

The Talent Gap

Rethinking Organizations & The Talent Required for Success

The challenge is clear. There is a widening gap in the skills needed by employers given technological, competitive and generational changes and the current and projected skills of the American workforce. The gap runs from the executive suite thru to the shophouse floor. It is critical for senior leaders to fully understand that closing the gap **must** begin in the C-Suite. The facts are clear, the emerging workforce of Millennials and Generation-Z are seeking to *integrate* work and life by leveraging technology versus the old idea of work-life balance. Therefore, attracting top talent will require employers to rethink the traditional employer/employee model. Also, self-learning machines combined with the real-time need to collect and interpret information will force decentralized decision-making in order for organizations to remain competitive. Table I below suggests the gap goes beyond the need for new skills and will require a shift in organizational mindset and culture.

Table I. Organizational Work Environment Paradigm Shift

Yesterday	Tomorrow
Centralized	Decentralized
Task Driven	Value Driven
Command & Control	Empowered & Autonomous
Closed System	Emerging Integrated Systems
Problem Solving Mentality	Opportunity Seeking Mindset
Classroom Education & Training	Continuous Personal Learning
Traditional Work Ethic	Balance Based Work Ethic

Sources: Pistrui and Kleinke, 2017

Those who hold onto the traditional approach to management may doom their organizations to the lower tier in their industries or into extinction.

Future success is tied to organizations with more agility, which means developing specific soft skills within the workforce. However, there is little indication that employers or employees have embraced this reality. There was a 2016 survey on change management. The survey segmented the 2,163 respondents based on job responsibility from CEO's to front line employees. What the survey discovered was a strong preference for the status quo, i.e. resistant to change. The status quo respondents ranged from 37% of C-suite respondents to 45% of front line employee respondents. Unfortunately, the status quo is not a part of a winning strategy.

Everyone in the successful organizations of the future need to be able to pivot and take on new and unexpected job requirements, adjust to competitive forces, or simply team with others to achieve organizational goals. The ability to pivot is what agility is all about. Superior technical competency will not matter if you don't have people that can make necessary adjustments.

Table II. Future Soft Skill Set

People Centered	Skill Centered	Thinking Centered
People management Coordinating with others Service orientation	Complex problem solving Creativity Negotiation	Critical thinking Emotional intelligence Judgement and decision making Cognitive flexibility

Source: World Economic Forum, 2016

Table II above, from the World Economic Forum, projects a few of the soft skills that will be in high demand and they are reflective of an agile workforce. The common themes from the list in Table II are as follows:

- Ability to dynamically interact with others
- Ability to identify opportunities and challenges
- Ability to develop solutions related to the opportunities and challenges
- Ability to make decisions

Becoming A More Agile Organization

An agile organization adopts a people centric approach to delivering its products and services. Every organization, regardless of its use of technology, relies on people to achieve success. Developing an agile workforce begins by uncovering the unique skills and competencies *your* employees must possess for success. You then develop and implement a systematic continuous learning strategy for existing personnel and new recruits. Having a commitment to continuous learning is critical for the individual, team and organization. But, since so many organizations hire and promote based on the *next man up* approach, prior personal relationships, affinity for alma maters or how they “feel” about a candidate, the transition to an agile organization is sure to be bumpy.

How do you recruit and develop the right people?

The most effective approach to building an agile workforce, tied to the unique needs of your organization, is to incorporate the use of a research validated suite of personality assessments into your performance management and recruitment process. This goes well beyond a simple behavioral assessment. Organizations need a comprehensive approach that uses data-driven methods to redefine the job requirements of key positions, develop new screening protocols for new hires, as well as creating new training and development curriculum.

Future success is tied to the agility of your personnel and now there is technology, through a comprehensive suite of assessments, to provide objective measures of analysis. Companies can now truly put the right people in the right job with the right tools. Why would you ever again want to hire and promote without the benefit of the best possible information available? The winners of the future won't.

This is the first in a series of articles providing insights into how to effectively adjust to the disruptions of technology, competition and generational change that is impacting all organizations. These changes, known as the 4th Industrial Revolution, are remaking the competitive landscape. Estimates are there will be more change in the next 20 to 30 years than in the last 300 years.

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Cape Fear Partners, a Hub Certified advisory firm that are thought leaders in helping organizations re-envision the effective deployment of human talent and organizational resources. The firm is also a value-added associate with TTI Success Insights, Inc., a global leader in the development of research validated assessments.

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