

# Preparing your business for rapid transformation

How to remain relevant in the  
changing face of work



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# Featured Authors



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Mike Bollinger is the Global AVP at Cornerstone and an accomplished executive with 20 years of experience in positions of increasing responsibility. Mike speaks regularly at HCM thought leadership events such as Evanta, Argyle, HCI, ICMI and others on HR trends, generations in the workplace and how to measure the impact of HR transitions.

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## **Charles Coy**

Charles Coy is the senior director of analyst and community relations at Cornerstone. He came to Cornerstone interested in the ways that technology can impact how organizations evaluate, motivate and value their employees. Charles is a study in permanence, having worked in every dark corner of Cornerstone since the early days of the company more than 16 years ago.

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## **Janine Milne**

Janine Milne has been studying HR, talent management and training for more than 20 years. She writes extensively on topics ranging from leadership, mentoring, creating an effective team, managing international teams and learning.



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### **Dean Carter**

Dean Carter leads global HR, Legal and Finance Shared Services for Patagonia Inc. As an officer on the core leadership team, Carter serves to further Patagonia's unique business model, proving that companies can "Do Well and Do Good." Prior to Patagonia, Carter held leadership positions at Sears Holdings Corporation, Fossil, Inc., Pier 1 Imports, Pearle Vision and Procter & Gamble. Carter has a BS in Organizational Communication from The University of Texas at Austin and has served as a Northwestern University Pritzker School of Law Workforce Science Fellow.

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# Introduction



The way we work has, is and will always be changing—that is the only constant. New communication capabilities are enabling both remote workers and those who choose to work in the “gig economy” to stay connected despite being geographically dispersed. Automation has long saved workers valuable time on mundane tasks, such as data entry and transcription, but the leaps in new interface techniques such as RPA and voice recognition promise new levels of efficiency not yet dreamed of. As our workplace continues to evolve, employees’ expectations of their employers are growing. I just finished a webcast where we talked about the notion of “micro moments” and how our people are listening for clues in every interaction. Modern workers are looking for organizations that offer them flexibility, autonomy and purpose. To borrow a phrase from Daniel Pink, they crave a “talent experience” that is both meaningful and transformative.

Businesses face the same pressures, but from a variety of places. Change is constant, and their business models need to adapt to the competitive environment they find themselves in. As a result, and a real byproduct of market pressures, most organizations find themselves compelled to transform their systems and processes to meet the growing needs of the modern workforce. Employees whose needs are not met may look to leave their roles and in a hurry. Labor force statistics emphasize this point: a U.S. Department of Labor report (JOLT) in early 2019 put voluntary quit rates at an all-time high. Employers must be muttering to themselves, “You’re leaving? You just got here.” In an era of employee ghosting, we need to rethink our interactions and our commitment to that employer brand promise.

Let's be clear. Successful business transformation is no easy feat. People play a central part, but it requires some legwork on the part of all our leadership, including the HR teams. We are all responsible for helping to identify transformation opportunities by focusing on the intersection of technology (e.g., which systems are working well for employees, and where might there be room for improvement?), processes and people, and ensuring that the skills, behaviors and cultural changes stick in the “new” new world we find ourselves in.

Finding an opportunity for change is just part of the challenge, however. An even greater obstacle? Many organizations lack the knowledge and structure to transform effectively, meaning they don't always have the resources to empower employees to reach their full potential. According to a report from McKinsey, less than 30% of organizations succeed in their transformation efforts. So how can your organization beat the odds? It comes down not only to investing in the right technology, but also making sure your people are open to change.

In this guidebook, you'll learn how investing in transformation efforts can help your organization engage employees and meet your business goals. With six articles covering everything from automation to company culture, our featured pieces will help you understand the changing forces in the market—and what you can do to adapt.

**Mike Bollinger**, VP, Global Thought Leadership & Advisory Services





# Take it from a futurist: your digital transformation is only as good as your people transformation

By Charles Coy

When organizations talk about digital transformation, they tend to focus on the obvious—the **technology**. And they think of their workforce as a secondary factor when, in reality, an organization's people are what determine whether a company's digital journey is propelled or stalled.

A recent global survey by MIT Sloan Management Review and Deloitte found that 69 percent of companies haven't yet reached digital maturity, which includes effectively preparing their workforce for a primarily digital future.





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**Underestimating human behavior is going to be the biggest risk to business as we move forward.**

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“Technology is pretty straightforward—it’s the people that are complex and that potentially slow down transformation,” says Cheryl Cran, future of work expert, founder of [NextMapping](#) and author of the upcoming book *NextMapping: Anticipate, Navigate and Create The Future of Work*. “We underestimate the psychological part of people wanting to change for the purpose of creating the future of work.”

For organizations that haven’t yet put people at the center of their digital transformation, it’s challenging to change the mindset. We spoke with Cran to understand what it means to prepare a workforce for transformation,

and identify how human resources professionals can play a crucial role in helping companies achieve [their digital transformation goals](#).

## Adopting a people-first approach

Cran argues that while the majority of companies are in the midst of digital transformation and are actively preparing for the future of work, most aren’t thinking enough about their people in the process.

Digital transformation leaders have been implementing new technology without involving key stakeholders on the front lines of company operations. They aren’t asking questions like: How will this make your work better? How can we do this better? How can we roll it out better?

“Underestimating human behavior is going to be the biggest risk to business as we move forward,” Cran says.

For example, employees crave technology that enables them to easily perform certain tasks on the go and outside the office, so focusing on introducing new in-office technology is a missed opportunity from a digital transformation perspective.

## How HR can help leaders excel at the intersection of people and technology

As organizations buckle down to meet their digital transformation goals, it's the ideal time for HR departments to stop operating in a silo and become more integrated into the overall company.

"Everyone looks to HR people for recruiting, retention and solving all of the people problems in an organization, but in the future, I see HR as a company-wide skill set—not a departmental skill set," Cran says.

Employee relations are among the top priorities for HR pros, which makes them hyper-aware of the changing dynamic or attitude of the workforce. Because they're often among the first to notice shifting employee behavior, HR teams have the capability to anticipate changes and equip leaders with the skills they need to guide their workforce through digital transformation. Cran says three of the most important skills to this end are agility, creativity and adaptability.


Adaptability comes into play with **remote workers**, for example. Some leaders work best when they have their team around them in the office, but when employees

are given the technology and flexibility to work remotely, those leaders start to struggle. **Remote and on-demand workers** will become a larger part of the workforce in the future, so it's imperative that leaders adapt to the trend rather than become withdrawn from these employees.

"Is HR giving their leaders the best tools to help retain and inspire their employees? That's the future of work—it's much more than a singular focus on technology," Cran says. "HR has the opportunity to expand an organization's perspective of what is included in the future of work."

The first step forward for HR departments to extend their reach beyond traditional HR operations and establish themselves as a digital transformation liaison between a company and its people is to find an influencer within every department. Each influencer should then be tasked with examining the digital transformation initiatives within their department, and should work closely with HR to ensure that these initiatives are being well-received and effectively implemented.

As HR practices become more ingrained in each department, human resources will be on its way to preparing their organization for the future of work.



# Organizational leaders can't avoid conversations about automation forever

By John Boudreau

**This post was prepared in collaboration with Theresa Welbourne, president and CEO of eePulse.**

We live in a world of **perpetually upgraded work**. Each day, **work** becomes a little more automated, employee and worker rewards become a little more immediate and job-related learning becomes a **little more virtual**.

But in order for businesses to stay at the forefront of innovation and for workers to have enough time to gain the skills necessary to use new technology, organizational leaders and managers must be willing to share what they know about emerging automation tools and their potential impact on the business. That involves open discussions about new tools that come on their radar, an exchange of case studies and other means of information gathering and dispersion.



**For both employers and employees to fully benefit from automation, transparent discussions about the potential impact of new automation technologies must occur.**

But just how likely are leaders and workers to share what they know about work automation? Together with [Theresa Welbourne](#), President and CEO of eePulse, we posed this question to 200 business leaders in a recent [eePulse](#) Survey.

“For both employers and employees to fully benefit from automation, transparent discussions about the potential impact of new automation technologies must occur.”

## The Impact of Automation Matters

Our research revealed some polarizing results: We found that both leaders and employees were more willing to discuss the potential impact of automation technologies

if they believe that this impact would drive positive change, such as certain tasks being simplified. However, if they feared that the impact would be negative—workers might lose their jobs, for example—they were less likely to have open conversations about it.

**Below is an overview of our findings:**

Question: would you and your employees share knowledge about potential work automation if it had these effects...	YOU would share knowledge	YOUR EMPLOYEES would share knowledge
	% who agree or strongly agree	
Employees must learn new skills	98%	69%
Makes work more productive	91%	66%
Employees would get pay increases	90%	87%
Makes work more reliable	89%	72%
Makes work safer	87%	72%
Employees would be transferred to other work	86%	37%
Positively affect my employment and career	71%	55%
Employees would be laid off	58%	6%

Source: eePulse and Center for Effective Organizations, 2018. All rights reserved.

## Society predicts the worst from work automation

For both employers and employees to fully benefit from automation, transparent discussions about the potential impact of new automation technologies must occur well before implementation is on the horizon. The caveat, however, is that while our survey revealed that optimism is a critical factor in leaders' willingness to be transparent, they are seldom optimistic about automation.

A **2017 survey** of 4,135 U.S. adults by the **Pew Research Center** found:

- **72 percent** of people worry about a future where robots and computers can do many human jobs.
- **76 percent** of people would not apply for a job where a computer program selected applicants.
- **58 percent** of people agreed there should be limits on the jobs businesses can replace with machines, even if machines are better and cheaper than humans.
- **85 percent** of people favor limiting machines to performing jobs that are dangerous or unhealthy for humans.

If the average leader or worker sees automation as a threat, our survey suggests she won't be willing to share her knowledge about work automation. Yet, this transparency is fundamental to anticipating work evolution early enough to give workers and organizations time to adapt to automation through reskilling, relocation, collaborative work redesign or other means.

## Leading agile work requires managing perceptions

A negative outlook on automation is no excuse to avoid productive conversations about its impact. **Automation** is coming, regardless of whether or not leaders and employees discuss it, so rather than hiding from it, they should prepare for the changes it'll bring. And after all, having successful discussions about work automation comes down to how you frame the conversation.

To have a productive discussion about automation, leaders should consult established **frameworks** that'll help guide their understanding of work automation. The goal of the frameworks is to identify ways to optimize (rather than avoid) human-automation combinations that are not only more efficient, but also generate higher returns on improved performance. And, with more knowledge, leaders are also more likely to gain the level of **psychological safety** needed to discuss automation openly.





# Software makes recruiting better. Let's embrace it

By Dean Carter

## A version of this article originally appeared in [HR Tech Outlook](#).

When I tell people that I work in HR, most of the time they assume I hire and fire. But in reality, the biggest thing I do is adapt.

Across my 20 years in the industry, technology has evolved and fundamentally changed the way I work—from the online job boards like Monster.com, to the applicant tracking systems, to the rise of artificial intelligence. And I would venture to guess that another technological shift is on the horizon: In 2018 alone, global investments in HR technology surpassed **\$14 billion**.

There is often a sense of dread that comes when new technologies emerge (Will my job go away? Will I be able to keep up?), but I've found that if we adapt to the technology, we actually get better at what we do. Over the years, I've helped my teams adapt at a variety of different companies—from my time at Fossil, to Sears, to my job today as Head of HR, Finance, and Legal at Patagonia—and I've learned some strategies for adopting the continued swell of technological tools in our field. The keys? Embrace your data, push for innovation and keep culture first.



## 1 harness and customize your recruiting data

As HR professionals, we have access to so much useful data today that we didn't just a few years ago. Software tools can tell us the number of applications we have for a certain job, highlight words that appear most frequently in the resumes of people we've hired and much more.

But there's more to be done with the data than rely on a pre-fabricated, default dashboard a given software offers up. We need to dig deeper to ensure we can draw the most effective insights—creating a more customized view of our data.

At Patagonia we recently took a closer look at our data to see the impact of a few videos we released on childcare for applicants. We looked closely at the dates we released certain types of videos on social media and cross-referenced that data with types of candidates applying during the same periods. We found a video around dads at work drove a 42 percent increase in applicants. It was a crazy increase, and it showed us that the message about dads at work really resonated with prospective applicants—an insight we might not have uncovered had we used pre-cut dashboards.

Rather than relying on only the insights you know you'll need—like common attributes of top applicants—explore the raw data to unearth new conclusions. Often, we ask our data scientist simply, what did you learn this week?

## 2 don't get comfortable: innovate, innovate, innovate

I find that HR and recruiting teams often get too comfortable with whatever system they're using and don't look around at what's out there. When I joined Patagonia four years ago, we had outdated processes despite the fact that other departments were driving innovation on multiple levels.

We've changed almost all of our processes since then—and I'm still on the lookout for new things. In fact, twice a year we hold an HR demo day where our team listens to pitches from the different services available. Usually, somewhere in that group of pitches is an important innovation.

Your candidates might be the innovators driving the way you do things, too, so pay close attention to their changing habits and preferences. Today, most young workers communicate with text: Research suggests millennial candidates open and read only about **20 percent** of the emails recruiters send, while texting platforms report response rates of 60 to 70 percent.



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**The best decisions are the ones where we combine really good data and really good human gut and experience**

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### **3 To make a change, know your culture**

Keeping pace with trends in technology turns recruiting teams and HR leaders into change-drivers—and that’s not an easy role. If your company needs a new technology every few years, it can be challenging to make the case to your CEO, much less your team who will have to adapt to the new system.

Use data when you pitch a new idea: it can be easier to make a case when the argument isn’t only based on the head of HR’s opinion. Also make sure you know your company’s culture well enough to frame your proposal. When I worked at Sears and I was trying to promote a new HR tool, I would talk about how the change would give us the ability to drive performance at the company. At Patagonia, the culture is very different. If I were to say to my leadership team, “We’re going to have better data

about candidates,” that would not be impressive. But I can say: “By being more efficient in our hiring, we can allow our recruiting team more time with their families.”

### **4 people will always be the heart of recruiting**

One of the biggest fears in recruiting HR is that emerging technologies will eliminate jobs. AI, for example, is still in the early stages of implementation—but one day might be advanced enough to conduct entire interviews independently. I’m confident, however, that there will always be a place for people because of something Paul Depodesta told me when I was at Sears. Famous for his work in baseball statistics and portrayed in the film *Moneyball*, Paul told me: “You know, Dean, the worst decisions we ever made in baseball were made by gut only or by data only. The best decisions are the ones where we combine really good data and really good human gut and experience.”

I think there will always be a place for great HR people who are combining great technology with great humanity. And I’m already seeing the benefit of added technology for my team today, where the machine is doing a lot of work that our eyeballs used to have to do. Now, I can use my recruiters for what I need them for: To have key conversations with candidates and inform our data with strong intuition.

# 3 ways HR can lead in digital transformation

By Janine Milne



Digital transformation is more than simply **introducing new technology**; it's about changing the very nature and future of work.

To be successful, consultancy firm Deloitte charges that companies need to **"be digital"** rather than "do digital." Technology should be part of the DNA of your company, rather than viewed as yet another technology-led business restructuring initiative.

Change on this scale requires full buy-in from the entire leadership team, with a particular role played by HR.

At its heart, digital transformation is about people and **changing the mindsets of workers**.

In many companies, HR is side-lined from the main decision making. Partly, this is because HR still maintains its traditional role as a supporter of business, rather than a leader. In such companies, consulting group Prophet warns in a **report** that HR is likely to become a passive recipient of digital strategies run by the likes of IT or marketing. The report shows that a paltry 2 percent of HR leaders see HR as a key influencer in strategic digital transformation.



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**Today's leaders need to know about technology, such as virtual reality or machine learning, because the top customers and candidates will**

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## Build a data-centric HR team

To help drive strategic digital transformation across the organization, HR first needs to [hire the right people](#). HR needs to start employing staff who are digitally aware and data-savvy, and comfortable with turning data-driven insights into actions. While digital experimentation is essential within HR, everything HR does needs to be closely aligned with the wider business objectives of digital transformation.

## Find the talent

HR needs to take charge of conversations across the business to find out how each department sees the future of work: Will they need people on site, or will there be more virtual workers? Which parts of the job will be automated and how does that affect the people in those roles?

HR needs to reimagine the organizational structure—and how this impacts its talent program. If people are working differently, perhaps in a [more team-based structure rather than rigidly separated departments](#), it will affect how they are measured and awarded for performance.

## Lead people down the digital path

If you want to change the mindset of employees, then you're going to need the leaders to have the right mindset and be able to bring their team along with them. Today's leaders need to know about technology, such as virtual reality or machine learning, because the top customers and candidates will.

It's also vital that they become a role model for values such as openness, integrity and honesty, according to Deloitte's "[Building Your Digital DNA](#)" report. In a workplace where department boundaries are broken down, these qualities are vital to survival. These leaders need to inspire loyalty and engagement and be particularly tuned into employees' individual differences and needs.

This is a long and complex journey for the whole organization. It's up to HR whether they play a tactical role in business transformation—or fall behind.

# Learning corner

With Jeffrey Pfeffer

As AI enters the workplace,  
organizations have  
to get active



The general consensus is clear: automation is poised to **transform** (or disrupt, if you prefer) present work arrangements in profound ways. Where the jury's still out is just how many jobs will be lost to automation.

One artificial intelligence **expert forecasted that** 40 percent of the world's jobs could be replaced by robots in 15 years. Meanwhile, the World Economic Forum predicted that robots will displace **75 million jobs**

globally by 2022, simultaneously creating 133 million new ones. What seems clear is that all of the numbers, even the most optimistic, suggest that unemployment risks exist and extensive retraining, re-skilling and job movement will be required in a world of work where automation plays a key role.

I believe that current trends in training by both governments and employers are inadequate to cope with the coming labor market dislocations. Employers should focus on training, investing in human capital and taking responsibility for the changes coming our way in order to remain relevant and reap the benefits that both people and technology have to offer—together.



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**If employers don't accept some responsibility for helping their workforce adjust to a world with more automation and artificial intelligence, employees will likely falter."**

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## **1 Increase your training efforts—and implore buy-in from the public sector**

A February 2019 [Brookings report](#) shows that while in 1996 employers paid for 19.4 percent of workers' formal training, a comparable figure in 2008 was 11.2 percent—a decline of 42 percent in just 12 years. If training is going to help with the transition to a more automated workplace, long-standing trends toward less training will need to change.

That same Brookings report also compared what the United States government spends on “active labor market policies” that train people and match them to jobs to what other industrialized countries spend.

The U.S. ranked 31 out of 32 total countries evaluated for public expenditure on labor market policies as a proportion of GDP. And between 1985 and 2015, U.S. government cut labor market spending in half. The implication? Our [government](#) needs to invest more in training, job matching and other efforts that help labor markets work more effectively.

An administration that relies on employees to acquire training and transition to new occupations on their own almost certainly will leave too many people in dire straits. Just as government has tried to mitigate the effects of jobs lost to foreign trade, public policy should seek to mute the economic effects of automation through training and other policies.

## **2 Focus on human sustainability**

Employers should embrace the issue of human sustainability and stewardship of the work environment with the same vigor they've brought to environmental sustainability—and for many of the same reasons. Just as companies today tout their physical environmental bona fides, in the future they may want (or need) to tout their human sustainability accomplishments. Things like high retention rates and internal growth are all things for companies to highlight. We see this already in competition for good ratings on sites like Glassdoor and in rankings like those put out by Great Place to Work.



Despite this, over the past decade I've seen the relationship between companies and their employees become much more transactional. And that will need to change if companies are to embrace the task of getting their people ready for coming workplace transitions and dislocations.

Multi-year careers at one company have transitioned to jobs of shorter duration—"gigs." With limited attachment between employers and employees, neither party has an interest in investing in the relationship, which provides one explanation for why training has declined in the U.S. and is lower here than in countries with less "flexible" labor markets. This is a good time for companies to recognize the trend and reinvest in their people through training.

### 3 Take responsibility for AI and employees

If employers don't accept some responsibility for helping their workforce adjust to a world with more automation and artificial intelligence, employees will likely falter, but many companies have no intention of providing them a lifeline. Technology columnist Kevin Roose's **observations** of discussions at the recent World Economic Forum meetings are instructive of the attitude

of the moment: "In public, many executives wring their hands over the negative consequences that artificial intelligence and automation could have for workers. But in private meetings, these executives tell a different story: They are racing to automate their own work forces with little regard for the impact on workers."

Companies face the problem of collective action—few firms want to be the only ones to provide training while other firms free-ride on those efforts. Therefore, it may fall to industry associations, local associations of businesses and **national organizations** such as the Chamber of Commerce and the National Association of Manufacturers to promulgate and possibly enforce guidelines for retraining and upskilling employees.

It's almost impossible to predict what will happen as automation and artificial intelligence increasingly penetrate workplaces. But it seems fair to forecast that it will not be possible for companies—or governments—to simply continue on the same path. The labor market transformations and their economic consequences are simply too large to believe that continuing a relatively hands-off, laissez-faire approach will be politically or economically viable.

# William Tincup weighs in on how to navigate the future of talent management

By Charles Coy



The relationship between hiring and training is undergoing a massive shift. More than ever before, learning is becoming a priority for today's candidates—and they are looking to employers to meet their needs. More than **80 percent** of millennials say it is important for employers to provide on-the-job training as well as **continuous professional development**, self-directed learning or self-paced learning to help them perform their best.

“The customer [job seeker] has changed,” says **William Tincup**, President of **RecruitingDaily** and **HR Tech Advisor**. Job seekers today tend to ask three questions during the interview process, he explains. ‘What’s next for me?’ [an internal mobility question], ‘How are you going to train me?’ and ‘How are you going to recognize what I do?’

“10 years ago, these questions weren’t asked,” Tincup says. “20 years ago, they weren’t even thought of—actually, they were probably thought of as disrespectful.” These seemingly simple questions are shifting the ground beneath HR and recruiting leaders as candidates drive forward a new set of priorities. We spoke with Tincup to learn more about how changing candidate needs are transforming hiring, the employee experience and retention efforts.

## Adapt to candidate needs

In order to attract top talent, organizations need to be able to answer the questions that are most important to candidates, Tincup says. Candidate priorities have changed and the interview process needs to change as well. Back when there was a surplus of talent, recruiters had the upper hand. Today’s talent market, however, is competitive and as companies face a **workforce skills gap**, the needs of candidate and recruiter have reversed.

“It’s almost like a power position has reversed where recruiters used to negotiate from a position of strength and ask questions from a position of strength,” Tincup explains. Now, qualified candidates will simply move on

if a company is unable to fulfill what they are looking for in a job. “The customer has changed and if you want to attract that customer, you have to adapt,” he says.

## Drive change around learning

Because learning is such a priority for today’s candidates, recruiters can expect to be asked about training, job mobility and internal development during the interview process. In order to better adapt to and understand these candidate needs, Tincup suggests that recruiters reverse new questions they encounter.

“We can be proactive instead of reactive,” he says. Recruiters can gain valuable insight by asking questions like ‘what would you like to learn?’ or, ‘what is something you’ve always wanted to learn but have never had the opportunity?’

By understanding what candidates want to learn and how they want to learn it, organizations can transform their onboarding process and work environment to provide a positive, engaging work experience for their employees. This approach not only helps to create a better overall employee experience, but it also drives



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**It's time to be thoughtful. In the things we do, the things we say, the way we behave, the way we treat people and the way we include people."**

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organizational change around learning by connecting employees with content they care about and allowing them to learn **in a style that works for them.**

## **Bring the customer experience to HR and recruiting**

Tincup says there are three experiences someone can have with a company: candidate, employee or alumni. It's essential for HR and recruiting leaders to be mindful of this journey from start to finish in order to attract, grow and retain talented workers.

"The concept of candidate experience and employee experience—what you feel, how you think, how you go about your day, what you see—those are all things that can be orchestrated," says Tincup. "We, as HR professionals, should be more thoughtful of that experience.

In order to create a positive experience from start to finish, HR professionals must understand candidate needs as they exist today. And, of course, it's not a learn it and leave it game. "This is a continuous, relentless pursuit of understanding their [candidate] needs," Tincup explains. "And their needs change."

By being mindful of the questions today's job seekers are asking and allowing candidate priorities to drive internal learning, organizations can create an engaging culture of learning that empowers employees to continually develop and pursue new skills. "It's time to be thoughtful," Tincup says. "In the things we do, the things we say, the way we behave, the way we treat people and the way we include people."

# REWORK

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