Understanding the keys to reskilling

Businesses and their staff may need help to identify the talent they possess

Take any assessment of the world of work and the conclusion will be the same: decades-old dynamics have crumbled practically overnight, change is the "new normal" and the only certainty is uncertainty.

But nowhere will the impact of the coronavirus pandemic make the biggest difference than in the supply and demand of labour. Predictions are that the UK economy will this year shrink by 14 per cent, a level that would signal the largest contraction for 300 years, with unemployment conservatively expected to double to 10 per cent.

Job vacancies in May were already at 60 per cent of their levels in March, enough to cause the largest quarterly drop on record, and no one is quite certain what will happen when the current nine million-plus furloughed workers stop being supported by the state. With some academics suggesting unemployment could touch 15 per cent by the end of the year, the usually balanced equation for demand and supply seems drastically out of kilter.

Taken together, the likelihood is the UK economy will move from previously suffering skills shortages to having the people employers need, who might well possess the necessary skills, but are either in the wrong roles or run the risk of redundancy.

This is a parlous position, not just for employees, but for employers, who risk shedding people who actually have more competencies, or propensity to learn, than they might actually be aware of.

As a resetting of the economy takes place over the next 12 months, what employers really need to do is take responsibility. It's well researched that many organisations have little or no idea of the latent talent and skills in their employee pool.

Talent in sub-optimal roles is defensible when times are good, but now employers need to take a much more insight and intelligence-led approach to the skillsets their people possess. Otherwise they run the risk of losing people only a training course or skills update away from being a key employee.

Ultimately, organisational agility and competitiveness depends on speed to market and quality of execution, so the skills and capability of staff are an important part of this equation. So employers will need to recognise what staff were already worrying about before the COVID-19 outbreak: that in a world likely to feature greater automation and digitalisation, their once-solid skills will need constant refreshing for them to stay employable and agile.

Last year, the annual *Edelman Skills Barometer* found 45 per cent of staff were already concerned their jobs could be obsolete in the next three to five years, with 59 per cent worried they wouldn't have the necessary skills and training to adapt. COVID-19 will only heighten employees' sense of their job being precarious.
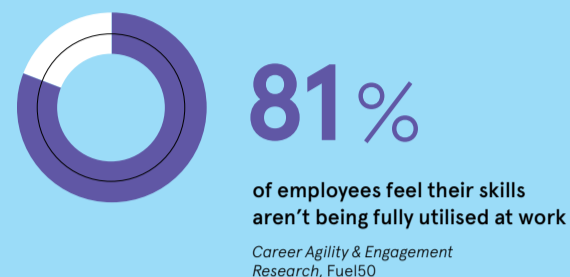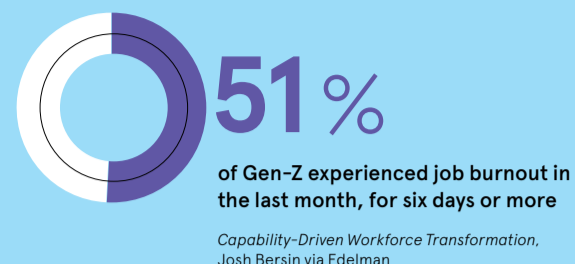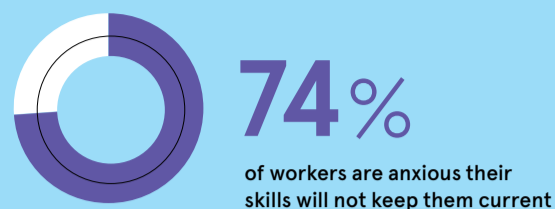
But responsibility around skills must lie with organisations themselves knowing precisely who they have in their organisations. Only then can they identify those with the sorts of skills needed to take on new challenges or who have already demonstrated a learning mindset.

Organisations armed with this data can not only plan, upskill and optimise their workforce so they are more resilient to change, but by having a digital skills platform for staff to see for themselves, they can be huge creators of engagement too.
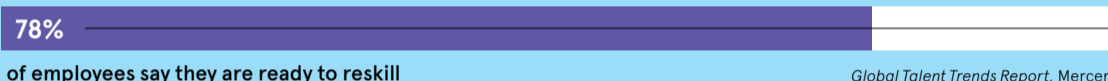
According to LinkedIn, globally there has been a huge groundswell among workers to feel "current"; 74 per cent are anxious their skills will not keep them current. Employee activism and demand for help is growing. So the experience staff want now is one where they feel empowered and enabled to take control of their own skills journey.

Fuel50's Talent Marketplace platform enables just this. Staff can not only create their own skills "fingerprints", but they can also see what other internal opportunities might match their capability, or do gap analyses of the skills they need to acquire to be considered for new, potentially different roles or projects.

Staff can also use the platform to see the sorts of skills that are currently most in demand. In short, staff can spot and prepare themselves for the sorts of opportunities that will keep them relevant.

74% of workers are anxious their skills will not keep them current

51% of Gen-Z experienced job burnout in the last month, for six days or more

Capability-Driven Workforce Transformation, Josh Bersin via Edelman

81% of employees feel their skills aren't being fully utilised at work

83% of employees believe it is their responsibility to reskill themselves

Career Agility & Engagement Research, Fuel50

Capability-Driven Workforce Transformation, Josh Bersin via Edelman

Executives believe that

45% of the workforce can adapt to the new world of work

78% of employees say they are ready to reskill

Global Talent Trends Report, Mercer

FACTORS IMPACTING THE WORKFORCE

1 **Increasing job automation** PwC

2 **Decreasing talent availability** OECD

3 **Decreasing mobility of skilled labour** PwC

4 **Ageing talent** World Bank Group

TOP CAPABILITIES FROM THE FUEL50 CAPABILITY TRENDS REPORT JULY 2020

1 **Talent agility**

2 **Cultural competence**

3 **Managing remote teams**

4 **Information transparency**

5 **Human quotient-empathy for personal experience**

Capability Trends Report, Fuel50

> **With the right technology, it is clear skills development can develop a momentum all of its own**

It's providing this supportive, caretaking role that all successful future organisations will need to transition to. In the uncertain future we now live in, organisations have to do better by their people if a chasm between employers and employees is to be prevented from opening up.

If both are to thrive, it's employers who need to provide the tools for employees to understand how their skills need updating or for human resources leaders to see which skilled people need redeploying.

Further upsides to this are that in providing such technology, organisations can only ever be transparent and inclusive, and promoters of roles awarded on merit, not skin colour, race, religion or any other sub-conscious biases.

Anne Fulton, founder and chief executive of Fuel50, says: "Through good quality data, talent can be placed on a level playing field. Talent-decision transparency creates fair organisations. In a world where all people need to feel included and are treated equally, the only thing that should drive business strategies going forward is capability."

It's only through good talent and skills data that proper human capital management can flow. It's data that's needed to provide accurate assessments of whether organisations already have the capability they need, or whether they should upskill their existing employees to get it or hire new people.

It can sound like a Herculean task. But technology is now so intelligent it is able to bring a user experience that encourages staff to engage with learning. Experience among our clients reveals typical engagement levels of 85 per cent, with around 74 per cent of staff coming back at least once a month.

With the right technology, it is clear skills development can develop a momentum all of its own. A robust skills architecture is also needed and FuelArchitecture™ and TalentBluePrint™ methodology help fast track this critical piece of the reskilling puzzle.

The most significant benefit though is that when done correctly, there is a huge opportunity for organisations to become the sort of employer they truly want to be: fair, equal and meritocratic. Talent systems have long been due a reset. Now the reset is here.

But in times like these, it truly is the case that the organisations most likely to prosper will be those that are clear about the capabilities they need to drive themselves forward, while acknowledging the genuine needs of their people in the wake of current world events.

For more information please visit www.fuel50.com