

Talent-Driven Gamechangers

ACQUISITION-PERFORMANCE-RETENTION-PLANNING-MODELS

Rita Veloso

Leading Tomorrow: Adapting Leadership for a Dynamic and Evolving World

Dave Goyal

AI-Driven Talent Revolution in Healthcare: Preparing Leaders for Uncharted Territory

Márcio Silva

The Future of Work in Healthcare: Preparing for a Talent-Driven Industry

Prof. Chan Ee Yuee, George Glass, Hoi Shu Yin, Loh Yong Joo, Lim Sing Yong, Celine Ong, Prof. Ian Leong

Project Carer Matters 2: Strengthening the Ecosystem to Support Family Caregivers of Older Persons

Dr. Mories Atoki

Advancing African Healthcare Through Leadership

Precious Chisom Uzoeghelu

Influence of Leadership Styles on Job Satisfaction and Organisational Commitment in Healthcare

José Antonio Cano, Alan Zettelmann

The Importance of Multidisciplinary Teams in Digital Healthcare



Leading Tomorrow: Adapting Leadership for a Dynamic and Evolving World

The concept of leadership has evolved in recent years. Instead of hierarchical structures, contemporary approaches like transformational and distributed leadership emphasise flexibility, collaboration and shared vision. The rise of automation and technology necessitates upskilling, reskilling and pre-skilling to maintain competitiveness. Effective leaders must foster a culture of continuous learning, supported by public policies and partnerships, to ensure a future-ready workforce and resilient organisations.



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key points

- Leadership shifted from rigid hierarchies to flexible, collaborative approaches.
- Transformational leadership promotes shared vision and innovation amid dynamic challenges.
- Upskilling, reskilling and pre-skilling are crucial for adapting to technological changes.
- Leaders must embrace continuous learning to sustain organisational competitiveness.
- Public policies and partnerships support workforce development and future resilience.

The Evolution of Leadership: From Hierarchies to Collaborative Models

Leadership has been a central theme in the social and organisational sciences for decades, and our understanding and practice of it have changed significantly over the generations. Historically, leadership was often associated with rigid hierarchical structures and an authoritarian style, where power and decision-making were concentrated at the top of the organisational pyramid. This model, largely influenced by the classical management theories of Taylor (1911) and Fayol

(1916), emphasised efficiency, control and standardisation as key elements for organisational success.

However, as social, economic and technological conditions have evolved, the conception of leadership has also undergone a significant transformation. New paradigms, such as transformational leadership introduced by Burns (1978) and Bass (1985), highlight leaders who inspire, motivate and influence their followers, promoting a shared vision and encouraging innovation. This approach is becoming increasingly relevant as organisations face more dynamic and uncertain business environments.

With technological advancement and globalisation, the contemporary business environment requires a new form of leadership. Younger generations, such as Millennials and Gen Z, have brought different values and expectations regarding work and leadership. These generations value flexibility, collaboration and purpose at work, which challenges our self-leadership capabilities.

According to studies by Deloitte (2019), new generations expect leaders to be not only effective managers but also mentors and facilitators who promote a culture of continuous learning and inclusion. Values-based leadership centred on empathy and social responsibility has become imperative to attract and sustain talent in an increasingly competitive market.

In addition, the concept of distributed leadership (Spillane 2006) has become more prevalent, especially in organisations that adopt more agile and horizontal structures. This model defends the idea that leadership is not exclusive to a formal position but can be exercised by multiple individuals at different levels of the organisation. This aligns with the expectations of the new generations, who prefer more collaborative and less hierarchical work environments.

The Critical Role of Upskilling, Reskilling and Pre-skilling

The rapid evolution of technologies such as artificial intelligence, automation and big data is transforming the future of work in an unprecedented way. Once essential skills are quickly becoming obsolete, creating a significant challenge for companies that

need to adapt to these changes. In this context, upskilling (updating existing skills), reskilling (acquiring new skills) and pre-skilling (early preparation of skills) emerge as crucial strategies to ensure the competitiveness and sustainability of our organisations.

“Whenever we collectively move forward together, We will be on the right side of change.”

Upskilling involves enhancing employees’ existing skills or teaching them new ones, enabling them to take on more complex tasks and adapt to changing market demands. According to a 2023 study by the World Economic Forum, by 2027, approximately 23% of global jobs are expected to change, with 69 million new jobs created and 83 million eliminated. Automation and emerging technologies will be the main drivers of these changes. Professions in technology, such as data analysts and artificial intelligence specialists, are expected to see growth, whereas administrative and support roles are likely to decline.

Companies like Amazon and PwC have long invested billions of dollars in upskilling programmes for their employees, recognising that continuous upskilling is essential to competing in a global

market. These programmes not only improve workers’ employability but also increase innovation and organisational agility, resulting in a more resilient and future-proof environment.

On the other hand, reskilling involves preparing workers for entirely new roles due to automation or digital transformation, especially in rapidly changing sectors like manufacturing, finance and technology. It should be noted that public services cannot be left behind either. McKinsey & Company (2020) forecasts that by 2030, around 14% of the global workforce, or 375 million workers, will need to shift professional categories due to technological changes. Companies that fail to adapt may face reduced competitiveness, higher employee turnover and dissatisfaction.

Leadership plays a crucial role in this process. Leaders need to identify areas affected by technological changes and implement reskilling strategies that align employee skills with the company’s current and future needs. This requires a clear vision of the future of work and a willingness to invest in human capital development.

While upskilling and reskilling address skills needs in response to changes already underway, pre-skilling focuses on preparing skills in advance that are known today and will be needed in the future. This proactive approach is increasingly vital in a world where technological and market changes are very rapid and unpredictable.

Pre-skilling involves training workers in critical future skills before demand arises. A 2017 report by the Institute for the Future highlights that companies investing in pre-skilling can quickly adapt to new opportunities, maintaining a competitive edge. It

also helps address skills shortages in industries like technology, healthcare and engineering, ensuring a ready talent pool for innovation and growth.

However, for upskilling, reskilling and pre-skilling to be effective, these strategies must be integrated with the organisation's long-term vision and objectives. This requires strong and visionary leadership, the ability to articulate the importance of continuous skills development and the mobilisation of resources to support these initiatives.

Building a Learning Culture: Leadership, Collaboration and Policy for Future Skills

Effective leaders need to foster a culture of continuous learning, where skills development is seen as a shared responsibility between the company and employees. This can be facilitated through mentorship programmes, project-based learning and innovative teaching technologies such as e-learning platforms and artificial intelligence.

In addition, leaders must be prepared to lead by example, investing in their professional development and demonstrating a commitment to continuous learning. Not only does this strengthen the credibility of leaders, but it also inspires employees to adopt a culture of constant growth. Many leaders should constantly remind themselves, "When was the last time I did an evaluated training?"

Although companies play a crucial role in skills development, the support of public policies and partnerships with educational institutions is essential for the success of these initiatives. Governments can undoubtedly facilitate upskilling, reskilling and

pre-skilling efforts by providing greater tax incentives, subsidy programmes and regulatory instruments that promote continuous training. This training should be conducted during protected time and without any censorship, whether declared or undeclared by organisations. Such support is crucial for nurturing the personal and collective investment of professionals.

“Whenever we are able to lead in an agile way, We will be on the right side of change.”

Research on trends and partnerships between companies from various sectors, universities and technical schools are also essential to ensure that teaching curricula align with the needs of the labour market. These collaborations can help create more effective and relevant training and education programmes that prepare professionals for the jobs of the future.

Funding, such as that provided by the current Recovery and Resilience Plan, presents a unique opportunity to accelerate the necessary changes. It should be used to protect the future of employment in our organisations but, more importantly, in our People and society as a whole.

Leading Tomorrow at the University Hospital Centre of Santo António

At the University Hospital Centre of Santo António, we have always believed that the pursuit of knowledge, through the encouragement of training and research, is the DNA of our institution and vital for its sustainability. While we recognise that there are still many actions and projects to implement, we are confident that it is merely a matter of time and commitment from our leaders.

Santo António is the second largest employer in Porto, with over 6,500 employees and an annual budget exceeding 700 million euros. It was established in February 2023 as a result of the merger of the University Hospital Centre of Porto and Magalhães Lemos Hospital. The Board of Directors seized this opportunity to initiate a cultural change and restructure the organisation to better address current and future challenges.

The rebranding of “Santo António” enabled a comprehensive refresh, aligning its image with the industry's best practices of leading international companies. The new regulations facilitated the introduction of innovative management areas and expertise aimed at fostering growth and prosperity through a business culture. The Centre for Digital Surgery and Robotics, the Digital Health Laboratory, the People and Well-Being Department, the Compliance Office, the Innovation and Projects Department, the Customer Experience Department and the Knowledge Management Department are examples of areas that have emerged as vital for daily skills transformation.

Our daily efforts are driven by the creation of high-performance teams to manage innovation and change projects, along with dedicated time for these initiatives, scholarships and support for training and research. We focus on developing young and agile leaders and continuously offer certifications that help us in this mission.

A key element of our strategy is establishing the Knowledge Management area. Its primary goal is to identify, capture, structure, disseminate and develop the organisation's knowledge. This ensures all employees can easily access the existing knowledge within the organisation, promoting personal development and creating a workforce that can make quick and informed decisions. This, in turn, helps generate new knowledge for the institution and society.

The foundation of this approach lies in the question: How do we manage what we do not know? Knowledge is a strategic resource that requires effective management. This necessitates a structure—comprised of people, processes,

platforms, tools and a management model—that facilitates the planning, implementation and monitoring of activities aimed at promoting knowledge for both internal and societal benefits in a focused, structured and professional way.

Conflict of Interest

None

“When we invest in our people and their knowledge:

We will be on the right side of change.”

Achieving this vision requires a guided, cohesive and prepared vision from the top down.

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