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Lessons From The Pandemic On How To Break Down Organizational Silos And Optimize Workforce Potential

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COVID-19 has impacted global organizations and their workforces in profound ways. Seemingly overnight, changes in supply and demand for products and services have significantly affected workforce strategies. At the same time, organizations have made necessary but challenging shifts to fully remote working. These and other pandemic-related shifts have forced leaders to challenge their assumptions about work, workforce and workplace and to create new solutions that break down silos to tap into the full power and potential of their existing workforces.



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MIT Sloan Management Review and Deloitte's 2020 Future of the Workforce Global Executive [Study](#) found that prior to the pandemic, only 34% of surveyed workers were satisfied with their organization's investment in their skills development. Our research suggests that the organizations with the most effective approaches to skills development consistently found ways to provide greater access to and transparency into opportunity for their workforce.

In other words, to engage workers where their skills are needed most, organizations should invest in talent "opportunity marketplaces." Building on the idea of a traditional marketplace where individuals come to buy and sell goods or services, the goal of a talent opportunity marketplace is to match worker skills to available work. From a workforce perspective, that means giving talent access to new internal opportunities that contribute to their personal growth and development. From a manager and organizational perspective, that means moving talent where you need it, when you need it, for greater

organizational agility. The pandemic has been a wake-up call for many organizations on why this type of ongoing investment is so important to avoid getting caught flat-footed in the future.

At a time when traditional workplace structures are seeing profound change, opportunity marketplaces have been a useful tool for global businesses [to align workforces with enterprise and digital strategies](#), to change organizational behaviors, and to gain meaningful workforce intelligence. For example, during the pandemic, a health care organization with a network of hospitals around the US was able to use its talent marketplace to shift local capacity to a cross-system staffing network in order to centrally manage staffing as talent needs shifted dramatically across the health system and to different locations/regions.

Opportunity marketplaces provide a platform to think about work beyond the confines of an individual's role and match workers with internal opportunities for project work on top of their current role or new roles all together, accelerating redeployment processes to get people aligned with work where the organization is seeing strategic demands and to add a human-centered approach to using existing workforce skills from areas of the business that may not be seeing as much demand. During the pandemic, organizations that deploy opportunity marketplaces have been able to stand up call centers, shift supply chains, and assemble emergency response teams, all while tapping into existing talent - effectively breaking down individual, team, business line, and location boundaries.

Opportunity marketplaces, by design, enable greater autonomy for workers and transparency into talent processes, which allows workers more equal access to different types of work, new teams, new leaders, and new locations. These marketplaces can have multiple benefits for organizations beyond the pandemic, including:

- At the individual level, work doesn't have to be confined to a role and traditional working hours. Opportunities found on the marketplace can be shorter-term or one-off projects outside the confines of a traditional role, allowing workers to take on projects that can be done alongside their current roles with a focus on outcomes rather than hours.
- Workers can bring back new capabilities and skills to their teams by working on projects outside of their traditional roles. These can be "hard" skills, such as computer science or data analysis, as well as "soft" skills like communications or problem solving, allowing organizations to increase hidden productivity within the workforce. As organizations work through their human and machine teaming strategies, building up enduring capabilities for human workers will be increasingly important.
- In terms of increasing inclusion within leadership roles or in succession planning, opportunity marketplaces can be used by organizations to identify rising talent based solely on their *skills* rather than their relationships or personal network.
- For organizations that are planning to use a remote working model for the near and longer terms (as we've recently seen with many of the world's largest [technology companies](#)), opportunity marketplaces can extend talent supply matching opportunity to demand across global locations.

The pandemic has given leaders a peek into the potential that opportunity marketplaces present for talent management, career mobility, and the future of work. By fully embracing opportunity marketplaces now, these leaders can build up their organizations' resiliency for future disruptive events while keeping their workers happy.



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