



CORPORATE RESEARCH FORUM

# BUILDING SKILLS AND TALENT FOR THE FUTURE

2024 GULF CONFERENCE RETROSPECTIVE





KEYNOTE SESSIONS

In Conversation  
with His Excellency  
Mohammed Al Jasser

The Business  
Imperative to Reskill

The Impact of  
AI and Emerging  
Technologies

The Impact of  
Organisational Culture

PARTNER MASTERCLASSES

Creating a Culture  
of Learning

Shaping the Skills  
for the Future

The Art of Strategic  
Workforce Planning

Critical HR  
Capabilities for  
the Future

# BUILDING SKILLS AND TALENT FOR THE FUTURE

## 2024 GULF CONFERENCE RETROSPECTIVE

Building future skills and talent in organisations in the Gulf Region is a pressing challenge and opportunity. While there are numerous initiatives and efforts underway, organisations need to continually adapt their strategies to stay competitive in the evolving landscape of the region's business environment. CRF's Reskilling conference in Abu Dhabi explored how to build skills and talent for the future, blending insights from research, practitioner expertise and case studies.

### Conference Takeaways

-  **Begin with the organisational strategy.** Every organisation is different; context is therefore key.
-  **We operate in highly connected and complex environments** where the principles of systems thinking and a holistic approach will be required to find effective solutions.
-  **Against an increasingly unstable external context, organisations in the Gulf Region need to build flexibility and responsiveness into their talent approaches.** Reskilling can help with this, focusing on helping people build long-term employability and is part of developing a sustainable talent pipeline.

-  **We do not yet know the full extent of the impact of AI – and previous technological revolutions indicate that in the long-term it will be more disruptive than we currently anticipate.** HR can play a key role in the governance of AI implementation, focusing on potential data security, privacy, and accuracy issues, as well as thoughtfully examining how GenAI may benefit the company and society as a whole, while remaining aware of the risks.
-  **We also need to continue to invest in building the emerging technological and digital skills our organisations need to be future fit.** However, we also need to build soft skills, with our leaders being curious, humble, empathetic, trusting and great communicators.
-  **We should be deliberate and intentional about planning for the future whilst this is not a precise science, that is no excuse to do nothing.** Strategic Workforce Planning is a tool to help ask the right questions concerning the people and organisation implications of the strategy. It is a business planning tool – not an HR initiative. It should be integrated with the business planning process. Organisations should disproportionally apply effort to the skills that most impact revenue generation.
-  **Learning is best-implemented when a learning culture is embedded in the organisation and employees are motivated to take ownership of their learning.** Learning curiosity will be key.
-  **HR must continue to build its own capability in order to deliver value across the organisation.** HR leaders we will require strong skills in a range of areas including technology, commercial awareness and critical thinking.



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## In Conversation with His Excellency Mohammed Al Jasser

Mohammed Al Jasser, former Asst. Minister, Ministry of HR and Social Development, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, discussed a range of topics with Richard Hargreaves, Managing Director at CRF. This included the importance of vision and purpose, the role of the leader in strategic planning and the impact of AI on future skills. His Excellency highlighted a number of key points, which included:

- 1 Investing in human capital is a key strategic priority for the region, with governments aiming to bridge the talent gap and to potentially become an exporter of talent. As one example of this prioritisation, the Crown Prince of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is currently chairing The Human Capital Development Programme. Vision 2030's strategic framework also positions talent and skills as critical to meet the evolving needs of Saudi Arabia's economy. Within Vision 2030, the Human Capability Development programme consists of three core pillars:
  - 1 Develop a resilient and strong educational base for everyone.
  - 2 Preparing for the future labour market locally and globally.
  - 3 Provide lifelong learning opportunities.
- 2 A skills-focus is a critical part of wider Labour Market reform, which is one of the key pillars for the KSA labour market strategy within the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.
- 3 The demographics of the region have created an emerging and highly qualified talent pool. A high percentage of the region's population is under the age of 25; in Oman it is 50%, in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia 46% and the UAE 34%. There is therefore a strong pipeline of talent entering the workplace who can help the region address their future skills needs. His Excellency emphasised how, to harness this opportunity, there needs to be strong optimism and investment.
- 4 AI will be an everyday skill that everyone will have to learn, similar to learning a language. Overall, organisations will need to create both a culture of learning and grow the required technical skills.



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**RICHARD HARGREAVES** is responsible for the sustainable growth of CRF through delivering world-class HR content, facilitating knowledge exchange between HR professionals, focussing on future ventures and developing a great team. Prior to this, Richard was Commercial Director across CRF and PARC and previously the EMEA Sponsorship Director at The Economist Group.



**HIS EXCELLENCY. MOHAMMED AL JASSER** is an experienced globally-oriented leader with a proven record of accomplishment through positive influence and meaningful impact. He is currently the Chairman of Cipher, a cybersecurity firm in Saudi Arabia. Previously, he served as the Assistant Minister, at the Ministry of Human Resources & Social Development. As the Chief Transformation and Operating Officer of the Ministry, he led Branch Network, Customer Experience, Shared Services, HR, Digital Transformation as well as Privatisation and Outsourcing Programme. Al Jasser is a member of several steering Committees including Digital Transformation, Customer Experience, and Internal Audit. He also chairs several Ministry wide Committees including GRC, Cyber Security, and Data Strategy and Management.





# The Business Imperative to Reskill and the Required Skills for the Future

CRF Research

CRF Director John Whelan presented CRF's latest research on reskilling, outlining why organisations need to rethink their reskilling approach to remain competitive.

Reskilling is about supporting workers to learn new skills to transition to new or different roles. It focuses on helping people build long-term employability and is part of developing a sustainable talent pipeline.

CRF research has identified several trends which are changing the future of work. This includes geopolitical instability, the sustainability drive to Net Zero and emerging technologies. Organisations in the Gulf Region will only be able to successfully navigate this complex environment through building flexibility and responsiveness into their talent approaches. Governments within the region also have strongly articulated national visions, which include the objectives to localise talent, upskill workforces and build new capabilities.

John outlined how reskilling is a key strategic issue for the Gulf Region. A CRF survey of HR practitioners based in the Gulf Region found that around two-thirds said they either have a reskilling programme in place, or plan to roll one out. The survey also showed that, in general, the Gulf Region anticipates greater need for reskilling than the UK or Europe over the next 3-to-5 years.

The same survey indicated that the primary reasons HR practitioners in the Gulf are investing in reskilling programmes are to build capability and talent, with the main focus of reskilling efforts being technical and leadership skills. Both in the Gulf Region and in the UK/Europe, a lack of clarity around future skills needs is the biggest barrier to effective reskilling.

There is a strong business case for reskilling, with research showing that in Western Europe and the US, redeploying one person (vs firing and rehiring) saves an average of \$100,000 a year. Reskilling offers a further range of potential benefits to the business, including building a competitive advantage, increasing organisational resilience and boosting employee retention.

More broadly, investing in skills can grow productivity through making workers and their outputs worth more.



**JOHN WHELAN MBE** is a Director at Corporate Research Forum. Formerly UK HR Director of BAE Systems, the FTSE 100 defence, security, and aerospace company, John's experience and strengths lie in business and HR Transformation, Organisation Development and Employee Relations. Prior to joining BAE, he held a variety of HR roles in engineering, technology and manufacturing businesses across the telecommunications and semi-conductor industries including Matra-Marconi Space where he was HR Director for the UK and, latterly, Group HRD.

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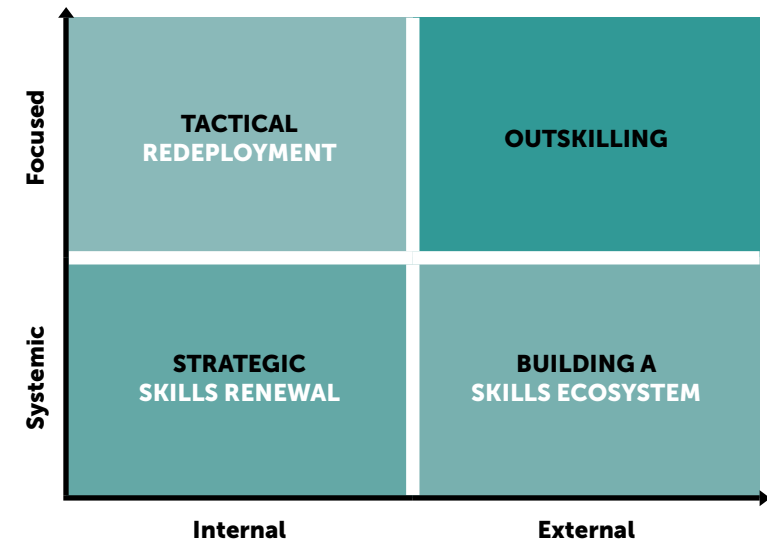
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## CRF RESKILLING MATRIX



CRF's Reskilling Matrix sets out the reskilling strategies we observe in practice and is organised on two axes:

- **Focused vs Systemic** focused approaches target reskilling at specific job roles, employee segments or skillsets. On the other hand, systemic approaches enable a culture of learning and continuous development.
- **Internal vs External**. An internal orientation means preparing people for future roles within the organisation. Conversely, an external orientation can mean supporting people to find jobs outside the organisation or creating an ecosystem of external partners to co-create solutions to long-term workforce challenges.





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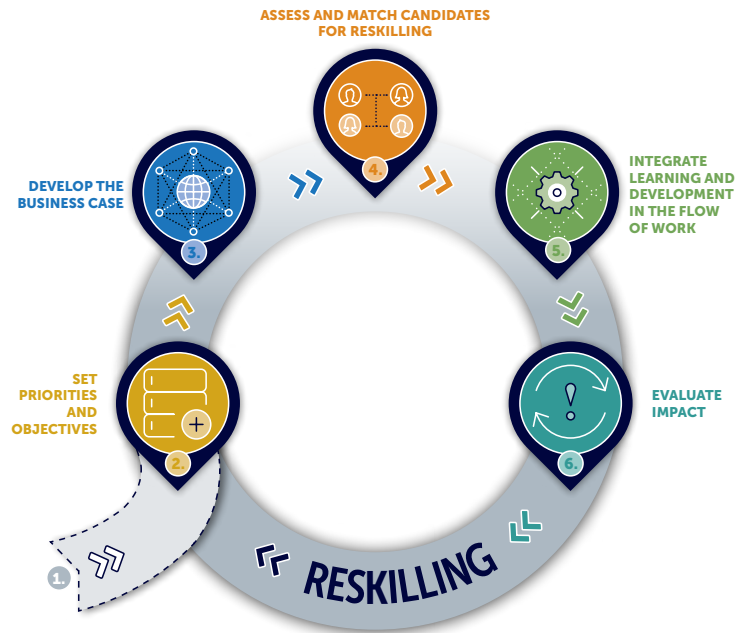
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## CRF RESKILLING PROCESS



- ✖ **Set Priorities and Objectives.** Reskilling programmes must be driven from the business strategy and technical roadmap, delivering skills that are critical to the organisation's future success. Strategic Workforce Planning is the key to understanding this (for further information, refer to [p.10](#)).
- ✖ **Develop the Business Case,** such as the positive cashflow effect, reduced restructuring costs or faster time-to-productivity compared to external hires.
- ✖ **Assess and Match candidates.** Before embarking on significant investment in skills, ensure reskilling candidates have the capacity, relevant experience and motivation to learn a new role.
- ✖ **Integrate Learning and Development into the flow of work** and design reskilling programmes around the principles of adult learning (such as making learning immediately relevant and oriented towards problem-solving).
- ✖ **Evaluate Impact,** including both qualitative and quantitative criteria. This could include tracking the feedback from key stakeholders, results achieved against the business case and the impact on employee engagement.

## KEY LESSONS

- “ Key factors to successful reskilling include a developmental culture, communications and change management, enabling technology and joined up practice in HR.
- “ Prioritise and be business-led, rather than trying to ‘boil the ocean’.
- “ New skills requirements should be linked to existing talent cycles and processes – this is an evolution, not a revolution.

## FURTHER CRF RESOURCES

CRF. 2024. **Reskilling for Sustainable Growth in the Gulf.** <https://www.crforum.co.uk/research-and-resources/research-reskilling-for-sustainable-growth-in-the-gulf>

CRF. 2024. **Leadership Development in the Gulf.** <https://www.crforum.co.uk/research-and-resources/leadership-development-in-the-gulf>

CRF. 2023. **HR's Contribution to Sustainable Business in the Gulf Region.** <https://www.crforum.co.uk/research-and-resources/research-hrs-contribution-to-sustainable-business-in-the-gulf-region>

CRF. 2023. **Effective Succession Management in the Gulf Region.** <https://www.crforum.co.uk/research-and-resources/research-effective-succession-management-in-the-gulf-region>



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[Integrated Talent Management:  
The Essentials](#)

Modernise your talent management strategies and discover how to design effective approaches in line with the latest talent trends. Discover CRF's integrated talent management framework and learn how to enhance your organisation's talent management ROI with this interactive, online course.



## The Impact of AI and Emerging Technologies on Reskilling

In this session, Professor Pat Wright led the group through positive outcomes and potential dangers of AI, as well as different frameworks for applying AI in organisations and ways HR can play a role in AI governance.

AI will bring a number of benefits, including taking over administrative tasks, speeding up data analysis, improving prediction and reducing bias. However, Prof. Wright emphasised that whilst we are often clear on the jobs and tasks that AI can replace, we are very vague about how people will use the time they have gained.

The dangers of AI include job losses, data issues (e.g. data security and IP ownership) and changes to the way we think, such as a loss of critical thinking skills. Just as people are worried about deep fakes in video and voice technologies, Generative AI (GenAI) will also make it easier to develop false data that leads to the answers one wants to find. He cautioned that AI is *"not there to care"* but instead support human led decision making. He also emphasised how the long-term impact of AI has likely been under-estimated. Similarly to how we did not know what the impact of social media would be when it was first released, we also do not know what the impact of AI will be – and AI technology is an order of magnitude more disruptive than social media.

The proliferation of AI will also have clear reskilling implications, including upskilling employees in how to use GenAI effectively and how to do tasks they were not able to before due to administrative burdens. HR professionals need to consider the short and long-term impact of GenAI on the organisation and workforce, thinking about issues such as how GenAI will impact the workflow, the way the business creates value for customers and social relations between team members.

Prof. Wright then led attendees through a series of frameworks that organisations had found helpful in understanding the different applications of AI. Example principles include AI initiatives being overseen and managed by humans and paying close attention to the unintended consequences. The session also offered insights on how HR can play a role in the governance of AI implementation, focusing on potential data security, privacy, and accuracy issues, as well as thoughtfully examining how GenAI may negatively impact people and society.

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**PROF. PATRICK WRIGHT** is Thomas C. Vandiver Bicentennial Chair in the Darla Moore School of Business at the University of South Carolina, the Founder and former Director of the Center for Executive Succession, and the Chair of the Department of Management. Prior to joining USC he has served on the faculties at Cornell University, Texas A&M University and the University of Notre Dame. Professor Wright teaches, conducts research, and consults in the area of Strategic Human Resource Management (SHRM), particularly focusing on how firms use people as a source of competitive advantage, the changing nature of the Chief HR Officer role, and the challenges and best practices in CEO succession. According to Google Scholar he is the fourth most cited faculty member at USC. He is the past Editor-in-Chief for the *Journal of Management*.



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*Unlock the revolutionary potential of AI that is transforming the way we live, work and learn. Embracing AI can enable greater efficiencies and an enhance employee experience. This course equips the knowledge and skills necessary to integrate AI into HR workflows, enabling better informed decisions, driving organisational growth and seizing the competitive edge.*





## The Impact of Organisational Culture

Ali Abdulla, UAE Country Chair at Petrofac, outlined how a high reliability organisation is an organisation that has succeeded in avoiding catastrophes in an environment where normal accidents can be expected due to risks factors and complexity. The nine key attributes of a high reliability organisation are:

- 1 clear expectations,
- 2 communication,
- 3 skilled leadership,
- 4 risk management,
- 5 planning,
- 6 right to intervene,
- 7 accountability,
- 8 self-evaluation and
- 9 safe behaviours

During the last several decades, numerous process and safety related events have occurred at petrochemical manufacturers, impacting people's lives and companies' financial integrity (e.g. the 2005 Texas city refinery explosion or the 1998 fire at a natural gas plant in Longford, Australia). The underlying organisational and safety management failures that led to these events included inadequate attention to detail in procedures, lack of communication and lack of a culture of clear direction and responsibility from leadership.

In contrast, Ali used the example of a nuclear-powered aircraft carrier to outline how organisation culture can be leveraged to create a high reliability organisation. Despite the aircraft carrier being a high risk environment, carrying jet fuel and bombs as cargo and with many young and inexperienced staff, it had a successful safety record. This was achieved through a range of processes, including a culture of learning and adapting, understanding near misses, extensive planning and training and giving everyone the power to halt operations.

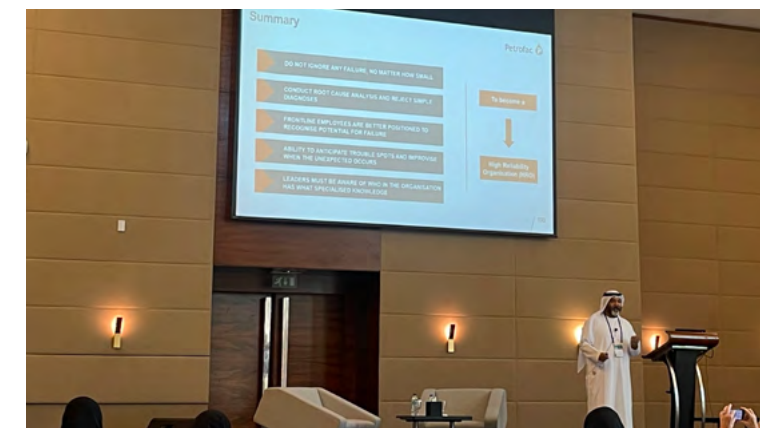


SLIDES

**ALI ABDULLA** has worked for IOC and service providers for more than 37 years. He started his career with American Oil Company in 1987 and joined BP in 1998. Since 2010 his journey with Petrofac began with Engineering and Production Services East as HSSIA Director, then Regional VP managing and supporting Petrofac to secure projects in the Gulf Region and globally including Iraq. In 2018 he headed Petrofac Global Engineering & Construction as SVP of HSSEIA. In 2020 as UAE Country Chair, he was tasked to manage and support all Petrofac teams in current and new projects, new energy service for renewable projects and supporting the operation/maintenance service provider team. Ali has been exposed to a wide range of Health, Safety & Environmental Systems Management along with Operation & Maintenance, Engineering, Projects, Integrity, and Marine.

In summary, in order to become a high reliability organisation, businesses should focus on the following:

- Cultivate a learning culture.
- Do not ignore any failure, no matter how small (focus on what could've gone better, rather than on what went well).
- Ensure processes and systems are well embedded.
- Recognise that frontline employees are better positioned to identify potential failures.
- Anticipate potential trouble spots, improvise when the unexpected occurs and adapt to changing environments.
- Leaders should be aware of who in the organisation has what specialised knowledge and be accountable at all levels of the organisation.



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## Creating a Culture of Learning at du



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Dr. Alia Al Serkal, Head of People Learning & Growth outlined the journey du have been on since the pandemic to create a culture of curiosity and development at du. Prior to 2019, du faced the following changes in their approach to learning:

- ❗ Training was only available to a select few, rather than the whole organisation.
- ❗ Employees felt forced into trainings.
- ❗ Interventions were costly and not the most effective way to utilise the budget.
- ❗ Internal processes were clunky and not efficient.
- ❗ Levels of concentration on the learning were low.

Du therefore underwent a learning transformation in 2020, leveraging technology to make learning accessible to everyone. The overall goal was to increase learning curiosity, rather than learning engagement. In order to achieve this, the mindset of the learners had to change, and the learning model was shifted. Technology was leveraged to increase the availability of learning, which included launching a new learning platform (My Journey) with a diverse range of topics available in the catalogue. Learning became available to everyone, anytime, anywhere.

Du also implemented the concept of a flipped classroom: a flipped classroom is structured around the idea that a lecture or direct instruction is not the best use of class time. Instead, learners encounter information before the session for activities that involve experiential learning. Benefits include learners going at their own pace, learners taking responsibility for their learning, increased collaboration between participants and greater opportunities for higher level learning.

Since the transformation in 2020, du has achieved the following in the learning landscape:

- ➡ Learning hours are measured and improved.
- ➡ Culture of learning is becoming embedded in the organisation.
- ➡ There has been a shift in mindset, with learning now owned by employees.
- ➡ Adopted a blended approach to learning, embracing the digital platform.



SLIDES

**DR. ALIA AL SERKAL** has been with Emirates Integrated Telecommunications Company – du since 2007. As a key leader, she spearheads talent development initiatives, cultivates leadership capabilities, identifies and nurtures successors for pivotal roles, and champions Emiratisation efforts. She plays a pivotal role in driving cultural transformation. Prior to this she served as a Senior Psychologist at Emirates Airline, where she assessed airline staff during recruitment and promotion processes, alongside conducting psychological evaluations in disciplinary and performance-related cases. With a solid foundation in psychology, Dr. Al Serkal transitioned into the role of Director of Talent Acquisition upon joining du, where she revolutionised recruitment processes by introducing psychometric testing and assessment centres. Among her notable career achievements is her pioneering effort in transitioning traditional learning methods to digital platforms, democratising access to learning resources and empowering employees to drive their own career growth.

- ➡ High engagement and virtual learning has become the norm.
- ➡ Introduced Skills Boosters (90 minute virtual learning).
- ➡ Everyone has the opportunity to be a learning ambassador.

**In the future, du will focus more on in-person learning and will introduce simulations.**







## Shaping the Skills for the Future

Mohammad Almarzooqi, Head of Talent, Group Finance at Mubadala, presented Mubadala Investment Company's mandate as a State-owned global investor.

Mubadala Investment Company is a sovereign investor managing a diverse portfolio of investments in the United Arab Emirates and internationally. Mubadala was established to accelerate efforts to help diversify Abu Dhabi's economy by investing in both traditional and non-traditional global sectors to create value for their shareholders and future generations.

Over the next 50 years, Mubadala will invest in strategic areas aligned to the priorities set by the nation's leadership. This includes:

- ★ Climate sector, reflecting the UAE's commitment to Net Zero by 2050.
- ★ Life sciences sector
- ★ Technology and AI sector.

Mubadala's vision is to transform the Mubadala investment lifecycle by equipping their investment professionals with AI tools that allow them to make better investment decisions faster, and by enabling their teams to deploy AI solutions, built on a foundation of institution-wide productivity gains.

Mohammad shared the implications of the above on Mubadala's human capital function; as artificial intelligence transforms the business world, the role of learning and development has never been more vital. Mubadala Investment Company is on the cusp of a massive pivot in the field of Technology and AI adoption, leading the call to action for corporate functions to reskill and upskill talent in order to be future ready. He additionally provided audience members with a case study of Group Finance, and shared examples of its methodology and approach while developing its two-year learning journey. Mubadala's learning approach includes longitudinal learning, an emphasis on learners taking responsibility, and learning that is scalable.



**SLIDES**

**MOHAMMAD ALMARZOOQI** joined Mubadala in June 2019 and is currently Head of Talent within Group Finance. With 18 years experience, including 14 leading teams and being part of Executive Leadership teams. Prior to Mubadala, Mohammad was with Dubai Petroleum Company where he led a number of strategic initiatives as a Petroleum Engineer, Special Projects Manager and was instrumental to the build out of its HR Function. He later joined First Abu Dhabi Bank where he established the Bank's Org. Design function and was then seconded to their financial services company – Dubai First, where he independently led the HR function.

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## The Art of Strategic Workforce Planning

John Whelan led a session utilising CRF's strategic workforce planning model.

CRF's research defines **Strategic Workforce Planning (SWP)** as:

SWP is a process that's designed to align a company's people and organisation with its business direction. It involves examining future workforce needs as determined by the business strategy, analysing the current organisation, identifying gaps between the present and future, uncovering risks to strategy execution, and taking action so the organisation can accomplish its mission and goals.

Strategic Workforce Planning can be summarised as:

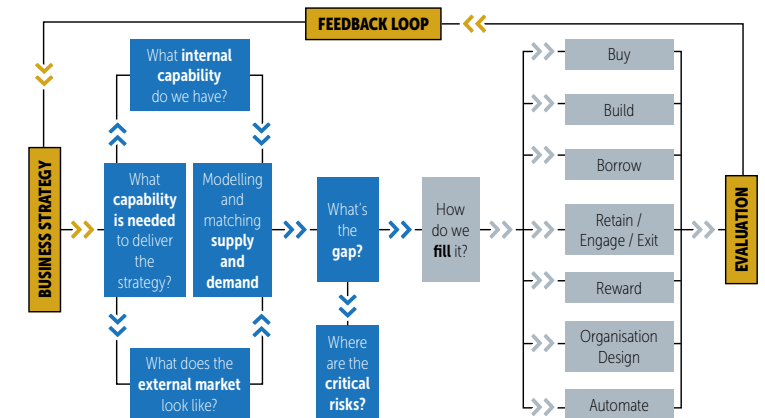
- Makes sure the right conversations are taking place by elevating people and organisation related issues to the strategic planning level.
- Asks the right questions around the people and organisation implications of the strategy.
- Provides the right answers by focusing people and organisation activity on the key risks to strategy execution, informing HR strategy and planning.
- It is a business planning tool – not an HR initiative. It should be integrated with the business planning process.

It differs from operational workforce planning in that it has a longer-term focus, centred on the strategic capabilities required to execute the business strategy. Conversely, operational workforce planning focuses on what needs to be delivered in the coming year to deliver current business commitment and is more detailed and numbers-driven. SWP augments rather than replaces operational planning. SWP also adopts a 'future-back' perspective that identifies the major workforce shifts required to deliver the strategy. Organisations should disproportionately apply effort to the skills that most impact revenue generation.

**crflearning** ON DEMAND COURSE  
[Strategic Workforce Planning](#)

If you'd like to build your expertise in Strategic Workforce Planning and learn more about CRF's framework, access CRF Learning's On Demand Course [Strategic Workforce Planning](#).

### CRF STRATEGIC WORKFORCE PLANNING MODEL







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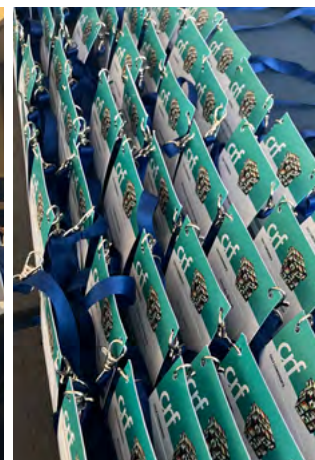
John outlined a case study of a large industrial business with multi-year large, complex projects, operating in a changing market and technological environment. The organisation adopted a 5-phased approach to SWP, which was integrated into the business planning process adopted by the organisation.



In order to support the businesses with the analysis, the HR Team worked with a researcher to co-develop a Macro-Environmental Analysis Report of the Labour Market. This was a secondary piece of research including academic research, consultancy analysis, industry reports and government data, developed to help the business understand what impact the external labour market would have on the business and its ability to attract/retain skills and/or the level of workforce change that is required.

Examples of specific actions the organisation undertook include collaborating with academic institutions, investing in new training facilities, increasing their apprentice intake and collaborating with industry partners.

The key learnings from this case study were that SWP is a business process not an HR process, to focus on the capability areas that will yield most value and to ensure strong stakeholder buy-in and senior management sponsorship.







## Critical HR Capabilities for the Future

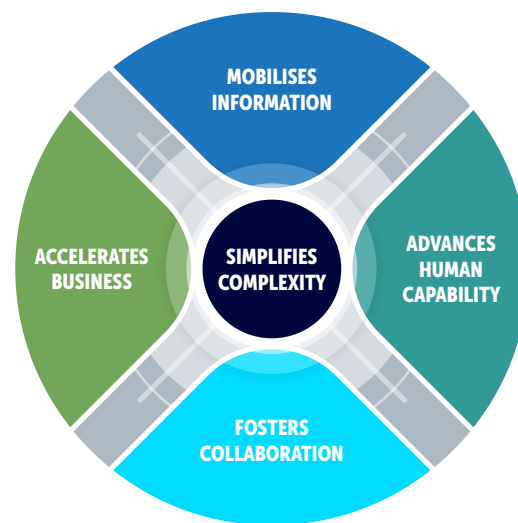
Unveiling his latest research, Professor Pat Wright shared the critical capabilities HR needs to be effective in the current business environment. In this session Prof. Wright covered two areas of HR capabilities that can determine the future success of organisations.

### WHAT MAKES A GOOD CHRO?

Prof. Pat Wright shared research on the capabilities that distinguish between great and good CHROs. This includes trust from the Board, CEO and executive leadership, business acumen, the ability to align HR with strategy and relationship building skills. Conversely, his research showed that a lack of these attributes increased the risk of CHROs being fired.

### COMPETENCY AND CAPABILITY STUDY

Prof. Pat Wright shared data from the 2021 HR Competency and Capability Study that he co-authored with Professor Dave Ulrich regarding the necessary competencies of HR professionals. These are the five competencies that the research suggests as the most critical competencies for driving business success, outlined below:



HR COMPETENCY	COMPETENCY SUB-DOMAINS	EXAMPLE ACTIONS
<b>Accelerates business</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Generates competitive insights</li> <li>Influences the business</li> <li>Gets the right things done</li> <li>Drives agility</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Build the human capability to execute the strategy</li> <li>Know your business, bring in relevant data and ask difficult questions</li> <li>Know personalities, strengths, weaknesses, goals and aspirations and leverage that knowledge to get to the right decision</li> </ul>
<b>Advances human capability</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Elevates talent</li> <li>Delivers HR solutions</li> <li>Champions the DE&amp;I agenda</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bring the right people into the organisation, move them through the organisation (e.g. through managing, performance, development, careers and encouraging DE&amp;I), and then retain the best employees</li> <li>Improve and track employee engagement</li> <li>Create a positive employee experience</li> </ul>
<b>Mobilises information</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Leverages information and technology</li> <li>Guides social agenda</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Obtain information that tracks organisational performance in the past and future</li> <li>Use information to test alternative and hypotheses and interventions</li> <li>Share information on business impact and predict what will drive the business</li> </ul>
<b>Fosters collaboration</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Manages self</li> <li>Builds relationships</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify the current social issues relevant to employees, customers and communities, evaluate how they are connected to your organisation and then decide how to respond</li> <li>Being curious around others, share yourself and manage conflict.</li> </ul>
<b>Simplifies complexity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Thinks critically</li> <li>Harnesses uncertainty</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Question everything</li> <li>Explore options broadly</li> <li>Avoid disappointment through realistic expectations</li> <li>Turn mindset from threat into opportunity</li> </ul>

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## Building Talent from Within to Deliver Tomorrow's Strategic Vision

KEYNOTE SESSIONS



### Building Talent from Within to Deliver Tomorrow's Vision

#### Bird & Bird

AI-Driven Solutions for the Workplace



Strategy made personal

AI Demystified – Shaping the Near Future of Work



Elevating Influence and the Strategic Role of HR and L&D



How to Transform Trust, Engagement and Performance



Assessing and Selecting Future HR Leaders

PARTNER MASTERCLASSES

Talent and Leadership development specialists APS, believe that 'knowledge is valuable, but practice is critical'. If HR's mission is to ensure we have a workforce able to execute the organisation's vision, hiring the right people and developing them in the right way is critical to ensuring that we develop the right culture and working climate to maximise performance. APS' Rob Field and Mike Davies used the analogy of a pilot getting their wings to explore this concept further: whilst studying and passing exams are valuable, a pilot only gets their wings after thousands of hours of real flight. In addition, critical skills (such as performing an emergency landing) need to be practiced in a safe environment with valuable and objective feedback.

Similarly, leaders may have great knowledge but should also develop and practice key skills (particularly for situations they may not have experience of) in order to maximise their team's engagement, collaboration and productivity. APS illustrated this through a case study of a life sciences company who built on their existing knowledge to improve teamwork, trust and engagement. This led to a programme which included assessments to raise awareness, a face-to-face masterclass to learn and practice agreed skills, and online, facilitated exercises which allowed individuals and the organisation to receive feedback on strengths and areas of focus. The programme focused on outcomes which include greater teamwork, better sharing of information and greater clarity on the skills leaders need to develop and display more consistently and effectively.

They finished by asking the question: 'How far ahead can organisations look in order to grow leaders for the future?'. In response, APS believe that gathering current capability evidence and targeting development to close gaps on future requirements quickly, efficiently, and cost-effectively matters, and today's technology is a key enabler to achieving this.

### KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Knowledge creates credibility whilst behavioural applications require practice and create reputation.
- Critical skills should be practiced in a safe environment.
- Leaders should practice skills and strategies which develop trust, communication and capability within their teams in order to build talent from within.
- High-quality feedback is an enabler.

### FURTHER RESOURCES

- [For more interviews, case studies and whitepaper](#)
- [Or try the business scenario navigator](#)

### APS CONTACTS

- [Mike Davies](#)  
Senior Learning and Development Consultant
- [Rob Field](#)  
Learning and Development Director








## AI-Driven Solutions for the Workplace – Balancing Opportunities and Risks

This session discussed how the impact of AI-driven solutions – both to augment the HR function and within the broader workplace – is complex and multifaceted from an employment law perspective. Whilst these solutions present clear opportunities for digital transformation and reskilling for the future, they can also pose challenges for employers.

The masterclass addressed some of the key employment law considerations that companies should be mindful of when allowing or encouraging the use of generative AI or algorithmic decision-making tools at work, as well as HR's role in maximising opportunities at speed whilst also minimising legal risk.

### KEY TAKEAWAYS

-  As AI regulation worldwide continues to evolve, the best way for employers to future proof their business is to adopt AI tools responsibly and in a manner that is both ethical and transparent.
-  When adopting AI tools, HR's role is critical in terms of setting employee expectations and addressing concerns raised by employees that may be reluctant to embrace the new technologies.
-  It is prudent to consider existing internal policies to see if they go far enough to address the risks that may arise from the AI tools implemented within your organisation.
-  Misuse of AI tools by employees can have serious financial and reputational implications so employees must be clear on the extent to which they are permitted to use such tools, as well as any limitations that may be appropriate.
-  In high risk uses cases, specific training and supervision may be appropriate, including with a view to reskilling teams for the future world of work.



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### FURTHER RESOURCES

-  [The 5 in 10 Podcast Series Episode 4: The key considerations for employers when implementing an employee-facing generative AI policy](#)
-  [EU Employment Masterclass with Lexology: What's new for 2024 on EU Works Councils, Platform Workers, AI, Whistleblowers and the 'S' in ESG?](#)
-  [First Judgement on the Rights of Works Councils when Employees use AI Systems](#)
-  [HR Data Essentials Webinar – AI, the Metaverse and the workplace](#)
-  [Generative AI tools: Key employment issues and how to address them](#)
-  [What will you do with infinite interns? Bringing Generative AI into your business](#)

### BIRD & BIRD CONTACT

 [Furat Ashraf](#)  
Partner





## AI Demystified – Shaping the Near Future of Work

In an era where AI is becoming a vital strategic asset, HR professionals have a golden opportunity to lead organisational transformation.

This session demystified AI, explaining what it is, how it works, and its potential to redefine success. For HR, mastering AI isn't just learning – it's about leading the workforce through a transformative era, shaping strategic decisions, and driving innovation.

HR is at an inflection point and there is a golden opportunity for HR professionals to take the lead. Are they going to be leaders in probably the most pivotal point and period in the history of work or will they be side-lined as order-takers and taskmasters as other parts of the business make critical decisions that impact the workforce? HR must get involved and be part of the solution and path forward while offering a unique human capital perspective that complements other perspectives from the business.

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### PARTNER MASTERCLASSES

#### KEY TAKEAWAYS

- 1 **Artificial Intelligence is the simulation of any cognitive task.**  
The key terms to know are machine learning, deep learning and generative AI.
- 2 **AI systems are X to Y statistical prediction machines.**  
AI doesn't 'think' – it finds patterns in data. So, the value of the output depends on:  
1) the potential value at stake from your use case, and  
2) the value of data you use to solve the use case.
- 3 **Leveraging AI will require the hard work of developing new mindsets and skillsets, and letting go of some beliefs that emerged from the limits of older technology.**  
These include dealing with behaviours and biases we haven't yet seen.

#### BTS CONTACTS

- ✉ [Peter Mulford](#)  
Chief Innovation Officer
- ✉ [Chris Legg](#)  
Managing Director – BTS Middle East
- ✉ [Tara Cherniawski](#)  
Head of Assessments – BTS Middle East



## A Seat at the Table: Elevating Influence and the Strategic Role of HR and L&D

Over the past few years, the role of Learning and Development has gone through significant change. From tactical to strategic, L&D has become the catalyst for talent retention and business transformation.

Headspring's Associate Leadership Professor Mark Fritz led an interactive workshop helping People and Talent leaders understand how they can make their influence go further and have a more direct impact on the business strategy, focusing on four key areas:

- Relationships** – Build your relationships before your need them! Always 'wrap' what you want inside what others want, and you will gain more support across the company.
- Mindset** – Bring an options mindset each day and create 'O' options mindsets in others. This starts by framing the business context in ways for others to see more options and to more quickly develop more powerful solutions. Success in an AI-enabled world is more about context than content.
- Focus** – The most powerful context to frame is direction, as it drives the needed alignment across the company to create the future faster than your competitors. A clear direction enables everyone to make better choices, especially on priorities.
- Pipeline** – Consistent success comes faster when you grow a strong pipeline of 'O' mindset leaders who can decide and influence others on their own. Grow strong role models at every level of the company and enable high potentials to step up into leadership roles more successfully.

Remember, it's all about building strong relationships that extend your influence to places you cannot personally reach. If you don't have a WHO, the who is always YOU! Empower the people around you and together you will create the future faster and achieve greater influence and impact in 2024.

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 **headspring**  
executive development

**Elevating Influence  
and the Strategic  
Role of HR and L&D**


**The Oxford Group**  
A City & Guilds Business

How to Transform  
Trust, Engagement  
and Performance

**sd** STRATEGIC  
DIMENSIONS

Assessing and  
Selecting Future  
HR Leaders

### FURTHER RESOURCES

 [Raise Your Level of Influence](#)

### HEADSPRING CONTACTS

-  [Bassem Banna](#)  
Corporate Partnership Director
-  [Saad El Hage](#)  
Corporate Partnership Director



## 5 Conversations: How to Transform Trust, Engagement and Performance

Using the latest neuroscience research and engagement data, the Oxford Group outlined their 5 Conversations approach. These are the key conversations that transform trust, engagement and performance at work, and drive innovation forward. These conversations build psychologically safe environments enabling deeper more substantial career conversations where the aspirations and capabilities of our people are well understood.

- “ **Conversation 1 – Establishing a trusting relationship.** As a leader, having trusting relationships with people who work for you, or with you, is at the heart of getting things done. This conversation is about embedding conscious steps to establish a deeper and more trusting relationship with your team and stakeholders, and the leader setting the conditions for effective, curious, two-way dialogue.
- “ **Conversation 2 – Agreeing mutual expectations.** In today's world of work, we are all mutually dependent. It is therefore fundamental to agree mutually beneficial two-way contracts of support between two people at work. This conversation should not only get into what we are seeking at work, but also on why it matters and creating clear expectations of how colleagues can support these outcomes.
- “ **Conversation 3 – Showing genuine appreciation.** We know people need to feel valued at work in order to give their best. This conversation is about what people are doing well at work, how they are being successful and how they can be more impactful with their strengths and talents at work. This exploration also creates a platform to understand where people could redeploy their skills as jobs of the future emerge.
- “ **Conversation 4 – Challenging unhelpful behaviour.** Whilst challenging unhelpful behaviour can be uncomfortable, it is necessary to [build trust](#) and can actually show your conversation partner how much you care about their success. The important thing is to have the tools to be able to have this conversation in a non-confrontational manner and to remember that it is not a one-way street.

- “ **Conversation 5 – Building for the future.** This conversation goes beyond discussions concerning promotions and pay rises, and towards gaining insights about their future desires which will move them towards their goals. This creates opportunities to harness the motivation and desires of your people in their current role that may serve them well in the future and can help spot future reskilling opportunities.

At The Oxford Group we believe leadership matters. If you would like to learn more about how our global clients have used 5 Conversations or insight on how we can support managers and leaders in your organisation please reach out.

### THE OXFORD GROUP CONTACTS

- ✉ [Caroline Taylor](#)  
Managing Director
- ✉ [Andy Dent](#)  
Director – Client Solutions



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## Assessing and Selecting Future HR Leaders

Strategic Dimensions hosted a session that dove deeper into the broader themes of the conference, focusing on the specifics of the future capabilities of the HR Function. The session initially focused on the current context, including:

- “ The global and organisational challenges that HR needs to adapt to
- “ HR's current capabilities and gaps
- “ Current HR operating models

### STRATEGIC DIMENSIONS CONTACT

✉ [Michael Whelan](#)  
Director

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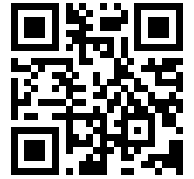
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#### PARTNER MASTERCLASSES

### KEY TAKEAWAYS

The majority of the session then discussed future HR operating models, including the HR capabilities and career paths required to succeed in these new models. Key takeaways about the future of HR included:

- Smaller HR Teams.
- Fewer, but higher quality interactions.
- Prevalence of specialists over generalists, supported by a higher level of functional education to join the profession.
- Automation and use of technology will remove the administrative burden and decrease the need for broad but basic knowledge.
- Capability not built around experience.
- Importance of consultative skills.
- Commerciality will be gained by greater or early exposure to 'the business' and problem solving.
- Less linear career progression and a smaller volume of generalist middle management roles.



**KEYNOTE SESSIONS**

In Conversation  
with His Excellency  
Mohammed Al Jasser

The Business  
Imperative to Reskill

The Impact of  
AI and Emerging  
Technologies

The Impact of  
Organisational Culture

**PARTNER MASTERCLASSES**

Creating a Culture  
of Learning

Shaping the Skills  
for the Future

The Art of Strategic  
Workforce Planning

Critical HR  
Capabilities for  
the Future

## HR BUSINESS PARTNERING ACCELERATOR PROGRAMME

Accelerated development for HR professionals in the  
Gulf Region

Across the GCC, nations are striving to accelerate the development of nationals in order to support their economic and social development. HR is both an enabler of these objectives and is part of the process. The function must play its part in delivering the national strategies and must accelerate the development of its own local talent to enhance the capability for the future.

Building on the success of the programme in 2023, CRF's **HR Business Partnering Accelerator Programme** supports the development of emerging HR professionals by offering the skills and career boost they need to fast-track into senior HR roles. Led by seasoned HR professionals with international and local experience, the programme builds key skills through:

- Understanding of the **purpose and contribution HR makes** in the context of the Gulf Region
- Knowledge of the key business and **commercial principles underpinning all HR work**
- Building capability in the **critical HR deliverables of Talent, Performance and Change Management**
- Enhancing important **delivery skills including stakeholder engagement, influence and project leadership**
- Creating an **effective People Plan** for the organisation
- Developing **personal impact and effectiveness**.

Enrol by email to: [rosanna@crforum.co.uk](mailto:rosanna@crforum.co.uk) →

### PROGRAMME FORMAT

Delivered in-person over two-days, the learning style will be experiential, practitioner-based, and mutually supportive through coaching pairs with a focus on applicable and practical outcomes for the organisation.

Commencing with a personal learning needs analysis and blending structured input with peer networking and time with senior HR practitioners at lunches and dinners, participants will benefit from a stimulating course designed around the principles of adult learning.

### WHO SHOULD PARTICIPATE?

The programme is aimed at emerging HR professionals, who are looking to accelerate their careers into HR leadership positions in the next 1-3 years. Participants will typically hold a business or HR related qualification and have 3-5 years of HR experience to date.

### DATES

The two-day programme will run **Wednesday 6 – Thursday 7 November 2024** in Abu Dhabi closing with a certificate presentation.

### CERTIFICATION

On completion all participations will receive a certificate from Corporate Research Forum and Hult EF Corporate Education.

### INVESTMENT REQUIRED

CRF Member Rate: 25,000 AED per participant  
Non-Member Rate: 30,000 AED per participant