

The Future of the Workforce Is Now



1st Edition

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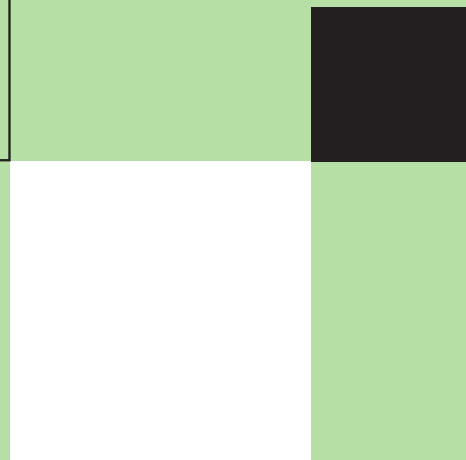
Foreword

The world is changing and multiple studies are showing us that productivity has little to do with the traditionally structured 40 hour office-based work week. The pandemic, new technology, rising focus on worker's rights, and the addition of more tech-savvy Gen-Zers into the workforce are catalysts - influencing how we think about work and the culture of the 9-5.

Past generations blurred the line between personal life and career - a viewpoint shared less and less by younger generations. Due to this and multiple other factors covered in this book; a greater emphasis on work/life balance has emerged and a new attitude toward motivation is challenging everything we thought we knew about what workers value.

How will the corporate world adjust to the new work/life balance mentality while also keeping up with the exponential rate of change in technology, maintaining productivity and profit in big business?

This book serves as a tool for those looking to adapt to the new structure of the workforce and those seeking to understand how jobs will function moving forward. We'll address the impact of work from home, future-proofing your organization, employee management, how to stand out in the marketplace, and more. The future is now, and embracing change will give you and your company the fuel it needs to propel forward.





The Future of the Workforce

"And the day came when the risk to remain tight in a bud was more painful than the risk it took to blossom." – Anais Nin

The Time is Now

For decades, American businesses have debated the best way to maximize employee output while keeping workers happy and turnover low. At the forefront of these debates have been the work from home discussions. However, technological advancements did not support this solution the way they do in our post-pandemic environment. Even now that the necessary tech is more available, many companies still are not offering remote work as a continued solution. The question is, why?

As a leader in technical workforce solutions, we've worked with hundreds of contractors, freelancers and business leaders only to find that they are all on the same page. Everyone wants to be able to offer a work from home solution but this decision requires further logistics and infrastructure. "A recent survey of 2,000 working professionals and 1,000 hiring managers by LinkedIn found that 82% of workers want to work from home at least one day per week, and 57% want to work from home at least three days per week."¹

Remote work may not currently be a viable full-time solution for every industry but we are seeing an increase in creative solutions and possibilities crop up that are not dependent on geography. Work-from-home has seen incredible growth, not just over the last few years but over the last decade. The factors slowing down the shift stem from both companies and employees. Here's why more jobs don't offer the option to telecommute.

Making it a Priority

If it's not broken, why fix it? Day-to-day business operations take precedence over implementing new solutions to overtake the existing commuter structure. Until something becomes uncomfortable, or stops working, it is often not a priority to install a better model.

Employees feel they can do their jobs in less than the standard 40 hours/week and that time in the office is not a necessity. In 2019, The average US worker commuted more than 50 minutes daily.² So when the team member is given the option to work from home, studies show they are even willing to take a pay cut, which further proves a required work/life balance, even more so for employees with a spouse or children.





Shifting to Remote Work

There are many challenges a business will undergo as it adopts a telecommute model. Any business looking to shift must have a strategy in place to retrain employees, provide work from home equipment, restructure customer service protocols, and manage quality. Special attention must also be given to employees in impoverished neighborhoods or rural communities with limited internet service. These challenges make it difficult for business owners and leadership to smoothly implement a work from home option. How does the employee stay engaged with the distractions of home life? What level of communication is required? How is progress tracked?

There are great best practices and technological tools to help facilitate these transitions. Internal accountability solutions are helpful to maintain relationships and build trust. Don't forget about the off-the-shelf apps available to you to help track time and project progress. We found building our own proprietary app was the best solution for us.



Here are ways to motivate yourself and employees for a productive workday.

Establish a Clear Schedule

Some businesses require a set schedule while others allow for less time restrictions. Developers often have large amounts of work that do not directly involve the customer whereas; a customer support representative would. Either way, regular meetings to begin and end the day or week are helpful to connect and focus our efforts. It's important to recognize that those who work from home can have a difficult time separating work life from home life. For those, clearly defining what begins and ends a work day will lead to higher job satisfaction.

For the individual, stimulus control is tied to the work routine. This could mean something as simple as getting dressed for work to put you in the mindset, but other avenues include eating breakfast, listening to certain songs, or even working out. For parents with young children at home, they may have unique challenges that require more patience and creative solutions. As a manager, it's a good idea to encourage individualized healthy pre-work rituals for maximum success.

Encourage Social Interaction

Good communication has always been essential to great working relationships and a great company culture. Now, more than ever, it is important to ensure your team is always on the same page. Project management and online collaboration tools make it easy to check-in, delegate and keep teams accountable.

Other tools exist that organize team communications by group or topic and integrate with the other tools your team uses to ensure that everyone has the visibility they need to do their jobs effectively. Even something small like utilizing a free chat app can boost productivity by becoming a searchable resource for team knowledge and important reminders for your current team, and for incoming hires.





Balancing Life and Work

"The key is not to prioritize what's on your schedule but to schedule your priorities." - Stephen R. Covey

It's no secret that the last few years have been challenging for everyone. Many companies have had to do more with fewer resources which put additional pressure on their teams to perform. Most workforces employ a diverse range of people including working parents, gig economy workers, and younger, inexperienced workers, each with their own scheduling hurdles and lifestyles. Workforce diversity has expanded from the relative homogeneity of the corporate world just 1-2 generations ago. Burnout benefits no one, making work flexibility an asset to productivity (which may seem counterintuitive). To implement effective change, business owners should consider the following solutions.

Utilize Technology to Boost Productivity

Technology applications have been in the works for years to solve problems from remote medical care, to long-distance emergency solutions, to the multi-national communication demands of growing industries. The natural growth of tech in the last decade plus the spotlight of the pandemic, have spurred the growth of viable solutions.

- Use project management software to outline goals and timelines for tasks and teams. With teams working apart - often in different timezones - clarity around responsibilities and deadlines is essential.
- Use communication tools like Slack or Microsoft Teams to ensure your team can easily collaborate and socialize. Communicate company milestones, direct questions to relevant channels, and keep a running dialogue that is easily searched and referenced.
- Use video! Make it standard to use video on every call. There are a lot of asynchronous messaging solutions but bi-monthly or weekly team calls with video help put a face to a name, build interpersonal connections, and help replace some of the team interaction you may feel is lost in a rem.

Foster Real Connections

We spend a third of our lives at work. There's no reason we can't make real friendships while we're there. Here's how to create an environment where real connections can thrive.

- Develop a consistent way that people with similar challenges can talk together and exchange ideas. This can be as simple as sending a mass email, gathering ideas for inspiration or as complex as creating peer groups with leaders and meeting agendas.
- Managers and Mentors should check in regularly with one-on-ones and use a few minutes to build rapport and take an interest in the people that make up your team in the same way you would if you were speaking in person.
- Use a Virtual Buddy System. This does not take the place of a manager or mentor. A virtual buddy is someone a new employee can go to for simple organizational questions and an introduction to company norms and company culture. How do I find this? Who can I speak to about this? It is nice to have someone who isn't your boss to go to for help.

Empathy for All

You may see a theme that these best practices are focused on communication. A healthy work life and open communication channels can boost the mental attitude and output of your team. These best practices do just that. To drive results and innovative solutions, leaders must have healthy worker-centric systems and processes. Being proactive in this way is immeasurably beneficial in halting conflicts before they become widespread problems. A company needs its team members and must work towards creating trust and flexibility for employees to benefit from long-term.⁴

We'll end this chapter with a reminder - empathy is crucial to leadership. As the saying goes, "You'll catch more flies with honey than vinegar," which is to say being kind and understanding goes a long way. Empathy goes even further.



Disruption & Innovation

"Innovation distinguishes between a leader and a follower." – Steve Jobs

Today, in our current global economic climate, many businesses, large and small, are facing substantial obstacles. Businesses are experiencing wide swings undergoing a great contraction while others have never experienced this extreme high in consumer demand. The future of work is dependent upon the ability of businesses to adapt to fit both consumer and employee demands under new global circumstances.

Open the Door for Innovation

As we advance, we all need to think about and be keenly aware of the impacts of disruptive innovation on the future of work. By definition, this will disturb traditional methods of work and bring cutting-edge solutions to light. What are the areas that will have and need the greatest technological advancements? How agile is your business? Is it enough to make plans to stay afloat and just get through the short-term? Are the current technologies enough for the long-term?

Experts expect to see the largest technological advancements and impacts (in terms of remote work applications) on the healthcare and environmental industries. The most measurable advantages will come in the form of data analytics and application to inform and automate processes, retrieve and organize information, and provide real-time analysis and assessment.

Apply Big Data

When it comes to incorporating big data solutions, we have only scratched the surface but we can and have applied it to remote work and hiring concepts. The data shows that one of the largest hurdles to overcome in the remote-work model is finding quality hires.

It is important to find the right people to do the job and foster an innovative and creative environment, and we're not talking about open concept offices, snack bars and ping-pong tables. Fostering an innovative environment means allowing for new ideas and communication. Environment and company culture are important to attract the right people who will be vetting your company against job boards like Glassdoor, and other platforms. With The Great Resignation headline covering news streams, it's definitely an employee's market - and they can afford to be selective.





Transparency & Expectations

Transparency helps, specifically in sharing how the business operates inside of each department and what the expectations are for the position. This sounds simple and even traditional - posting the job requirements is old hat - but in the tech/startup world many hats can be worn by any given position so clarity goes a long way toward longevity.

Transforming your company infrastructure to support this evolving remote/gig-economy work model is step one to attracting lasting and committed employees. If your company is thrown another curveball like it was in 2020/2021, do you have the agility to pivot quickly and with minimal disruption? In planning your future workforce, there is a need for in-depth industry analysis. What is happening with your industry, suppliers, and your third-party relationships? Open the lines of communication and engage your clients as well as your employees, user-centric operations will be equally as critical as remote work success.

Transformation in the digital age requires up-to-date technology and sustainably flexible working models. Invest in your digital core to achieve this. The software and systems that power businesses need a thorough review. Systems like accounting tools, CRMs, ERPs, customer portals, and websites should all be agile and intuitive to improve your team's work and your client's access. With the fast-paced switch to online industry operations across the board, security has become a primary topic of conversation. Companies that work with you will have security compliance needs and service license agreements (SLAs) that will include how accessible your team is under certain circumstances. If you haven't yet made significant technological changes in your organization, you may be behind the curve.



Another key factor is developing a deeper understanding of your workforce's skills. Once you understand what technology is needed to meet your customer's needs, you can better understand the skill sets required to deliver. A strategic analysis of the tools you use and the tasks you need to accomplish can help you optimize and define the roles you need to fill. When you have identified your needs you can get to work closing your talent gap and identifying the type of employees or contractors you need. Consider this three-pronged approach:

- Traditional employment: Hire a full-time employee dedicated to your company who can fulfill a specific role.
- Staff Augmentation: Temporary and external team members brought in for a specific project or short-term period.
- Strategic partnership with another organization: Utilizing a third-party solution or vendor to outsource specific tasks on an ongoing basis such as; content writing, accounting, web monitoring, or customer phone support.

Which type of employee you need can be a tough call to make and depends on budgeting, growth projections, and the current state of your company. Staff augmentation, or hiring contractors, can be intimidating. Finding freelancers and gig-workers who are as invested as you are in your company is an uncomfortable task for many. It's important to alter your perspective. Just as there are tech-spurred changes within companies, there are changes externally. The gig economy has evolved and to be successful, reputation and skill matter. If you can partner with companies to vet contractors, your organization will benefit from the speed and flexibility to scale quickly to meet rising demand.



Leading a Digital Transformation

The pressure to be the best Chief Technological Officer or Chief Information Officer is immense, and many organizations have yet to establish this integral role among their senior leadership. As a CTO/CIO, every decision you make while leading a digital transformation impacts all other parts of the organization. After all, every company is a tech company now. If you are an organization without a CTO, there are solutions to help navigate the uncertain waters of digital transformation. The far-reaching impact of tech across an organization means a need for large-scale management for all of the moving parts. To begin leading a digital transformation, start with the ultimate goal – the “why” – and envision what does this organization need to look like post digital transformation?

To get started, think about how fast businesses and technologies change today and take some best practices from organizations you have seen weather storms. How did those organizations demonstrate agility? Next, define the key players – who, detailed requirements – how, and timelines – when. Don't leave out the intangible, but oh-so-important, momentum. Here's the breakdown.

Who - Key players/stakeholders: These are the people that are the primary investors (either financially or intellectually). Those doing the technical and development work, project managers, and supporting asset managers (content, branding, media) must be included in each phase of the planning and handoffs between phases.

How - Detailed requirements: Outline the deliverables and set standards for performance and quality. What technologies and technical skills are needed to accomplish each task? If you have major technical skill gaps during this process, your budget and timeline can be blown. What budgets, hardware, software, and manpower is necessary? To achieve a sustainable and impactful change, investing in these resources is fundamental.

When - Timelines: Define the order of tasks and plan accordingly. Which steps are dependent upon the completion of certain items? What can be done in parallel and what can be outsourced? If any AB testing is required, add that to your timeline as well. Breaking down a digital transformation into bite-sized pieces and mapping it out will give confidence to those you rely upon.

Momentum: Even small challenges can stall your progress. Be thoughtful in addressing real concerns, as they will pop up often. Remember that through frustrations come breakthroughs. To make the digital transformation as painless as possible, stay positive and keep your message to the teams goal-focused. Gain momentum by celebrating small wins along the way and collaborating to find solutions.

Agility and adaptability are traits a digital transformation will give you, allowing you to future proof your business model. Part of adaptability is the ability to pivot. A business must be willing to move in a new direction if something isn't working. Of course, it is important to stick to the plan as much as possible, but be flexible, realistic, and embrace opportunities. “One tip: allow for some departmental or organizational latitude, but stick to your plan. And when you encounter resistance, which you certainly will, identify your holdouts – and then listen if not embrace what they have to say.”⁷

Speaking from experience, leading a digital transformation through to the end is one of the most rewarding experiences. The impact of the project felt throughout the organization is immense. And the benefits of meeting those digital transformation goals and helping to create a more agile organization for all compounds for years to come.



Playing to Your Strengths

Are there areas of your business distracting from what you do best? Spinning your wheels in an area that is not your expertise can hold you back from maximizing your strengths. This is a common waste of resources. Moreover, it is an unnecessary cost and can spread your existing team too thin. If one area of your business is the primary source of frustration, it is time to rethink it. Hiring industry-specific experts through staff augmentation is a recommended viable solution to give your HR team the win they need.

Experiment

Of course, some risk avoidance is necessary. On the flip side, companies that do not adapt do not last. How can you gain a competitive advantage right now? Technology experts are the answer. Technology plays a substantial role in everything we do. Partner with internal and external tech experts to quickly get up to speed and find the most innovative and effective solutions.

When preparing for your future workforce, do not just look to Silicon Valley anymore. There is exceptional tech talent located across the United States, from small towns and rural communities to large-scale cities. The trick is finding the reputable ones among the growing market. We've said it before but it bears repeating. Your workforce talent is your strongest competitive advantage. Rethink your business structure, putting flexibility as a primary focus. Add flexibility not only in your business strategy but also in your talent performance and management.

Planning your workforce should be aligned with tech projects like upgrading, replacing, integrating, and building new systems. You are going to need developers, designers, and IT pros to do this. Consider these types of projects as improving and enhancing your digital core or accelerating your digital transformation. These are top priority. In this phase, your focus should be on talent procurement and a motivational strategy to achieve a future-proof end result.



Upskilling and Reskilling

With the exponential pace of changing technology, new skills must inevitably be learned to stay relevant within every industry and every job. Imagine your own role 10 years ago. What did you or the person before you use for technology? What did their day-to-day look like? We suspect it looked very different. Different software. Different hardware. Even different processes each one requiring some level of technical training which is now commonly referred to as upskilling and reskilling.

Ensuring your employees are up-to-date on market trends and software is a vital component of leading innovation and reducing the skills gap - which we can expect will be a constant challenge as new technologies are updated and developed. The digital skills gap is the educational space between the latest technology needed for growth and the current technology. Tech consultants are useful for evaluating potential additions to your team. What certifications will your employees need? What are the latest applications, and who will have the tools to complete the necessary tasks?

Every industry has different technical needs and will experience skill gaps in different ways. Today, the tech sector has seen high demand for .NET Developers, Frontend Web Developers, UI/UX Designers, and Software Engineers. Forbes reports, "As the digital economy continues to rapidly expand, the demand for workers with at least some cybersecurity skills will only rise..."⁵ In some cases, automation and artificial intelligence will help to fill these gaps. Even with these technical advancements, human talent is necessary to create and run these future technologies.

There are many forces at play here that contribute to the digital skills gap. The two largest issues that everyone can agree on are:

- The speed of technological change is fast and growing exponentially.
- The educational system has not kept up with the pace of technology.

"Many businesses are targeting specifically the lack of STEM knowledge in potential hires. Almost 60 percent of Business Roundtable executives said that data science and computer science were "very relevant" to their current openings. However, roughly half of executives indicated that these skills were also "very problematic" to find."⁶ Companies have been telling us for years that these basics are vital to building the foundation of a successful technical career. Unfortunately, changes to education will not happen overnight.

Full-time employees and freelancers may make the change for themselves by upskilling and reskilling in their down time. In some cases, companies offer reimbursement or in-house training. Upskilling means that workers are no longer pigeon-holed into one role for the entirety of their careers. It also means that companies are not locked into one approach for problem solving as cloud-based solutions are a large part of this flexibility versus legacy software systems that are challenging to adapt.

If you ask anyone who you consider successful, did they know this is where they would end up? The answer is almost always "no, and here are some of the lessons we've learned along the way." Education and skills create opportunities. You may not be an expert now, but with a high level of interest and motivation, you can become one.



A Contingent Workforce Benefits You

The traditional workforce model has changed its trajectory over the last decade, accelerated by the pandemic. Employees want the power and flexibility to choose the type of work, location, and have some control over their schedule. Employers also see the growing downsides of brick and mortar work structures.

The high cost of turnover, the complex solutions for workforce motivation, hiring challenges, and overhead expenses all make remote solutions attractive. A growing focus on in-demand skills like software development, DevOps engineering, and data analysis make work from home and staff augmentation easier as these jobs exist and operate 100 percent digitally.

The model of the traditional hiring funnel: recruiting, interviewing, screening, hiring, and training team members is often not the most efficient option. Embracing a contingent (on-demand hiring) option can not only benefit your company and growth by bringing in specific skills, but alleviate strain on your high-performing employees who would otherwise absorb additional projects.

To be successful you need both the right technology and the right people, but you need them at the right time. Contingent solutions allow you to scale at your pace and within your budget by letting you bring in talent for a short-run. A contingent digital workforce will help you leverage your existing resources. Need more horsepower on a project? Need a team of technology experts this month, not next year? Do you have a growth opportunity that you need to take advantage of NOW? Look at your business under a microscope. What is truly important to long-lasting success? What skills do you need that you cannot train?

Utilizing a contingent workforce means understanding the values of such a workforce, as well as understanding the market and learning how to successfully locate the talent you need. As much as it is difficult for an employer to make the decision to commit to an employee full-time, it is a big commitment for an employee to devote their career to one business and one industry for the foreseeable future as gig-economy becomes more viable. Autonomy is a driving force among independent workers but as demand grows, so does the need for agencies to vet both potential employees and the companies they will partner with.

Evaluating for these dynamic positions involves many aspects from analyzing work culture to assessing the skill level required and the experience level needed to execute projects. Work styles, time zones, and availability also come into play. With a hybrid work model, situation analysis is almost as important as defining the role.

One of the more intimidating elements of integrating contingent or augmented staffing is the lack of relationship building. With your full-time employees, you expect that they will become invested in your company goals - something that is harder to expect from a short-term team member. This is another area where technical consultants can come in handy, as they have built relationships with a variety of skilled contractors and can act as a corporate match-maker.





Merging A Traditional & Contingent Workforce

Traditional workforce employees come with deep organizational knowledge. What types of initiatives have the company tried in the past? How did it impact the bottom line? These team members also have long-standing relationships with many inside the organization and it is easy for them to navigate through the company's org chart. High performers may also often take on duties outside of their job responsibilities to pick up slack.

The traditional workforce values stability, benefits, and longevity within the organization. The contingent workforce brings a level of flexibility, allowing for scalability without a major additional strain on salary resources. Staff augmentation exists to help the traditional workforce move ahead on crucial projects to meet deadlines. Your organization can have fast access to pivotal high-level digital skill sets. Staff augmentation is used to implement new systems, software, and technologies pushing companies forward through necessary digital transformation. These transformations help you stay relevant with your customer base.

The contingent workforce has a lot of experience working in diverse industries and for many companies. So, they bring a fresh perspective to the project and to the traditional workforce pushing your ideas to the next level. In fact, many say they bring intense focus and loyalty to the project without the heavily rooted company influence. For this reason, they add a vital asset for project innovation and success. The contingent workforce values variety in types of work, location, and flexibility of hours. Additionally, they value the ability to focus on their unique set of individual capabilities.

In the past, management consultants advised that employees should improve their weaknesses. Now, they have changed their tune. What if people spent their energy maximizing their own unique strengths instead of spending that same energy improving a weakness?³ Would that create a more positive work environment? Would that actually bring out the absolute best in someone? Is it possible that this could shine a light on a unique strength? This new perspective is opening up new ways of thinking about how we utilize all members of our blended workforce. With that in mind, here are the steps you'll want to take to maximize efficiency in a blended workforce.

- Ensure everyone involved is aligned to the business strategy with a flexible framework and end goals.
- Pair up someone from your traditional workforce to "manage" the contingent workforce. Make sure the contingent workforce is introduced to the team and goes through a similar, albeit shorter, onboarding process.
- Reassure your traditional workforce that a contingent workforce is there to support them. They will leverage your strengths taking the entire team to the next level.
- Make sure that the contingent workforce also goes through a formal screening process. Establish that this person or team can fill the skills gap with the proper industry and technological experience.
- Give visibility to all involved so they make well informed decisions.
- Treat both the traditional workforce and the contingent workforce team members as they are truly a part of the team. Even if the contingent workforce is only scheduled for two months, they need to feel valued for optimal performance. Maybe you will end up working with them again on future projects.
- If your team is not remote, invite the contingent workforce to team-building events and gatherings.
- Maximize creative collaboration. Use this time to give your permanent workforce the energy and excitement needed for the future. They want to keep up the good work after the contingent workforce has ended the project.

A healthy mix of traditional full-time employees plus a contingent workforce makes sense for your business's long-term strength. Give your permanent team members the ability and tools needed to achieve this kind of success with a blended workforce. With the right mix, limitless possibilities will be achieved in your organization.



Solutions to Staff Augmentation Concerns

Staff augmentation is a facet of a contingent workforce. It also plays a big role in transforming your digital core. Utilizing technical staff augmentation with contingent workforce principles to lead a digital revolution isn't easy. The biggest reservation from business leaders is that they just don't know where to begin. These leaders are experts in their field but not in technology.

Some organizations that have primarily worked with traditional hiring may hesitate to use staff augmentation. Consider this, building a tech team through staff augmentation is meant to enhance your own team's skills. Reimagine the way you deliver technical projects. If you need highly skilled and highly trained specialists, can you afford to employ them full-time and keep them busy indefinitely? Often, the answer is no. That is why organizations reach out to find the skills they need for their projects and commit for the short term. This progress will energize your team for future success.

Having someone on the team who is not in it for the long haul can seem counterintuitive. Remember that those who have chosen contract work do so for many reasons. Your opportunity might have been the kind of role they are most passionate about! The process to achieve digital transformations through staff augmentation can be broken into the following steps:

Step 1: Plan for Technology: Where is the business going? What technology are you currently using, and does it need an update or overhaul? Are you utilizing your technology correctly? Does the organization have security blind spots? The organization must decide on the technology they need to use to get them where they need to go. Digital transformations can be big or small in the efforts required and can be for any area of your business. ie: If your Accounting systems are from 2009, it may be pretty easy to implement an update, which in turn boosts team efficiency. We'd bet that your team will welcome this update with open arms.

Step 2: Open the Lines of Communication: Transparency is key to developing the right tech team for your organization's needs. Your team needs to feel secure in their roles to be open with you about the skills gaps that exist. Without a realistic view of what is needed, your plan will be ineffective. Ask your teams, "what are the unique tech talents within the organization and what digital skills gaps exist?" You may be surprised about the underutilized tech talent right in front of you.

Step 3: The Right Fit: Now that you understand what tech you are going to use and what skills are needed, it's time to augment your staff. Will these be full-time, permanent roles, or will this need to be project-based? One year? Two months? Is your recruiting process sufficient, or do you need a staff augmentation expert to recruit, vet, hire, and onboard the right fit for you?

Step 4: Accelerate your Digital Transformation: With an agile plan laid out, the technology chosen, and the right people to implement the plan, you are on the path to success. Be sure to keep up the excitement around the project for momentum and celebrate the small achievements along the way.

Step 5: Stay Up-to-date on New Technology: The process of transformation is never over, and continuous improvements create agile organizations. Because there are always new technological advancements, something may pop up that is worth your efforts. Be open-minded to learning about these new advancements and how they may impact your organization.





Today's Job Opportunities

"Finding the right work is like discovering your own soul in the world."- Thomas Moore



We stand by the statement that the right employee is any company's greatest asset. With that in mind, this chapter will focus on ways the right employee can find the perfect organization for their needs and values.

The process of job searching is increasingly frustrating. It is important to have realistic optimism as you navigate the job opportunities available to you. This realistic optimism will help keep you sane. Let's begin by understanding the job search process and looking at it from all angles. We have all been there. You spend countless hours updating your resume, cover letter, and references, then you begin searching for job opportunities through friends, on job boards, and postings on company websites. You find a job that both fits your qualifications and would be engaging.

Next, you begin to picture what your life may look like with this job. Do you have a long commute, or can you work from home? Will this be a pay cut but with a promising new career path? Are you familiar with the industry? How will this affect your family? Once you have decided that the job is a good fit for you professionally and personally, then you go back to your resume and cover letter to update once again. Sometimes you have to create an additional account with the company that requires you to fill in the blanks with all of the information perfectly placed in your resume already. At this point, you may be several days or weeks into the process. Now you wait.

To complicate matters further, the employer suffers various hurdles too. If it is a small business, they may not have a Human Resource department that is trained and prepared to write job descriptions and post them on job boards or pass them along to recruiters. They are often doing these tasks in addition to their normal day-to-day activities. If it is an organization with an HR department, know that there is a process for the job postings to get approval before they can post a job. In both cases, getting to this point may take weeks or months.

Once the job is posted and the applications begin rolling in, the applications are filtered, sorted and reviewed. This number is likely in the hundreds, but could be thousands. Next steps are to vet the candidate, schedule phone and/or in-person introductions, and interviews that work for everyone's schedules. Now the decision-makers try their best to make the right hire.

The last big challenge in finding qualified work is the risk of job scams. Unfortunately, phantom jobs, ghosting, and job scams are common. Phantom jobs usually come from larger organizations with a policy to post a job to the general public for at least a few weeks, ensuring they have the best candidate. This can cause a problem if the company is planning on hiring from within. That is why they call it a phantom job, because they are just going through the motions. Ghosting has become a norm in many facets of life. Giving people the benefit of the doubt, we choose to believe it is because of the overwhelming amount of work the employer must complete. Lastly, let's not forget about the too-good-to-be-true job scams! If they won't leave you alone, they might just be a multi-level marketing scheme where you are the customer, not the employee.



Now that we have a view of the job landscape let's discuss how we can all approach this optimistically. Focus on what you can control. It'll help you temper your expectations. Here are some factors entirely within your control that make the difference when job hunting.

Your Network: Up to 85% of jobs are filled via networking and not through the traditional application process.⁸ Hiring managers feel more comfortable hiring an applicant who has someone who will vouch for them. Talk to your friends, family and schedule meetings with people they recommend you to meet.

Your Resume: Reach out to those with whom you have built strong relationships over the years and ask for a reference. Companies like to see a long list of references for two reasons. It shows that you left organizations on good terms. And for logistics, they will be able to get a hold of the people much easier when offering a job. Plus, use your resources to validate any gaps in your resume. If you apply for a job and don't get an offer, take the time to reach out to the hiring manager to ask what skills you lacked. Remember to be polite and to take all criticism as a lesson, not an insult. Also, check the list of requirements posted within the job description and compare them to yours. This may sound tedious, and it can be. But tailor your resume to match the job descriptions. Often, technology is sorting the resumes for the hiring managers. When applicable, use similar phrases and terms from the job description in your resume. Then save the resume to a resume folder with the company's name in case you get the opportunity to interview in the future.

Your Words: The job search process with inherent rejections and lack of transparency can make anyone feel vulnerable. But vulnerability doesn't have to be all bad. Vulnerability can show itself in the form of self-awareness and honesty in an interview. Proudly tell the story of when you made a mistake and what you learned from it. We all make mistakes and the humility to grow from that mistake is priceless. By showing humility, you can make a hiring manager more confident in their decision of giving you a callback or an offer.

Your Empathy: Anticipate the needs of the organization/team you are applying to work with and how stressful this time is on them. Your empathy is important to be able to relay your value to them. Really put yourself in their shoes. Are they doing the work of two or three people right now and can barely focus on the interview? Ask questions about their roles and challenges. You may not have the answers right now, but you can show them your interest in making their lives easier and in achieving mutual goals.

Your Skills and Hobbies: Showing that you are learning a new skill (even if it isn't directly applicable) shows learning agility. Learning agility is necessary for any workplace, given the rate of growth of technology. Team members must be prepared with any organization to learn new systems, processes, and new tech. Hobbies count too! Hobbies show that you have a healthy release from work, and hobbies often inspire creativity and spark new ideas to bring back to work.

Your Attitude: Exude positivity at every chance and with every interaction, even if it is not how you are really feeling. Now is the time to put your best foot forward with all job opportunities. Take a deep breath or a good night's sleep before sending that email or calling that person back. Run through what you are going to say out loud with a friend. Have someone proofread your email. People want and deserve to work with people who are enjoyable to be around.

Your Self: Self-care is crucial for any work/life balance. Work exhaustion can lower your quality of life, impact productivity and more. Self-care is about doing the things that make you feel happy and relaxed. No matter the form it takes, ensure you take regular self-care breaks. And remember, work/life balance is just that - a balance.



Job Trends

As mentioned, modern companies are searching for people that possess modern skills. We've curated a list of the most sought-after skills. If you don't have at least a few of the items on this list then it may be time to reinvent your professional self.

Teamwork. It may sound cliché. But if you cannot work well with others and communicate, you will not succeed in meeting objectives. Long-lasting solutions are commonly developed using feedback from all areas of the organization. Therefore, collaboration is an essential skill to be effective.

Have patience. Today, companies are doing more with less. Be patient, and do not be afraid to follow up after giving the company a reasonable amount of time. They have many applicants right now, and the task of hiring can seem overwhelming. Yes, we all have technologies in place to help, but we are still human.

Follow the instructions. It is a pain to apply to 100 different companies using each of their various systems. But, this is how companies manage, sometimes, thousands of applicants. So, take the extra time to do it their way. You are more likely to get in front of the right person if you follow the instructions.

Pay attention to the needs of the organization. Make sure the skills you have are those that are needed. If they are not, then now is the time to get your training and certifications online.

Remember to ask questions about every offer you receive. This is a two-way street. Yes, the company is interviewing you, but you are also interviewing them. Do not just accept a job because you have an offer. Do they have a good reputation? What is the culture like? Do your expectations match? Make it a good fit by being honest about what you need to stay for the long term.

Hiring Trends

Finding great talent is the first step in building the future of any organization. All business owners say they value knowledge, loyalty, and longevity, but how do they foster those behaviors when attracting talent? Below are several hiring trends that many businesses utilize for successful hiring.

They Practice Honesty, Transparency, Vulnerability: Companies may be more realistic with applicants about expectations and hurdles. They do not have to divulge all company issues, but the new hires will find out one way or another. Being honest with their team about where the company is heading, especially during troubling times, puts people at ease. In an ever-changing environment, coming out in front of it and attacking the problems as a team is more effective. Everyone feels similarly and that can give comfort. Potential job seekers should be prepared for and seek honest companies whenever they can.

They Provide Flexibility: People do not want to be pigeon-holed into one role forever. This trend has been happening for a generation now. You may notice that people do not stay at companies for a long time, but prefer to be exposed to the wider organization, rotate opportunities, and feel as though they have made a big impact. Cross-functional teams and mentorship help tremendously with this task. Traditional employment has found this to be a tall hurdle to overcome. As such, job seekers should seek out companies that offer flexible schedules and jobs. A flexible job may increase the life-quality and happiness of most employees.

They Engage with Candidates: Modern companies put themselves in the applicant's shoes. Applicants are applying to many companies and waiting... and waiting... Each company has a different platform to manage applications and track where potential hires are in the process. This is where technology and automation come in handy. But you cannot replace human interaction. It is also essential for companies to ensure their automated system does not have breakdowns where they might lose candidates in the process.



Systems should be built to be responsive and considerate to humans. Also, they make sure it is easy for someone to reach a human directly, if necessary. All that said, a proactive job seeker is an efficient job seeker. If you don't hear from a company after an allotted amount of time, don't be afraid to reach out. Be polite, brief, and professional. Even if you didn't get the job, you might leave a good impression on the hiring managers for future work. And even if nothing comes from it, it's important to practice your resolution skills.

They Begin Growth and Development Plans from Day One: Of course, this will be under constant revision depending on the organization's changing needs and the team members. Having a development plan keeps team members engaged when they are feeling disconnected. Employees should seek out companies with this value as it belies a greater interest in employee wellbeing.

They Have a Focus on Company Branding and Culture: Quality employees want to work somewhere they believe in. If we are all going to spend a substantial portion of our lives working to grow a company, then we want to feel good about it. Companies attempt to appeal to multiple generations as generational diversity in our culture is larger than ever before.

There is a level of risk the employee and employer are taking on entering into this new relationship together. The trends for the job search and the recruiting process are essentially the same. If we take the time to understand the experience of the other person, clearly voice our needs and open the lines of communication - we will set ourselves up for success.





How to Stay Relevant to Your Customers and More Importantly, Your Team

"To be relevant, you need to be purposeful." - Sunday Adelaja

In business, relevance is not something that occurs naturally. It is something people and businesses need to strive for in our fast-changing world. What does relevance mean to you, personally, and to your business? The two are inextricably connected through culture. Relevance is about perpetual curiosity, a passion for problem-solving, and agility. What do some of the most successful companies and people have in common? It's easy. They foster a culture of curiosity, learning, and are not afraid to try something new and fail. In fact, in these environments, teams are encouraged to try and fail. Some of the most innovative solutions came from "out-of-the-box ideas" in a brainstorming session. Perpetual curiosity is key for business development but also for your workforce management. Supporting your team through education and training opportunities shows them your appreciation and confidence in their work. Therefore, bolstering longevity. Studies also show that there is no longer a one-size-fits-all approach to employment. The same applies to personal team member fulfillment. People are naturally much more curious about other industries and other roles. In recent years, employees are less afraid to leave a company to try out something new and exciting. If your business handles exits well, that doesn't mean they will be gone forever. In fact, they may refer great new applicants and advocate for their old employer.



Staying relevant is important not only for your customers but also for your talent. Modern day talent management is full of creative solutions. Upskilling and retraining are now essential to help your team members learn new industry changes or to develop an entirely new set of skills for a new role. In the past, employers showed fear of investing in a team member that might leave after spending valuable resources on development opportunities. Try turning that fear on its head. What might happen if you do not invest in your team members? The team member is likely to feel frustrated, devalued, and less motivated to bring fresh ideas. Investment in education can help reinvent a person and end up future-proofing your company.

There are additional ways of rethinking your workforce to stay relevant. Employment does not just have to be full-time versus part-time, benefits versus no benefits. Your workforce can include a mixed bag of full-time, consultants, contractors, freelancers, and advisors. There is no longer a one-size-fits-all approach to talent management and creating an efficient and fulfilled team. Ask each employee what they value most and see if it is a good fit for the company.

The best laid plans must be upended from time-to-time to strike while the iron is hot. This does not mean you shouldn't have processes and procedures. Creating an agile company requires a framework for scalability. But not frameworks that create boundaries and hurdles. The truth is that none of us know what tomorrow holds with how quickly industries change.

Using your resources today to be ready at the right time will make for quicker and, therefore, more fruitful transitions. This may mean that your business is actively networking, catering to a new customer, B2B instead of B2C, or even using a new workforce model. Workforces are now looking for portfolio professionals to work on many different types of interesting new projects in and outside of the industry. They want more control over the work they choose and how they choose to perform that work. Your business must be adaptable enough to be in front of the right customer at the right time but also agile enough to respond to the will of your workforce.



Who is TECKpert and Why You Should Listen to Us

"Success is not forever, and failure isn't fatal." - Don Shula

Where to begin? With the speed of technology and TECKpert's decade (plus) of experience, TECKpert has been through several digital transformations. Over the years, we analyzed our pain points, the market, and our clients' feedback. Then we found skilled talent and technologies. We even created our own technologies – not to just get us through these digital transformations but also to make us stronger.

- **2010– Web Based Project Management** – From the start, we wanted to move all our communications and processes to be accessible by our team and clients. We started using Basecamp for project management and client collaboration with Kanban boards for agile software development. Over the years, we've used additional tools while consolidating vendors for project management and development.
- **2013– Online Invoicing and Payment System** – Initially, we took payments over PayPal and evolved into our own customized system for accounting and client invoicing systems. This enabled us to accept credit card payments, ACH, and bank transfers.
- **2014– Digital Proposal Contract Signing** – We have used electronic signing software since the early days. Some of our clients still liked to print, sign, and scan. Over time we've seen less and less of this as legal departments and business owners consolidated with similar programs online.
- **2015– Intranet and Timekeeping Portal** – Our first version of our internal tool for managing time tracking and inter-company communications. This was built using WordPress and evolved over the years with processes we developed for onboarding clients, contracts, and time tracking. We tested integrations with external systems for invoicing, CRM, and other tools.
- **2017– Cloud-based Automation** – Our cloud environments and applications were using automation to monitor health and orchestrate deployments. This added a level of efficiency to our development processes as well as adding efficiencies to how we manage applications in production environments.
- **2019– Business Process Platform** – We began using our own custom application that brought in the processes and features we built with our intranet and timekeeping portal. Now we have a holistic approach to managing people, projects, contracts, time, and invoicing using our own technology. Our road map is to continue to integrate key business processes into our own proprietary technology.
- **2020– Mobile App for Recruiting and Workforce Management** – Most notably, our current app integrated with our business process platform (contracting, crm, contracts) focused on managing our expanding agile workforce. Phase One included the ability for applicants to create profiles and choose their work preferences. This gives our Workforce Management the ability to pair the vetted candidate with the latest project quickly. Phase Two included several upgrades, including the opportunity for our candidates to access upskilling. As with every business, the COVID-19 pandemic forced us to adjust and utilize our processes and technology to efficiently run our business during this time.
- **2021–** Enhanced our platform for recruiting, onboarding, and fulfilling workforce commitments to our clients. We began incorporating AI and automation into our technology platform which has positioned our business for growth in a post pandemic world.

Where will TECKpert be in the next five years? Like always, we'll be looking forward. We are planning our future to be ready to embrace opportunity as it comes. We are focused on masterful agility and excited about new technological advancements. As a result, we built solutions for TECKpert and our clients that reinvigorate the heart and soul of the company. Be bold as you define the new ideal version of your company.

If you like what you read here and want to join TECKpert's team of digital and tech professionals, then visit our website and sign up for our platform. If you're a business ready to enhance your technical capabilities, we'd love to speak with you. [Visit teckpert.com to learn more.](https://teckpert.com)



About the Author

Adrian Esquivel is the CEO and Founder of TECKpert. He has been in the business of people and technology for more than a decade. In 2009, he “opened the doors” at TECKpert to provide cutting-edge technical solutions to organizations. As the business grew quickly, he knew he could not do this without the best technical talent available.

After working with hundreds of companies and organizations and building a proprietary platform of thousands of highly skilled technical talent, he is proud of TECKpert’s lasting impact. The partnerships built with organizations to deliver on their mission and future-proof their company has been recognized and is showcased through 30+ industry awards. The most significant and personally rewarding for Adrian has been watching the talented people grow in their roles and find passion in their work.

Mr. Esquivel, his wife and their two children call Miami, Florida home.

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