



2021 Talent Trends Report

rewrite your talent strategy playbook  
during extraordinary times.

As Randstad Sourceright prepared last year's Talent Trends Report, we projected that 2020 would be a landmark year for futurists. As it turns out, it was a most transformative year for just about everyone.

For human capital leaders, there were numerous unprecedented challenges — from developing safety guidelines and protocols to keeping at-home workers engaged to revamping corporate communications strategies. Through it all, HR leaders became a guiding force for their organizations by enabling their people to operate remotely and keeping talent engaged. As CNBC pointed out, the coronavirus has clearly elevated the importance of CHROs during this time.

Fast-forward to a new year: in many ways HR is driving business success as we pivot into a transformed global economy. Sectors severely affected by lockdowns and restrictions, such as hospitality and travel, are turning to their chief people officers for ever-changing guidance on operating safely and planning for the eventual return of business as usual. Companies fortunate enough to prosper during the pandemic are leaning on HR to enable growth through massive hiring initiatives, such as the one undertaken by Amazon.

Regardless of whether your company is hiring or retrenching, the C-suite is counting on you for leadership. At no time has workforce strategy been more critical to business outcomes than it is today, and you'll need to elevate HR's function further to meet and exceed expectations. Your biggest challenges may still lie ahead. How will you rewrite your talent strategy playbook for 2021?



Mike Smith  
global CEO  
Randstad Sourceright

Our 2021 [Talent Trends](#) research, which gauged the outlook of 850 human capital and C-suite leaders in 17 markets around the world, affirms the challenges many organizations face, but also shows how businesses are adapting effectively in the new normal. Nearly two-thirds (65%) say the role of HR has shifted significantly since the onset of the global pandemic.

And when it comes to talent, the acceleration of digital transformation has meant many of the skills gaps companies faced before the pandemic have not gone away. Addressing the need for good IT, HR, and finance and accounting skills remains a high priority. In fact, 40% say they continue to experience talent scarcity in IT, while 28% say they can't find enough qualified candidates for HR roles. Nearly 1 in 5 (19%) need more finance and accounting specialists.

With uncertainty eclipsing your view, how will you adapt your talent strategy to prepare for the road ahead? Start with good data and insights to guide your way. Among all the investments HR has undertaken in recent years, talent analytics remain the top area of focus heading into 2021; 90% say they will continue to budget for such data platforms after the pandemic subsides.

Beyond better insights, flexibility will be critical to accommodate rapidly shifting market conditions. Right now we're witnessing an unprecedented push by companies, which are [tapping into more contingent talent](#) in response to economic fluidity. Flexible labor is increasingly viewed as a powerful way to address critical skills deficiencies, cost efficiencies and rapid access to agile resources.

Our data shows that a multiyear trend of converting permanent roles to temporary ones reversed for 2021. In 2017, nearly one-third (29%) of our Talent Trends respondents reported they had shifted permanent roles to temporary ones, but that number fell each subsequent year to 21% in 2020. Our 2021 research shows expected conversions to temporary roles rose slightly to 22%.

This shift to more contingent talent resources will not be without challenges. Companies will need to consider how to attract and retain the best temporary workers or face losing great talent to competitors within and outside their industries.

The importance of talent during and after the pandemic cannot be overstated. And it's your job to answer the "hows." How will you find and acquire the best talent? How can you reach the optimal balance of contingent and permanent workers to fuel your business engine? How will you ensure timely and cost-effective deployment of talent across the organization? How can you create a transformed experience for talent and hiring managers? How are you introducing just-in-case and just-in-time talent supply chain strategies, and how will you ensure your organization is best enabled to determine how work gets done?

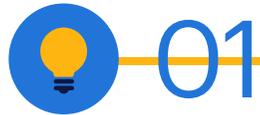
These are tough questions you probably ask every day. But you can draw upon lessons learned in 2020 to provide the data-driven advice, resourcing insights and unwavering leadership that will drive growth in 2021. Addressing the 10 workplace trends that follow in this report will help your organization rethink how work gets done to advance critical missions this year.

At no time in recent memory have human capital leaders assumed a more essential role in the success of their businesses, and now you must continue to have the courage to boldly face unprecedented challenges. Where will you lead your organization next?

Mike Smith  
global CEO  
Randstad Sourceright



# what are 2021's top talent trends?



01

focus on skills, not jobs, to create value.



02

remain flexible in a fluid economy to win.



03

take workforce health & wellness to center stage.



04

sustain productivity gains with digital transformation.



05

drive workforce decision-making with data.



06

get ahead of a still-growing skills gap.



07

reshape the supply chain with borderless talent.



08

amplify the business case for a culture of diversity & inclusion.



09

build a sustainable workforce by repurposing talent.



10

fuel employer brand strategies with your talent experience.

## success stories

- in times of uncertainty, Philips speeds up workforce innovation.
- UCB improves time to hire while filling an unprecedented number of requisitions.





# 01 focus on skills, not jobs, to create value.

Can aligning your strategy with skill sets help you achieve greater business performance?

For years, human capital leaders have been considering how to drive greater value from their talent strategies, but 2021 appears to be the year that separates the visionaries from the daydreamers. Even as countless companies face continued restructuring and look to control workforce costs, the innovators are prioritizing value over savings. They know that in the long term their organizations will emerge more competitive and agile.

Clearly the pandemic has elevated the importance of human capital leaders over the past year. In fact, in our 2021 [Talent Trends](#) research, 65% say the role of HR has shifted significantly, and 77% say their talent strategies are now more focused on workforce agility than ever before.



Human capital leaders can make a greater impact on business performance by adopting a value-oriented mindset. With many 2021 budgets reduced, companies are rethinking a variety of investments, including those that impact their workforces. Forward-thinking leaders aren't just focused on how to cut costs, however, but rather on how to redeploy their spend in more efficient and effective ways. This means embracing an optimized blend of temporary and permanent talent and focusing on skills, rather than jobs. This holistic approach, which was slowly being adopted in recent years, is now seeing broader interest.

The use of contingent talent has grown steadily at many organizations over the last few years. Contingent workforce programs are being thrust [into the spotlight](#), and [Staffing Industry Analysts](#) projects that the staffing market may grow 10% this year as a vaccine is made available.

But companies are now taking a fresh look at how they can leverage flexible labor to achieve better business results and drive efficiencies. According to [McKinsey](#), temporary labor can be the linchpin to a company's success in 2021. By realigning strategies around the contingent workforce, companies gain enhanced flexibility and resilience at a time when these competencies are greatly needed.

This revamped strategy should examine how work gets done, instead of how jobs are filled. By focusing on skills that can be deployed across the enterprise, businesses build deep proficiencies and flexibility. This type of holistic approach aligns with what many organizations have been striving to achieve for some time: creating a total talent model that enhances access to talent, reduces time to deploy, and optimizes spend and agility.

Casper Zoetekouw, global commodity leader, External Workforce for Philips, explains that his company calls this approach "right sourcing." As part of the company's [total workforce demand management \(TWDM\)](#) solution, it drives tremendous value and a competitive advantage for Philips.

"With our TWDM solutions, we anticipate and help our business in choosing and planning how work needs to be done. And we do this by integrating all of our workforce options into one overall program."

Casper Zoetekouw

global commodity leader, External Workforce  
Philips



Among companies we surveyed that have adopted a total talent approach, successful adoption and outcomes are exceptionally high. Nearly all (97%) say they are extremely or very satisfied with the model they have implemented. As more companies such as Philips execute on their total talent ambition, it's expected that similar results will be reported, leading to greater workforce value.



# 77%

say their talent strategies are now more focused on workforce agility than ever before.



# 97%

say they are extremely or very satisfied with the total talent model they have implemented.

"With so many organizations undergoing transformation now, human capital leaders should consider this an opportunity to effect change through a holistic approach for fulfilling work requirements."

Sue Marcus

regional president, North America  
Randstad Sourceright





01. focus on skills, not jobs,  
to create value.

## 3 questions you should ask

01

Do the workforce measures we have in place or are implementing create long-term value or short-term gains?

02

Are we consulting with hiring managers to consider how best to get work done regardless of work arrangements?

03

Does our talent strategy empower business leaders to reach their goals more effectively and efficiently?



## 5 ways to create value with a holistic talent approach

01

Consider how to access the resources and skills your business needs through alternative and scalable work arrangements, such as on-demand talent or payrolling.

02

Identify how skills can be deployed across your organization on cross-functional agile projects, not just across one function or department.

03

Eliminate silos that prevent you from accessing all types of talent to best achieve your desired outcomes.

04

Build a data engine and technology stack that can give you greater insight — and control — over how talent is acquired and deployed.

05

Build talent pools that drive rapid selection and acquisition of permanent hires and temporary staff.



## 02 remain flexible in a fluid economy to win.

Are you ready to respond to the needs of your workforce and shifting market developments?

A key enabler for many organizations in the past year was their ability to operate with greater agility and flexibility. This was evidenced by how quickly companies adapted to the constraints of the pandemic, which sent millions of workers out of the office and back home.

Companies that could flex to the changing dynamics of the COVID-19 crisis — from shifting business models to hiring talent in response to increased demand to reskilling and redeploying employees — emerged as the winners during this time. Having learned numerous lessons along the way, many businesses will have to stay flexible in the months and years ahead.



Flexibility is especially needed in managing the workforce. Although millions were laid off or furloughed initially, millions of jobs have returned and many new roles have been created. With the global economy witnessing a second wave of infections in Q4 of last year, employers were again faced with additional restrictions and reduction in economic activity. Innovation was born out of necessity and now employees have new expectations.

In light of this, companies need to remain flexible. Organizations such as the [International Monetary Fund \(IMF\)](#) have forecasted a global rebound of 5.2% in economic growth this year, but it also concedes this is based on a high degree of uncertainty. This means businesses must be extremely careful in their talent acquisition efforts. Most importantly, they need to be ready when demand returns.

At the same time, employers should be attuned to the needs of their workforce. Because of the fluid nature of the pandemic and uncertainty around how long it will take for vaccines to be widely available, reverting to workplace practices prior to pre-pandemic times may take a long time. Human capital leaders face continued high pressure of inspiring engagement and productivity for remote teams, while addressing workforce fatigue and stress as the pandemic lingers on.

Over the past year, organizations have learned to manage talent in new ways. With so many working from home, daily check-ins over Cisco WebEx, Microsoft Teams, Google Meet and Zoom are a part of people's daily routine. For the most part, the flexibility has not resulted in declining productivity. In fact, [some companies](#) such as Cisco and Microsoft reported higher productivity last year, and others have [embraced permanent remote work](#) options.

Our 2021 [Talent Trends](#) research reveals that 64% of human capital leaders view flexible working arrangements as important to talent attraction. A majority (59%) also say a family-first culture is a strong employee value proposition, with 55% reporting that their companies are delivering on this promise. Sixty percent (60%) say they currently offer total or a great deal of flexibility to their workforce.

[Support for working parents](#) and caregivers continues to be especially important, as these individuals are still challenged to balance work and home responsibilities. Employers may offer support, such as financial assistance to working parents and caregivers to supplement additional care expenses, but they should also offer greater flexibility in how, where and when work is completed. Allowing caregivers to adjust their hours, block no-call zones and fostering a culture of understanding can make a big impact.

As the pandemic ebbs in some markets, more companies may consider mandating in-office attendance again. Even so, hybrid schedules will likely be preferred by talent as their views of work-life balance have fundamentally shifted. [Workmonitor](#), research conducted by Randstad N.V. in the fourth quarter of 2020, shows that 35% of the working population prefer a hybrid schedule, and one-quarter want flexible schedules to accommodate their desired work-life balance. Most human capital leaders we surveyed are responding to this shift; 80% say their business will consider some sort of permanent work-from-home policy.

Although corporate leaders have more clarity and direction on what's ahead for their business in the coming months, a great deal of uncertainty still exists. Human capital leaders must remain flexible to shifting conditions, consider how and when to return to work sites, and balance new talent expectations.



# 64%

of human capital leaders view flexible working arrangements as important to talent attraction.



# 80%

say their business will consider some sort of permanent work-from-home policy.

"To ensure you have a flexible and agile way of working, analyze the latest market and internal survey data to help guide your talent decisions. Knowing what is to come and the needs of your workforce will be critical to success in 2021."

**Graham Trevor**

HR director, Randstad Sourceright EMEA  
HR and Corporate Services director,  
Randstad UK and Ireland





## 3 questions you should ask

01

Are we regularly surveying our workforce to understand how we can support individual needs during challenging times?

02

How are we aligning with business leaders to respond rapidly to worker and business needs?

03

How will we use flexible working arrangements in the long term based on shifting talent expectations?



## 5 ways to build an agile and flexible workforce

01

Allow flexible schedules that are both more conducive to individual circumstances and to the needs of the organization.

02

Consider giving employees choices around in-office attendance, whether that's a hybrid schedule, fully remote or always onsite.

03

Provide stipends or other support to help with caregiving or childcare needs.

04

Earmark days in the week to minimize meetings, allowing employees to focus on their work.

05

Offer job sharing to those who prefer to work only a few days per week to accommodate home obligations.



# 03 take workforce health & wellness to center stage.

Is your company doing enough to protect physical safety and ensure mental wellness?

Health and wellness challenges emerged as one of the most pressing workforce issues facing many human capital leaders in 2020. As the global economy continues to adapt to new ways of working, these concerns remain top of mind for talent leaders. The uncertainty companies and workers faced last year led to considerable stress early on, but a year since the outbreak, it appears that organizations are effectively managing the safety and emotional needs of their workers.



According to [Workmonitor](#), 71% of working-age adults feel they are emotionally supported by their companies. From the employers' perspective, as captured by our [Talent Trends](#) research, 62% say a wellness program is extremely or very important to attracting talent. This increased attention to workforce well-being has resulted in surprisingly good outcomes.

According to [HRDirector](#), which studied 10 million employee survey results in July of last year, engagement actually rose 2% globally between January and July 2020. Benefits such as flexible schedules, safer work environments and more autonomy were cited as factors for the enhanced score. Our survey shows that nearly 39% of companies believe their workforce is more productive working from home than before the pandemic outbreak. An additional 30% say their permanent workforce is as productive from home as they are in the office.

While the work-from-home movement of 2020 delivered better results than many anticipated, it isn't all good news. According to a study conducted by [Harvard Business School](#), the average workday increased by 8.2% (48.5 minutes) early on in the pandemic. And 69% of those surveyed by [Ginger](#) said 2020 has been the most stressful time of their entire careers. So even though remote arrangements have proven effective for getting work done, some employees are struggling with its side effects.

Jonathan Berlan, global head of Candidate Experience for UCB, says he encourages his team to observe a healthy work schedule to [avoid stress and burnout](#), and to ensure they have personal time separate from work time.

"Companies have a duty to promote employees' ability to switch off from work while working at home."

Jonathan Berlan

global head of Candidate Experience

UCB



Last year was a period of high stress for most, whether quarantined at home or on-site at work. Despite vaccines now rolling out around the world, ensuring workplace safety is still a top requirement for many. According to [LinkedIn](#), talent will prioritize safety, security and health when considering job offers. Companies that fail to meet these expectations will lose out on critical talent, and small changes can make a big difference. Recognizing the stress of video call overload, employers such as Google are promoting healthier work schedules with "[no meeting weeks](#)."

Companies will be taking a closer look at health and wellness needs in 2021. This is imperative because employers that offer comprehensive support to their stressed workers will likely see returns on their investment in the form of a healthier and [more productive workforce](#).



# 62%

say a wellness program is extremely or very important to attracting talent.



# 69%

believe their workforce is as productive or more productive working from home.

"Workforce wellness has never been more important, so companies should consider the evolving needs of their employees as circumstances change. More frequent communications and assessments should be a part of your overall talent strategy."

**Wesley Connor**

vice president, Global Learning and Development leader  
Randstad



# 3 questions you should ask

03. take workforce health & wellness to center stage.



01

What kinds of data are we using to guide our workplace safety and wellness policies?

02

Do our managers regularly assess the workload and stress levels of their people and track changes over time?

03

Have we implemented measures that enable workers to limit the time they spend on work to avoid burnout?



# 5 ways to keep talent engaged and prevent burnout

01

Mandate more time away from the desk — either through additional paid time off, opportunities to perform volunteer work or even shorter work weeks — and be sure that workloads are adjusted accordingly.

02

Assess your employee assistance program to track utilization and job satisfaction.

03

Build exercise time into each day to allow your teams to mentally and physically unwind.

04

Create more transparency about your company's plans about layoffs or furloughs and other organizational changes to reduce stress and build trust.

05

Nurture a culture of empathy to provide more emotional support to workers who may be suffering from COVID-19 fatigue.



success story:

## in times of uncertainty, Philips speeds up workforce innovation.

If you ask Philips' Casper Zoetekouw what key takeaway lessons he has learned during the past 12 months of the pandemic, he might tell you to check back in the second half of this year. That's because, as the global commodity leader for the company's external workforce, Philips is still learning and implementing solutions to a myriad of challenges that continue to crop up every day.

"We are in the learning and implementation phase. We learn each and every day more and more," Zoetekouw affirms.

Philips is in the midst of creating a new paradigm around talent management and utilization. In helping to oversee the rollout of the company's total workforce demand model (TWDM), Zoetekouw is part of a team that is elevating Philips' ability to innovate more quickly, be more competitive in its business, and create more excitement and engagement for its talent.

## TWDM launched ahead of COVID-19

When the outbreak initially occurred, Philips was already working toward its goal of bringing total talent management to life at its operations around the world. Exploration and implementation of this holistic approach to talent have been on the rise in recent years, but few organizations are doing it at the scale and breadth seen at Philips.

Total talent management, while delivering exceptional benefits to its adopters, can be highly complex and time-consuming to get right. Together with Talent Acquisition, the business stakeholders and the MSP partner, procurement's job is to get it right.

Randstad Sourceright's 2021 Talent Trends research finds that 69% of companies intend to implement a total talent model over the next 12 months, and they will do so for a variety of reasons. Among the top expected benefits are: creating efficiencies in the hiring process (cited by 35%), building for the future (34%) and bringing strategic function into the HR function (33%). And among companies that have implemented their total talent vision, 97% say they are extremely or very satisfied.

And that is Zoetekouw's goal — to create greater satisfaction for his business stakeholders. The program aims to satisfy hiring managers by giving them the best resources for their business ambitions. TWDM will also result in significant cost savings over time and deliver greater access to scarce talent that's critical to winning in the MedTech industry. And the model keeps both employees and temporary labor engaged with Philips, whose brand is well recognized throughout the world.

"This will enable us to better manage our expenses, our costs, our risks and our total workforce in a holistic way. It is our strategy that enables us to carry out the work in the right way, at the right time, in the right place and at the best cost."

Casper Zoetekouw

global commodity leader, External Workforce  
Philips



## MedTech's pandemic challenge

The impact from the pandemic has the company prioritizing better cost efficiencies over all other benefits of TWDM for now. While it may seem like medical technology companies are well positioned to reap higher healthcare spending during the COVID-19 crisis, it's not true for all segments of the industry. High-cost capital product manufacturers have suffered a significant decline in revenues since the outbreak due to hospitals holding off on capital acquisitions.

This was apparent early on in the pandemic to Philips' leadership, as CEO Frans van Houten announced hiring control measures last March (with the exception of business-critical roles). As a result, human capital leaders throughout the organization came together to develop a policy, a way to implement it globally, and strategies for tracking and assessing its financial impact. The company examined reduction of non-critical contingent spend, renegotiation of bill rates and transfer of workers to different departments.

At the same time, the company needed to ensure it could still deliver critical products needed in the care of COVID-19 patients, such as ventilators and patient monitors. So while the company stopped acquiring non-essential talent, it had businesses that needed more resources to keep going.

Even though the focus shifted to cost reduction and avoidance, the company also needed to ensure its permanent and contingent workforce at locked-down facilities could work virtually. The company reacted quickly to create clear and regular communications for its people, provided secured equipment to enable remote work and adopted flexible schedules with well-stated milestones. All of these measures enabled Philips to continue to operate efficiently in markets affected by lockdowns.

Nearly a year since the company mobilized, many of the challenges facing Philips and its industry remain. What's changed, however, are the lessons the company accumulates every day. And much of it hinges on its work around a total talent approach, which Zoetekouw says has positioned the company for the uncertain times ahead.

"The challenge is to determine the optimum internal and external workforce mix for today and tomorrow and how to continuously anticipate changing situations. You need to know who you will want to bring back first and when, and be prepared for potential future waves of COVID-19 cases. With this we believe that we offer our business a competitive advantage in terms of understanding the objectives to reach and the ability to meet those needs."

Casper Zoetekouw

global commodity leader, External Workforce  
Philips



In terms of successfully managing through the pandemic, Zoetekouw advises peers to stay calm and cool, communicate with each other, and maintain a healthy work schedule at home that provides time to be creative and to de-stress. When it comes to workforce management, he suggests talent leaders start by achieving visibility of where the workforce sits. It's essential, he adds, to make sure you have good governance in place and focus on creating agility, while taking care of your people.



## 04 sustain productivity gains with digital transformation.

Are you rethinking policies to sustain productivity gains achieved during the pandemic?

One of the surprising results of the massive exodus away from the office has been documented productivity gains during the past year. As millions traded in business casual for everyday casual while working from home, companies reported that productivity was unchanged and often improved over pre-pandemic times.

Much of this gain can be attributed to the elimination of the daily commute, which extracts about an hour each day from the typical worker, according to a concept called [Marchetti's Constant](#). Giving 60 minutes back to workers, however, did not result in more free time for personal or family needs; instead, they spent most of it on work, according to the [World Economic Forum](#).



If this is the case, and if just half of the commuters were able to gain the hour back, the World Economic Forum theorizes that productivity could increase 6.5%, which would be the biggest gain ever recorded in one year. Additionally, with travel either severely reduced or eliminated at many companies, the workforce can actually focus on activities that nurture productivity.

For companies that have achieved such gains, this is a surprisingly pleasant development in an otherwise challenging period. As markets become acclimated to new ways of working, and talent settles into a routine at home or in reconfigured office spaces, they are better at managing their schedules and tasks to get more work done in fewer hours.

Our 2021 [Talent Trends](#) research uncovers that 69% of employers believe their workforce was just as productive or more productive working from home than prior to the pandemic, but 31% say talent was less productive. This is reflective of the realities of working from home. Even without the commutes and office chatter, there can be many other distractions in the household, such as chores, connectivity issues or less structure overall.

Productivity gains are made possible in large part through the acceleration of digital and business transformation: the adoption of innovative tools and ways of working. The role of technology in enabling remote work was key to last year's massive work-from-home initiative, but now that the virtual workforce has become the new workforce, businesses will have to look for additional ways to step up productivity and innovation.

To ensure workers continue to perform at a high level, companies will have to continue to invest in enabling technologies and conduct surveys to understand what would be most valuable to talent. Our Talent Trends research finds that 73% expect innovation will help their talent teams focus on business-critical activities. Among various HR investments earmarked for this year, 47% say they are investing in technology to improve the talent experience in the workplace, the second most cited item.

Technology to enhance collaboration and connectivity will remain key to greater productivity, even when large numbers of workers head back to the office. For the foreseeable future, the workplace will be a blend of on-site and at-home arrangements, so keeping colleagues connected and aligned will be a priority.

More importantly, over the long term, companies must learn to replicate more water-cooler moments and in-person sessions to spur innovation. As [Wharton Business School](#) pointed out, innovation appears to have slowed this past year, in part due to fewer personal interactions. Company leaders can overcome this challenge, however, through connecting teams, training and tooling.





# 47%

are investing in technology to  
improve the talent experience  
at work.



# 73%

expect innovation will help  
their talent teams focus on  
business-critical activities.

"Human capital leaders are in a unique position to help their organizations drive greater productivity. By regularly surveying the workforce, and addressing their unique needs during the pandemic, companies can help create even stronger talent loyalty during these trying times."

Cindy Keaveney  
chief people officer  
Randstad



## 3 questions you should ask

01

Are we measuring workforce productivity against a pre-COVID-19 baseline, and have we adjusted our metrics to the unique circumstances surrounding our business?

02

How can we sustain the measures that are helping our organization to achieve gains in (or sustained) productivity?

03

How are we using technology to recreate water-cooler moments and opportunities to brainstorm or be creative?

04. sustain productivity gains with digital transformation.



## 5 ways to sustain or improve productivity levels

01

Invest in tools that better connect or facilitate collaboration to ensure your business doesn't stop innovating.

02

Ensure your teams are well-trained on how to use new technologies, and meet regularly with providers to understand how new features can enhance productivity.

03

Focus on the talent experience and job satisfaction to drive higher output.

04

Hold agenda-less meetings that focus on a topic or theme to foster brainstorming, creativity and innovation.

05

Fortify your recognition and rewards program to remind your employees of their continued contribution to the company's goals.



# 05 drive workforce decision-making with data.

How can talent analytics help you drive business growth and employee engagement?

Leveraging workforce and labor market data to facilitate workforce strategies has been a growing practice at many companies in recent years. But with the outbreak of the pandemic, the need to make numbers-driven decisions has become even more urgent. Digital transformation is leading to exponential growth in the amount of data generated, and more than ever employers want to convert numbers into knowledge.

Our 2021 [Talent Trends](#) research identifies talent analytics as the technology human capital leaders are investing in the most, with 62% earmarking significant budget for tools such as data visualization dashboards. Nearly 1 in 5 (19%) human capital leaders say they have started investing in talent analytics as a direct result of the pandemic.



At the same time companies are investing in technology, they are also mindful of the internal capabilities required to collect, process and analyze data. Nearly half (46%) say they expect to provide training around data analytics — a percentage second only to AI when it comes to reskilling goals.

Why the strong interest in talent analytics? Even before the pandemic set in, human capital leaders were investing in analytics capabilities as a way to better understand what they were spending on talent, how these resources were being utilized, the availability of skills within their organization and other important information that can be leveraged to support decision-making.

But with lockdowns occurring around the world, talent analytics have become indispensable, according to industry analyst Josh Bersin. Bersin [explains](#) that with robust analytics in place, companies achieve greater visibility of what is happening to their workforce across markets, regions and the world. These tools can be used to track health information, talent retention, the location of employees and other important details that will help companies make critical decisions in response to COVID-19 challenges.

Talent analytics are also critical in helping businesses quickly process and react to employee feedback. Throughout the pandemic, some companies have increased the amount of internal surveying to gauge the level of stress and engagement among their workforces. While this information is important, it also creates significant work for HR to process. With AI playing a greater role in data analysis, gaining those insights is more easily achieved.

Analytics have also been critical to workforce planning. Whether companies were downsizing or adding headcount due to increased demand, talent analytics have accelerated decision-making when it comes to hiring or reductions. Our Talent Trends research indicates that even though hiring declined in 2020, the importance of analytics in talent acquisition has not changed much. Seventy-eight percent (78%) say this competency plays a critical role in sourcing, attracting, engaging and retaining talent. Last year, this figure was 81%.

Analytics will continue to be critical to recovery efforts and business agility for companies in the near future. As some economic activities return this year, hiring is expected to improve. Even now, many skills that were in short supply before the pandemic remain scarce. With normalization of the global economy underway, employers will need deep analytical competencies to help them compete for the best talent.





# 1 in 5

have started investing in talent analytics as a direct result of the pandemic.



# 46%

expect to provide training around data analytics.

"Talent analytics capabilities have evolved rapidly over recent years, so make sure you regularly assess your own competencies and identify areas where additional investments can help markedly improve your workforce insights."

Summer Husband

vice president, Global Data and Analytics  
Randstad Sourceright





## 3 questions you should ask

01

Do we currently have clear insight around resource utilization and skills gaps within our organization?

02

Are we able to access data and insights in real time to support agile operations?

03

How are we using external market insights to make smarter decisions around talent for our organization?



## 5 ways talent analytics can drive recovery and growth

01

Use predictive functions to identify the skills your business will need when demand is expected to increase.

02

Examine how your contingent talent spend can be better controlled with enhanced supplier data.

03

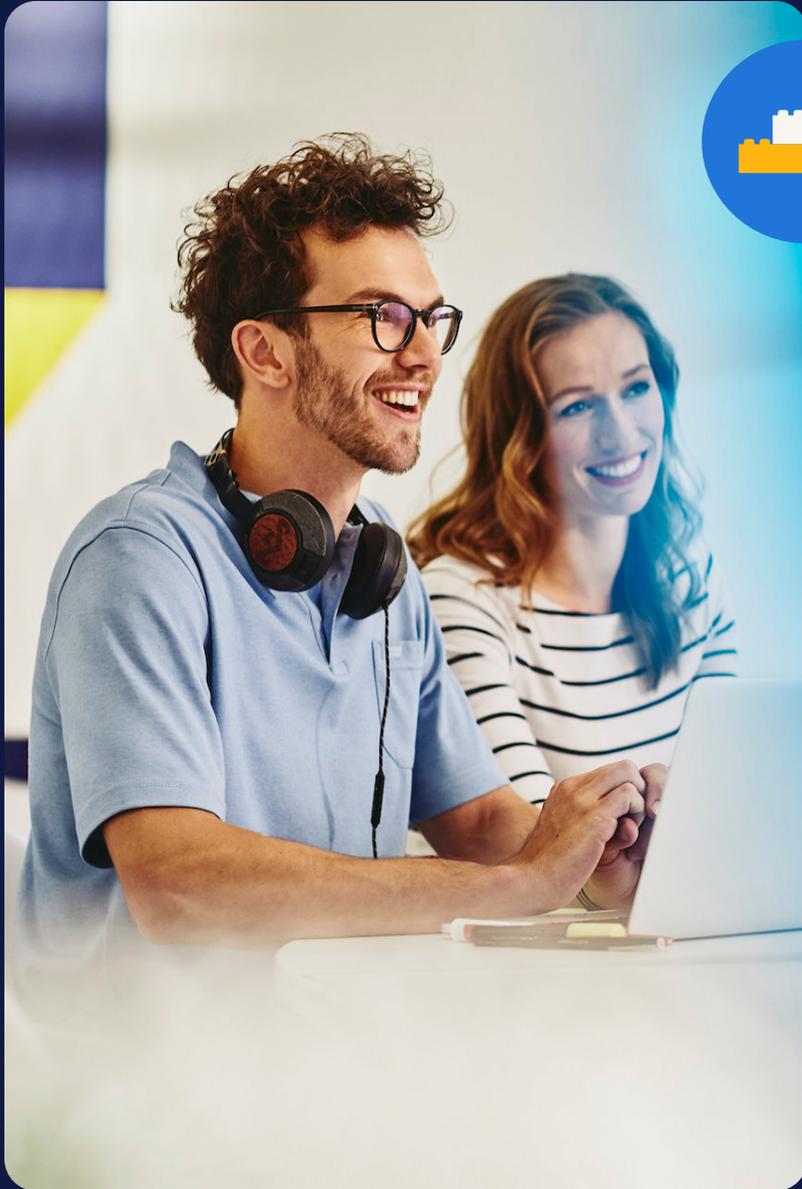
Use organizational network analysis to understand how work gets done in your business.

04

Provide talent analytics and digital fluency training to broadly leverage data throughout your organization.

05

Analyze retention data as an indicator of engagement and job satisfaction.



## 06 get ahead of a still-growing skills gap.

Are you competing effectively for the digital and people skills that are needed for digitalization?

High global unemployment dominated the headlines in 2020, but even as millions lost their jobs temporarily or permanently, many employers are facing a skills gap that has only grown wider since the arrival of COVID-19. Companies around the world found themselves searching for a variety of skills that were already in short supply as they migrated their businesses from legacy to digital.

According to McKinsey, companies that have taken on business transformation during the pandemic are accomplishing in 10 days what used to take 10 months. And with this speedy shift, the need for specialized skills has also accelerated. According to the World Economic Forum's The Future of Jobs Report, all of the top 10 in-demand roles are related to digitalization and technology. Roles such as data scientists, AI and machine learning specialists, digital marketers and software developers are still growing across the world.



Beyond technology, people skills remain important to growing businesses. Project managers, strategic advisors, organizational development specialists and management analysts are also in high demand. [CNBC](#) reports that healthcare and transportation workers can also expect to see increasing demand for their expertise.

Since the pandemic began, a reconfiguration of the global economy has begun. According to [Axios](#), a "creative destruction" of markets is underway. This is a process in which new firms that form in growth sectors attract workers who are fleeing shrinking businesses. As this happens, the skills needed in emerging industries will be in short supply until an equilibrium is reached.

In the meantime, companies not only compete for talent with direct competitors within their industries. Now, they face competition from companies in other sectors that are recruiting for the same digital and people skills. A life sciences organization may be looking for the same data scientists or AI specialists as tech leaders, such as Google and Amazon. These skills are [just as applicable](#) in fields such as bioinformatics or clinical research.

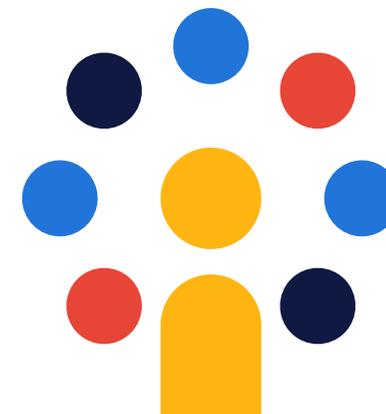
The shortage of certain skills became even more apparent as a result of the coronavirus crisis. [By one estimate](#), the EU needs an additional one million IT professionals in Europe. McKinsey estimates that in the U.K., [94% of the workforce lack the skills](#) the market will need in 2030. The skills gap is more dire in Eastern Europe than in countries such as the Netherlands and Finland. This concern about the digital skills gap has led European Commission president Ursula von der Leyen to prioritize digital transformation in the region's post-coronavirus recovery.

Ahmed Mazhari, the president of Microsoft Asia, [shared on LinkedIn](#) that even though the pandemic could lead to 7% of the Asian workforce losing their jobs, some businesses in the region have struggled to find qualified talent in growth areas.

This may explain why, according to our 2021 [Talent Trends](#) research, human capital leaders still see talent scarcity as a challenge for their businesses. Forty percent (40%) say talent scarcity has either made a negative impact or been one of their organization's biggest pain points — the highest total in the past five years.

And among the top skills in which they hope to train their workforces, 61% say AI is part of a necessary skill set, while 46% cite analytics as a skill they need. Beyond acquiring new skills, 1 in 5 also say they have provided training to their people to address changing business needs in the past 12 months.

Companies' recovery from the global economic decline will hinge on their ability to close the skills gap over the next year. With the great digital transformation showing no signs of slowing, businesses will need to either build more robust talent pipelines or take on significant reskilling programs to stay ahead of the competition.





# 40%

say talent scarcity has either made a negative impact or been one of their organization's biggest pain points — the highest total in the past five years.



# 1 in 5

have provided training to their people to address changing business needs in the past 12 months.

"Maintaining strong talent acquisition capabilities, either internally or externally, should be a priority of HR. You want to ensure you can rapidly access new and critical skills when the business needs them."

Anthea Collier

managing director, Asia Pacific  
Randstad Sourceright





## 3 questions you should ask

01

Are our business leaders forecasting further business disruptions that may require us to quickly acquire new skills?

02

Have we considered how our employee value proposition competes with employers within and outside our industry?

03

Among the top skills we will need, can we upskill our existing workforce to fill those needs?



## 5 ways to overcome a growing skills gap

01

Assess whether upskilling efforts can help you acquire the skills you need in the future or if you will have to more actively recruit externally.

02

Clarify your company's employee value proposition for candidates with emerging or specialty skills that are needed.

03

Build robust talent supply pipelines using branded talent pools.

04

Look to the contingent labor market to supplement your permanent workforce.

05

Consider how automation, AI and machine learning can alleviate some of the talent scarcity plaguing your organization.



# 07 reshape the supply chain with borderless talent.

Do you have plans to leverage a transformed talent supply chain?

One of the most important lessons from 2020 is that work can get done anywhere. With millions around the world suddenly holding virtual meetings at their kitchen tables, or in a spare bedroom, businesses have realized that their workforces can be located almost anywhere. All that is needed is a good internet connection.

In just a few months, an unprecedented migration away from dense, high-cost urban centers has begun. In Silicon Valley, home rental prices are plunging as people migrate to less costly areas. Rents in New York have fallen at record rates as many residents leave for leafy suburbs. The same is true for cities across Europe, such as London, Milan, Barcelona and Berlin. Talent sees an opportunity to free themselves from high-rent cities and settle where quality of life is different and the cost of living is lower.



This migration is enabled by many companies' decision to prolong or offer permanent work-from-home arrangements. Early on in the pandemic, [companies such as Twitter and Square](#) announced that employees can work from home permanently. Facebook also said that within a decade, 50% of its talent will be virtual. Other companies, such as Slack and Shopify, have taken similar steps to redistribute their workforces as well.

Our 2021 [Talent Trends](#) research shows that companies have shifted a significant portion of their permanent workforces to work-at-home arrangements. On average, 26% of their employees were working remotely before the pandemic, and that number roughly doubled to 50% as of the fourth quarter of 2020. The change is less dramatic among their contingent workforces, which saw an increase from 28% before the pandemic to 44% afterward.

For some employers, there is both a potential cost and benefit to this migration. On one hand, employees and remote contractors may find it more advantageous to relocate to a lower-cost area. Having a remote schedule also means more flexibility and the ability to control their workday. All of these considerations would increase job satisfaction.

Eliminating geographic limitations also changes strategies for sourcing and acquiring talent. Employers will see their talent pools expand, along with the possibility of finding the highest-quality workers from anywhere around the world. Tax and labor compliance considerations may limit foreign employment, but it's very possible contractors and other independent talent could be sourced from anywhere. The expansion of work-from-home policies can also lead to reduced labor costs and creation of around-the-clock teams.

Some human capital leaders believe this development opens up opportunities for businesses that previously had limited access to talent. Now they may benefit immensely from a transformed supply chain. "The opportunities are significant. Remote creates an immense opportunity, not just for companies, but for the world. It creates more economic opportunity in areas that really need it and for people who might not otherwise have access to work in tech, for example," Katie Burke, the [chief people officer for HubSpot](#) told Randstad Sourceright last year.

Borderless talent strategies will require that companies adjust their approach to recruitment, engagement and employer branding. Supported by technology, companies will need to develop more sophisticated sourcing, screening and interviewing capabilities as they expand the scope of their recruitment efforts. They'll also need to use market intelligence, their own workforce data and local expertise to understand talent availability, competitive pay rates and local legislation, for example.

But as organizations become more effective at remote recruitment and meeting talent expectations, borderless talent acquisition can help deliver the agile and responsive workforce that's needed in today's uncertain environment.





# 50%

of permanent employees are working remotely post-pandemic, nearly twice as many (26%) as before.



# 44%

of contingent talent are working remotely post-pandemic, compared to 28% before.

"We're in the greatest workplace experiment that the world has ever witnessed. So far, virtualizing the workforce appears to be successful, but regularly assessing the impact on business performance should be used to guide the ongoing development of your company's policy."

Louisa Wilson  
managing director,  
Enterprise Customer Acceleration  
Randstad





## 3 questions you should ask

01

Is our executive leadership comfortable with a geographically dispersed workforce?

02

Are we able to effectively manage talent located around the country and around the world?

03

Have we identified which roles we want to retain within our offices?



## 5 ways to optimize a virtual workforce

01

Explore how your work-from-home policy enables recruiting from new locations.

02

Set clear policies around work schedules, key performance indicators and compensation for those relocating to lower-cost areas.

03

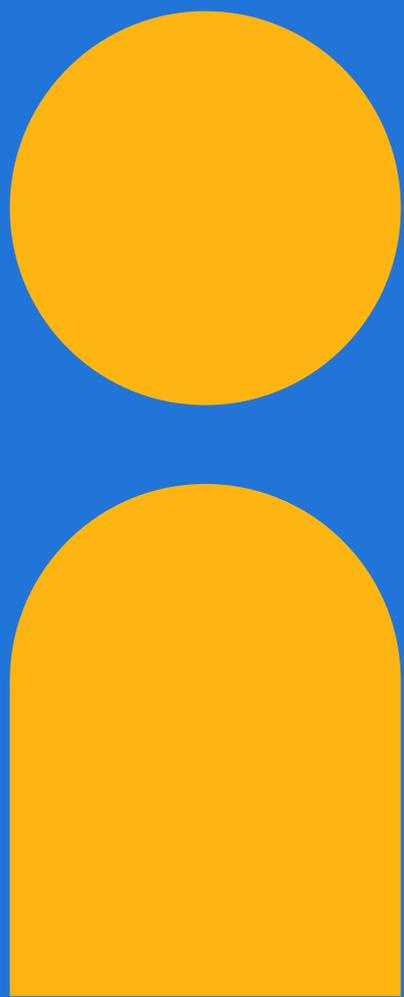
Provide a complete suite of technology tools to facilitate collaboration and communication.

04

Develop a revised approach for effectively onboarding and engaging new hires virtually for the best hiring outcomes.

05

Expand your access to highly qualified talent by broadening the geographic scope of your sourcing activities.



success story:

## UCB improves time to hire while filling an unprecedented number of requisitions.

When Belgium went into lockdown last March following the pandemic's outbreak in this small European country, organizations everywhere mobilized in response. As a biopharmaceutical specialist in the neurology and immunology field, Brussels-based UCB took quick action to protect its workforce, ensure production of its critical drugs and continue to operate under various government restrictions in its locations around the world.

Jonathan Berlan, global head of Candidate Experience for the company, oversees talent acquisition and immediately halted all in-person interactions with job candidates, knowing the risk that such meetings could pose to talent and his team. The decision didn't come easily as the company was engaging in its largest hiring blitz ever in preparation for a record number of new drug launches coming out over the next several years. Additionally, UCB needed to support the development of two new production lines in Belgium.

Under typical circumstances, recruiters and hiring managers would actively seek out and build relationships with talent in person. The pandemic, however, would change all that. As a result, UCB moved from in-person interviews to an all-virtual process. This was an approach the company had never even experimented with before.

"I went to HR leadership and told them to fasten their seat belts. I really didn't know the consequences of taking a hiring process completely virtual."

Jonathan Berlan

global head of Candidate Experience  
UCB



His concerns, however, were quickly allayed when the company was able to successfully fill roles as needed in a timely manner. In fact, heading into the fourth quarter of 2020, UCB had shaved 2.5 days from time to hire — a feat which has surpassed expectations despite the record number of requisitions.

### a team effort from the beginning

How did the company achieve such gains all while adopting a new recruitment model? How did it acquire some of the hardest skills to find in the biopharmaceutical industry, even as demand was rising due to the global economy's sudden shift to life sciences?

"We did it with the quality of the people on our team," Jonathan explains. He points out that UCB's executive leadership were aligned from the beginning on the goals at hand. The company's top priorities were protecting the safety of all employees and candidates, clearly communicating its plan of action across the enterprise and leveraging technology to enhance the recruitment experience.

Having turned 90 years old in 2018, UCB is a research-intensive business with a strong pipeline of late-stage drugs in development. As such, the company is in need of both scientific and sales roles to support the forthcoming launches. So even when many companies were sending most of their employees home during the initial lockdown, UCB needed to maintain an on-site workforce, while recruiting and enabling virtual talent as well.

## hiring safely is a priority

There are many considerations for acquiring both types of positions during this time. For instance, hiring managers have to interact in person with manufacturing and other facility-based employees, so ensuring they are guided safely throughout the hiring and onboarding journey is both a priority and a challenge.

On the other hand, hiring remote workers can be facilitated through video interviews and other virtual tools. But when it comes to onboarding, Jonathan believes most employers are still trying to replicate an on-site experience.

"The onboarding piece is something no one has gotten quite right yet. We can send new hires a phone, computer and a welcome gift, but that person is still in the same physical space they were in before they began their new job," he explains. "When you physically go into an office, that marks a rite of passage."

He is also quick to recognize that under the complete lockdown in March, companies had no choice but to operate with limitations. Even so, his team has become even more productive, which is apparent in the company's improvement in time to hire.

Beyond concerns about the onboarding process, the company has been especially mindful of the needs of all employees, whether they recently joined UCB or have been longtime workers. Even for his own team, Jonathan is working to replicate the synergies that in-person interactions nurture.

"It was obvious that without those water-cooler moments, you have to manage people differently," he says, adding that UCB was able to quickly adapt to an effective rhythm that includes regular communications to internal team members and its recruitment process outsourcing (RPO) service provider. This helped to ensure roles were being filled on time with high-quality talent. Other measures to keep his team engaged include ad hoc meetings, virtual coffee chats and Friday night happy hours.

By achieving record hiring and slashing time to fill, UCB's talent acquisition efforts have been more successful than envisioned at the outset of the pandemic. Even though UCB was busy throughout 2020 filling roles, elevating the talent experience is always a priority. Rethinking talent strategies by focusing on skill sets, and not jobs, and focusing on reskilling will be imperative to the company's success in the future.





## 08 amplify the business case for a culture of diversity & inclusion.

Are you connecting business impact to a more diverse and inclusive workforce?

Although the [Black Lives Matter](#) movement began in the U.S., its impact over the past year has been felt globally. Demonstrations outside of America spread throughout Europe, Latin America, Asia Pacific and Africa. The movement's purpose focuses on social justice and has resonated deeply throughout the corporate world, spurring many companies to set greater workforce diversity goals and to build more inclusive cultures and practices.

Last year, with demonstrations breaking out, [real change was expected](#) in our neighborhoods, systems and offices. Companies that passively followed the events unfolding were finally compelled to take action as public outrage spread among the general public and into their workforces. According to [The Washington Post](#), companies such as JPMorgan Chase have invested millions of dollars to address chronic social and economic issues plaguing the Black community.



Similarly, Nike CEO John Donahoe said the company would make additional efforts to create a more diverse and inclusive culture at the sports apparel brand.

"During this past year, we've stepped up our own efforts and measures of accountability in the areas of diversity, inclusion and belonging to foster an inclusive environment and attract a more diverse workforce," Donahoe said in a statement.

Other businesses have pledged additional actions and funding to support Black communities. Netflix allocated 2% of its cash holdings — up to \$100 million — into financial institutions and organizations that directly support Black communities in the United States. McKinsey has pledged to take 10 actions to combat racism, including donating \$200 million in pro bono work around the world to advance racial equity and economic empowerment among Black communities.

Most human capital leaders surveyed in our 2021 Talent Trends research agree that they need a strong diversity and inclusion program to drive business impact. Eighty percent (80%) say it's either extremely or very important to have a robust diversity and inclusion strategy to attract and retain talent. Most (68%) also already have one in place, and 27% say they are planning on developing one.

Still, questions remain regarding whether companies will sustain their efforts after the headlines are gone. After all, just 1% of the 2020 Fortune 500 CEOs are African American, and there have been only 18 Black CEOs on the list since 1999. And CNBC reports that many companies fail to move minorities and women into management tracks, resulting in their underrepresentation among senior management roles that lead to the C-suite.

By some accounts, however, real action is being taken. An initiative called Modern Leadership aims to improve minority representation on corporate boards, which will have a trickle-down effect on workforce diversity and inclusion outcomes. And last year, we witnessed the largest number of women CEOs serving at Fortune 500 companies.

To ensure organizations continue to focus on diversity and inclusion initiatives, human capital leaders will need to elevate the discussion beyond just hiring a more diverse workforce. Using an evidence-based approach, companies should point to the business impact of building an inclusive culture and outline how they will do it.

McKinsey — which has documented the performance benefits of a diverse and inclusive organization for years — stated in its Diversity Wins report that the business case is now more important than ever. The firm points to a growing performance penalty for laggards in diversity and inclusion practices.

How well your organization can sustain diversity and inclusion momentum driven by last year's social justice movement and today's talent expectations will hinge on how closely your efforts align with company performance. As McKinsey points out, "a systematic, business-led approach and bold, concerted action on inclusion are needed" to bring about real change that will guide your workforce strategy for years to come.





# 80%

say it's either extremely or very important to have a robust diversity and inclusion strategy to attract and retain talent.



# 68%

already have a diversity and inclusion strategy in place, and 27% say they are planning on developing one.

"To create real change, companies need to set solid goals around hiring, supporting and promoting talent from all different backgrounds. Only through tangible actions within their organizations can companies contribute to the broader social justice movement."

**Audra Jenkins**  
chief diversity and inclusion officer  
Randstad North America



# 3 questions you should ask

08. amplify the business case for a culture of diversity & inclusion.



01

Do we regularly and clearly communicate our diversity and inclusion strategy to employees so they understand our goals?

02

What actions can we take to ensure our talent acquisition efforts reach candidates of all backgrounds?

03

Should our company link executive compensation to fulfilling diversity goals?



# 5 ways to activate inclusion at work

01

Use data to inform whether your recruitment and leadership development efforts are inclusive.

02

Set up a diversity council and hire a chief diversity officer to set strategy and execute on achieving desired outcomes. Give them a voice and let them lead.

03

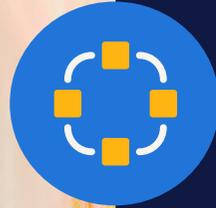
Work with diversity talent suppliers to ensure access to underrepresented talent.

04

Consider how technology can help you reduce bias and create more equitable sourcing, recruitment and screening processes.

05

Remember that diversity and inclusion don't stop at hiring. Always be willing to listen to and learn from the experiences and needs of your diverse talent.



# 09 build a sustainable workforce by repurposing talent.

How are you planning to reskill and upskill your workforce as digitalization gains momentum?

The arrival of the Fourth Industrial Revolution has been unfolding for some time as AI, the internet of things and digitalization have profoundly transformed businesses and lives. Accompanying these changes, however, are concerns about legacy and transitioning skills. Employers and society will need to find new jobs for those displaced by technology and new processes. Those concerns ballooned in 2020 as millions were laid off as a result of the pandemic.

In response, countless companies, governments and labor organizations have set out on one of the most ambitious efforts ever to quickly reskill the global workforce, with some calling for industry and government to collaboratively reskill entire industries. Some of this is already occurring in the sectors hardest hit by the global economic slump, such as the airline industry.



To ensure workers are protected against future economic disruptions, they will need the skills employers are looking for today and tomorrow. In some instances, companies that suffered a drop in demand have redeployed their workers to companies facing sales spikes.

For many organizations, accessing all of the skills they need can't solely be accomplished through hiring. One reason is the shortage of highly skilled talent in specialty roles, such as AI, machine learning and data engineering (a search conducted in Q4 2020 revealed more than 150,000 data engineering positions listed on LinkedIn).

In addition, millions of displaced workers whose skills don't match those needed by businesses will have to find work as digital transformation accelerates. According to the World Economic Forum, closing the global skills gap could add \$11.5 trillion to the global GDP by 2028.

Many already have marketable skills that just need refreshing, or complementary skills that facilitate a transition into other roles or industries. For instance, airline and hospitality professionals already have strong people skills that are required in other lines of work, such as merchandisers, call center support or medical technicians.

Early on in the pandemic, a number of companies were able to quickly adapt to changing market demands and keep their workers on the job. Honeywell received broad recognition for quickly converting its Rhode Island plant to produce N95 masks last April. Ford began producing respirators and personal protection equipment in Michigan. And the Mercedes-AMG Petronas Formula One team developed continuous positive airway pressure (CPAP) devices, meeting demand in U.K. hospitals. These businesses were able to pivot quickly by reskilling and retooling their lines to meet emerging demands.

According to McKinsey, companies need to actively reskill their workforces to emerge stronger after the pandemic has passed. Now is the time to nurture employees' "digital and cognitive capabilities, their social and emotional skills, and their adaptability and resilience."

And employers are recognizing their role in closing the skills gap. Amazon, for example, has committed \$700 million over the next six years to reskilling its workforce. Our 2021 Talent Trends research uncovers that most human capital and C-suite leaders believe it is the responsibility of employers to reskill workers. An overwhelming majority (92%) say companies should be responsible, but most also believe the government (68%) and universities (65%) have to do more. Eighty-seven percent (87%) believe reskilling their employees will help retention.

While many of the skills needed are technical in nature, survey respondents also want to enhance other workforce competencies. For instance, 46% say they are focused on nurturing soft skills, such as adaptability, time management, creativity, teamwork and communication. Nearly as many (43%) say the ability to work and lead remotely is also a priority. And 39% will provide training for occupation-specific skills.

Regardless of who ultimately provides reskilling or upskilling, employers and talent will simultaneously benefit from these efforts. What is important is that all parties invest time and energy in building a sustainable global workforce by closing the skills gap and ensuring redundant workers find employment again.



# 92%

say companies should be responsible for reskilling workers.



# 46%

are focused on nurturing soft skills, such as adaptability, time management, creativity, teamwork and communication. Nearly as many (43%) say the ability to work and lead remotely is also a priority.

"Reskilling and upskilling are more urgent in the time of COVID-19, so organizations that are accelerating their digitalization efforts must make learning a critical component of their business transformation."

**Michel Stokvis**

senior director  
Randstad Innovation Fund and  
Group Innovation





## 3 questions you should ask

01

Has our leadership mapped out anticipated shifts in our business that will impact talent needs over the next several years?

02

Do we have a clear picture of what skills will become redundant in our company and the reskilling needed to redeploy these workers?

03

Can we partner with other organizations to help with reskilling and upskilling so our company isn't solely responsible?



## 5 ways to facilitate the redeployment of talent

01

Consider a micro-learning strategy that can quickly upskill your workforce to support new business initiatives and evolving market conditions.

02

Incentivize your workforce to invest in learning, either on their own or through a company-sponsored platform.

03

Formalize occupation-based training to document the skills your teams possess.

04

When making roles redundant, provide the career transition services and training displaced workers need to quickly rebound.

05

Include upskilling goals and actions in employee review discussions.



# 10 fuel employer brand strategies with your talent experience.

Do you have clear KPIs that will help you enhance job satisfaction and your company's reputation?

In the past, employer branding was regarded as an external measure of attractiveness that had little to do with the internal workforce. More recently, human capital leaders began linking workforce engagement to their brands, recognizing that reviews left on Glassdoor, stories shared across personal networks and alumni interaction all make an impact on how organizations are perceived and attract talent. Still, many companies did not try to elevate their brand through a better talent experience — until now.



According to HR technology analyst [Josh Bersin](#), the rapid development of new technologies aimed at enhancing the workplace experience is under way. Reflecting the consumer shopping trends in which the buying journey is almost as important as the product or service, employers are now investing in "experience" platforms built around what employees want to do, and not what technology needs them to do. Even as the HR technology market caters to the needs of each worker, companies themselves are realizing the importance of the talent experience to their ability to attract, retain and inspire high-performing talent.

The talent experience also has a significant correlation with job satisfaction and retention, both of which affect labor costs and business output. While creating a positive talent experience had been a priority for many organizations before the pandemic, it is even more critical now. According to our 2021 [Talent Trends](#) research, 63% believe the talent experience is now more important in a post-outbreak environment.

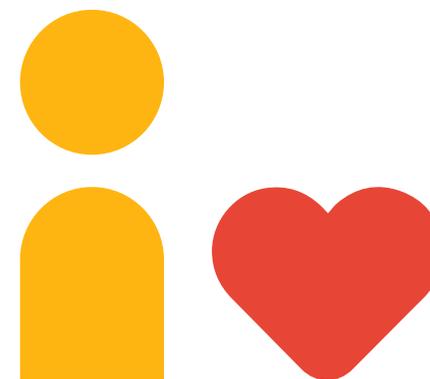
Managing the talent experience — defined as the continuum spanning from pre-hire through the recruitment process to joining the workforce and even offboarding — has become more difficult at this time. The pandemic has changed many companies' approach in the past year, and it's unclear whether this is permanent.

For instance, many candidates recruited and hired in 2020 joined their workplace having never stepped into the office, and many employers are still [struggling with virtual onboarding](#). This is concerning because companies that have effective onboarding strategies boast nearly twice the profits of companies that don't, according to the [U.S. Chamber of Commerce](#).

Beyond onboarding, companies no longer control the day-to-day experience of their remote workers. What employees experience is a combination of work and home life that can be both stressful and overwhelming. The blurring of personal and professional boundaries may leave some unable to take the space they need. This may lead to a negative perception of the organization.

So how can companies energize the workforce to elevate engagement and advocacy for their employer brands?

Setting and meeting expectations is key. Our Talent Trends research reveals that 75% of human capital leaders believe workers' expectations of employers are continually increasing. If this is the case, companies will have to deliver on these expectations, whether it's flexible work schedules, pay protection or reskilling.





Workers also expect their employers to provide the technology and other resources needed to get their work done. According to [Forbes](#), tech giants Facebook and Google are offering funds to employees to set up home offices.

Even when companies have to part ways with redundant employees, it's important they maintain a consistent talent experience, whether that's providing severance, job search support or other transition services. After all, former employees may have a lot to say about their former companies.

Take the example of Booking.com, which was significantly affected by global restrictions on travel last year. The online travel portal was forced to make reductions in force as a result of a significant decline in business, but company leaders knew they needed to be transparent and compassionate throughout the process. As Lee Cumberbatch, global manager of L&D Programmes at Booking.com, explained to us, the company provided career transition services to ensure a positive experience for employees who were laid off.

"While our industry has been one of the hardest hit by the pandemic, we knew it was crucial to support those colleagues who we sadly had to let go. It's both socially responsible and important to us as an employer to make sure we provide comprehensive career transition services so our talented colleagues can quickly find new jobs and minimize the disruption to their lives. It is paramount they have as positive a talent experience as possible in these challenging times."

Lee Cumberbatch

global manager, L&D Programmes  
Booking.com





# 63%

say the talent experience  
is now more important in a  
post-outbreak environment.



# 75%

believe workers' expectations  
of employers are  
continually increasing.

"The care employers  
provide to their workforce  
and their job applicants  
during this time will  
resonate with them for  
years to come, so make  
sure your business is taking  
steps to deliver the best  
experience possible."

Francesca Campalani  
vice president,  
global head of Talent Marketing  
Randstad Sourceright





## 3 questions you should ask

01

Do we apply a consistent communication strategy across all talent, including job applicants, new hires, contingent workers and existing employees?

02

Are we effectively using feedback data to guide our policies for both internal and external talent?

03

Does our leadership understand the relationship between talent experience, engagement and productivity?



## 5 ways to ensure a positive talent experience

01

Create focus groups within your workforce to steer your talent management approach.

02

Set clear goals around metrics and scores so there is clarity of what you hope to achieve.

03

Invest in a rewards and recognition program to raise engagement, especially now as workers are quarantined at home.

04

Survey talent at all stages of the continuum — especially job applicants — to determine whether their candidate experience meets expectations.

05

Automate some touchpoints using engagement technology so talent never feels ignored.

# is your talent strategy agile enough for 2021?

Take the Step>Edge>Ahead talent strategy diagnostic to learn whether your company has the right building blocks in place.

begin my assessment

or go to  
<https://randstadsr.com/3buEYG2>.

## Talent Trends methodology

Randstad Sourceright's [Talent Trends](#) research is a survey of 850 C-suite and human capital leaders across 17 markets. Conducted by a third party on behalf of Randstad Sourceright, the research is designed to help our clients and the broader business community understand the top HR trends for 2021.

Online surveys were conducted via external panels during Q4 of 2020. Interviews were self-administered and could be taken across devices (including mobile phones, tablets, desktops and laptops).

Survey samples include C-suite and human capital business leaders at international and regional organizations in Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, China, France, Germany, Japan, India, Italy, Mexico, the Netherlands, the Nordics, Poland, Singapore, the U.K. and the U.S.

## about Randstad Sourceright

Randstad Sourceright is a global talent solutions leader, driving the talent acquisition and human capital management strategies for the world's most successful employers. We empower these companies by leveraging a [Human Forward](#) strategy that balances the use of innovative technology with expert insights, supporting both organizations and people in realizing their true potential.

As an operating company of Randstad N.V. — the world's leading global provider of HR services — Randstad Sourceright continuously builds and evolves talent solutions through recruitment process outsourcing (RPO), managed services programs (MSP) and total talent management strategies.

Read more at [randstadsourceright.com](https://randstadsourceright.com).