



It is the most critical time for businesses to invest in upskilling their employees

Description

Over the last 30 years I have observed and believed that a healthy mix and balance of skills, knowledge and behaviours, that are nurtured and continuously developed, are the ingredients for a motivated workforce and a successful career. Having great knowledge or aptitude, but not having the skills to be able to execute on them often leads to missing out on realising the true value of potential. Recognising this value and leveraging it while the skills gap is still short will help organisations deliver better results. Quite simply put, failing to upskill yourself and your staff will leave you behind.

As we battle the pandemic and the economic fallout from it, we see even greater emphasis from organisations in all sectors to be able to serve their customers with even more flexibility and effectiveness. As this landscape becomes more competitive for businesses, it also becomes more demanding for their employees. It is vital in today's economic climate for people to develop the right skills to enable themselves to keep adding value and keep pushing their organisations forward.

How is the need for upskilling more relevant today?

AI is at the forefront of a wave of technology-driven disruption that is remaking industries, the competitive landscape, and the nature of work. If you are waiting for the right time, the time is now for businesses to build a future-ready workforce.

Digital transformation will continue to shape the 'change strategy' of organisations regardless of size or sector, while also re-shaping the demand for new skills and capabilities. Whether the transformational roadmap includes disruptive technologies like big data, blockchain, Internet of Things, AI and robotics, or more established solutions in cybersecurity or modern workplace technologies, we know that organisations that are most able to chart a successful course through this digital disruption will be those that identify and transform themselves, and their workforce.

As business eco-systems continue to improve and evolve, so must the modern manager or leader. Our place of work, for many businesses across the globe, has undergone incredible change over the last few years. Workplaces are becoming more virtual and distributed, and operational processes and information systems are quickly adapting disruptive technologies to improve productivity and enhance

our work-life balance. Data and access to it is now ever-present, and the demands to not only manage this data responsibly, but also keep it secure, is a top priority. Organisational leadership must embrace these challenges by developing strategies that capitalise on new technology, but this must be allied by adopting optimised processes and setting the right example in terms of an adaptive mindset and cultural change.

So, what does this look like in action? Upskilling on an individual level is acknowledging the need to grow, identifying the key areas of growth, and investing in yourself while others are yet to. It has always been my belief that we should look at ourselves as our own enterprise. We are our very own investment strategy and the more we invest, the better the return. If we have that mindset as individuals and then we collectively have that mindset as teams, departments, functions, and then organisations, it will be contagious.

A thing to remember is that there is no timeline to expect results. I say this because it is infinite. Training and development do not have a beginning and end. It needs to be continuous and it needs to be embedded into the DNA of the ecosystem.

It is, of course, helpful that the UAE has effectively and successfully put executive education at the forefront. As a part of the region for 30 years now, I have noticed that there is an undeniable change in the air that recognises the need for new economy skills. As every nation is looking for the next competitive advantage, the UAE and GCC are in prime position, with a young workforce and a committed region-specific governmental strategy that calls to invest, invest, and invest in knowledge and skills. With competitive knowledge economy being a key pillar for the Vision 2021 strategy, the organisations in UAE will not only take part in the race to be the leaders in innovation and leadership but will also consistently highlight how they are surpassing their competitors.

As in any investment, it is most important to assess your need as a business and individual before advancing toward continuous professional learning. A sure-fire way to get this right is to identify the growth areas or skills gaps, and with the help of a training expert like Kaplan, create bespoke programmes that address these challenges in a way that suits your organisational values.

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