, J III. (2021) argues that more than upskilling and reskilling is needed to keep up with changing needs in consumer trends and business necessities. He argues that this is merely sharing existing knowledge. Instead, creating

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a lifelong drive to learn and improve should be the goal of organizational learning programs, benefiting innovation and retention figures.

Recent literature about talent management's involvement in the future of work has evolved into a more employee-centric stance. Employees' mental and physical health, work flexibility, employee-employer connection, and diversity are topics that Harvard Business Review found particularly important in their collection of articles which aimed to aid organizations and businesses in navigating the future of talent management and was named "Future of work: The insights you need to know from Harvard Business Review" (2021). Quoting existing research from Harvard, the document stated that total work flexibility could increase the number of total high performers. Additionally, it said that building a stronger sense of belonging for the employees towards the organization increases productivity. Also, according to the paper, aligning social values to helping others in society and work teams have been shown to lessen downtime and increase work speed (Betterup 2012).

Recent publications also relate to the war on talent (Hankins 1998). In other words, the consensus about the lack of the right talent for the right job, what Hankins claimed to be an increasing talent scarcity, inherently tilts the discussions toward business efforts in employer value through means such as those previously mentioned. Therefore, according to McKinsey consultants Kartik Sharma and Bill Schaninger (2021), recruitment policies and communication regarding the present values and opportunities are essential for future employers.

#### ***4.2. Talent Management Before the 2000s***

From the 1980s to the 1990s, little was talked about talent management as we know it today. The more relevant articles from the eighties surfaced on "management talent" or "managerial talent" in organizations. The article investigated what made some employees good options (or talented) for high-hierarchy postings. The topic was covered not only in the management field but also had some studies explicitly done by psychology authors.

One example in the management field comes from Jennings, which approached the topic in 1981 from the angle of corporation academies, where he showcases some firms which can develop flawless employees through these training programs to top management positions as directors and C-level (Jennings 1981). Despite that, some authors had a different point of view, Bod and Slavinski, from the psychology field, suggested academic centers for management had nothing to do with the disposition of a person to be a good pick for a top posting. Using cross-cultural research, their study used a group of Canadian and South African high managers and directors to see how personality correlates to managerial talent and to identify tendencies in the relation of personality and managerial talent (Bod and Slavinski 1983). Other examples of notorious authors and studies that explored the theme through the optics of managerial talent are Ivancevich and Stewart (1989), Tjerk Hooghiemstra (1990), and Thornton and Cleveland (1990).

Although managerial talent was the trend in the academic field, a few researchers were already looking at the topic more holistically, closer to the nature of talent management as we see it today. An exciting work comes from Spencer Blakeslee, and he outlined the need to plan to hold new graduates in the firm for more than the typical 14-17 months, a benchmark of the average for an entry-level position to stay on the job before jumping to another company at the time (Blakeslee 1984). The author characterized those young professionals from top universities in the Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) field as highly talented individuals with much potential to contribute to the firm's future but would usually quit due to a narrow vision caused by a vision shaped by academic experience. Blakeslee said the retention problems come from 1) not knowing how to work in a professional setting, 2) new graduate employees wanting autonomy, and 3) new graduate employees needing an idea of what career plan they want. Although some parts of the study seem outdated, the novelty of this

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study comes from anticipating some topics companies are grasping now in 2022 as employee retention, workers' autonomy, and workforce planning time (Blakeslee 1984).

Various authors, such as Barney (1995), also had exciting studies regarding the imitability of talent - suggesting that firms gain skills, experience, and abilities through their people, which is linked to the company's culture, network, and structure. This human capital is the heart of talent and what makes it difficult for other companies to copy, giving a real competitive advantage to firms skilled at managing their people.

The turn of the decades came with a change as McKinsey authors Chambers, Foulon, Handfield-Jones, Hankin, and Michaels III (1998) crafted the term "The War of Talent" term. It brought awareness to the topic, changing the field of talent management studies forever. Rarely a study gets this much attention and importance, which determines its influence on this in the years to come. The article starts with a strong statement: "better talent is worth fighting for," and is backed up by buzzword play in recruitment questions: "why would someone really good want to join your company? And how will you keep them for more than a few years?" (Chambers, Foulon, et al. 1998).

The article starts by identifying the worsening talent shortage of people in different fields and the difficulty of attracting and retaining the right people. The researchers investigated the issue in 77 large companies from other sectors and industries and looked at different data on performance, talent pool, and interviews on various talent management topics. They also looked into almost 6500 corporate officers' and executives' assessments to get top management perspectives.

The study proves the existence of the war for talent by counting the insufficiency of talent by comparing a large number of answers and assessing the tendency of decline in the supply of top managers and executives, rise in job mobility, and decline in productivity. In the

qualitative aspect, the research showed that most company executives feel they do not attract high talent and are unsure of whom the top performers are (Chambers, Foulon, et al. 1998).

The main conclusion from the study was there it is possible to win the war for talent by elevating talent management over corporate priority: refining the employee value proposition and putting the employees at the center of company priority and policies, as the text states: “Superior talent will be tomorrow’s prime source of competitive advantage. Any company seeking to exploit it must instill a talent mindset throughout the organization, starting at the top” (Chambers, Foulon, et al. 1998).

The rest of the text suggests solutions to have strong talent management: creating a winning employee value proposition, holding executives accountable for developing talent recruitment, developing and retaining initiatives, having a robust recruitment strategy, developing the employees at full force, and others (Chambers, Foulon, et al. 1998). The study gathered several trends of talent management so smartly in the war of talent concept, clarifying the outlook of the future of work for the decade to come and on, which makes it a staple in the field.

The literature on the turn of the century was mainly marked by the shadow of the war on talent, demarked by authors and works such as the book “The War for Talent: Getting the Best from the Best” by Williams (2000), “Beware and Prepare: The Government Workforce of the Future” by Green (2000), and “The Quest for the Best: Human Resource Practices to Attract and Retain Talent” by Hilton (1999), to name a few.

#### ***4.3. Talent Management: the 2000s Pre-Covid***

As previously mentioned, the field of Talent Management got famous during the turn of the century. Lewis and Heckman brought awareness that the results for “talent management” grew almost four times from 2004 to 2008 (Lewis and Heckman 2008). The rise in papers about the subject did not lead talent management to become a well-defined study area. However, as

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the authors indicated, there needed to be more clarity on the field's definition, scope, and goals. Lewis and Heckman (2008) then proceeded to organize a critical review of all literature in the area, becoming a reference to any relevant academic work related to it.

Firstly, the authors gathered all terms used to describe talent management interchangeably. After reading and comparing the sources of use, they realized there needed to be a precise meaning since it was used in many ways to highlight the strategic importance of human resources. From that, they took the approach of talent management as architecture, meaning the best practice is to describe the vision of early components of managing talent and offer a strategic perspective that provides a framework to outline how these policies should occur.

To pursue a strategic approach in talent management, the authors suggest every employee needs to be segmented by the difficulty of replacing the value added to the company, in an adaptation from several models, as Zuboff's (1995). By positioning people in this matrix, the company has visibility on how to approach its talent management policies and exploit opportunities that appear to use people as a competitive advantage (Lewis and Heckman 2008).

Lewis and Heckman also present more complex frameworks and models, in general, they link other elements to assess when deciding how to manage people, among them: sustainable strategic advantage, resources and processes, talent pools and structures, aligned actions, human capacity, policies and practices, and investments. The discussion from those dynamics adds value to the strategic approach of talent management and can be accountable to authors such as Jackson and Schuler (1990), Barney (1991), Zuboff (1995), and Boudreau and Ramstad (2005).

To finalize their critical review, the authors appeal to researchers to bring more clarity and thought leadership to the topic to make the field more academically coherent and rigorous. They claim researchers come up with talent decisions systems-level models to illustrate the

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impact of talent choices and provide meaningful impact within the organization. It is worth mentioning that Collings and Mellahi (2009) also did an interesting review paper on strategic talent management that resembles a lot the investigation of Lewis and Heckman.

Fascinating research on talent management for the 21<sup>st</sup> century was held by Cappelli (2008) for Harvard's Business Review. The author showcases that talent management policies and procedures done in the last century eventually collapsed because they could not address the uncertainties raised in the marketplace, which led to an excess supply of managers and talent pipeline churn due to wrong growth forecasts. The crisis affected a lot of programs and initiatives to develop talent, such as the academy companies.

By the end of the 90s, companies restarted filling their talent pools and focused on hiring from competitors instead of internal development, which caused retention issues. The author highlights that the C-level mindset was on assuring they would have people from the outside with the required skills, not developing internally and potentially losing this employee to another firm (Cappelli 2008). By the end of the century, companies realized they were attracting experienced candidates and losing valuable employees to competitors at the same pace. Although many tried to keep the old talent management practices back in place, Cappelli believed those needed to be updated and had little chance of succeeding since they surrounded creating succession plans for high-potential employees. The problem is that most of them were leaving rapidly and leaving a gap in workforce planning.

Cappelli defends talent management does not serve to lower turnover rates or develop employees - their primary outcome should be helping the company to achieve its strategic objectives, and for that, it is essential to understand the benefits of each initiative and assess the risks associated, a point vital due to a change of culture - if changing jobs were seen as a sign of failure in the past and more people looking into having a "career for life," signs of constant job-hopping were in the growth by this time (Cappelli 2008).

The author then uses a novel supply chain perspective on talent management to set principles to address the new risks and uncertainty of talent supply; they are:

- Make and buy to manage risk: companies should lose estimates of resources needed to hire externally in case of shortfalls since some postings are more accessible to fill from the inside by development, as the author puts “talent management is an investment, not an entitlement”;
- Adapt to the uncertainty in talent demand: since uncertainty is assured, break up development plans into shorter periods and create a generalist talent pool that can be allocated among business units if needed;
- Improve the return on investment in developing employees: share the costs of development with employees by asking them to take on assignments voluntarily or keeping in touch with former employees that can be rehired in the future;
- Preserve the investment by balancing employee-employer interests: make employees share in advancement decisions to avoid them leaving for better opportunities.

Although the article presents some parts too heavily sided with business instead of employees at times and makes some loose predictions on the future, it has a new view and solutions in a time where most firms were picking up old ones. Another exciting piece of work comes from Vaiman, Scullion, and Collings (2012) in their work on talent management decision-making.

Considering the field was finally becoming mature scientifically and the crisis of talent management happening, the researchers wanted to come up with topics on talent management that could help the practical decision-making by companies since its main objective should be to increase the organization's success. Firstly, the researchers enhance the need to use data to back up managerial talent resolutions to make more rational and qualitative decisions, here, the

authors anticipated a big trend in talent management in the years to come (Vaiman, Scullion, and Collings 2012).

The article also presents other significant trends to be considered: the intensification of recognizing critical roles, instead of people, to be future-proof against shortages, a change in competition between employers for talent from the country level to the regional and global levels (supported by the increasing mobility setting of the 2010s), a shift towards skills-related immigration systems, and the lack of leadership talent (Vaiman, Scullion, and Collings 2012).

The text also highlights the need to consider corporate social responsibility since research showed that it was a lever in talent management and retention and a positive point in companies' employee value proposition. Diversity was also appointed as an essential factor to be considered in talent management decision-making, by that time, global companies started to become heavily diverse (Vaiman, Scullion, and Collings 2012).

Other three significant trends identified were the permanent shift to a knowledge-based economy, since employers were concerned highly qualified workers were motivated, the trade from security to become less dependent on a single company due to the recession, and the growing importance of emerging markets (Vaiman, Scullion, and Collings 2012).

Notice that the academic literature shifted to a more objective approach as the authors tried to look into the future of work trends and set talent management guidelines for companies to follow in the coming years. Schiemann (2014) wrote an interesting article in this direction. The author defines talent management as "a unique function that integrates all of the activities and responsibilities associated with managing the talent lifecycle regardless of geography - from attracting and acquiring talent to developing and retaining it."

The author defines the talent lifecycle as: "The talent lifecycle encompasses all of the stages of interaction between an organization and its human capital. This ranges from building a talent brand that attracts the right talent to acquiring, onboarding, developing, managing,

retaining, and recovering talent." It consists of, in sequential order from the talent pool: attracting, acquiring, onboarding, training, maximizing performance, developing and succession, retaining and recovering (Schiemann 2014).

In Schiemann's eyes, every organization's aim should be talent optimization, which is the balance of acquisition, development, performance, and retention strategies - the optimization would provide higher productivity, quality, retention, regulatory and environmental risks, and strong operational and financial performance (Schiemann 2014). Due to his research with over 2000 companies, Schiemann believes optimization can be reached through the people equity framework. The framework is divided into three categories: alignment, capabilities, and engagement - by aiming to increase those dimensions, companies would achieve better results when managing the talent lifecycle (Schiemann 2014).

Lastly, an important article was published in 2020 by highly recognized authors in the field: Gallardo-Gallardo, Thunissen, and Scullion (2020). Adding on world trends such as globalization and technology, competition is fiercer than ever, talent is seen more than ever as an essential competitive advantage, and companies are rushing to leverage and protect their human capital. The authors conclude that talent management is very context-dependent, and each company's individual and surrounding environment dynamics must be comprehended before making decisions. A focus on micro decisions and employees' reactions to talent management at an individual level is also identified as a trend, understanding that companies may adapt the employee value-proposition to suit personal needs in the future (Gallardo-Gallardo, Thunissen, and Scullion 2020).

#### ***4.4. Covid and Post-Covid***

Like a few others before, one recent event that impacted how and where work happens is the Covid-19 pandemic. It forced all companies to re-evaluate how collaboration can work in a remote setting and allowed many employees to experience working from home for the first

time. Office workers, in particular, have concluded that they are at least as productive - if not more effective - working from home (Birkinshaw, Cohen, and Stach 2020) and have started to prefer working from home or other remote locations. This significantly impacted the recommendations expressed by the scientific community regarding talent management during the period in which most office workers were working from their homes:

Caligiuri et al. (2020) focus their research and recommendations on the stress the pandemic caused in many individuals and suggest measures such as hiring people who are naturally more comfortable in uncertain situations [..]. Nevertheless, also state that the employees - now more aware than ever that their jobs are ephemeral - should be more willing to receive training to sharpen their skills and increase their chances in the job market.

Building on top of the literature that focused on the time at which the pandemic's impact on everyday life was at its peak, post-covid literature considers talent management as a more critical determinant of organizational performance than previously (Hongal and Kinange 2020).

Talent and skills mismatch has become a relevant issue since remote work rapidly increased the talent pool available to companies. However, it is still difficult for companies to find suitable employees for the job requirements that have altered due to the changes caused by the Covid-19 pandemic (Hongal and Kinange 2020).

Automation is also a source of change for the future of work. Although many stakeholders consider automation a disruptive force that may end jobs, in practice, it has been shown that automation does not only create or destroy jobs - but rather transform them: “the World Economic Forum estimates that by 2025, technology will create at least 12 million more jobs than it destroys, a sign that in the long run, automation will be a net positive for society” (Nunes 2021) - this data also shows how important reskilling will be in the following years to assure a workforce that is ready for the challenges of the future.

Regardless of how the consequences of the pandemic are interpreted, the data collected before, during, and after the pandemic clearly shows that expectations towards work have changed in many ways. According to Gartner, the share of remote workers has increased from less than a third to almost half (Mohamed 2020), and over 80% of leaders want to let their employees work from home for at least some of their working hours (Arlington 2020).

Another critical trend comes from the need to have a strong employee value proposition (EVP), especially when it comes to diversity and social responsibility, confirming a trend of recent years: “inclusivity; corporate responsibility; and equity and equal employment opportunity are the key underlying principles of a responsible talent management system” (Anlesinya and Amponsah-Tawiah 2020). The primary outcome from this topic is that diversity and inclusion are needed not only in the firm as a whole but also in talent management.

Finally, since solid talent management is essential to master unforeseen situations that will arise in the future, it is also clear that using data is a crucial component of proper human capital management. The use of data facilitates all talent lifecycle touchpoints, enabling conscious decision-making for areas like recruitment and training and also helping to explore talent-related issues such as performance, employee absenteeism, and more. The benefits can go from minimizing the cost of bad hires to predicting employees’ performance: the opportunities offered by big data are endless (Jackson 2021).

## **5. Future of Work Trends and Insights**

This section summarizes our findings from the most current and essential literature regarding talent management practices. It serves as an important step in bridging the gap between general knowledge and practical knowledge needed for this research and to assess and improve the future of work readiness of the company this project was completed. The topics

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chosen here to form a collection of subjects and data selected by the writers to narrow the broader future of the work topic down to make it usable for a specific purpose and company.

### ***5.1. Learning***

A consensus within recent literature on the topic emphasizes learning and training needs within companies. Key findings from reports indicate the still existing and growing skill gaps until 2025, which include critical thinking, self-management, and problem-solving (World Economic Forum 2020). On the other hand, emerging skill gaps also continue within technical skills, such as specialists in software development, the internet of things, and machine learning. Furthermore, a trend among companies and scholars agree that organizations need to reskill or upskill their employees through extensive programs lasting six months or more to meet future requirements (World Economic Forum 2020).

At the same time, a meaningful discussion is being held about why organizations still need to foster these skills and how one can facilitate such learning. Hence, experts on the topic have increased their interest in understanding how to build a culture of learning within organizations and if it is possible to teach individuals to become self-learners (Schwarz 2021). It is through self-learning that the employees, who make the economic gains for the organization, can best find themselves navigating the ambiguous nature of the future of work.

### ***5.2. Automation and Reskilling***

In the long run, automation will be responsible for transforming and creating new jobs - instead of destroying them, as some researchers feared for years. This trend goes hand in hand with another one: reskilling. The companies will need to reskill their contributors to keep an updated workforce and talent pipeline. In line with developing a learning culture, a company should create a synergy that makes workers look to learn more skills independent of someone demanding them to.

### ***5.3. The Talent Bottleneck***

Finding talent, at the right time, with the right soft and hard skills will continue to be difficult for Human Resource departments (Harvard Business Review 2021). In addition to being an obstacle from a recruitment and possible talent pool perspective, it has the extra layer of selecting the right people based on soft skills, culture, values, and the company's EVP - the rise of learning and reskilling due to the quick changes in work environments will make each person's characteristics as the most crucial determinant factor when picking employees, especially to assure they choose to stay in the company for a long time (PwC 2021).

### ***5.4. Diversity and Inclusion***

As put by Anlesinya and Amponsah-Tawiah (2020, 281), “Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) are determinant factors for the future of work. More than having them as components of a company is required, though - the future of the work shows that D&I should be a part of the talent management policies and decisions”. Some solutions are way more accessible than it looks: re-evaluating job requirements, analyzing the diversity of the company's talent pipeline from a succession perspective to ensure different people can reach C-level, track career movements segmented by people (Sigelman and Taylor 2021).

### ***5.5. Hybrid and Remote Work Modes***

The pandemic created a unique time for many workers to work at home for a long time. This opportunity made many appreciate the ability to prioritize other life aspects by staying

more at home. The new reality pushed secondary trends such as the great resignation<sup>1</sup>, quiet quitting,<sup>2</sup> and the four working days per week, and although it is still too early to know if those will have a long-lasting impact, what we can already know for sure is that the new work modes are bid to become the rule and not the exception, research shows that less than 10% of workers prefer a full-time presential job (Wigert 2022). McKinsey research suggests that the new work modes trend will stay after Covid-19. However, besides that, there is a disconnection between different segments inside the company - while core employees generally want to be in the office three or more times a week, almost half of the employees prefer to be a home for at least three days. Complete alignment and unanimity on a preferred work mode are unlikely, and companies must find the best way to accommodate different preferences (Smet et al 2022).

## **5.6. Data**

New big data solutions are coming up every day. The new analytics possibilities are essential to take talent management to the next level by helping Human Resources to make better decisions throughout the talent lifecycle instead of just picking things out of thin air. Another advantage is a better understanding contributors' related phenomena such as absenteeism, retention, and performance. Research shows that 82% of companies plan to begin or increase the use of big data post-covid (Jackson 2021).

Big data and Artificial Intelligence (AI) are powering up several HR policies and processes, including talent management. Available AI platforms are already in use in the

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<sup>1</sup>.

Psychologist Anthony Klotz crafted the term. It describes the labor shortage records during the pandemic (Gloude mans 2022).

<sup>2</sup> Quiet quitting means remaining in one's workplace while not actively going above and beyond (Pearce 2022).

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market. A benchmark is Fusemachines, which helps the HR team predict talent needs the company will have based on past data on vacancies across departments. Another example is AI auto-generated advertisement also assists the firm in creating personalized ads targeted at the candidate.

## **6. Case Study Company Interviews**

The starting point of this research was to investigate if the talent management practices of the company XYZ were ready for the future of work. We compared the collected benchmark with the case study to apply the gathered knowledge from the literature review successfully. The first step was to hear employees from different backgrounds, seniority, gender, roles, and others through interviews. The questions aimed to grasp the worker's perception of the company's talent management, human resources practices, a vision of the future of work, and internal readiness for it.

### ***6.1. Interview 1***

A first interviewee is a man who has held his position in the company for eight months.

In his perception, the future of work has to be linked to career development and agility in organizations. Training is a crucial point, however, it is not just about this and training people to become digital, but installing a learning culture, where people have to understand that they have to be learners, and this he thinks they still do not have. Although much good work is done, it is not Human Resources or the managers who should say that now the employees should do specific training. However, they should have this initiative in constant personal and professional development. Another critical point is mobility, where they have to learn to have processes, succession plans, and knowledge management so that people can move. Moreover, for this, they need to have the ability to be adaptable so that they can also retain people for the company's growth and efficiency.

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*"The recipes that gave us success today will probably not be the recipes that will give us success in the future because the world is changing very fast." (Interviewee 1)*

Regarding onboarding, the interviewee clarified that this process should be more normalized within each department. This is because, in general terms of the company, the onboarding is very centralized and works well. However, each department works very differently, and this consistency needs to be improved.

However, an exciting point he also mentioned was the importance of off-boarding. In case an employee receives a better job offer or opportunity and wants to leave, it is essential to maintain a good relationship, not only for referring and saying good things about the company where they have been but also to ensure that if one day the person wants to return, the company will remain open to receive them.

When asked what aspects of the workplace and processes he thinks are essential for employees now and in the future, he replied that he does not consider money to be the most important thing but that pay compensations and fair benefits are a crucial angle. On the other hand, with the change we have seen over the years, now more than ever, employees are looking for more flexibility.

*"The world changed massively, in two years, probably the biggest social experiment in the last centuries, and people want different things, I think it is probably a lot healthier." (Interviewee 1)*

## **6.2. Interview 2**

The second interviewee is a woman who joined the company almost four years ago, in February 2019.

Her team is composed of two people, however, they intend to increase the workforce, mainly due to the increase of processes that they have in progress. The recruitment process starts with a manager identifying a need for a specific area, either because it is a new function

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or a replacement for someone leaving and introducing it on the *Cornerstone* platform. After that, the recruitment team has to verify with the Reporting and Analytics area to check whether the company has a headcount to recruit. Only after that can the process get going. Having that in mind, recruitment can be done internally or externally. Within external recruitment, there are several types of processes, namely: recruitment of full-time employees (FTEs), who possess much experience with a certain level of expertise for long-term and continuity functions in the company; recruitment of trainees, to do professional internships of twelve months or curricular internships (less than twelve months); and, recruitment for temporary work, to bridge a specific need that may exist due to the quick replacement of someone who is in maternity/paternity leave or absent from a prolonged illness. Focusing on FTEs, the vacancy will always be first published internally for ten days. After this period, if there are no positive results, the vacancy gets published externally on different media platforms (company's website, *LinkedIn*, recruitment partner) depending on the profile being searched.

Regarding trainees, the company advertises in similar media platforms and universities, where they already have vital contacts for sharing profiles and for internal dissemination of the opportunities in their networks of students and alumni. Adding to that, and for these two types of recruitment, the company publishes the job on the *Get Talent* platform, a pilot program registering positive outcomes. Lastly, the application is channeled directly to the company's recruitment partners for temporary work. On outsourcing recruitment, the interviewee stated that the process had not gone directly through them, although it is something that they would want to take over for better control. Once the applications for the different types of jobs start to come in, the interview part of the process commences unfolding. A telephone interview takes place in the first phase, screening the applicants. Then, they move on to a face-to-face interview via *Teams*, and in the last phase, they try, as much as possible, to bring people to their facilities.

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When asked about how they evaluate the success of the processes, the interviewee pointed to a need for more analysis on turnover. However, although in the last two years, the number of people leaving the company has been increasing due to a more heated market, people usually do not leave in their first year at the company. The employee feedback on the process is positive, with 94% of the admitted employees classifying it as good or very good on an internal survey. However, there is always room for improvement in different parts of the process. Therefore, considering the future challenges that may arise, the interviewee suggested the importance of having critical partnerships with institutions crucial in attracting talent, such as universities from different areas.

The future of recruitment is still being determined, nonetheless, the interviewee came up with some reasons that make her believe it will be harder to find and attract talent. While pointing to the fact that candidates now have different needs than before, she added that the concept of a job for life is a thing of the past, and flexibility is vital.

*"They are going to want to have more flexibility, they are going to want to work anywhere in the world, they do not want to be obliging to come to the office once or twice a week, by the way, three do not even think about it, so sometimes one is too much, they want to have the freedom to be the perfect digital nomad, don't they?" (Interviewee 2)*

To face these changes, the interviewee stated that the way to go is to act accordingly and give the candidates what they are looking for: a flexible program of benefits that lets the applicant have the right work-life balance.

*"It is not just a question of salary anymore, and it is a question of flexibility, which is something that is a paradigm different from what it was two or three years ago." (Interviewee 2)*

*"Life insurance, pension plans, these are things that younger people do not value at all, they often do not even know how it works, and so they want things right away." (Interviewee 2)*

### **6.3. Interview 3**

The third interviewees are two women, one of them having been in the company since September 2022.

When talking about the onboarding process, which both considered well-structured and works well, they were asked what they could improve. The answer was that they would love to implement an event that brings together all the people that integrate the company and the newcomers, where activities are carried out that allow them to get to know each other better and, consecutively, the company's values.

Looking into the future of work, they think that the onboarding process might be very different in ten years, considering the employees' needs and the evolution of technology. Combining these two factors, one possibility will be the onboarding done from home, using technologies such as Virtual Reality (VR).

*“Possibly we can be in our house and use VR to meet and learn with other people.”*

*(Interviewees 3)*

When asked if the social part and going to the office would still be necessary in case they work only from home, they answered yes because they like to be with others face to face. They also need to gain experience in what it is like to work with people only in the office or online.

However, they concluded that this factor will always depend a lot on each person's background in work experience and what they are or are not used to, but the ideal would be hybrid.

*“But the favorite was hybrid because you could get like the best of both worlds.”*

*(Interviewees 3)*

#### **6.4. Interview 4**

The fourth interviewee is a woman who has been in the company for about a year.

As the company's industry is a highly regulated sector, and as stated in the interview, the company has fourteen contents of mandatory training plus, for everyone who has contact directly or indirectly with a client, an initial training of 80 hours and an annual training of 15 hours. Apart from this, the company ensures that everyone has their development plan on the basis that it is to the needs of the area managers and can be adjusted to the current demand. The other and last way the company offers training to their employees is by offering to pay the tuition (or half of it) for higher education programs in Portugal or abroad. The current training portfolio has about one thousand pieces of content, which external partners typically provide.

Asked about how the company assesses the success of the training contents, the interviewee diagnosed a need for methods to do it, stating that, currently, it is all about direct feedback from a superior.

*“(...) direct feedback from the manager who comes to the Academy and says: Well [interviewee 4] that worked for that person, it went fine, I can see some improvements in his or her role.” (Interviewee 4)*

The interviewee suggested checking how the employee accomplished their goals on a specific topic three months after the training. However, she pointed out that some skills might be harder to evaluate than others.

*“But some others, and of course much more in soft skills, are harder to identify, harder to measure that difference between what was my initial point of starting and now what have I improved.” (Interviewee 4)*

To understand better whether the employees are satisfied and if their needs are being fulfilled, the company asks them to give their level of satisfaction for each content. According

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to the interviewee, the employees appreciate and recognize the investments made by the company.

*"Of course, the Youngers will say, I am fed up with mandatory training because they did not reach the time to get to the sexier «contents.» But overall, the people who are more than two or three years in the company recognize that there is much content to use and many opportunities to do." (Interviewee 4)*

On the challenges that might arise in the future, the interviewee explained that people got fed up with online content during the pandemic and were urged to be in a room together. The issue comes when the training providers ask for higher prices for in-person activities making the company adjust its budget. Moreover, people more and more need more time to learn and, therefore, want to learn fast with only the relevant message.

*"[They do not want to be there] for 4 hours explaining how we got here and why we will get somewhere. [They] want to know how to get there, and I think that will be a huge challenge for us once more." (Interviewee 4)*

Adding to that, and considering the company's sector, where there are different age groups among the employees, it leads to the need to adjust to different levels of ambition for their careers and different learning paces. This must be centered on more interesting, disruptive, and relevant ways of transmitting the same content.

Among these ways, the new possibilities that *Artificial Intelligence* brings to the table might make the entire training process easier with even better results. However, according to the interviewee, deep down, it will always depend on how curious the person is.

*"But in the end, we are always talking about individuals, willing to grow or not, maybe just simply being in their comfort zone without stepping up and being curious. Moreover, there is something that I cannot change in that human [nature]." (Interviewee 4)*

### **6.5. Interview 5**

The fifth interviewee is a man who joined the company about two months ago.

When asked about his recruitment process, the interviewee stated that it was a complete and thorough process where all the steps made perfect sense. It consisted of four moments, three of them being interviews and a final and fourth one, a psycho-technical test.

Regarding his onboarding experience, the feedback was similar.

*“ I was very well received, I liked very much the way I was welcomed, and then the process of onboarding was phased, i.e., I had an initial phase here, with the human resources, and then we had, the P&O organized here four days, four sessions, with new colleagues, so I and more colleagues who entered more or less in my time, in the last months, (...) we had the opportunity to meet the leaders of all the teams, of all areas, realize how the company is organized, what each one does in general, how the teams connect, so I think the process of the whole [onboarding] was excellent, I feel very well integrated (...).” (Interviewee 5)*

The interviewee stated that he already had several pieces of training, including the company's mandatory training. Although not applicable to his case, he mentioned that in specific functions, when people arrive, they have someone who helps them understand precisely how they should proceed in their role.

Regarding his experience in both processes and how they influenced his view of the company, the interviewee pointed out that it helped him, without any doubt, to have a more accurate and precise perception of the company and that by understanding exactly what the other areas do and how everything connects, it helped him see the bigger picture and understand the purpose of his job. Lastly, it gave him a more detailed view of the company's culture and values, which he always looks for in a company to check if it is by his values.

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On improvements in any of the processes, the interviewee suggested that the recruitment process could have been faster. However, he stated that it was just standard since there were holidays and some negotiations on his side on the offer along the way.

*"(...) comparatively, other processes I have had recruiting to other companies here made more sense the way things are." (Interviewee 5)*

## **6.6. Interview 6**

The sixth interviewee was a man who joined the company less than two years ago.

When asked about his recruitment process, the interviewee mentioned it was a fast, transparent process where his expectations were met at every step.

Looking over his onboarding process, the interviewee explained that he joined the company during the pandemic when no one was in the office. Nevertheless, his feedback was positive too. It allowed him to have a closer look at how the company is organized and even to get some company's industry-related notions, something that was entirely new to him at that time.

*"(...) even though it was remotely, I think everything went quite well. There was much openness in transmitting knowledge to me and making me comfortable with the dynamics of the team and the company." (Interviewee 6)*

On the training topic, the interviewee mentioned that he still needs to do the mandatory training and that his boss is aware of that situation.

His experiences in both processes contributed significantly to his optimistic take on the company since he felt that his well-being was an important topic for the intervenients in both processes.

*"(...) I think this motivated me a lot because I felt that there was a concern to know how I was doing, if I was learning, if I was enjoying it if I was integrated, and this, by the way, was one of the things that impressed me most in the process, this concern." (Interviewee 6)*

When asked about possible improvements in the two processes, the interviewee needed to add more information. However, he would like to see the same care he felt during both processes being extended throughout the time, especially in middle management.

### **6.7. Interview 7**

Our seventh interviewee is a woman who joined the organization in June 2016, which makes a total of six years with the company.

Regarding the training offered by the company, she mentioned that there is a Business Academy that contains contents of the most diverse topics and that is available to any employee. If there is no topic of interest on this platform, the employees may always request that a training course be available. However, it is always subject to analysis and acceptance by the company.

*"All of this has to be approved as is natural, but yes, I have already made this proposal twice, and it was accepted, so yes." (Interviewee 7)*

When asked what her best training experience at the company was, she replied that it was a certification she had requested in Emotional Intelligence, which she took through an external entity for five days.

*"The one I liked the most was the last one I requested, which was a certification in Emotional Intelligence by an external entity. It was a 5-day intensive training outside the company, and as it was a certification, also hence the need to be more intense, let us say." (Interviewee 7)*

Concerning the methods for learning a new competence, she reveals that she prefers presential training because it is more dynamic and productive and allows deeper sharing among colleagues. Practical cases are proposed which require more interaction among the participants.

*"When there is a practical part to the training, getting people to work in groups or some kind of dynamic during the training, I think this type of incentive is always good because it makes it more dynamic and stimulates a little bit of sharing between people." (Interviewee 7)*

### **6.8. Interview 8**

The eighth interviewee is a woman who joined the organization five years ago.

Throughout her time in the company, the interviewee has done several pieces of training without any of them taking the place of the best or worst training she had. However, she stated that the more practical the training, the better, and online training also tends to get boring faster. The interviewee felt that only some relevant competencies or topics were included in all this training. However, they mentioned that the content usually focuses on the work each person needs to do and the projects people have or want to have.

The interviewee had an extreme preference regarding types of learning. She pointed out that practical and face-to-face are undoubtedly the best ways to avoid losing focus due to external interruptions.

*"Practical and face-to-face are the best for the current context because one is underwater and one has to concentrate, and one has to focus and to help us focus, practical, and face-to-face is best, because otherwise there [are] emails [coming] in, phones ringing, people interrupting, so it is [harder] to be focused." (Interviewee 8)*

Concerning the possible improvements in the training methods and contents, the interviewee separated it into two groups. On the one hand, content-wise, she would like to see training more focused on the future, letting the employees stay updated on new technologies and ways to do the same thing.

*"I think that in terms of contents (...) something that would reassure us in the sense of I am going to give this training in a way that you can keep up with the future that is more technological, that is more digital, that will eventually be, I do not know, more dynamic, that can spread us the technical knowledge, that can keep us up to date (...)." (Interviewee 8)*

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On the other hand, format-wise, the interviewee feels that people are tired of always seeing the same layout and that anything that builds on that and comes in a different format can only have positive impacts.

*"A more classic training does not get our curiosity and attention as much. So, anything that is a little bit off the beaten track, I think, will be a greater value for us to be awake and attentive, and for it to be a training that impacts us and for us to be an ambassador for that training itself." (Interviewee 8)*

*"Look, some avatars, nice things. The person goes like that for an immersive reality. Something like that, which is much more fun." (Interviewee 8)*

Still, on suggestions of improvements for the training, the interviewee added that it is essential to pay attention to the quantity and not overload the employees with content that, in the end, it could be more beneficial for the person. She also stated clearly that it is important to remind employees that it cannot be the company's sole responsibility (and vice-versa) to make this process successful. It is crucial to find a balance between the effort each part puts on the table. Lastly, she suggested having a company manager help the employee find and inform them about some topics that might be useful in their area in the future and the corresponding training on those topics.

## **6.9. Interview 9**

The ninth interviewee is a woman who has been in the company for six years.

When we asked her to explain the recruitment process, she told us that the applications are submitted via the website, LinkedIn, and contacts, and then the Human Resources team evaluates and filters them. Then they send the results of this approach to the manager and the recruiting area so they can also analyze and conduct the interviews.

As points to be improved in the recruitment process, she identified the recommendations, which she considers to be sometimes difficult to distinguish if what they

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receive corresponds to reality or if it is adulterated information, which can consecutively lead to a casting error.

*"Sometimes, and unfortunately not always, what we receive is true, and therefore there is always some difficulty in the interviews for us to understand what we are receiving, whether it corresponds to reality or not." (Interviewee 9)*

Regarding onboarding, this was mentioned by the interviewee in a very positive way, consisting of several moments at a particular moment of the year when newcomers are brought together and introduced and presented with the activities and responsibilities of each area of the company.

However, among all the very positive aspects, she considers that there is still room for improvement, which is to offer new employees the opportunity to have a trainee program, where they can work for some time in different areas so that they can have a live experience and understand in which areas they see themselves effectively performing in the company.

*"It may be interesting to be identified as a pool of recently arrived employees, especially in a trainee process, in which they are, in fact, a little lost, they do not know whether what they like is area x or area y, especially in a large company like ours that has different areas, and eventually they will be allowed to have a trainee program." (Interviewee 9)*

Asking about the main challenges and future opportunities of recruitment, she argued that the next step would be to look more at what are the soft skills of people and not so much at the hard skills because this process is still very focused on what is the experience and academic background of the employees.

*"Our company does not do any kind of tests, that is, people are recruited, but there are no tests, namely at the soft skills level, that can assess this type of information so that the manager can evaluate if this is the right person or not to work within the team." (Interviewee 9)*

### **6.10. Interview 10**

The tenth interviewee is a man who joined the company in 1992, so thirty years ago, and is almost considered a founder member.

Regarding the recruitment process, the interviewee mentioned that this selection has as a first objective to privilege people in the house, therefore giving priority to internal recruitment and only then to an external one.

*"Even for the sake of talent, rotation, and all those qualities that are very important in people, we always try to have a selection process that I would say favors people who are in-house because they already have a certain culture, and they can also grow and develop themselves, so I would say that this is the main pillar." (Interviewee 10)*

When asked about the improvement points in this process, he replied that it is possible to change how the interview is conducted in the case of external recruitment. Instead of being something more formal, where curriculums are analyzed, people try to get to know the person and ask questions. It should be more interactive, where the candidates can make a specific presentation or expose a free theme.

*"In the sense that people would show themselves, and we would not be so much trying to fit certain things that sometimes require a half-hour conversation on a certain profile that may not be adjusted." (Interviewee 10)*

As far as the onboarding process is concerned, although he thinks that it is very robust and well structured, he believes that there is room for improvement in the planning; that is, regardless of the time needed to dedicate to the respective functions, it must also be balanced with the time to be with the person and listen to their difficulties.

*"We have to strike a balance between the time we have available to receive these people well, knowing that by giving them this time we have less time for our routines, but being sure*

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*that shortly this time we spend with people will be repaid with the individual and collective well-being of the team." (Interviewee 10)*

Considering teams, a crucial aspect, he was asked about which competencies he thinks to need to be offered for their development. He answered that people should be even more proactive in challenging themselves and the organization and be recognized and valued for their originality and contribution.

*"People being even more proactive, so creating the conditions so that the company, regardless of the possibility of people being genuine and expressing their opinions, be recognized and valued for the spontaneity of the contribution they can make." (Interviewee 10)*

## **7. Interviews Main Points**

### ***7.1. The Company Lacks a Shared Vision for the Future of Work***

A crucial step for any company to become ready for the future of work is a solid understanding of what to expect from that future. Without shared expectations that everybody understands, it becomes difficult for the company to act consistently when challenges and changes eventually arise. If departments respond to challenges differently and in an unaligned way, some form of chaos is likely to follow.

However, the expectations towards the future of work observed during our interviews were defined mainly by ambiguity. The responses by those responsible for the essential talent management processes to our questions regarding opportunities and challenges of the future were diverse and only overlapped in one area: all respondents brought up remote work in one way or another and expressed that they perceive virtual work and content consumption as a challenge. None of the interviewees seemed to have a plan on how to leverage the trends of the future of work to their company's advantage. This lack of alignment and perspective was

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emphasized when the interviewees were about assessing their success and responded that the company could do a better job at evaluating performance.

## ***7.2. Learning and Development Frameworks Are Not Ready for Upcoming Changes***

As mentioned before, automation will substantially transform company employees' jobs today. According to McKinsey & Co., about 50% of today's work activities are automatable (Manyika et al. 2017). This would mean that, on the one hand, half of the company's workforce would suddenly be out of work, while at the same time, there is a massive demand for people who can set up, maintain, and use automated systems to perform these same tasks in the employee's place.

The observed company's learning and development strategy, however, is mainly focused on building and improving workers' skills for today's jobs instead of preparing them for new tasks and responsibilities. During the interviews, company employees especially mentioned mandatory training in the insurance industry, language classes, software training, and certifications that improve general business skills, such as a workshop for emotional intelligence. None of them mentioned programs that would prepare them to change their career paths or roles within the company should there be a need to do so, as it could, for example, be triggered by automation.

Our assumption that the learning framework at the observed company is not ready for significant future changes is additionally grounded in the fact that all training seems to be structured around a "development plan" that is seemingly developed individually for each employee when they enter the company. Such plans will most likely be tailored to the role the employee has when joining the firm and does not facilitate agility of the workforce as we suggest is needed to master the changes in how work is done.

## **8. Interview Analysis vs. Internal Documents – Case Study Company Outlook**

In this section, we combined an analysis of the main topics pointed out during the different interviews with an overlook of the main takeaways from the provided documents of the company XYZ. The main goal was to understand and have a clear view of topics that were common in the interviews and on the internal documents to come to settlements on three distinct topics:

- Areas where the company has been doing good work;
- Areas where the company still needs to endeavor to achieve better and more efficient outcomes;
- General trends or perspectives on how the future of work will develop.

Considering this, several general topics burst from the interviews and the documents. To start with, there was this constant idea that, nowadays already, people expect more from their jobs. The three main forces at work are technology, social change (flexibility, and control across the life course, values, expectations, and career choices), and demographic change (aging, non-retirement, longer life expectancy, growth of younger and older populations, and greater workforce diversity).

On the Technology side, it was stated that automation, Artificial Intelligence, machine learning, and advanced analytics (technological and digital tools that are developing) are expected to notice an improvement in productivity and better access to information and ideas, which promotes work and job change. They can and should be applied in the organization's recruitment, onboarding, and training processes. It is essential not to forget that, with the development of these technologies, the sense of insecurity and fear of job loss, remote working, less office space, and demand for social interaction also rises with this growing automation of work and new leadership and management techniques are needed.

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Regarding Social Changes, there is a high demand for flexible work options, which has resulted in a decline in employment contracts, an increase in self-employment and multiple contracts for employees (working simultaneously for various organizations), a greater variety of contracts regarding working conditions and locations, shorter tenures for managers and employees, remote working, a decrease in office space. In one sentence, people will want to come closer to the *digital nomad* stereotype, people who live in a nomadic way while working remotely using technology and the internet.

Lastly, when it comes to Demographics, specific changes are expected to happen due to factors such as an increase in the average age of the workforce (age diversity), gender and cultural diversity (more and more women are entering and remaining in the workforce) and increasing cultural diversity due to increased migration in some geographies. It is also crucial to remember that in contrast to the past workforce, today's social capital is highly mobile (there is no such thing as a job for life), volatile, and motivated by a new set of psychological factors. These changes, and the lack of keeping up with them by the company, holds when looking at the company's *2021 Employee Climate and Engagement Survey*, where the lowest scores given by the employees were in the *Compensation & Recognition* and the *Retaining Talent People* criteria (46 and 31, respectively). The first item showed that only 23% of employees believe their pay is competitive compared to those holding comparable positions at other companies. Only 32% believe the firm needs to do a better job of aligning compensation with performance. Both metrics are down from last year's performance and under the industry average.

Regarding the second metric, only 31% of the organization's employees think it is doing an excellent job keeping its best personnel. This identical question scored 4 points less this year than last and continues to fall short of all external benchmark norms. Zooming in on some specific segments, such as employees between the ages of 31 and 40 and those with tenures between 6 and 10, makes this result even more important. Another critical change that started

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to happen some years ago and will become more evident shortly is that people shifted from a *Ladder Career* – The person starts at the bottom of the ladder and works the way up till retirement. It follows the conventional concept with one career option, one kind of business, and one kind of job; to the *Mosaic model* – Transforms our professional lives from a narrowly defined path based on a core set of abilities to a composition of talents, creativity, skills, and values. Therefore, Company XYZ must plan and implement new procedures to consider all of these considerations.

## **9. Additional Observations**

Before moving on to recommendations for the investigated company, we want to look at how our findings from the interviews relate to the output of our literature review so that a problem set can be defined and guide our recommendations.

### ***9.1. Reskilling and the Skills Gap***

Findings from the literature review indicated the need for better and more agile learning and development of employees (McKinsey 2021). Global recruitment figures show the most significant gap between skill demand and supply in 16 years, and the skills in need today are also becoming obsolete faster (World Economic Forum 2021). Therefore, it is evident that organizations will benefit from procuring or developing the human capital that possesses the needed skills internally. Similarly, in one of the interviews, it was explicitly expressed that learning and development, which includes reskilling or upskilling, can solve or mend the demand for talent with the needed hard and soft skills.

## ***9.2. Learning Culture***

The interviews also revealed that the company needs to work on its culture of learning, or even the lack of such a culture today. One of the interviewees in the company's people and organization department stated this. The reference to culture was understood as a direction of change toward building learning agility and self-learning motivation within employees through an organizational culture that promotes this mindset. Theories such as Mindset Theory, Growth Mindset Theory, and Learning Agility support the positive outcomes of collective motivation toward learning (Dweck 2015; Lombardo and Eischinger 2000). Furthermore, new generational attitudes towards work and events such as the Covid-19 pandemic have impacted how the role of work is perceived in our lives. The trend that shows the demand for work flexibility encapsulates not only remote work but also the demand for employers who can create a working environment that caters to current needs. A recent study showed that over 70% of Millennials and Generation Z (Gen Z) workers are willing to quit their job due to the lack of skill-building and mobility initiatives in their current organizations (Schwabel 2022). It builds on the understanding that there is a shift in how we view employment and jobs as not static but rather something temporary compared to previous times (Perna 2022). Learning and a collective mindset are a part of the company's future work problem set.

## ***9.3. Internal Mobility***

Moreover, the interviewees understood the trend toward internal job mobility and the need for internal mobility. Increased mobility and fluidity of an employee's career, either by upskilling or reskilling them into new roles or parts of the company, could partly solve the increasing turnover rates that the future of work literature claims to affect organizations around the world (World Economic Forum 2020). Therefore, the ability to reskill and retrain employees and improve internal mobility pay into one important overall dimension for the company:

Agility. To be ready or prepared for any future, a company must be willing to respond to change; It must be nimble enough to react fast and flexible enough to adapt to whatever unforeseen scenario it finds itself in. Since we cannot predict what the future is going to look like, a company needs to be able to adjust as new requirements become apparent. A flexible workforce is one of the company's most critical capabilities to achieve this flexibility. As specific teams, for example, departments and business processes become obsolete when the company's environment changes, new areas that need to be staffed emerge. If a company can use those employees who work in an outdated part of the company to form the workforce for new initiatives, it can react much faster and with less cost. It also means that it is less difficult to revert changes making it more feasible to experiment with new initiatives that allow the company to act proactively instead of just reacting to changes. Flexibility is also a matter of mindset; If employees expect, are used to, and embrace frequent change, it is reasonable to expect that they handle change much more gracefully than employees who are used to a more rigid environment. While the company already enables internal mobility, for example, by listing job ads internally before they are advertised externally, it seems like it does not encourage internal mobility in a way that would make changing roles a default rather than an exception and cause the cultural changes that we discussed before.

#### ***9.4. Artificial Intelligence***

Artificial Intelligence is often regarded as the frontier of technology regarding the future of work. Its impact is often discussed whether its automation and self-learning capabilities may replace workers and their tasks at a rapid rate or if it can create new opportunities for organizations and their employees. Literature suggests that AI will make talent management processes such as upskilling, reskilling, and recruitment as effective and value-adding as possible (Schwab 2018). AI was mentioned during the interviews and proved at least a basic understanding of the technology's existence and possibility. However, the organization needs

more outstanding performance and artificial intelligence to compete in work talent management and acquisition. The use of AI within talent management is expected to grow by 56% in the next year (Venturebeat 2022). Some examples of using AI within organizations are platforms such as Claro, Eightfold, and Seekout, which have been shown to improve recruiting results, career planning and mobility, and identifying talent potential (Venturebeat 2022).

## **10. Recommendations**

After discussing the current state of the literature on the future of work, how the interviews that build the foundation of this work were conducted, what results they yielded, and how the two connect, the next step is to derive some actionable recommendations. The recommendations that are expressed in the following section are tailored towards the interviewed company but are generic enough to apply to other organizations as well:

### ***10.1. Cultivate a Learning Culture***

Company XYZ should build a reliable infrastructure to foster a learning culture. As discussed, a learning culture and the change towards a collective growth mindset can promote agility and resilience towards future re- and up-skilling needs. It encourages learning output performance and motivation to engage in new challenges (Rives 2020; Marsik and Watkins 2003; Rock and Grant 2022). Therefore, it is proposed here that the organization applies a three-part analysis structure of learning culture, containing structural, individual, and environmental measures, as explained by Valamis (2021).

Firstly, structure regards the facilitation of learning and development within your organization. The dedication of funds and time to enable a learning culture is highly important. Furthermore, re-assess your organization's permissions to learn its formats and platforms. Open access to learning material, rather than restrictive, in combination with continuous assessment

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of learning, has found support to foster an organizational learning culture (Gredmark and Larnhed 2021).

Secondly, from an individual perspective, a learning culture should aim to facilitate time to learn and motivation to learn. The biggest constraint is needing more time to learn (Valamis 2020). Therefore, I suggest that organizations align ample time and goals each month for employees to enrich themselves with new topics and skills aligned with their strategic goals. Moreover, the essential part of facilitating learning within an individual is motivational encouragement. The theory surrounding Growth Mindset's is written extensively about in the future of work studies. The definition is based on individual traits characterized by learning from failures and seeing one's skillset as malleable. Carol Dweck (2002) proposes frequent mindset interventions of employees from managers, which have been proven through large-scale studies to have a performance-enhancing effect on learning and motivation over time. Hence, Company XYZ should implement a growth mindset via added support by external consultancies that could help facilitate it within the organization.

Lastly, the organization should assess its internal environment after assessing and aligning its structural and individual factors. Even though it is a unique part of the overall model, it can be seen as the sum of the structural and individual parts. Essentially, it refers to the organization's overall work environment, culture, and mindset (Valamis 2022). Fostering an environment that celebrates creativity and embraces failure is critical while allowing for an open and non-punishable environment that shares knowledge and opinions without repercussions (Saputra et al. 2018).

In conclusion, building a learning culture is not a linear science but a collective input that can be fostered over time by including all actors within an organization. Hence, if the organization builds the appropriate structure and space for learning, individual facilitation

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support and growth mindset, a learning culture is well on its way to increasing sustainability, agility and performance to meet future work needs within its talent management processes.

### ***10.2. Build a Career Model that Allows Job Mobility***

Many rising trends will need a response from companies as soon as possible since they are already emerging since the pandemic. One is the desire of new generations to have new job experiences. More and more new employees want to feel fulfilled and stimulated by their work, and spending years in similar positions may not be the best call for everyone.

Besides that, an emphasis is on creating a learning culture focused on the skills one may need to get the next promotion and on gathering more skills and knowledge for different job families and areas. The new reality will also proportionate an environment prosperous to reskilling; people can choose to get training on topics and skills related to another knowledge area, being prepared in a considerable short-term for a new position.

To capitalize on these trends, a key recommendation is to build a revamped career model ready for the future of work - simply having performance reviews yearly to fill up new promotions and roles horizontally in the organizational hierarchy is not enough anymore. For the years to come, companies need to have different criteria that allow horizontal, vertical, and even diagonal movements in the organizational charts, providing freedom to contributors to aim to go anywhere during their careers.

A career model for the 21<sup>st</sup> century must also be powered up by clear job descriptions available to the organization and diverse free training options that permit any employee to become ready by him or to fill a vacancy or new role in the organization. The employee should be supported by their direct manager or someone from the chosen target area; this way, a smoother preparation, and potential transition could be done.

Any horizontal or diagonal movement must be supported by set criteria just as a vertical one would. Continuous personal feedback potentiates contributors to know at which point they

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are regarding their current job and future career possibilities. An excellent example of an initiative to support a new career model is McKinsey's development s-curve.

McKinsey authors state that an s-curve can exemplify every person's growth in a job: first, whenever someone starts and still needs to get acquainted with the tasks and activities, second the ascension phase, when the contributor gets comfortable and showcases a significant rise in a small amount of time, third the sweet spot whenever the person has complete control over the job and needs the company's support to go to the next and final phase: The start of a new s-curve triggered by a career movement, independently of being within the same job family or not (Brassey, Gene Kuo, and Van Dam 2019).

The inclusion of these initiatives not only responds to future work trends but also helps to prevent future perceived hazards such as job hopping since it powers up an internal learning culture, establishes a personal and consistent feedback loop, and finally provides contributors from the current generation with different and exciting opportunities inside their company.

### ***10.3. Building a More Automated and Inclusive Company Through AI***

The arrival of Artificial Intelligence has come to revolutionize and influence the way we live, especially when it comes to our workplace. Thus, companies and their future leaders must develop a working knowledge of implementing and functioning with AI in employment.

On the other hand, this implementation also allows work to be automated, enabling specific tasks to be carried out more quickly and efficiently than humans. The aim is not to completely replace humans but to create tools that help them and free up more time to perform other functions. Additionally, this technology contributes to a more diverse and inclusive environment, as it helps, for example, to understand the unconscious bias of humans during the hiring process.

Therefore, XYZ must implement a platform that uses AI to facilitate talent management initiatives and the recruitment process. One good example used in the industry is Eightfold's

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Talent Intelligence Platform, which consists of a single artificial intelligence platform for all talent. The most significant global talent dataset powers this tool to unlock the workforce's full potential, including employees, candidates, contractors, and citizens. Regarding talent management, the platform offers the following functions:

- **Internal Mobility** - Here, a match is made of all current employees in the company, together with all the available positions where they have the potential to succeed. That said, employees can quickly identify, be notified of, apply to relevant opportunities, and then be recruited. This process has the significant advantages of reducing the attrition and expense of replacing employees, retaining the best talent before it is lost to the competition, and engaging the workforce based on individual potential.
- **Talent Upskilling** - A dashboard analysis is carried out, providing visibility of progress at the individual employee and organizational levels so that it can be planned, executed, and adjusted to its upskilling strategies.
- **Talent Marketplace** - Employees can browse a list of internal company projects to find out about programs matching their skills and preferences. This way, managers find employees who match the skills required for each project and invite them to join. This whole process is carried out without bias.
- **Career Planning** - This feature allows employees to understand their career path based on their current position, so they can see their career in the company and gain the confidence to stay in it.
- **Succession Planning** - This planning combines dynamic skill analysis, talent intelligence, and skill adjacencies to support leaders in critical role planning. In this way, an automatic recommendation is made of current employees who can take on a particular role in case a succession event occurs.

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- Talent Redeployment - A rapid workforce transition is made to open positions where the skills required to contribute are immediately achieved, reducing redundancy costs and negative impacts on the employer brand dramatically.
- Talent Mentoring - This feature allows one to find a willing expert to advise the employee based on what the worker wants to learn and encourages them to stay in the company and grow in their career.

This platform increases internal mobility by 25%, cuts talent acquisition time by 90%, and reduces hiring costs by 60% (Eightfold n.d.).

Another feature of this platform that gives high relevance to candidates is an experience that instantly shows each candidate the right jobs for them and explains why their skills and background are suitable. So they receive more appropriate feedback, do not feel unwanted and undervalued, and allow for a reduction in the number of clicks to make applying faster, easier, and more encouraging. In this way, company XYZ also creates an excellent first impression. Even if candidates are not accepted, they are given a good experience within the short time they have had contact with the organization.

In conclusion, implementing this platform will not only meet the needs that employees are looking for but will also keep pace with new trends in the market and the future of work.

### ***10.4. Diversify and Refine a Work Flexibility Program***

To raise employee happiness and lower staff turnover, there is a need for freedom and flexibility. People nowadays want employment opportunities that are advantageous not just in terms of compensation but also in terms of cutting-edge perks, technical assistance, and flexibility to enable them to operate at their best.

According to statistics by *Workest*, 78% of employees believe that flexible work schedules boost their productivity, and 77% of those who apply for and evaluate employment

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possibilities think that flexible work arrangements are vital. It is also important to remember that employers and employees benefit from a flexible work environment. It not only aids in raising productivity inside the company but also generates numerous other benefits through employee happiness.

The current work flexibility program in the firm is a type of work arrangement that allows company employees to fulfill their job duties more conveniently and outside their regular place of employment. The work flexibility program encourages a work-life balance by creating a more positive and livelier workplace. Although well-structured and implemented, some aspects can still be refined and reinforced. The following consist of some possible examples that could be put into practice and combined depending on the availability of resources and needs:

- Flexible timetables: Employees may choose to have a compacted workweek or choose their hours, shifts, and break periods (i.e., working full-time in four days instead of five);
- Flexible location: The choice of working from home, the office, or another place is up to the employee. Although the *work flexibility program* already allows a maximum of two days a week, "if there is an agreement between the Employee and the direct Manager," it should be considered, at least for some positions, the extension to more days per week;
- Unlimited or flexible personal time off: Employees are allowed to take time off as needed without worrying about going over their allotted amount of vacation time;
- Versatile positions (job sharing): A single position is shared by two or more people, allowing them to work part-time while the role is filled full-time;
- Cross-department secondments: Employees can temporarily immerse themselves in another department's operations through cross-departmental secondments, keeping their "day job" intact.

When applying these measures, tracking how they are doing in terms of helping the company's results is crucial. It can be done by simply examining the company's financial performance. Customers and clients will also be dissatisfied if staff are, and the firm will suffer. Beyond that, there should be a regular checks with the employees to ensure their flexible work environment fulfills their requirements. It is possible to do it through surveys or one-on-one catchups.

### ***10.5. Create Company-Wide Initiatives to Create a Shared Vision***

As we discussed earlier, the interviews performed during this project showed that the case study company needs a shared understanding and vision of how it will tackle the future of work. Most of the previous recommendations are rather holistic and require that everybody in the company works together and that the issues are approached at different levels of the company. To ensure this happens, the company should identify and communicate the issues it deems most important (the authors of this report believe them to be the issues discussed in the four previous recommendations). After that, the company should identify measurable indicators to track progress toward these goals. For learning culture, this could be achieved by surveying employees on whether they feel they have improved their skills recently; For a more mobile career model, the company could track how many of its employees changed their roles within the company and how their performance as evaluated by their supervisors has improved by the change; The successful use of AI to remove biases from HR processes could be represented by changes in diversity at different hierarchy levels and also by questioning employees about their perceptions. Lastly, to confirm that increased work flexibility is helping the company, it could be measured how specific individuals' productivity and satisfaction increase. As overarching measures, turnover, the time employees spend at the company, and more standard HR-Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) should be tracked, but we can assume this is already happening. Having done this, the company should ask its policy owners and managers to propose initiatives

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they could perform and justify how these initiatives pay into the goals, and KPIs defined earlier. This would mean that: firstly, everybody understands the company's goals, and secondly, all initiatives are aligned. The initiatives could also be small-scale or encapsulated to specific departments or teams, allowing the comparison with other departments similar to A/B tests in marketing. This way, the company can identify the most promising initiatives to scale them up across the organization.

When asked, all managers and policy owners can clearly state how the company and their team, in particular, are approaching the future of work.

## 11. Limitations

During the project and our research, some limitations emerged, so the following should be considered:

- **Sample Size** - The number of employees we could interview was minimal and may have needed to be representative of the entire company.
- **Perspective** - The subjects addressed in the interviews were not chosen randomly, which may have compromised the responses and, consequently, the results. Furthermore, the company facilitated interviewees, which may also have biased the selection.
- **Reliability of the Results** - This point is also related to the previous two, so we can add that although there was a concern about creating a pleasant interview environment with non-compromising questions, it is possible that the interviewees gave socially correct or accepted answers rather than the whole reality. However, the findings from the interviews were used for educational contexts only, without disclosing the person concerned to either colleagues or the public.
- **Qualitative Research** - As previously mentioned, we used a qualitative approach. However, this approach brings some limitations, as being open-ended questions, it is more

difficult to measure the concrete conclusions compared to the other interviews. Additionally, the results cannot be generalized to the rest of the company. For this, a quantitative study of a focus group would be necessary.

## **12. Conclusion**

The future of work is a constant-changing, hard-to-grasp concept - what the future of work may be perceived as right now can be very different in a year. The myriad of possible scenarios may lead companies to fear or lack motivation to take the necessary steps to be prepared for the trends we observe at this moment in time. Facing this dilemma, it is essential to remember Heraclitus's dictum, "the only thing that is constant is change." If everything changes, companies need to invest in what has powered business to success generation after generation: its people.

The present research showed that the pandemic has tremendously shifted employees' mindsets and substantially influenced new generations. It is easy to assume they came to stay. Realizing their work is not their entire life, people want to feel valued and fulfilled at work, and old practices will not do in the future. Having strong culture and values as the backbone of your company and using them as a pivot to several policies during the talent lifecycle will make employees identify with the brand.

Seeing people want to feel their work matters in their lives and personal development, firms need to provide unique experiences in recruitment, onboarding, training, and more. There are several ways of doing that. Our case study, Company XYZ, has showcased good talent management practices taken as a response to the pandemic, but still need a concrete structure to be secure towards the future of work.

Company XYZ needs to focus on concrete measures with lasting benefits instead of quick-wins policies and procedures. Some actions we consider the right step to become future-

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proof are: 1) Use data and AI to all organization' parts favor by talent management tools implementation; 2) Create a learning culture, and make sure to stimulate workers to seek personal development beyond their job requirements, triggered by reskilling; 3) Promote flexibility across the organizational charts by providing vertical, horizontal, and diagonal career movements; 4) Make every person feel unique by having a personal feedback loop, prepare managers to guide different people and their needs; 5) Provide training and development initiatives that are also an experience: personal mentoring, job shadowing, and others.

The main point academic researchers and authors agree on the agreement is that human capital is the competitive advantage in the future. To apply the field of talent management to the future of work, upcoming works should focus on creating structured frameworks to help companies make better managerial decisions when creating and changing human resources initiatives.

Unstable environments are a source of opportunity. Focusing continuously on creating a value proposition in line with the new era and implementing the initiatives and changes that will potentiate the company's internal talent is the best approach to becoming future-proof against any hazards.

## **Future of Work Readiness Through Learning Agility**

### **13. Introduction**

Businesses depend on agile learners (De Meuse 2017). Learning agility, in other words, the ability to learn is a common feature in Future of Work literature as a solution to the growing skill gap and need for re-skilling and up-skilling within organizations (World Economic Forum 2020). Furthermore, A Growth Mindset (Dweck 2015) is the theory developed by Psychologist Carol Dweck and it is also a commonly covered topic regarding learning and development strategies within future of work studies. The theory proposes the difference in people's mindsets and how a growth mindset can be developed to foster proactive views on failure, increased learning motivation, and the malleability of an individual's own skill set.

Both theories surrounding learning agility and growth mindset have inherent similarities in their purpose to explain individual learning orientation, motivation for learning, and their effects on organizational performance. This study aims to explore how a Growth Mindset can promote learning agility and, in this way, instill future work readiness. Firstly, this study will define each theory through its existing literature. Secondly, it aims to bridge the academic gap in literature by comparing their conceptual similarities and differences. Thirdly, the work explores the theoretical link between the practice of growth mindset interventions and how it can increase learning motivation and therefore learning agility. Lastly, suggestions for further research are presented.

### **14. Methodology**

This study was conducted using a qualitative research design. Secondary data was gathered through existing scientific findings. It serves the purpose of a critical scientific review and aims to go beyond the explicit information stated in existing literature (Grant and Booth 2009). Moreover, this study takes a conceptual approach in reviewing Growth Mindset and

Learning Agility (Grant and Booth 2009). By assessing and identifying unexplored theoretical links and overlaps, it aims to add knowledge towards its connection of the Future Work Field and its facilitation within organizations.

## **15. Growth Mindset Theory**

Carol Dweck, a Stanford University Professor in Psychology, is the originator of the term and theory surrounding Growth and Fixed mindsets. The terms are rooted in the Mindset theory, which serves as a basis for describing core assumptions about the malleability of personal qualities (Moreau 2021). The theory states that it is inherent that all people understand and see the world differently (Soo Jeung and Vicki 2020). However, in her work surrounding Growth vs. Fixed mindset, she argues that motivation and our views on learning, successes, and failures are part of making skillsets malleable, contrary to beliefs of the Fixed Mindset, which views talents, skills, and abilities as challenging to develop or change (Dweck 2015). Therefore, A growth mindset is, by its definition, a state or belief that one's talents, skills and performance can be developed through hard work, good strategies, and dedication to self-learn (Dweck 2020). Individuals with a Growth Mindset have been shown to have higher motivation levels to engage in learning and development activities (Dweck 2006). Furthermore, the theory describes growth mindset individuals' relationship to failure as a learning experience and an opportunity to correlate efforts into new ways of succeeding in tasks (Yeager and Dweck 2020). Dweck also describes Fixed Mindset as the belief that talent, intelligence, and skills are fixed and difficult to develop, often viewing failure of challenging tasks as the result of one's own inabilities (Dweck 2015).

Her findings are rooted in human psychology, brain plasticity, and neuroscience; therefore, validity is believed to be added to Growth Mindset through the interest and research within other fields than its applied findings in business (Hills 2012). For example, Dr. Heidi

Grant (2015), a neuroscientist and consultant, points out the correlations and importance in motivation, stress handling capabilities, and task performance, highlighting the different reactions towards stressful change between fixed and growth mindset individuals. According to her findings, these factors correlate to current organizational agility through change agility within its employee's skillset (Grant 2015). Her research showed that individuals with a growth mindset perform tasks significantly better under uncertainty and change, which usually increases stress levels in individuals. This is a trait that companies benefit from when under uncertainty themselves (Madsen 2020). Therefore, the findings of growth mindsets' abilities to explain and foster performance under change have created interest in the Future of Work field.

## **16. Learning Agility Theory**

Learning Agility is a term proposed first by Lombardo and Eichinger (2000). Their study explored traits found in high-potential talent and the optimization of succession planning within organizations. They found that the ability to learn, and the ability to learn from experience, is how high-potential employees should be defined (Lombardo and Eichinger 2000). Therefore, the article also proposes that, what they call Learning Agility, should be a higher valued characteristic than intelligence scores when assessing applicants or workers (Lombardo and Eichinger 2000). The 4-part model they developed describes the dimensions of Learning Agility: People agility, Results Agility, Mental Agility, and Change Agility (Lombardo and Eichinger 2000). Firstly, people agility describes individuals who teach themselves from interpersonal experiences and work well under changing social circumstances. Secondly, Results Agility characterizes people who, under harsh conditions, still find the motivation to achieve high task results. Thirdly, Mental Agility regards employee characteristics that allow for looking at problems with a new viewpoint and who stay comfortable during complex tasks and situations. Lastly, change agility aims to characterize

individuals who connect to learning, problems or challenges with curiosity, new ideas, or ways of working. Hence, it describes people who like to engage in new skill-building and challenging tasks (Lombardo and Eichinger 2000). Over the last 20 years, this model has expanded by contributing authors regarding new ideas surrounding learning-agile people and their possession of self-awareness and the ability to look critically at one's own character (De Meuse 2017). Even though it has developed, today's practical use of the Learning Agility is still similar to how it was initially proposed by Lombardo and Eichinger's (2000). Its primary use is to assess new applicants during recruitment processes or to evaluate employee performance potential. A learning agility analysis of employees serves the purpose of understanding fit into new and more challenging roles (De Meuse 2010). Moreover, Silzer and Church (2009) also agree with the importance of learning ability as the high potential identification of employees.

However, the academic contribution towards its facilitation and the reliability of its general findings have come under scrutiny (DeRue, Ashford, and Myers 2012). De Rue, Ashford and G. Myers (2015) conclude that the topic of learning agility lies within a broader nomological network of related constructs, rather than a theory that creates ambiguity to its contributions and facilitation.

## **17. Conceptual Similarities and Theoretical Overlaps**

This section aims to bridge the theoretical gap in the current literary contribution. By expanding on the conceptual similarities and differences between a Growth Mindset and Learning Agility, this chapter aims to find how learning agility can be fostered from a growth mindset.

### ***17.1. Change Agility***

Firstly, learning agility literature depicts individuals who operate successfully under uncertainty and change as being change agile. That clearly possesses similarities to the way

individuals' growth mindset is depicted. They are often referred to as individuals who perform better under changing or challenging circumstances. Dr. Grant (2015) has claimed that her findings exemplify this function of a growth mindset and its correlation to learning agility and change agility in her study. Two groups of people were introduced to a set of sequential tasks. If the task didn't vary in its problem set nor change in difficulty, fixed-mindset individuals performed better than growth-mindset individuals in repetitive clerical tasks. However, from the moment any changes were introduced, such as an increase in difficulty level or new problem themes, the growth mindset individuals not only produced better results comparatively for each task but also increased their results over time, even in the face of failure (Grant 2015). The study, therefore, exemplified how characteristics from learning agility theory, called change agility, were found in growth mindset individuals.

### ***17.2. Learning from Experience***

Similarly to the way Lombardo and Eschinger describes Learning Agile people's ability to develop and learn from challenging circumstances, a later study into the brain activity of subjects with a growth mindset showed to have a similar relation to learning and memory retention from stress responses induced by challenging tasks. Findings showed that how growth mindset individuals handle stressful situations, such as challenging tasks, leads to long-term memory responses within the brain (Mangels et al. 2006). Hence, the internalization and learning from experiences and failures are intrinsic to people that meet challenges with a growth mindset, similar to what Eichinger and Lombardo (2000) described regarding learning from experience in individuals who are characterized as learning agile. Furthermore, growth mindset individuals conclusively learn from past failures and tend not to repeat their mistakes, they also find different ways to handle similar experiences in the search for positive outcomes (Grant 2015).

### ***17.3. Shared Qualities of Predictive Performance***

Both Learning agility and Growth Mindset literature claim an ability to be used as tools in predicting task performance.

Research has found that measured mindsets can predict academic achievement (Yeager and Dweck 2021). In an early study (Blackwell et al. 2007, Study 1, N = 373), students undergoing challenging mathematical courses were observed and measured for results. The study found that students that had the same level of abilities as the test sample showed increasingly better performances if they scored a higher level of growth mindsets in a post-assessment. The findings have been supported by larger-scale studies as well (N = 300.629), where students with a growth mindset performed better in both qualitative subjects,  $r = 0.28$ , and creative subjects,  $r = 0.27$  (Claro and Loeb 2019).

Similarly, Lumini (2021) analyzed the level of learning agility in employees and the result of their yearly performance on competencies coherent with their roles. It showed a positive correlation of 0,37 between Learning Agility and their respective Performance Assessment. Furthermore, their showings proved to have an even stronger correlation between performance and learning agility of 0.43 for employees in managing positions. De Meuse (2019) findings showed similar results. In his meta-analysis of the relationship between learning agility and succession potential, the findings show a strong correlation of  $p = 0.74$  and  $p = 0.75$  of learning agility levels in an employee, and its power to predict performance in organizational leaders. Moreover, Korn Ferry Institute (2021) also concurred that Learning Agility is a strong indication of future performance in job applicants, something that encapsulates the learning potential of new tasks and relates to the organization's future of work needs.

#### 17.4. *The View of Learning Agility as a Rare Trait*

Even though the theories share a lot of similarities in effect on learning, motivation and regarding the predictability of task performance, they differ in their contribution in how to actually foster it in individuals or organizations. There seems to be ambiguity surrounding whether learning agility is intrinsic to people's personalities or if it is something one could learn. Learning agility is often described as a rare trait; only 15% of people are agile learners, according to Gochman and Stuffer (2021). Moreover, statements in the literature rarely discuss concrete measures or solutions to facilitate learning agility, and recommendations appear to be based on “testimonials of highly vocal proponents” rather than on actual findings (De Meuse 2019). Therefore, if learning agility creates task performance and adaptability, how can you foster it rather than only assessing it? This paper argues that the similarities between the effects of learning agility and a growth mindset share theoretical aspects. However, in contrast to the ambiguity found in the literature regarding how to learn to be an agile learner, Carol Dweck (1988) proposes an explanation and guidance based in organizational psychology with her work surrounding a Growth Mindset. Hence, her contribution could help explain how to facilitate learning agility through a growth mindset theory.

*Table III – Summary of Conceptual Similarities Between Growth Mindset and Learning Agility*

<b>Growth Mindset</b>	<b>Learning Agility</b>
Learning Through Change (Dweck 2020; Ng 2021).	Change Agility (Lombardo and Eschinger 2000).
Learning From Failure (Yeager and Dweck 2015; Dweck 2020; Grant 2021).	Learning From Experience (Lombardo and Eschinger 2000).
Practicability of Learning Task Performance (Dweck 2021; Panuesku et al. 2015).	Predictability of future talent performance (De Meuse 2019; Lumini 2021).

*Table IV - Summary of Conceptual Differences Between Growth Mindset and Learning Agility*

<b>Growth Mindset</b>	<b>Learning Agility</b>
Solution orientated contribution on how to foster learning agility (Dweck 2020).	No theoretical contribution on how to foster learning agility.
Contributes to the malleability of skill and change agility (Grant 2021).	View as an inherent characteristic of a person, viewed a rare trait (Gochman and Stuffer 2021).
Used as a development tool (Dweck 2020).	Used as an assessment tool (Lombardo and Eichinger 2000).

## **18. Finding the Theoretical Link Between Growth Mindset and Increased Learning Agility**

The previous chapter explored the many similarities in the existing theoretical overlaps of Growth Mindset and Learning Agility. However, the current literature surrounding them shows no explicit contribution to the actual relationship between the two theories. Therefore, this work proposes that an argument can be made that the increase in learning motivation from a Growth Mindset (Dweck 2020; Sci 2021; Sarrasin et al. 2018) influences an individual's ability to learn (Zhang and Chen 2021; Lin, Yen and Wang 2018), building a fundamental link between the theories to contribute to the facilitation of learning agility.

### **18.1. How Growth Mindset increases learning motivation**

The function of increased motivation as an effect of a Growth mindset plays a vital role in its discussion regarding learning outcomes (Dweck 2021). Even though some argue that motivation from a growth mindset is merely observational, the case of the growth mindset and its ability to increase motivation to learn has been found to be supported by neuroscientific

findings (Ng 2021). Betsy Ng (2021) builds on this argument from functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) brain scans that show increased activity in parts of the brain that are connected to motivation when exposed to mindset interventions. Moreover, evidence of the relationship between the facilitation of a growth mindset and higher levels of learning motivation was found by Sarrasin et al. (2018) in their meta-analysis surrounding their relationship. Furthermore, Zhao et al. (2021) found similar findings in the relationship of growth mindset, learning motivation and task perseverance, here referred to as Grit. The large scale study (N = 1842) concluded that motivation, grit, and level of growth mindset have mediative effects on each other. Conclusively, these findings together add to the understanding of how a Growth Mindset can affect motivation to learn.

### ***18.2. How Learning motivation increases the ability to learn***

As concluded previously, a growth mindset seemingly affects motivation to learn, but how does motivation to learn to impact an individual's learning agility? Learning motivation is here based on a Human Resource and Organizational Learning and Development perspective (Qi et al. 2019), meaning the belief that learning can enhance one's career and that learning activity is fun and that it is self-fulfilling. Based on these definitions, Chen and Zhang (2021) have found a strong correlation between learning motivation and learning effectiveness in their study. However, motivation in learning is multifaceted, and factors such as the task results, mode of learning, and fear of failure influence motivation levels (Borah 2021). Nonetheless, all the factors proposed by Borah are arguably met by the mediating effects of a growth Mindset, therefore, providing higher motivations (Dweck 2021). Furthermore, persistence in learning has correlated to learning performance and is often described as the result of higher motivation levels (Pintrich 2003). In conclusion, motivation is primarily discussed from different perspectives, however most findings seem to support the correlation between motivation and

learning agility. Therefore, it is indicative that the implementation of Growth Mindset could facilitate learning motivation which would lead to higher levels of learning agility.

### ***18.3. Facilitating Learning Agility with Growth Mindset Interventions***

The most used method of growth mindset implementation is called Mindset Interventions (Dweck 2020). These interventions refer to individual or group sessions with differentiating frequencies, where subjects are introduced to, or supported in facilitating a growth mindset (Institution of Education Sciences 2022). These sessions are in place to foster the mindset through exercises and exposure to theories and topics regarding the malleability of intelligence and skill adoption (Paunesku et al. 2015). Common tools and techniques used in these sessions are informational videos about growth mindset research and its findings. Other important tools are discussions, and debate simulations regarding an individual's own experiences with failure and current individual learning goals (Orosz et al. 2017). These interventions are the primary tool used in Carol Dweck's research and build the foundations of her findings surrounding the malleability of intelligence and the aspect surrounding learning motivation (Paunesku et al. 2015).

The results from Mindset interventions have shown increased grades in academic subjects and resilience of failure, proving increased learning performance and increased ability to learn specific tasks or subjects (Dweck 2021).

## **19. Growth Mindset and Learning Agility's Role in Future of Work Readiness**

Future of work studies relates to how changes in work and employment is influenced by technological, generational, and social shifts (Gartner n.d.). In future of work studies, the ability to adapt to new circumstances is often described as organizational agility and is a common topic of discussion. Being able to face new challenges, understanding them and learning from them serves as a response to a rapidly changing environment (Peterson 2021) Furthermore, the need

for upskilling or reskilling your workforce is widespread globally, and the world economic forum projects that 54% of all employees will require significant re- and upskilling by 2025 (World Economic Forum 2018). Hence, Deloitte announced a 2 billion dollar investment to upskill their workers for future of work requirements (Business Insider 2020). According to Rives (2020), learning agility is therefore crucial, seeing as there is little to no choice if organizations want to stay competitive and survive. The question, therefore, arrives at how to create learning agility in your workforce, fit to meet the changing demands of a volatile environment. Interestingly, rather than directly addressing the need for hard skills, such as specific technical know-how, the most significant skills in demand relate to adaptability and the Critical Thinking Cluster (SSG 2021). These skills form the basis for identifying changes and problem-solving abilities needed to face them and share characteristics with the topic of learning agility (SSG 2021). Hence, there is an understanding that learning the needed hard skills for tomorrow can be rendered obsolete with the passing of time, therefore it is essential to develop personal skills that keep employees in constant development. A Growth Mindset's role in mediating the effects of future of work trends is a popular contemporary topic (Dweck 2019, Jeung 2020, Rives 2020; Derler 2019; Brasseey, Mugayar-Baldocchi, and Nielsen 2020). Apart from the increase in motivation to learn the needed skills of the future, finding comfortability in operating in changing circumstances and increased task performance, 34% more employees feel a strong sense of commitment and task ownership towards their company and its strategies (Harvard Business Review 2014). Here, highlighting its effect on the fundamental difficulty in aligning an organization's strategic goal to individual effort. Secondly, companies that possess a growth mindset culture are 47% more likely to have employees that find other colleagues and your organization as trustworthy (Harvard Business Review 2014). Also, Growth mindset contributions frequently add to the future of work discussion by highlighting its role in upskilling and reskilling the global workforce (2020).

Rives (2020) encapsulated part of the problem by stating that today's reality for employees and employers is much different than in the past. He argues that "In the past, the choice of reskilling was one that people made as a normal part of their career path....This self-selection process ensured that most workers seeking a career change or wanting to upskill were prepared for the uncertainty and challenges ahead of them. How do we prepare a large labour force to have the psychological framework to undertake change willingly?" (Rives 2020). Conclusively, he is pointing out the need for motivation in urgent reskilling within organisations. This correlates well with the findings from the world economic forum. Their Future Of Jobs Report (2020) arguably finds similar characteristics of a growth mindset, such as Active Learning, Resilience, Stress tolerance, and flexibility, to be some of the ten most sought-after skills over the next 3-5 years.

## **20. Conclusion**

In conclusion, this paper looked at how a growth mindset could facilitate learning agility and, through it increase the readiness for the future of work challenges within organizations and businesses. This paper highlights the potential of the theoretical possibility of using growth mindset interventions to increase learning agility within organizations. Starting from the standpoint of explaining the existing definitions and literature surrounding the two theories, it is necessary to clarify their conceptual similarities and theoretical overlaps. Both theories were found to share descriptions of individuals possessing learning agility or a growth mindset as: change agile; individuals who can operate, perform, and learn within changing or difficult circumstances. Secondly, describing people that succeed in learning through experiences and failure as having a growth mindset or learning agile. Thirdly, both theories claims to have similar predictive abilities in task performance over time. However, it was found that the two theories found predictability within two different fields: academic settings, and organizational

or job-related settings. Lastly, it was argued by this work's findings that the views on these abilities differ between the theories and their contributing authors. Learning agility is something that is assessed and seen as a rare trait in prospective talent, whilst a growth mindset is offered as a possibility to improve skills and capabilities and sees personal development as malleable.

Moreover, the theoretical exploration in this work aimed to link the two concepts and found a possible connection in facilitating Learning Agility through increased motivation fostered by a growth mindset. In other words, a Growth Mindset was found to increase motivation in task performance and learning and learning motivation has been found to increase the ability to learn. Therefore, Growth Mindset interventions, the main tool used to facilitate a growth mindset, could be beneficial in facilitating learning agility. Lastly, this work used this fundamental link to present the case of why learning agility and a growth mindset are essential to the future of work readiness in organizations.

## **21. Discussion and Recommendations for Future Research**

This work was exploratory by method and aimed to link three concepts; Growth Mindset Theory, Learning Agility and Future of Work Readiness. However, as described previously, no existing research on the facilitation of learning agility through a growth mindset was found to exist. It leads to the first recommendation for future research:

1. *Facilitate an analysis of the statistical dependence and correlation between learning agility scores and growth mindset interventions.*

Seeing as there is existing assessment models for learning agility within the field of human resources and talent management, an interesting way for further researchers to explore their correlation and dependence would be to assess the change in learning agility assessment scores pre and post growth mindset interventions. This could facilitate a more profound

understanding of creating a greater ability to learn and further close the gap of how to adopt learning agility within individuals.

Secondly, the interdisciplinary literature used in this work created limitations in comparing findings. For example, the research and findings behind a growth mindset are predominantly made in academic settings with students as subjects to its testing. Even though most contributors freely compare the findings and their effects on business settings and the learning and development facilitated there, they are arguably different and often concern different demographic groups and ages. Therefore, I suggest that future research should:

2. *Recreate findings of learning performance and growth mindset interventions within organizational settings.*

It would arguably add legitimacy and value to the future of work studies that mainly surrounds businesses and their employees rather than students in school.

## **How Can Artificial Intelligence Reconcile Recruitment Tensions in Organizations?**

### **22. Introduction**

Artificial Intelligence is a term that emerged many years ago but has been gaining more traction in recent years with technological developments. This system has enabled companies to implement automated processes, install a more inclusive environment, and help eliminate error and bias.

This research aims to understand how companies are adapting to this new trend and how they are following and implementing this artificial intelligence technology in their processes, namely in recruitment. This way, a literature review is carried out, where the topics previously addressed are deepened from an academic perspective. This is followed by a practical analysis where examples of companies with AI-oriented recruitment are presented. Finally, a theoretical reflection based on the theory of paradoxes is delivered so that it is possible to understand better how it is linked to the subject.

### **23. Research Question**

Since the world is in constant technological evolution, namely artificial intelligence, companies must keep up with these developments to maintain their competitive advantage. As the saying goes, "time is money," so this technology helps in the automation of processes, which plays an increasingly important role in companies, as well as helping to implement more inclusive procedures to address the current problems of our society.

According to Delloite (2021), adopting AI solutions puts investing companies at the forefront of innovation. However, for these to be successful, it is necessary to understand how this technology accommodates the various tensions that arise in the recruitment process, such as the ability to have a fast process when it comes to identifying and securing talent while

ensuring inclusion criteria. Therefore, it is important to discuss “*How Can Artificial Intelligence Reconcile Recruitment Tensions in Organizations?*”.

## **24. Literature Review**

### ***24.1. Artificial Intelligence: From the Past to the Present***

The term "Artificial Intelligence" is not as recent as we may think. It emerged during the Second World War when Alan Turing published his article "Computing Machinery and Intelligence" (Hmoud and Laszlo 2019, 23). Thus, the term was born, suggested by John McCarthy (1958); Stuart and Peter (1995).

As an industry, AI was not introduced until after the 1980s, along with hardware development, where it was found to be used early on in automating complex, repetitive and precise tasks (Hmoud and Laszlo 2019, 23).

However, AI software witnessed a clear improvement after the mid-1990s, with the "Deep Blue" intelligent software designed by the International Business Machines Corporation (IBM), especially for playing chess (Hmoud and Laszlo 2019, 23).

Currently, artificial intelligence comprises software and robots that simulate human intelligence. According to Lucci and Kopec (2016), artificial intelligence can create software or computer hardware systems that exhibit thinking comparable to humans to display characteristics generally associated with human intelligence. In this way, it allows one to analyze and interact with its surroundings, draw learning from previous experiences and solve problems autonomously and without human intervention (Chui et al. 2015).

This intelligent technology has not only revolutionized the way we perform our functions but also contributed to reducing or even eliminating errors and risks of bias, which are so much associated with humans (Hmoud and Laszlo 2019, 23).

#### ***24.2. The Future of AI in the Recruitment Process: Automation and Inclusion***

According to Bark and Cole (2018), it does not take much courage or brilliance to predict that artificial intelligence will play a significant role in the future of recruitment, as around a third of companies are already using some element of AI in their processes. This technology will continue to be increasingly used to produce better and more effective results, so that routine administrative jobs will be replaced by intelligent AI technologies and then gradually disappear, allowing recruiters and Human Resources managers to focus more on strategic functions (Hmoud and Laszlo 2019, 21-26).

With the increase in job applications, recruiters have found it difficult to process everything at human speed, and with this comes several problems. On the one hand, it can create a sense of discontent among candidates whose applications may never receive a personal response. On the other hand, it can generate mis-hires due to an inability to quickly distinguish the best candidates from a wide range (Bark and Cole 2018, 42). Moreover, this is where artificial intelligence technology plays its significant role, being able to separate and identify at lightning speed the most serious candidates with the most significant potential and distinguish those who confer the specific skills, qualities, and desires for the role in question. In the case of unsuccessful candidates, a response is granted that includes personal detail and encouragement to reapply for possible vacancies for different positions or even to help find jobs where they could thrive and would be a great fit (Bark and Cole 2018, 42-43). This is a handy and appreciated tool by candidates because, according to studies, most job seekers would have a negative impression of the company if they did not receive any feedback from employers (Hmoud and Laszlo 2019, 25). In this way, we can confer that, as Rina Joosten-Rabou (2018), the co-founder of Seedlink, says, the power of AI can create happier workers.

In addition to task automation, artificial intelligence technology has also come to help the recruitment process to be more inclusive. AI aims to have a positive social impact by

providing the most rigorous and transparent methodology to achieve the expected result. Additionally, it is considered almost mandatory to place inclusion, equity, and human well-being and safety at the center of the design, implementation, and deployment at the scale of any technological innovation for it to be considered responsible (Delecraz et al. 2022, 35).

For this innovative HR technology to be considered fair, it must confer the following characteristics at the time it is introduced to the market (Delecraz et al. 2022, 36-37):

- Legal - Must comply with the general law, as well as the specific regulations of the activity sector and the technology developed;
- Ethical and Safe - It must not harm its users and non-users in any way;
- Provable and Scientifically Validated - If the technology is not validated by rigorous science, it cannot be proven or explained;
- Robust and Reliable - The results of the technology should be replicable;
- Non-Discriminatory - The results of technology should not vary depending on who benefits from them;
- Cutting Edge - The inventors of the technological resource must be convinced that there is no better solution to achieve the desired results when it is being introduced;
- Have Realistic and Measurable Goals - This involves aiming at the impossible but achieving the possible;
- Inclusive and Accessible - All people should have equal access to innovation;
- Purposeful - This should benefit society at large.

In conclusion, AI provides promising solutions for recruiters to optimize talent acquisition by taking over time-consuming, repetitive tasks, improving the quality of the hiring process, and neutralizing human biases (Hmoud and Laszlo 2019, 26). It thus provides a strict policy of being as fair, inclusive, and transparent as possible so that everyone has access to

employment, regardless of age, gender, background, education, and work experience (Delecraz et al. 2022, 34-37).

### ***24.3. The Current Recruitment Process with AI***

As mentioned above, the focus on artificial intelligence worldwide has significantly impacted companies, requiring them to be ready to keep up with new trends. Otherwise, they will lose a competitive advantage. This consequently significantly affects Human Resource Management (HRM) practices, and it is necessary to redefine the methods in which organizations manage their human resource strategies, striving to maintain and develop their HRM services, increase productivity, reduce costs, and eliminate human error and bias (Hmoud and Laszlo 2019, 22).

That said, recruitment and selection have been the integral HRM functions most impacted by this radical technological advancement, having undergone a considerable change from conventional employee selection methods, making them more technologically dependent when acquiring competent human resources (Hmoud and Laszlo 2019, 22). According to Lievens et al. (2002), conventional recruitment methods based on psychometric principles may no longer be effective due to the rapidly changing business environment with less defined and unstable jobs.

Currently, AI solutions have been integrated into the recruitment process. This is increasingly common to see growing day by day in companies, from intelligent automated systems used in sourcing and refining to interaction with job candidates to optimize and support the selection process. This aims to provide the organization with the necessary human resources at minimal cost, focusing on the core tasks and behavioral competencies needed to meet the job requirements. (Hmoud and Laszlo 2019, 22)

This way, the recruitment process consists of interrelated tasks supporting the company's global strategy. Therefore, the first stage of the process is planning, where future

needs and the analysis of each job vacancy are idealized so that profiles suitable for each position can be defined and created.

Afterward, sourcing is carried out, where various AI techniques are used to automate the search for candidates to produce a better result than conventional methods. After that, the following stages go through screening, selection, and hiring, so the success of hiring decisions strongly depends on the effectiveness of the first stage, planning, and analysis. (Hmoud and Laszlo 2019, 22-24)

Sims (2002), Cook (1998), Ployhart (2006), and Anderson (2005) state that current and future challenges and factors that should be kept in mind in the recruitment process and that consequently influence its practices are globalization, changes in the organization, technological advances, laws, changes in society, social trends, candidates' perceptions, fairness, and diversity. Additionally, organizations are shown to be concerned about equity and human biases concerning the design and implementation of the recruitment system, and these occur when an individual or group receives favorable or disadvantageous treatment based on their characteristics, such as age, ethnicity, religion, and educational background (Hmoud and Laszlo 2019, 23).

This previously mentioned bias is distinguished from discrimination because it is an unconscious or unintentional human act, yet it produces the same effect and outcomes on human capital composition (Hmoud and Laszlo 2019, 23). Indeed, numerous studies have been conducted over the years on human biases that can affect hiring decisions. In a review of studies on gender bias, Davison and Burke (2000) found that recruiters tended to be biased against female applicants during the hiring process. In another study on biases against ethnic groups, Correll et al. (2007) claimed that white candidates received 50% more callbacks for interviews than for African American names.

In conclusion, companies need to use screening software concerning recruitment for the previously mentioned reasons and many more. This way, the process becomes fairer and more inclusive and saves time and money. On the other hand, it avoids this kind of human bias and eliminates errors.

#### ***24.4. Techniques Used in the Recruitment Process Through AI***

Over time, a wide variety of models incorporating intelligent systems have already been studied and proposed as a way to support decision-making regarding recruitment and its functions to offer a set of solutions to improve the efficiency of the process (Hmoud and Laszlo 2019, 23). Thus, this section identifies some of the most commonly used AI techniques in recruitment:

- Search Engine - According to Strohmeier and Piazza (2015), the knowledge-based search engine is one of the most used AI techniques in this process, a system designed to search content on the web. When performing a search, search engines recognize the content and achieve a web-based query to match the candidate's profile based on the semantic annotation of job advertisements and profiles (Mochol, Jentzsch, and Wache 2007). Employers have to define keywords that describe the characteristics of the job, as well as a title, and qualification, among others, so that the knowledge-based search engine employs a pre-defined notions-driven information extraction within the system (Çelik 2016).
- Specialized Systems - These are considered one of the oldest and most accessible branches regarding AI techniques and have been primarily used in business decision support and Human Resources Information Systems (HRIS) (Hmoud and Laszlo 2019, 23). These systems are typically built in domains of human knowledge with too many rules to be processed by humans (Lucci and Kopec 2016).
- Data Mining - According to Simoudis (1996), this technique is defined as extracting valid,

previously unknown, understandable, and actionable information from large databases through an automatic or semi-automatic device and using it to make crucial business decisions. Strohmeier and Piazza (2015) further suggested an intelligent text processing technique using text extraction for sentiment analysis. Subsequently, the test automatically extracts sentiments and opinions within unstructured text, classifying them into positive and negative sentiments, which could help evaluate a candidate (Hmoud and Laszlo 2019, 24).

- Artificial Neural Network (ANN) - Contemporary AI-based decision support systems focus on this network, which is considered to be very effective in reasoning and learning capabilities, particularly machine learning, which aims to capture the parallel and distributed structure of the human nervous system, as an attempt to simulate the human learning capacity (Lucci and Kopec 2016). Concerning talent management, Huang et al. (2004) integrated the ANN technique into the human resource selection system to test a model aimed at talent assessment. On the other hand, they also used neural network learning to determine the score of each candidate. Finally, Huang et al. (2006) used artificial neural networks to discover implicit knowledge. They presented beneficial results in predicting employees' future performance and supporting their assignment to suitable positions and projects (Hmoud and Laszlo 2019, 24).

## **25. Practical Examples AI-Driven Recruitment**

In this section, a practical analysis of some examples of AI-oriented recruitment is developed. To get two different perspectives, a case of a company offering AI solutions, Pera, and two companies implementing AI solutions in their recruitment process, Unilever and L'Oréal, are presented.

### **25.1. *Pera***

Pera is an information technology (IT) services and consulting company created in 2015 to tackle the inequalities experienced by job seekers in the recruitment process. In this way, they decided to challenge the recruitment industry by eliminating human bias from the process and, subsequently, from decision-making.

The company has developed innovative neurolinguistic software to analyze and map each person's unique skills. It uses artificial intelligence technology in its recruitment process, which, based on the answers people give to three questions in a simple digital interview, detects and defines the competencies of each person. After the interview, two reports are generated within a few minutes, a skills assessment report for the recruiter and a personal report for the candidate. This information is subsequently used as a basis for making recruitment decisions.

Using this process, the company can automate time in a simple, fast, and accurate way, allowing a large-scale, high-quality assessment and a more careful selection of talent. It can also minimize problems that have to do with inclusion to ensure more fairness in the process.

The algorithm developed by the company evaluates how people write and not what they write in the same way that it ignores education, experience, and ethnic origin. Pera enhances people's performance in their next job, regardless of their background, thus substantially reducing the possibility of mistakes and, subsequently, the associated costs. In this way, the company believes it has the necessary characteristics to make the right choice and invest in the right people.

### **25.2. *Unilever***

Unilever is a British multinational consumer goods company founded over 100 years ago and one of the largest in its area. The company is known for its great brands, such as Dove,

Rexona, Cif, Hellmann's, Knorr, and Magnum. Its purpose is to make sustainable living commonplace.

When it comes to using artificial intelligence, namely in the recruitment process, Unilever is not behind, having a partnership with HireVue, which has allowed the company to reinvent its recruiting process.

HireVue is a digital services provider and is the most well-known AI-powered hiring platform. The way it works is that, firstly, applications are posted online through advertisements on platforms like Facebook and LinkedIn, where candidates only have to submit the link to their LinkedIn profile to apply. This algorithm then scans all submitted applications and subsequently filters out more than half of the candidates. Once it is time for the interviews, these are conducted by videoconference, where the AI software records the interviews of the approved candidates and then, using voice and facial recognition tools, the vocabulary, speech patterns, body language, tone, and facial expressions are analyzed to determine the ideal candidates for each position.

One of the components used in evaluating candidates is 12 games based on neuroscience to test skills such as concentration, short-term memory, and the ability to analyze emotional versus contextual clues.

This platform has enabled Unilever to achieve annual cost savings of \$1 million, a 90% reduction in hiring time, and a 16% increase in hiring diversity (HireVue n.d.).

### **25.3. *L'Oréal***

L'Oréal is a French multinational cosmetics company founded in 1909 to offer every woman and man on the planet the best and most varied products in terms of quality, effectiveness, safety, and responsibility. For these reasons and more, the company has been the global leader in the beauty sector for decades.

This company is one of the most focused on developing its goal of being the most inclusive beauty leader and contributing to a society where everyone can live safely, peacefully, and equally, which implies “working to eliminate bias in algorithms” and “recruiting diverse teams and prioritizing inclusive leadership and management” (L’Oréal Groupe n.d.).

That said, the company also considered that L’Oréal has around one million applicants for about fifteen thousand new jobs a year, so it was necessary to introduce AI to streamline hiring and automate the process. As the global vice president of L’Oréal’s human resources department said, “we wanted to save time and focus more on quality, diversity, and candidate experience, and AI solutions were, for us, the best way to go faster on these challenges” (Eva Azoulay n.d.).

Therefore, the company uses Mya Systems, and in the year 2021, this conversational technology was acquired by StepStone GMBh. This tool consists of a chatbot, where natural language is understood, allowing recruiters to save time and simplify the process during the first phase of recruitment and throughout the entire path from job search to onboarding. Candidates who move on to the next stage will then be able to find Seedlink, the AI software used by the company, which scores candidates based on their answers to open-ended interview questions. These scores are intended to supplement human judgment but to help increase the likelihood of candidates appearing who would not be obvious choices in the first place. Also, according to Rina Joosten-Rabou (2018), the co-founder of Seedlink, this application makes hiring ten times faster and increases retention by 25%.

## **26. Theory of Paradox**

In this section, Smith and Lewis’ Paradoxical Theory (2011) is used as a basis for theoretical reflection, relating it to artificial intelligence in the recruitment process, considering the automation of processes and inclusion.

### **26.1. *What is the Theory of Paradox?***

We constantly face various tensions throughout our lives as workers, leaders, or even a company. Thus, contradictory demands intensify as organizational environments become more global, dynamic, and competitive (Smith and Lewis 2011, 381). As such, this theory consists of contradictory but interrelated elements that exist simultaneously and persist over time. The goal is to know how to live with them because to achieve success, and it is necessary to balance opposites and navigate between them. Additionally, this will be the key to the business. With this prior preparation, they can control all the variants and tensions that may arise. This study then allows adopting an alternative approach to tensions by exploring how businesses can simultaneously meet competing demands (Smith and Lewis 2011, 381).

### **26.2. *Tensions in the Recruitment Process***

Managers and companies are confronted with various tensions, and it is no different when it comes to the recruitment process. As such, it is necessary to be able to make progress on contradictory objectives at the same time. Thus, these are some of the tensions that occur throughout this process:

- Efficiency vs. Assertiveness - Achieving efficiency in the process of filtering and attracting many candidates for specific roles while at the same time being able to identify the right people for the right job.
- Celerity vs. Inclusion - The ability to have a quick process when it comes to identifying and securing talent and skills, ensuring inclusion criteria.
- Automation vs. Individual Feedback - Confer the automation of the process, which saves time, but still gives an appreciation to each candidate.
- Automation vs. Algorithm - Create automation processes by having the ability to create algorithms that do not repeat themselves.

- Automation vs. Machine - Providing automation processes without neglecting the candidate, who may have another type of intelligence than the traditional one or have some dysfunction, such as dyslexia.

### **26.3. *How Can AI Address the Tensions***

As previously mentioned, tensions are part of and are at the core of everyday life in organizations. Before paradox theory was formulated, early researchers responded to tensions by seeking the 'best form of organization' (Smith and Lewis 2011, 395). Subsequently, scholars sought to articulate generalizable principles as to why firms benefit from a hierarchical versus flat structure (Fayol 1990) or more coercive versus self-directed HR practices (McGregor 1960; Taylor 1911). That said, contingency theory emerged in the 1960s as a way of calling on researchers to analyze the conditions under which alternative tension elements would be most effective. For this theory, success depends on alignment within the internal system and the external environment to recognize and resolve tensions. (Smith and Lewis 2011, 395)

On the other hand, paradoxical theory offers an alternative, assuming that tensions persist within complex and dynamic systems, considering them normal and that if they are leveraged, they can be beneficial and powerful. The existence of these opposites intensifies experiences of tension which consequently challenges cognitive boundaries, requiring creative sense-making and seeking more fluid, reflective and sustainable management strategies. (Smith and Lewis 2011, 395).

In this way, artificial intelligence is more aligned with paradoxical theory because it does not choose between two dualities and addresses persistent tensions. This technology tries to simultaneously combat several factors with great relevance in our society, such as the violation of human rights and technological evolution. This is only possible because AI follows basic instructions to function, the algorithms. These are a sequence of rules or operations

applied to several data, allowing similar problems to be solved (Elias 2018). However, these algorithms are not unbiased, as they may contain biases present in the creators of the algorithms or in the data used to train the algorithm (Elias 2018). Thus, the algorithms used in AI must be developed and constantly updated to purposefully adapt to different tensions, just as a society must be actively involved in shaping the values to enable them to be set correctly.

As mentioned in the previous section, AI makes it possible to make simultaneous progress on contradictory goals. It enables a more significant number of applications by having a quicker and easier process and simultaneously determining optimal associations considering the requirements of each stakeholder. On the one hand, it provides rapid talent identification; on the other hand, it allows being fair to everyone by applying the same criteria. It will enable ensuring economies of scale with automation and, at the same time giving individual feedback on each case. It helps in the automation of processes and makes sure that the algorithm developed is not repeated. On the one hand, it also helps the automation of operations, and on the other, it allows to detect specific cases that can be explicitly considered through diversity criteria.

Additionally, we can mention as advantages of this technology the precision, accuracy, and quick resolution of problems, the usefulness of repeating processes, the innovation associated with it, and the saving of working hours. However, it does have some disadvantages in that it threatens the jobs of thousands of people. After all, it is a technology that may gradually replace humans because it does not have the cognitive skills to develop creativity. It is a relatively new and constantly evolving technology, bringing ethical, moral, and social uncertainty. That said, the disadvantages of AI do not outweigh the advantages that this technology can bring to our evolution as a society.

In conclusion, we are unlikely to find a perfect model, so this model of dynamic equilibrium is closest to our needs and ambitions as a society, as strategies of acceptance and resolution seek to engage tensions and thus enable sustainability (Smith and Lewis 2011, 396).

## **27. Conclusion**

Artificial intelligence is an excellent contribution to how we see the labor market today, so if a company uses this technology with a good strategy, it can have a competitive advantage and high success. It has allowed companies to save time while reducing costs and increasing their level of inclusion. This system has changed and will continue to change how we work, communicate, and get things done. However, being constantly evolving and because the future is always uncertain, companies must be on top of things to make the right decisions.

As with paradox theory, this technology simultaneously addresses persistent tensions, intensifying experiences that challenge businesses at a higher level. However, AI only works if the algorithms are thought through and developed to incorporate these tensions.

Thus, it is concluded that the use and implementation of AI is the best solution to address persistent tensions in the market, the ineffectiveness of conventional recruitment methods, human error, and the absence of inclusion criteria, despite the disadvantages and uncertainties it brings with it. So, as recommended above, Company XYZ can implement a platform that uses AI to facilitate recruitment and talent management. In this way, it creates a more significant competitive advantage and becomes more ready for the Future of Work.

### ***27.1. Recommendations for Future Research***

During this project and research, some questions regarding the use of Artificial Intelligence in the recruitment process were raised that can be taken into account in future investigations. Thus, some recommendations are:

- Conduct a Generational Analysis - The generational issue can be considered an obstacle to

implementing Artificial Intelligence because older generations have different ease and knowledge about new technologies. Therefore, it would be interesting to conduct a generational analysis to understand how older generations look at this new form of recruitment and if there are negative perceptions on their part. If so, it is also necessary to know how these understandings regarding technological innovations are solved.

- **Broad Understanding of the Candidate's Experience** - Throughout the work, it was mentioned the candidates' satisfaction regarding the use of artificial intelligence in the recruitment process and how it helps to make the procedure faster, more accessible, and more transparent. However, there was no access to information about the age range of the people who gave this feedback, so also related to the previous point, it would be necessary to survey people of different ages and activity sectors who are looking for a job. In this way, it is possible to understand the opinions regarding the participation of these people in a recruitment process that involves AI tools and platforms.
- **Understand the Importance of Implementing AI** - The Covid-19 pandemic has revolutionized how we look at things and develop our work. When it broke out, many companies could only stay active because of technological innovation solutions. Having said this, all practices were maintained, and more and more, the business world and people themselves seek to work in this more technological context. For this reason, it would be interesting to effectively understand the impact of this technological innovation in the medium-long term, namely artificial intelligence, and how people should develop or not their skills in this area to have more opportunities in the labor market, regardless of their age.

## **Work Flexibility - A Research Overview**

### **28. Introduction**

There have been significant changes in how work is organized globally, mainly regarding work practices, flexibility of work, and the use of technology and automation. Additionally, it appears that the demographic, technological, and economical shifts that have been influencing how work is organized are more significant now than they were in the recent past.

The global working population is getting older, but the interest and needs of the younger ones has been changing and they are not the same they use to be. Technology breakthroughs that enable quick decreases in some types of economic transaction costs for companies, such as labor productivity monitoring expenses, have been influencing the changes of organizational practices as well, with a great focus on work flexibility. While there is no universally accepted definition of "work flexibility," it frequently refers to qualities about how, where, when, and for how long work is performed. Some employees and employers have prioritized this demand. Changes in work location, time off, and work hours are the three forms of flexibility that employees most frequently have access to.

Flexibility in the workplace may have both beneficial and harmful effects on employees, their families, businesses, and society at large. It is important to understand both sides in order to maximize the efficiency of the choice of work flexibility arrangements for each specific company in order to create value.

The purpose of this topic is to better understand the concept of work flexibility, what can it bring to the table by looking and analyzing some examples of practices that have been applied in certain companies and that have been successful. It is important to remember that each industry or sector of activity has their own particularities that can limit or expand the possibilities to proceed with certain work flexibility measures.

### **28.1. Research Question**

Having in mind that the needs of both employees and employers are not constant, and that technology advancements have a huge impact on how we work, it is important, from time to time, to look at what is been happening and what are other companies doing to keep their outcome positive while having satisfied employees and customers.

In fact, according to Forbes, “one study found that happy employees are up to 20% more productive than unhappy employees”, and that will be directly reflected on customer satisfaction. Focusing on one way to trigger this chain, in this case work flexibility, an important question to discuss is:

*How can we define work flexibility and how can it impact companies and their employees?*

### **29. Work Flexibility and its Importance**

Simply put, the term "work flexibility" can be used to refer to any job that deviates from the rigorous 9-5 workday and five-day workweek standard. At its center are people who may have more autonomy in deciding when, when, or how to perform their specific duties. On a broad take, one can say that work flexibility in the timing and location of work provides advantages for both companies and employees since it enables individuals to better handle the demands of contemporary life, lessen stress, and maintain a healthy work-life balance.

Since the 1980s, technology advancements have made it possible to work nearly anywhere, and several sorts of flexible working are becoming more prevalent. People needs are not constant in time, and the way we do work has been adapting to that. Due to that, flexible work arrangements have been quickly growing and can encapsulate different variations to apply it.

### **29.1. *What is Work Flexibility?***

Work flexibility, also known as workplace flexibility, is about creating an environment where workers may prosper, is the practice of allowing employees to pick the day, time, and place of their work in order to better match organizational objectives with personal objectives. These were not common in the working world not so long ago. In a typical job, people had to be there for eight hours a day, five days a week, at your desk or station.

In late 2019, beginning of 2020, without notice, the world was completely shocked with a pandemic where our structural way of doing our regular activities had to change helped by technological innovations. Prior to the pandemic, flexible work arrangements were becoming more common in firms with a worldwide focus. These arrangements included remote teams and flexible scheduling. But after that, lockdowns compelled everyone, whether they were ready or not, to accept workplace flexibility. And although some businesses have now resumed their previous schedules, most firms have made the decision to continue being flexible going forward.

Flexibility at work requires businesses to show greater consideration for their staff and acknowledge that they have busy lives outside of the office. It entails giving them options and substitutes to assist them in balancing the demands of their personal and professional life. This increases employee happiness and encourages them to work harder and more productively. Both raising employee happiness and lowering staff turnover need freedom and flexibility.

In a flexible workplace, managers trust workers to complete their task in a non-traditional framework and gives them the tools and setting they need to do so, as previously explained. Therefore, the main component of flexible workplaces is trust. Remote and flexible employment are most productive in high-trust societies. Employees feel trusted by their bosses to complete their task regardless of when and where they work, and they feel comfortable to express their opinions and make mistakes.

It is also important to state that work flexibility differs from employee flexibility, which usually relates to how adjustable a worker is at work. Flexibility in the workplace is also distinct from "work-life balance," which puts life and work against one another as if work were the opposite of life. Flexibility in the workplace recognizes that the two are increasingly entangled and fluid. In the next section, we will try to understand why and how is work flexibility a buzz word in our current days and its relevance when it comes to the future of work.

### ***29.2. Why is Work Flexibility Important for the Future of Work?***

Long-standing conventions regarding where work can be done were turned upside down by the widespread shift to remote employment with the most recent pandemic that the world faced. True flexibility, however, goes well beyond the ability to work from anywhere, and many firms continue to fall short. The demands of the post-pandemic workforce cannot be met by an updated remote work policy.

The fact that companies have a limited perspective and that they have not yet realized the true importance of this issue, makes people being forced out of their existing occupations and even the workforce altogether. It's time for businesses to fundamentally alter how they think about flexibility. Today's workers need flexibility that is catered to their unique demands, whether they be family responsibilities, work-life balance, or maintaining their physical and mental health. Employees' needs these days have nothing to do with what was happening some years ago. They are becoming closer to a digital nomad, individuals who use technology and the internet to work remotely by accessing the Internet from a wide range of different settings including public spaces. On the other end, managers have a crucial role in personalizing flexibility for their subordinates as they collaborate with Human Resources department to create one-of-a-kind, innovative solutions for their employees.

The alternative is to run the danger of losing employees and not be able to draw in key talent. People who recently left their job, usually state job flexibility as their main motivation

for rejoining. If leaders are serious about meeting the demands of their staff, they should consider the focus on work flexibility.

The moment has arrived for flexibility to be understood from many angles. Recognizing the where, when, and how of flexibility is necessary to get the competitive edge in luring fresh talent. The financial argument is clear: Give your workers real flexibility to keep them on board and help them develop or watch them go. In the following sections, we will discuss the main advantages and disadvantages that this work arrangement can have for companies in the current days.

### ***29.3. Advantages of Work Flexibility***

Adopting a flexible work arrangement instead of a traditional, inflexible one has various benefits, including a rise in employee morale, an increase in employee engagement, efficiency, and production, a decrease in staff turnover, among other benefits. It has been demonstrated that offering employees a flexible work environment increases their commitment to and loyalty to the company. In this section, we will dive deeper in the advantages of work flexibility diving them into two big groups, the advantages for the employees and for the employers.

To start, employees have the chance to resolve personal issues when their workplace is flexible. For example, having a flexible workplace allows employees to take care of their family's needs, such as attending a child's talent show to show support, and to achieve personal goals, such as those related to fitness, health, or even personal development. Employees will have a higher quality of life as a result, which will boost productivity.

Next, it allows workers to work when they feel most productive since different people perform their best at different times of the day. Flexibility in the workplace gives workers the chance to decide when they think is the ideal time to work, which will undoubtedly enhance production because they will be more productive and efficient at a time of their choosing than one that is imposed upon them.

Adding to that, by allowing employees to choose when to work, it eliminates the stress that can lead to burnout. This means that all they need to do to avoid burning out is take a break and then pick up where they left off. This work arrangement also gives employees more power and influence. This implies that, among other things, the employee has control over his or her work schedule. Being in charge in this way is certain to increase staff morale, which will make them more motivated and focused on their task, allowing them to be more productive.

Another big benefit is the fact that employees that have flexible work schedules are able to save money. This is because they will not have to spend money on commuting to work if they have the choice to work from home. They will be happier and more productive as a result of being able to save money.

Lastly on the employee side, it contributes to a healthier mental condition by avoiding rush-hour and traffic. A worker who has the freedom to choose when to report for duty can arrive at the office after the rush hour. By doing this, people will lessen your stress level from being stopped in traffic.

Focusing now on the employer side, employee morale will rise as a result of the flexible work environment, giving them more enthusiasm for their jobs and a greater desire to complete their assigned duties. Additionally, it will promote staff loyalty to the company where they work and aid to strengthen employee engagement. Increased employee attendance, the number of employees that show up for work, is another benefit of workplace flexibility for companies, as is a decrease in tardiness, the number of workers who are late. The organization will undoubtedly see greater productivity as a result of this increase in attendance.

Furthermore, employers who let their staff members choose when, how, and where to work will undoubtedly be seen as being employee friendly. Top talent will be drawn to work for these companies as a result of this, helping to establish it as an excellent place to work. With that, there will be a decrease in the number of valued employees quitting their jobs reducing the

turnover rate. Another advantage would be to let some organizational divisions to put in longer workdays. The customer service department is one example, which will have the option to be available at various hours of the day and night depending on when they believe it is ideal for them to work.

Moreover, a greater probability that things will get done is also something expected from this type of work setting. When employees are free to work whenever, wherever, and whatever they choose, the company can be sure that more work will be done. This is due to the fact that employees take their work with them and can even combine numerous short hours during the course of a day to complete a task. In addition, the ability to telecommute and work from a location other than a standard office setting may be highly beneficial in terms of stimulation, especially for creatives. Lastly, being cost-effectiveness is undoubtedly an advantage since office space is expensive, allowing your staff to work from home will enable you to pay less rent and pay less on everything that comes with it.

#### ***29.4. Disadvantages of Work Flexibility***

When deciding on what level of work flexibility should be applied in a certain company, is important to analyze both the advantages and the disadvantages of this type of work arrangement. And indeed, there are a number of drawbacks to having a flexible workplace, but if correctly balanced can be leveraged.

One of the drawbacks of a flexible workplace is that it can be challenging to manage employees, as well as the fact that some of them are just unreliable and untrustworthy. If solutions are not developed to address these drawbacks, firms will essentially stop growing, which is the exact opposite of any company's goal. In this section, we will take a closer look at these limitations that affect both the employees and the employers.

The fact that not all of the company's staff members can be trusted upon to complete their duties is one of the issues that could be faced while implementing workplace flexibility.

While some individuals may take advantage of this chance to get better at what they do, others will undoubtedly use it as an excuse to be idle and accomplish nothing. Managers will not be able to take action to stop the employees from being slack and inept since they will not know what they are doing precisely. Instead of the rise in productivity that would often be anticipated from implementing a flexible working arrangement, this specific issue would cause a fall in output. This is why it is critical to take steps to guarantee that employees are completing their work rather than wasting their time on pointless activities. This also brings up the importance of the recruitment process and the how strict and tailored to the company values to guarantee that the new joiners are a good fit for the organization.

Moreover, some companies might also face an incapacity on their employees' side to distinguish between being at work and at home. This might be explained by the fact that we are naturally wired to unwind at home, so it may be challenging for us to push ourselves to accomplish more or perform better while at home. Adding to that, it is crucial to understand the availability of the company's client on working via some sort of a video conferencing platform, otherwise, attending to clients, especially when they do not follow a comparable schedule, could be one of the drawbacks of having a flexible workplace.

Another drawback could be related with an extra difficulty for some roles, such as those who work in teams. This is due to the possibility that it might easily affect how these teams cooperate and function. How would anything get done in a situation where each team member chooses a different time to work? As a result, it is crucial to establish some ground rules for such situations so that they may be resolved before they endanger the coherence and quality of the outcome. Additionally, security issues might also arise. The ability for employees to work wherever they choose is one of several types of workplace flexibility. With that, security challenges may result. If an employee is working in a public space, there is always the

possibility that confidential client information can be seen or shared unintentionally with someone who can use that to denigrate the firm's reputation.

If one of the advantages is the fact that companies might save some costs with office related expenses, the other side of the coin is that it may cause workers to stay later than expected, requiring payment from the company for the extra time spent working. Still on the costs' topic, employees might require technology such as second screens, and other devices to assist them complete their duties. This might result in increased expenses for the company, which naturally comes as a drawback.

Another one, that sometimes can be easily overlooked, is the less interactions and relationships between people. Work flexibility may cause a split among the employees of a particular organization. This means that there will not be any interaction between coworkers as individuals will be able to work from anywhere they desire, including from the comfort of their homes without seeing each other. Lastly it may lead to dissatisfaction. If some roles have flexible hours and others do not, there may be sentiments of unhappiness among the employees because those who do not have flexible hours may believe they are being mistreated.

### **30. Challenges**

When deciding to go forward with a flexible work arrangement there are many aspects to consider. During that process, the Human Resources department and managers can strive to address the flexible work dilemmas that may arise, by listening to workers at all organizational levels and taking the time to develop the future digital employee experience. By tying personnel initiatives to organizational and corporate strategy, managers may start having open discussions about this topic. This may be used as a jumping off point for designing and implementing an all-encompassing worker experience that, at the end of the day, can generate value to both the company and its employees.

### ***30.1. How to Measure the Success of Work Flexibility?***

As previously explained, implementing flexible working arrangements across a certain firm, will result in a possible boost on the outcome, a stronger interest in working for that company from top talent, lower turnover rates, and enhanced morale and culture. Measuring and assessing the impact of flexible work is crucial when it comes to making sure that shifting market demands are addressed and that the company benefits as a consequence.

Having this in mind, we will now go over different techniques that can be applied to ensure companies can get true and clear insights on how the work arrangement is contributing for the firm's positive outcome. We will first start focusing on quantitative methods to later approach qualitative methods. In both these scenarios, it is important to distinguish four different moments; Before; During; After; and Next steps. Following this order and when combined, these four steps can generate better and more relevant measures.

### ***30.2. Quantitative Methods***

On a first approach, before having already implemented a work flexibility program, it is crucial to find out what the employees' needs are. To do that, a survey to the workers should be applied. Here the goal is to collect employee opinions on work-life balance, wellbeing, engagement, diversity, and inclusion through the different questions. After getting back the results of the survey, the baseline information should be gathered and diversity in recruitment analyzed.

Moving on to a next step, where there is already some sort of a flexible work arrangement in place, based on the information collected on the first step. At this stage, the focus should be on gathering and analyzing information on several topics, such as recruitment, employee turnover, sick leave, health and safety indicators, KPIs (e.g. revenue), mental and

physical well-being, and data from leaving interviews. Adding to this, the changes in behavior using IT systems (e.g., the quantity of emails sent and received, etc.) should be tracked.

Coming to a third step, the effect that the program had on the firm will be evaluated by analyzing the previous data. Time and money saved on travel will be determined, as well as the effect on society parameters (e.g. whether the program is making a difference to the gender pay gap). Adding to that, it is important to determine if flexible working affects absenteeism and retention rates, while checking if the teams have accomplished organizational needs and goals by comparing before and after measurements.

Lastly, and focusing on next steps to improve the current flexible work arrangement, after 3, 6, and 12 months, collect post-intervention data, comparing results to pinpoint any issues that require attention and also recognizing the effects that a flexible working effort may have across different areas of the business. To interact with employees and have feedback on the entire process, the procedure continues with another employee survey, where the goal should be analyzing the opinions of the workforce about diversity, inclusiveness, engagement, and work-life balance.

### **30.3. *Qualitative Methods***

The first step, when using a qualitative approach, should be to set up a focus group with employees to determine what is being required in accordance with their needs while making sure topics like work-life balance, wellbeing, engagement, diversity, and inclusion are covered.

After that, and during the process, it is crucial to conduct a performance review in order to assess the effects of flexible working. To do that, managers may decide to give flexible workers tools to measure their progress and achievements. Through surveys and/or ad hoc input, it is possible to gather information on cultural changes.

On a third step, the focus goes to the collection of data showing projects or parts of the firm that continued to be productive after the program being implemented to try to show how

the influence on the company's results is insignificant or favorable. It could be also interesting to make case studies that emphasize the achievements, lessons learned, dangers, and advantages faced during the program. Adding to that, by conducting performance evaluations, it would give both sides (employees and employers) a chance to think about and discuss any improvements that need to be made.

Lastly, in the final step, in order to dive deeper on what can be improved, what to do next, it is strongly recommended to plan frequent meetings and check-ins to ensure that managers and employees understand flexible working options. Moreover, it is also important to establish steering committees to track the development of initiatives and keep testing programs related with flexible working.

### **31. Best in Class Examples**

While it is true that implementing a flexible work program can arise some issues in the first stages, usually related with workers operating remotely, they are by no means unsolvable, and the benefits frequently exceed the drawbacks. In this section, we will present four companies that have perfected flexible work arrangements, resulting in happier workers, improved retention, and even less expenses.

#### ***31.1. Dell***

It comes with no surprise that Dell, a computer manufacturer, fully embraced technology when it started establishing its flexible work culture back in 2009. Dell took this action after understanding how much its workers appreciated flexibility. There was never a formal policy in place at the organization. And because many workers occasionally need to work outside of regular business hours or choose to do so, Dell wanted to make sure that everyone felt at ease and supported working wherever and whenever they preferred, based on their own work style.

Since the very beginning, the Human Resources department collaborated closely with the IT and facilities teams to guarantee that every employee had access to training and to technology so that they could be in contact and be effective wherever they were.

Dell is one of the businesses nowadays that offers flexible work schedules and arrangements that contribute to the positive outcome of the company, allowing workers to work from home occasionally or even all the time. With over 60% of workers working flexibly and earning a Net Promoter Score (measure of customer experience and predict business growth) that is generally 20% higher than those who do not, the initiative has been a huge success. It is estimated that Dell has saved \$12 million annually since 2014 by using less office space because there are fewer employees working there every day.

Dell places a strong emphasis on carefully matching its rules with company culture in order to guarantee that the program satisfies both business goals and employee preferences. All workers, whether they work in the office or not, are held to the same standards, and trust, responsibility, and results are deeply ingrained in both. If there is a lack of trust, it may indicate a deeper issue within a certain company's culture that needs to be addressed fast.

### ***31.2. Humana***

Humana values flexibility for its clients, and it applies the same philosophy to its employees. It updated its policy for remote work in 2016 and started to promote the advantages of job flexibility. Nearly half of the workforce responded positively and worked remotely at least occasionally.

There was only one issue: Since calls could only be recorded at desks, the call center staff was unable to take advantage of these restrictions. When a call center manager brought up this concern with the business, Humana started looking into new technology that would enable the employees to work remotely. Following considerable investigation, a trial program was

introduced in 2018 that provided call center staff with new at-home equipment that allowed for remote work.

The technology redefined the rules. The organization could save on desk space by switching from its assigned seating arrangement to a more flexible, shared workspace, and the contact center workers could suddenly enjoy the same benefits as everyone else. Humana found it simpler to recruit top applicants by enhancing and broadening its flexible work arrangements. Furthermore, it did not rely primarily on local talent as its workforce is empowered to work remotely.

These is a good example that these kinds of policies will only become more accessible as technology advances. Additionally, by testing different approaches to discover what works, you can demonstrate to staff members your dedication to implementing a successful flexibility policy, even if it takes time.

### ***31.3. Unilever***

Unilever has their own vision on work flexibility too. Their new ways of working are ultimately focused on assisting individuals in maintaining their jobs and ensuring that the company has the resources it requires to operate. Additionally, workers are ensuring that the company can accommodate the demands of a workplace that is becoming more automated and where employment are divided into tasks and projects. Additionally, employees encourage opportunities to study and work in new ways so that individuals may have fulfilling careers both now and in the future.

One of their work arrangements that they take the most pride is called U-Work. There is no set role for individuals in U-Work. They work on a variety of jobs and have time between them to pursue other interests. Whether or not they are working on an assignment, they get a monthly retainer and a unique set of perks. They are free to choose their own work schedules, which might range from working a few days a week for a few months to working full-time for

brief periods of time interspersed with holidays. When they are working, they get compensated for each assignment.

They tested U-Work in the UK, and it is now operational in seven nations, including Malaysia, Argentina, and South Africa, where is already a big success.

The other work flexibility arrangement the company has is called U-Renew, that provides individuals with the time and resources necessary to advance their knowledge and abilities and put what they have learned to use in the real world. The firm provides people with financing, time off to study, opportunities for job experience, and the stability of a career, much like a paid learning sabbatical. It is an investment in a brighter future.

#### **31.4. Allianz**

Initiated as an emergency response, widespread working from home gradually evolved into a paradigm that businesses kept refining as the pandemic persisted. Soon after the transition to remote work, Allianz established the New Work Model (NWM) with the goal of developing a roadmap for the Group's future of work and hastening its transformation.

After introducing the NWM in 2020, Allianz made another step in the evolution of the work model by releasing a set of Global Minimum Standards for its new Ways of Working (WOW) in August 2021. These standards are applicable to all Allianz firms Group-wide. The Allianz WOW standards, which center on five important action items, were built on the pillars of adaptability, cooperation, and agility.

In the past 18 months, Allianz has carefully examined market trends and listened to its clients and employees as they made modifications across the company that increased cohesion and trust. What distinguishes the WOW standards of Allianz? The foundation of the WOW is hybrid work, and the company is enabling and empowering team members to work and perform at their very best by providing the possibility of working remotely at least 40% of the time and modern digital tools and meeting spaces that can accommodate both face-to-face and virtual

meetings. Adding to that, it also strives for a company with a culture that values greater flexibility and significantly less business travel, support for health and well-being, including free mental health counseling available around-the-clock and live health presentations, and lastly, the company gives studying possibilities, such as weekly times set aside for learning and a digital learning platform that is available in 27 languages.

## **32. Conclusion**

As technology advanced, the ability to work from home, and eventually from anywhere, spread and started to be seen as a solution to issues ranging from heavy traffic and metropolitan commutes to severe labor shortages. In early 2020, as the pandemic struck, the flexible working trend became a hot subject in conversations about the future of employment. People had to adapt themselves while at the same time their needs and desires were changing too.

The rising need for a better work-life balance was, and still is, the main factor driving the importance of workplace flexibility. It has special advantages for those who are multitasking obligations like elder care, childcare, or school, but, on the other hand it can also have disadvantages that can jeopardize advancements of other good practices, if not resolved in an early stage. Additionally, as more members of Generation Z join Millennials in the workforce, the need for flexible work arrangements has grown, and many job seekers are rejecting possibilities that do not fit their criteria related with work flexibility.

Some companies, more than others, realized that and started to develop work arrangements that could bring more comfort and adaptability to the employees while at the same time create value to the company. After assessing the needs of a certain company, it is crucial that there is a close follow up on the practices applied checking if they are turning out to have a favorable outcome or not. To do that, there is the need for measuring the output of those practices using both qualitative and quantitative methods.

Adding to that, it is wise to look at what other companies in the market are doing in this topic to stay up to date on new trends and ways of doing the same procedures. By adopting these measures, it helps firms to build their image by making them appear adaptable and pro-employee, leading to firms that can reach and maintain top talent for longer.

## **Leading a Successful Remote Onboarding Program**

### **33. Definitions**

*Onboarding*: "...the process of introducing a new employee into his or her new job; acquainting that employee with the organization's goals, values, rules and policies, and processes; and socializing the employee into an organizational culture" (Watkins 2012).

*Orientation*: the process where a new employee learns about immediate tasks and responsibilities they are expected to perform, based mainly on formal training and some aspects of socialization with their coworkers (Carlos and Muralles 2021).

### **34. Goals of the Project & Research Question**

The main goal of this manuscript is to detail the onboarding process through different lenses and methods to answer the research question: "*what are the best practice to lead a successful remote onboarding program?*". To accomplish this goal, the manuscript presents first an overview of the onboarding process and how it has been shaped by academic literature for both presential and remote modes is provided. Following, an analysis of the best and worst presential practices conducted by firms is presented for consideration; finally, the best practices for an all-remote onboarding process are proposed.

As onboarding is an important process for all companies, both large and small, the suggestions provided in this project may be of use for future company leaders who must develop new and innovative onboarding processes for their employees.

### **35. Introduction**

Little efforts from human resources HR are as significant as onboarding new employees. Onboarding is the single best moment to assimilate employees into the company's operating style, including its: culture, values, goals, behaviors, rituals, and more. Although the importance

of this process in the talent lifecycle is clear, many firms' HR departments continue to simplify the process and make it as quick as possible, making onboarding less effective by losing benefits such as performance raise and skill utilization (Caldwell and Peters 2018). After the begin of Covid-19, a lack of preparation became clear as companies were obligated to trade their physical onboarding process for an all-remote method. Nonetheless, the pandemic seemed to encourage a lingering shift in ideology for companies. Despite the fact workers around the world have started to go back to the office, research indicates the combination of hybrid and remote work is here to stay (Wigert and Sangeeta 2022). Thus, it is more relevant than ever to understand how to tailor the onboarding process to a more effective all-remote method.

### **36. Presential and Hybrid Onboarding**

Onboarding has been a source of academic research for some time as a subtopic in talent management studies. Researchers are interested in exploring how to maximize the positive effects of this introduction phase to new employees in a new role. Regarding productivity and future learning curves, effective onboarding enables new workers to access the information, tools, and materials needed to perform their role. Snell (2006) argues companies are focused on the attraction, selection, and recruitment of the right employees, while seemingly forgetting the main benefits from this effort come from a supportive introductory process into the job. Additionally, it is the perfect moment to reiterate the firm's culture and values, ensuring new workers understand how the company acts and what it stands for; put more simply, it helps create a cohesive workplace for all parties (Samra 2021). The two points mentioned are typically more traditional and obligatory onboarding aims which are included in the orientation phase of onboarding. However, as time passed, inventive HR teams and businesses have come up with revamped visions and objectives.

Cable, Gino, and Staats (2013) released an article exploring new ways of reinventing the onboarding process. The need for new methods was due to weaknesses observed in the regular track, as the authors explain onboarding processes were tailored in a way to assume every hire would just blindly adopt the company’s culture and values, without considering each person’s identity and preferences.

The authors suggest a new method called "personal-identity socialization" which focuses on assimilating new employees' unique perspectives and personal strengths to the job from day one, instead of framing them on what the company already has pre-selected.

*Table V - Traditional Onboarding vs. Onboarding Through “Personal-Identity Socialization”*

<b>Traditional Onboarding</b>	<b>“Personal-Identity Socialization” Onboarding Approach</b>
Convey a defined message about the company culture and values.	Tailor the onboarding activities to give the new hires the opportunity of interpreting the company’s culture and values by their perspective.
Teach the procedures for task end-to-end.	Provide the basics for a task, but let new hires use their skills and knowledge to find their way of doing.

One of the examples showcased is from Wipro, a telephone and chat support company, which typically implemented standard onboarding process where new employees would spend the first weeks of orientation focused on learning about the company. For example, new employees would learn about HR, voice training, customer relations, the correct manner to handle various scenarios, and all the norms and behaviors valued by Wipro. By changing their process to focus on each employee's identity and socialization behaviors, the quitting rate decreased 32%, and customers' evaluation of the service increased positively (Cable, Gino, and Staats 2013).

The difference is even clearer when comparing the approach between the previous onboarding to the new one. Before a leader would discuss Wipro's values and how to materialize

them in the current process, employees could express how to manifest them and create new opportunities (Cable, Gino, and Staats 2013). Additionally, the authors revealed great guidelines to pursue an impactful and original onboarding process; breaking out of the traditional employment trap can be patronizing and ineffective. Rather, employers should help newcomers to identify their strengths, facilitate introductions to other organizations members, and ask the new workers how to apply their unique strengths to the job.

The shift in focus towards onboarding as a simple orientation process was a big trend during the 2010s. Klein, Polin and Sutton (2015) focused on the socialization aspect of onboarding by exploring the main practices used by companies and how helpful or not they were to new employees. For the authors, successful onboarding aims to reduce the anxiety of new hires, help them make sense of their new environment, and provide the necessary tangible and intangible resources to become fully functional members of the organization. By interviewing numerous employees after their onboarding processes, the research concluded that the most common practices have the objective of informing the employee and displaying resources, the more different and diverse the offered activities are, the more effective the onboarding is, and new employees like obligatory activities more than optional ones.

Byford, Watkins and Triantogiannis (2017) also did a piece that backs up this view, stating that onboarding involves much more than bringing employees safely on deck. The authors approach the process as "integration", suggesting the final goal should be making the new employee a fully functioning member of the team as quickly and smoothly as possible. The authors' approach is corroborated by a global survey with almost 200 HR executives that revealed only half of the organizations were effective at facilitating alignment between new leaders and their teams. Furthermore, fewer than 30% said they helped the new hires adapt to the organization's cultural and political climate effectively.

The academic focus on diversifying the onboarding programs and making them less of just an orientation phase affected companies as well and important examples of revamped onboarding practices started to appear in companies. For example, as Davila and Ramirez (2018) highlight, Kimberly-Clark's social media and website are tailored to convey the company's philosophy to potential candidates, in addition to including useful tips and resources for the recruitment process. After hiring, the new employees gain access to another password-protected section that streamlines the bureaucratic part of the onboarding process before the first day, so the main core of the onboarding focuses on culture and values.

Furthermore, Zappos makes all employees participate in four weeks of customer service training whatever their role is, allowing every person to understand the underlying reason behind their work. After three weeks into training, Zappos offers all employees the option to forfeit the role in exchange for compensation between US \$2,000 - 4,000 if they don't feel they are a good cultural fit for the company. This practice shows the value of recruiting the right people, even if it means backwardness in the recruitment process.

Finally, the authors provide the example of the Cleveland Clinic. This company has a video series called "Empathy Series: The Hyman Connection to Patient Care" which exposes how the hospital promotes connections between the staff and patients. The series is used to call interest to potential hires and advocate for the hospital's culture and values, as one of the many initiatives used to support employees' development and growth across career paths.

Davila and Ramirez (2018) further identify practices that lead to a successful onboarding as giving feedback to the new employees, so they may improve their weakness(es), promoting relationship building between the new employees and key individuals from their departments and informing new employees on the history of the company and the plans to create a link between the worker and the company.

Bauer (2010) provided further contribution toward onboarding studies. The author claimed a strong onboarding process must have the following components: self-efficacy, role clarity, social integration, and knowledge of culture. Seeing that social integration is the most challenging component she suggested tactics such as making time for small talk during activities, arranging informal interactions such as lunches and coffee breaks, and participating in voluntary company functions.

Some of the top practices identified by the author: 1) make a written onboarding plan available 2) make all the orientation phases online to implement the basics before day one 3) have mentors or buddies to support the onboarding process 4) use milestones as 30, 60 and 90 days on the job to check employee advancement 5) use a feedback tool at the milestones 6) make the first day special 7) make clear the objectives, timelines, roles, and responsibilities to the new employee (Bauer 2010).

Among the worst practices of onboarding identified were: 1) ignoring diverse needs, metrics, and accountability 2) companies that don't define the owners of the onboarding process 3) focusing only on compensation and benefits 4) lack of guidance of managers 5) information overload 6) not defining the company's goals and expectation and the role of the new employee in it 6) assuming unwritten rules are self-evident 7) expecting the new employee quickly perform the role at mastery without having enough time to develop.

A final study worth mentioning was released by Chillakuri (2020) before the Covid-19 pandemic. The author claims inter-generational issues could arise if companies don't start preparing their onboarding processes to accommodate the new generation's needs and decided to investigate the expectations and desires of Gen Z<sup>3</sup>. This generation tends to share specific

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<sup>3</sup> Individuals born after 1995 (Lanier 2017).

characteristics related to work. For example, Gen Z has not needed to adapt to certain situations without technology and/or the internet, they are concerned with finding a job which suits their skills (Bernier 2015), they prefer autonomy at work, and they have a drive for learning new things, constantly searching for personal development opportunities. Considering these characteristics and prior academic research, the first thing Chillakuri (2020) identifies is that Gen Z desires to work as fast as possible after entering the company and likes to have constant feedback, as they are focused on career growth and personal development.

Chillakuri (2020) further highlights the need to merge online and offline activities since Gen Z is competent in gathering information online. This also confirms the value of dealing with bureaucratic and legal parts of the onboarding before the first day, by digitalizing all possible steps. The author also conducted surveys revealing the number one expectation of Gen Z is to have meaningful work at the organization, which can happen by having their ideas implemented by their managers and having exciting work.

Thus, it is important to highlight and promote discussion on the worth of each new employee in the great scheme of things during the onboarding process, as well as highlighting the mission, purpose, visions, and values of the organization at the initial phase. The survey also showed Gen Z employees like to understand the social initiatives a business does, so it is also necessary to communicate the social work done by the firm in an early phase to make workers feel as if their jobs are purposeful. Work-life balance is also a priority, since Gen Z workers believe flexibility improves productivity and efficiency; allowing the onboarding process to have some flexibility portray the right image of the company right at the beginning and raise new employees' satisfaction (Chillakuri 2020).

### ***36.1. Best Practices for Presential and Hybrid Onboarding***

After comparing the findings from past research, a list of the best practices for presential and hybrid onboarding was developed:

1. Make a written onboarding plan available.
2. Incorporate each new employee's point of view on the discussion about the company's mission, purpose, values & culture to create a personal link.
3. Make the objectives, timelines, roles, and responsibilities of the new employee clear.
4. Offer innovative and diverse experiences during the onboarding process.
5. Focus on integrating the new worker as an integral part of the team instead of training on tools and oversharing information.
6. Introduce the new hire to stakeholders from different departments and areas.
7. Promote feedback on milestones to constantly revamp the onboarding.
8. Arrange a time for informal rituals such as coffee breaks, lunches, and happy hours.
9. Cover the bureaucratic part of the onboarding before day one.
10. Make the first day special.
11. Organize some online sessions to give flexibility to the onboarding process.

### **37. Remote Onboarding**

The Covid-19 emergency prompted people to work remotely from their homes and obligated companies to quickly adapt to an all-virtual onboarding process. This phenomenon became a central point of study in onboarding studies, and several relevant articles have been released since the pandemic outbreak.

For instance, Carlos and Muralles (2022) state one of the main benefits of onboarding is to position the new workers in their day-to-day work environment in the most welcoming way possible through relationship building, which can be quite difficult in an all-online onboarding experience. As the authors mention, a lack of physical cues makes it more difficult to naturally develop personal relations. A positive outcome that may come from a distant

onboarding is the strong bond the new employee and his/her designated mentor develop due to extensive communication from the parts.

Since the office component is lost, the authors highlighted the added importance to create scheduled sessions and activities with colleagues since to create synergies and relations, to create an official platform or space where the new employee can ask for constant feedback from mentors and colleagues to all types of questions and to plan online meetings with longer duration to allow time for brainstorming and collaboration. The author also states it is a given reality that building bonds will be harder in this type of onboarding (Carlos and Muralles 2022).

Yadav et al. (2020) further highlight the online format's main benefits are saving time, saving costs, and providing a bigger room for flexibility. Conversely, the main disadvantages were the lack of a better communication flow, formation of personal connections, and difficulty in perceiving the company values. Due to that, the author suggests 1) creating more online socialization opportunities is a key element of online onboarding, (e.g., digital townhalls) 2) making the most of gamification initiatives to raise engagement, (e.g., gamified online training programs) 3) expand the onboarding to more than just lectures, understanding processes, and preparing documents 4) periodic virtual meetings to socialize with both upper management and the team and 5) always have a mentor or buddy program to increase interpersonal bonds.

Additionally, Alexander (2021) states the first and mandatory component of good virtual onboarding is utilizing efficient communications software, enabling all stakeholders to quickly connect and exchange information. The author's research indicates one-on-one sessions are a start to onboarding since it avoids new employees' first contact being in a meeting with unknown people. Making several learning options available is a good practice as well, considering that it makes it possible for each new worker to choose the modality that suits their learning style. Having a mentor or buddy system is also crucial, since in the online environment the new hires don't have access to informal office networking. Finally, the author suggests

companies should streamline and simplify the flow of new information in remote onboardings to avoid overwhelming and confusing new employees.

Mets (2021) calls attention to the importance of planning a structured remote onboarding program to ensure company culture is conveyed from afar, instead of worrying about the legal fragmentation of the process. The extended digital component should be used as an advantage of a remote onboarding, especially in social activities and sessions to ensure the new hire is able to make connections with their peers. The author explains these connections are even more relevant because in a remote context the “learn by doing” style of approaching the job tasks is lost, and the new employee needs an extended help from colleagues.

Finally, Scott et al. (2021) provided case studies of new hires during Covid-19 and reached the conclusion that companies need to work mainly on three fronts: creating structure, connecting people, and adapting continuously. Creating structure may refer to personalized coaching with an HR representative to guide the employee through different topics and training not only on tools and systems but also on how to connect with the other workers in the best way considering the company rituals and communication cues. Connecting people may include hosting online socials outside of the work spectrum as game nights, setting up virtual lunches and coffee breaks sessions, establishing virtual open-door policies to remind employees that it is acceptable to ask questions to leaders, creating online social spaces in different platforms, and scheduling one-on-ones between key stakeholders and new hires. Finally, continuous adaptation may refer to the scheduling of regular onboarding check-ins, using pulse surveys to specific themes, organizing feedback focus groups, rewarding exceptional mentors, and investing in objective metrics related to onboarding.

Upon the review of available literature on remote onboarding, we can identify work on all-remote onboarding is still scarce; this trend is observable when comparing the results for onboarding versus remote onboarding on Google Scholar. 73,700 results were shown for

onboarding, while only 266 results were shown for remote onboarding. Although work on remote onboarding is limited, the available studies have overlapping ideas on how to conduct the process. The path to adding the best qualities of presential onboarding into a virtual scene can be challenging, but this only presents opportunities for advancement.

### ***37.1. Best Practices for Remote Onboarding***

After comparing the findings from past research, a list of the best practices for remote onboarding was developed:

- Make some one-on-one sessions between the employee and critical stakeholders before meeting the whole team to foster key relations in advance and avoid awkwardness.
- Set longer duration meetings to allow time for brainstorming and collaboration.
- Assign a mentor or buddy so the new employee has someone to immediately rely on since it's hard to ask for clarification on a remote environment.
- Create bigger socialization online opportunities with other areas and departments as a digital townhall.
- Use gamification methods in some parts of the onboarding, as training for example.
- Align the communication tools and software used to streamline the information-gathering process.
- Host online socials outside of work time as game nights and virtual coffee breaks to help the new hire creating connections.
- Use pulse surveys for more agile feedback procedures.

## **38. Optimizing Remote Onboarding**

Exceptional suggestions have come from literature regarding remote onboarding, but due to a lack of academic research, several points are still missing from a traditional presential

onboarding experience. This section aims to shed a light on how to adapt some of these practices that are not so easily transferable in an online environment.

The first point is to make a written onboarding plan available, which can be easily adapted to an online interactive format such as dashboards. Besides stating the plan of activities, the tool could allow the employee to easily find people outside their area to connect with, enroll in informal activities, suggest training initiatives, access feedback surveys, and pulses to voice their opinion.

Arranging time for informal rituals can also be attained in a remote onboarding process by making the most out of available tools such as online games, collaboration software, and virtual media platforms. Integrating these informal gatherings into the onboarding session may help ensure the new employee and their team become bonded. It is also important to take advantage of these opportunities by inviting people from different department areas to amplify the new employee knowledge and network across the organization. In the long run, this will encourage the new hire to look for help from different outlets across the firm and make them feel welcomed by all of the company.

Literature on onboarding (Cable, Gino, and Staats 2013) exhibits that incorporating the new employee's identity, vision, and strengths on the pre-set company's mission, purpose, values and culture is key to creating a strong bond between individual and brand, but this can be harder to achieve in a remote experience. To make this process more dynamic and interactive, tools such as Mentimeter and Miro gather each hire's opinion on these topics. For example, after a session talking about the company values, it may be beneficial to allow people to participate by stating how they believe these values are showcased through concrete behaviors daily. Additionally, one may make a simulation on how they would act on a given situation. Further, a challenge which gets them to compliment the company's purpose with their individual one may increase positive feelings.

It is important to note the given suggestions already touch on another relevant practice from presential onboarding – to offer innovative and diverse experiences during the onboarding process. Hence, it is essential to make a special first day, which must be an unforgettable experience. Some ideas to make an online first day special might be to make the new employee write letters for their future self to be opened after one year, to give meal vouchers to the new hire and their team so they can have an online lunch together and create personalized message on the meeting background so the new hire feels welcomed in their first team meeting.

### **39. Recommendations for Future Research**

In the upcoming years, literature on remote onboarding should be expanded to reach the same rigorous academic approach found in presential onboarding work. Future research should then focus on:

- Applying the identified best practices in real life case studies to test their effectivity listed across papers, besides creating a concise framework to help companies establish a remote onboarding experience.
- Comparing satisfaction levels and experiences records between employees that went through presential versus remote onboarding processes in the same company or in the same industry.

### **40. Conclusion**

Successful and effective onboarding can significantly improve a new employee's productivity, loyalty, engagement, and overall job satisfaction. An analysis of the academic literature on both presential and remote onboarding displays that, despite what some may believe, it is possible to create a compelling onboarding experience in an all-remote mode; even

activities related to a presential modality can have proficient alternatives in an online environment powered by two factors.

The first one is technology. Through diversified tools and platforms, the feeling of not being physically together can not only be overcome but also surpassed by incredible activities available only in an online format. The second and most important factor is powered by people, and more specifically, their creativity. An effective all-remote onboarding cannot be achieved without deep care and preparation from selected employees committed to providing an extraordinary and unique experience to the new hires. The previous section and other examples of the work show amazing initiatives that can be crafted without the need for physical presence.

Many crises will come and go, and the future of work will constantly change. However, being prepared to have an impactful onboarding experience needs to be a priority regardless of what the scenario conditions impose. Seeing that, hopefully, the experience from the last years is just the starting point on a more holistic and continuous effort from academic and business stakeholders to a fresh and revamped remote onboarding process.

## **How Agility and Reskilling Impact an Organization's Readiness**

### **41. Introduction**

One major aspect defining today's future of work is automation. Automation changes the way companies operate by shifting workload from humans onto machines. This means that the characteristics and tasks of individual jobs change and so does the overall composition of skills, characters, and roles that make up a company's workforce. Large numbers of employees who formerly handled business processes manually are being replaced by a significantly smaller number of people who develop, program, maintain, and operate the machines that now perform the tasks required for the same business processes. This is an important shift, because hiring and laying off employees is an expensive undertaking for almost every company, so it pays off to leverage already employed workers. The ability to shift and adapt its workforce generally makes a company more agile and flexible to adapt to changes in its environment. And since change is inevitable in all industries, having an agile workforce can be a tremendous competitive advantage for any company.

#### **41.1. *Research Question***

Considering that the world is constantly changing, agility has rightfully become a major topic and an important goal for many organizations: McKinsey says that successful agile transformations significantly increase the chance for a company to be "a top-quartile performer among peers" as well as several other metrics like efficiency, customer satisfaction, and employee engagement (Aghina, Handscomb, Salo, & Thaker, 2021). Given that agility is an organization's ability to adapt itself to changes in its environment, an important question to discuss is:

*How does an organization's ability to reskill and therefore retain its workforce affect its agility and competitiveness?*

## **42. Reskilling and Why It Is Relevant Today**

### ***42.1. What is Reskilling?***

Reskilling in general could be summarized as the process of changing the composition of an individual's unique set of skills and capabilities with the goal of making the individual able to handle some desired task or responsibility that they couldn't handle before.

However, this change can have all kinds of extents. It could go from the very hands-on ability to use a specific tool, for example a new type of vehicle for a worker on a construction site, over learning a new language as a salesperson moving to a different country to completely changing careers and switching from handling insurance claims manually to being someone who programs computers to complete these tasks automatically. When the person whose skill set is changed remains in the same position overall, this process is usually referred to as "upskilling". Accordingly, reskilling is the process of altering a person's skill set when the change is performed for the person to do a new job.

### ***42.2. Why Do Workers Reskill?***

There are several reasons why a person would want to or have to reskill: Some realize after their initial education that they do not enjoy their job and wish to change it so they study another subject or go through another apprenticeship; Some would like to earn more money and shift careers by for example founding their own company and autodidactically become an entrepreneur; And some reach a ceiling in their career path and run through an Master of Business Administration (MBA) program to be able to jump to a management position. These are all important issues for the individuals themselves, for most organizations however the most important reason to reskill workers is because the world - and therefore the organization's environment - is always changing. Change on an abstract means that the company's customers demand different things or that the company is forced to do things differently for other reasons

out of their control. If the company needs to do different things (or do the same things differently), it is inevitable that the day-to-day tasks and responsibilities for workers change as well. With this, certain skills the workers possess become obsolete and it becomes necessary to acquire new skills - otherwise known as reskilling.

An excellent example for this is the advent of electric vehicles (EVs): Car manufacturers have heaps of expertise in building combustion engines, however due to regulatory changes and an increase in environmental awareness on the customer side, combustion engines are being replaced by electric motors in more and more vehicles at a rapid pace. Car manufacturers who don't want to close their operations must therefore react by offering EVs instead. Their workers, however, are experts at optimizing exhaust pipe airflow or understanding the physics of how pistons move in an engine block - skills that are entirely useless when building EVs. Consequently, these companies must reskill workers in many of their departments. And this is of course an issue that can and will happen eventually in any industry. Understanding how organizations can line themselves up to reskill quickly, efficiently, and effectively and how they can then use this ability to their competitive advantage is the goal of this paper.

### ***42.3. Why Today's Trends in the Workplace Are a Catalyst for Change in Job Requirements***

Since nearly everybody has a computing device at their disposal at almost all of the time and we are able to connect more and more devices to the internet, the way many things work has changed. As more and more things and processes now play out virtually, it has become possible to automate processes and tasks and thereby dramatically increase the efficiency of an organization's operations.

*Automation:* There are several ways in which businesses become more automatable. First of all, many processes that were formerly handled in an analog way - via forms, speaking to people in shops, moving physical documents around, etc. - have mostly

become digital. This means that now, most information is available on computers so that automation software can work with it and consumers are used to being communicated with via automatable channels such as chat or email. Secondly, many businesses offer entirely digital goods and services which are inherently automatable and built from scratch with automation in mind. Then, many companies can automate many internal processes: Reports that needed to be manually created can now be generated automatically, expense claims can be handled by computers, and so on. Lastly, a more recent but equally impactful development is the rise of robotics in businesses that require physical interaction. Robots are taking over in many industries such as production lines, restaurants, shipping, construction, and generally almost everywhere.

An illustrative example for this is the shift to automation in agriculture. Many new tractors that run on farms all over the world have been equipped with automated control systems since the early 2010s or even earlier. In 2022 John Deere also announced its first fully autonomous tractor that does not require any manual intervention whatsoever (Deere and Company 2022). This means that the skills that defined the job of a farmer in the previous century, such as the specialized equipment needed for farming, have become obsolete and the skills required moving forward will be the abilities to program, maintain, and supervise the machines that operate themselves.

*Obsolescence:* While services and goods have of course also become obsolete in the past, today's shift to virtual alternatives often turns entire industries into artifacts of the past with extreme pace. Examples of that being travel agencies who have largely been replaced by online bookings, video rental shops, phone book printers, paper companies and more. Additionally, there is always obsolescence due to general technological advancement which affects for example those who worked on combustion engines, developing film, pay phones, etc.

Both of these scenarios see workers who have experience in some specific field replaced by businesses that largely are defined by their ability to leverage computers to their advantage. This is why we see such a large perceived skill gap. In the past when one business model became obsolete, there were many others coming up that required a more diverse set of skills than what we see now. Today, most new companies lack talent that can work with software and data and the demand for those people is consequently huge. Additionally, the requirements for a job in technology and/or automation are very different from what laid-off workers bring, which creates a need for significant reskilling.

### **43. Introduction to Agility**

#### ***43.1. What is Agility?***

Harvard Business Review defined strategic agility as “[...] the ability to improve performance - not just survive but thrive - amid disruption” (Wade, Joshi, and Teracino 2021). The Agile Business Consortium says that an agile organization among others has the abilities to “adapt quickly to market changes” and to “respond rapidly and flexibly to customer needs” (Agile Business Consortium, n.d.). Both these definitions show that an agile organization is one that gets stronger when circumstances change and it gets challenged in its status quo.

#### ***43.2. Why is Agility Important Today and for the Future of Work?***

Agility should always be an important goal for any company because the world is constantly evolving. While it might feel like things are changing especially dramatically at present times, there are few episodes of semi-recent human history that do not involve some kind of technological advancement that turned most people’s lives upside down. May it be the phone, railroads, cars, or electricity. Topics such as climate change, web3, and artificial intelligence guarantee that there will be no standstill in the near future. Accordingly, those in

charge of organizations should expect change to happen at the same, if not increased, frequency in the future as we have seen in the past. And since it is impossible to reliably predict what exactly is going to change in the future, it is any organization's safest bet to embrace uncertainty and to prepare to react to whatever is coming.

This is also why agility is important for the future of work. Since we can't predict what exactly the future of work is going to look like, companies should aim to be as flexible as possible. And since talent management is at its core about the different activities required to assemble a collection of people who bring valuable skills to an organization, the ability to skill and reskill the members of that organization is an essential part of becoming ready for the future of work.

### ***43.3. The Future of Work, Talent Management and Agility***

The future of work is one aspect of the future that businesses are facing. The term describes changes in "how work will get done over the next decade, influenced by technological, generational and social shifts" (Gartner, n.d.). How work will get done is one of many dimensions (like the market and customer needs) that can change and that organizations must be ready to adapt to. Talent management is the strategy by which organizations attract, retain, and prepare employees to perform the jobs needed at the respective organization. This unavoidably places the company in an additional market: the job market. In the job market talent offers their skills and time and organizations purchase those for typically a salary but at the end of the day for whatever is demanded by potential employees. Like any market, this market is always evolving and what people ask for in exchange for their skills, how they find and pick their "buyers", how frequently they reach out to the market, and so on is subject to constant change.

Therefore, organizations must be able to respond to changes in the job market in a flexible and agile way just like they must be for the market that they sell their products in.

Additionally, talent management covers aspects of the employee lifecycle within a company that come after a person is hired. What people value in their day-to-day work is also changing as was outlined in earlier parts of this work and determines whether talent stays with the organization or not.

To summarize, the future of work concerns itself with how talent management will change; And having an agile talent management is necessary to hire and effectively apply the talent needed to stay competitive in that very future.

## **44. How the Ability to Reskill Impacts an Organization's Agility**

### ***44.1. Why a Company Needs to Reskill Its Workforce to Be Agile***

In order to adjust to changes in an organization's environment, the members of the organization must either do different things or do the same things differently - otherwise nothing would change and the organization fails to adjust and risks becoming obsolete. An example of a significant risk that is already playing out today for insurance companies are new, technology-first insurances that streamline processes by building them from the ground up with technology in mind allowing their customers to experience a much more frictionless interaction through their phones or computers. If existing insurance companies do not want to fall behind in customer experience, they must be able to build the software that allows customers to handle interactions virtually, while at the same time the need for customer support agents and salespeople would decrease. As soon as a digital-first insurer (these are often referred to as InsurTech companies) enters the market, existing players must react as fast as possible. Of course, they must not exactly match whatever the new entrant is doing, but chances are high that it is necessary to either match the new experience or to come up with some other differentiating factor to avoid losing customers to the new entrant. To do so quickly, the existing insurance companies might rush to hire people who have experience with digital processes only

to find that many other companies are facing the same struggle and the supply of the people needed is scarce. This makes hiring slow and expensive. Additionally, once hired, those who joined must be onboarded to the company, understand the issues and have general knowledge of the industry transferred from other employees. Another time consuming process. On top of that, those employees whose jobs are needed less due to the changes must be laid off. Laying off employees is an extremely uncomfortable procedure that might affect company morale, cost money due to severance payments, and negatively impacts the public perception of the company or even its valuation.

Hiring and laying off instead of reskilling existing staff also comes with significantly higher commitment. If the change turns out to be for the worse, re-hiring those laid off and un-hiring the new employees is likely close to impossible and would impact the external perception of the company in an extremely negative way. Rolling back changes that were made by reskilling workers who were already with the company is significantly easier and while it might be perceived as problematic from within the company or trouble those affected by the changes - it would not be impossible. Making decisions that bring the organization in a state where it cannot undo changes effectively inhibits it from reacting to changes appropriately - the opposite of agility.

All-in-all there are four major factors that make it necessary for companies to be able to reskill their employees:

*Cost.* Hiring new employees is expensive and so is laying off existing employees. Reskilling can mitigate the funds lost so they can enable further agility in other places. The Financial Services Skills Commission (FSSC) estimated the savings for reskilling a worker in the financial services industry to amount to about \$60,000 (Financial Services Skills Commission, 2022). This might even be an entirely prohibitive factor since major changes can

affect large shares of an organization's workforce and it's not feasible for companies to lay off large quantities of people at the same time.

*Speed.* Hiring and onboarding new employees is furthermore slow and difficult. Consulting firm Gallup suggests that employees typically need twelve months before they reach their peak performance potential (Wetherell & Nelson, 2021). A large share of the efforts spent in onboarding are often specific to the company, not the function performed by the employee and could therefore be avoided by reskilling.

*Responsibility.* Companies have social responsibilities and laying off large quantities of employees damages its reputation which in turn can affect the company's ability to hire, employee morale, the company's valuation, and more.

*Culture & Mindset.* Agility is in large parts also a question of culture and mindset. Improving one's skill set to grow to new challenges is the core idea of agility. If a company reacts to challenges by "giving up" on employees and replacing them, it can hardly expect its employees to grow and improve. Especially not if they must fear that they might be laid off if their role becomes obsolete in the future.

Another interesting perspective is through the lens of the "Framework for Business Agility" as it was defined by the Agile Business Consortium (ABC). The framework defines five major dimensions of agility: People, culture, leadership, strategy, and governance. The ABC claims that for an organization to be truly agile it must be "populated with agile people who thrive in an agile culture" and become a "learning organization". Peter Senge - an Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) professor also referenced by the ABC - defines a learning organization as one "[...] where people are continually learning how to learn together" (Senge, 2006). Since learning is often defined as the process of acquiring new knowledge or skills, an organization whose workforce can reskill is one that should already be leaps ahead

compared to any other organization in fulfilling the “agile people” aspect of the ABC’s agility framework.

#### ***44.2. Using an Agile Workforce for Competitive Advantage***

Reacting in an agile way can - as we discussed earlier - be a necessity when market conditions, regulation, customer demands, or other factors change. However, agility must not only be relevant for situations in which an organization reacts, it can and should also be used to get ahead of competitors in a proactive way.

To do so, it is necessary for organizations to be innovative. Many companies already explore opportunities through experimentation and by promoting intrapreneurship. However, having an agile workforce makes it significantly easier to act on the findings that come up during these initiatives. If a project promises to be successful, members of the organization can be transferred and reskilled to that project which makes it both less risky and expensive to initially perform these projects and less difficult to roll back if needed.

By experimenting a lot an organization can significantly increase its chances to get ahead of its competition in addition to the resilience benefits that we discussed earlier.

The World Economic Forum (WEF) nicely describes why reskilling is especially important today in its report “Towards a Reskilling Revolution”: The WEF says that because technology is becoming more and more available, most organizations will not be able to differentiate themselves by the technologies they use but must rather create competitive advantage by making the best use of their human capital.

#### ***44.3. The Current Job Market and Skills Gap***

The “skills gap” describes a mismatch between the skills that employers need and the skills that workers offer on the job market. Harvard Business Review (HBR) claimed in 2014 already that there is a significant skills gap - especially in higher paying roles as evident by a

significantly higher increase in pay for 90th percentile wages compared to 50th percentile wages. This was also amplified in sectors that had particularly average use of technology (Bessen, 2014). In 2020, McKinsey surveyed executives and managers and found that 9 out of 10 interviewees either experience a skills gap already or believe that one would form in the next 5 years. This lack of skills amplifies everything that we discussed before, since hiring becomes more difficult and organizations become unable to simply fill positions with new hires. As one PwC manager states, the problem that managers will face when they think “I will just hire new people” is that “they won’t be there” to be hired (Weber, 2019). Consequently, not being able to reskill would negatively impact the company’s agility because it might fail to find the right talent to adjust to changes.

## **45. Challenges and Side Effects**

Of course reskilling is not as easily said as done and there are several challenges that make it more difficult. Additionally, being an organization that reskills in place of hiring and laying off brings a few side effects that we are going to take a look at in the following section:

### **45.1. Challenges**

Reskilling is hard work for all involved parties. It is, however, especially challenging for the individual being reskilled. Acquiring a new skill set requires the individual to participate in formal training, to try new and unknown activities, to shadow others on their job, and might generally be perceived as more arduous than just staying with the status quo by some individuals. This is on one hand certainly influenced by the individual's character and aspirations but can also be mitigated by the organization through the right incentives and creation of comfortable reskilling programs.

As we established earlier, most industries are changing frequently and will keep doing so with similar or increasing pace in the future. This also means that reskilling’s are equally

frequent. This brings up another issue that companies must try to alleviate: Frequent reskilling's might fatigue those affected by them. The more frequent members of an organization are reskilled the higher the chance that they lose interest in acquiring those new skills - especially when they feel like the new skill might only be used for a short period of time.

Lastly, not every person can be reskilled to do any other job. Clearly, people have certain strengths and weaknesses - and more importantly interests. Also the skills that a person possess today influence how difficult it is for them to reach a new desired set of skills. A financial analyst who spends lots of their time working with analytics software and spreadsheets will most likely have an easier time to become for example a business automation manager than a customer support specialist. If the skills are too mismatched it might be very challenging or impossible to reskill an individual for certain roles.

Another important challenge that we can look at from an applicant's point of view is expertise. A traditional way to become an "excellent hire" for companies is to have very deep expertise - especially when an applicant brings an unusual combination of skills and has a very deep understanding of both they can be an invaluable asset for specific companies. However, as skill sets become more short-lived and move from something that one sharpens their entire career to something that is acquired for a specific job and given up for the next job, it might become less attractive for any given person to invest into particularly deep knowledge of a specific domain. This is also accelerated by the trend that people remain in positions and companies for shorter periods of time than they used to.

#### ***45.2. Side Effects***

Having in mind that reskilling as a process can be quite challenging, it makes sense for organizations to keep that in mind when building or expanding its workforce. Since members of agile organizations can expect to change their roles and responsibilities rather frequently, it seems irrational for companies to follow a traditional hiring approach in which they check an

applicant's ability to perform on the job description or test their skills. Instead the organizations should hire for what it actually needs: Flexibility. Assuming that the organization is proficient in reskilling its members anyways, it can ignore whether an applicant's current skill set is a great fit for the advertised role and instead make sure that the applicant is somebody who is less likely to resist reskilling or to be fatigued by it. Additionally, a broader skill set can mitigate the risk of having too large of a mismatch between existing and desired skills when reskilling which will likely push companies to hire generalists rather than specialists.

### ***45.3. Reskilling in The Far Future***

The word "today" has been used frequently throughout the headers and body of this discussion, mostly to contrast the current situation to the past. But since the issue has not been as pressing in the past, we must also ask ourselves how important it will be in the far future. When we are discussing the future of work we are usually referring to a period of time that might span the next 10-20 years, until new significant generational shifts occur. And while - as is said often - change is the only constant, we have also discussed earlier that today's skill gap is so tangible because lots of jobs in diverse industries are being replaced by very comparable jobs that require skills in working with machines. Accordingly, there is a chance that the workforce of the future will simply be way more homogenous than that of today or the past. If that were the case, the topic of reskilling might well become less relevant in the far future as more and more people will be educated in this new and more ambiguous skill set and can simply be employed by almost any company.

## **46. Summary**

To briefly answer the question posed in the beginning, we can state that the ability to reskill can make or break a company's agility. We have discussed ways in which an organization might be heavily impeded in its ability to respond to change if it is unable to reskill

its employees. Because things are changing and will continue to do so, it is not feasible or sustainable for companies to constantly lay off large parts of their workforce to then hire other people from an already fierce job market. We have then looked at ways in which reskilling can help increase an organization's agility through culture and experimentation and discussed challenges that affect reskilling and whether it will actually stay relevant in the far future.

It is, as with many business questions, difficult to quantify or precisely measure both agility and ability to reskill, so it is hard to make comparisons that would allow us to definitely say if organizations that do more reskilling are actually more agile as well. It can be assumed, however, that in the future we will see more and more situations in which companies run large scale reskilling programs - or fail to do so. This will allow us to draw further conclusions about how agility and reskilling interrelate.

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