

SUMMARY

4 Focus Areas to Prepare Workers and Workplaces for an Uncertain Future

Productivity improvements, unquittable workplaces, future-ready workforces, and next generation talent acquisition can position employers to weather an uncertain future.

THE CONTEXT

A number of trends are re-shaping workforce demand and contributing to the worsening of a persistent skills gap. These include such trends as an aging workforce, low unemployment, climate change, e-commerce growth, hybrid work, infrastructure investments, and technology adoption. One of the most influential technology trends that is expected to be both widely adopted and deeply impactful is artificial intelligence (AI), in particular generative AI. With these trends at play, the only certainty is that the future of work will continue to rapidly evolve. Employers who prepare their organizations and their workers for an uncertain future will be best positioned to weather the change.

BEST PRACTICES

Our research revealed four focus areas that can give employers an edge in today's labor market and into the future. These are listed below.

- **Productivity improvements.** Employers have a renewed focus on worker productivity after recent declines. Practices to increase worker productivity include optimizing job design and matching employees with roles; boosting employee satisfaction; and implementing new technologies such as those that augment human capabilities or automate processes.
- **“Unquittable” workplaces.** The employee experience has risen to the forefront of HR discussions. Employers recognize that happy employees are better for retention, better for recruitment, and better for bottom lines. Employers are paying more attention to work-fit, not just work-life balance, and tailoring mutually-beneficial, often individualized work arrangements. They are also being more intentional about job design to ensure meaningful work and

organizational culture. Infused in this kind of “unquitable” workplace are inclusive and equitable practices that support diverse workforces.

- **Future-ready workforce.** With changing workforce demand comes changing skills needs, which will require workers to upskill, reskill, and, in many cases, transition to new occupations. To optimize their internal workforces, employers will need to put in place systems to help manage this process – assess skills, deliver learning and development, create internal talent marketplaces, and provide employees with opportunities for mobility.
- **Talent acquisition.** The previous three focus areas help retain workers, shore up the skills of current employees, and potentially reduce recruitment needs. At the same time, improvements in these focus areas help employers attract and hire new workers. To further support talent acquisition needs, employers are also implementing skills-based hiring practices and prioritizing hiring for skills and attributes that demonstrate potential. In addition, they are reaching into untapped talent pools, often called the “hidden” workforce to cast a wider net in their searches for good-fit candidates.

WHERE TO FIND OUT MORE

Please reference Workforce Innovation Reports listed in the Best Practice Library under Retaining Talent > Workforce Development Trends 2024-25.