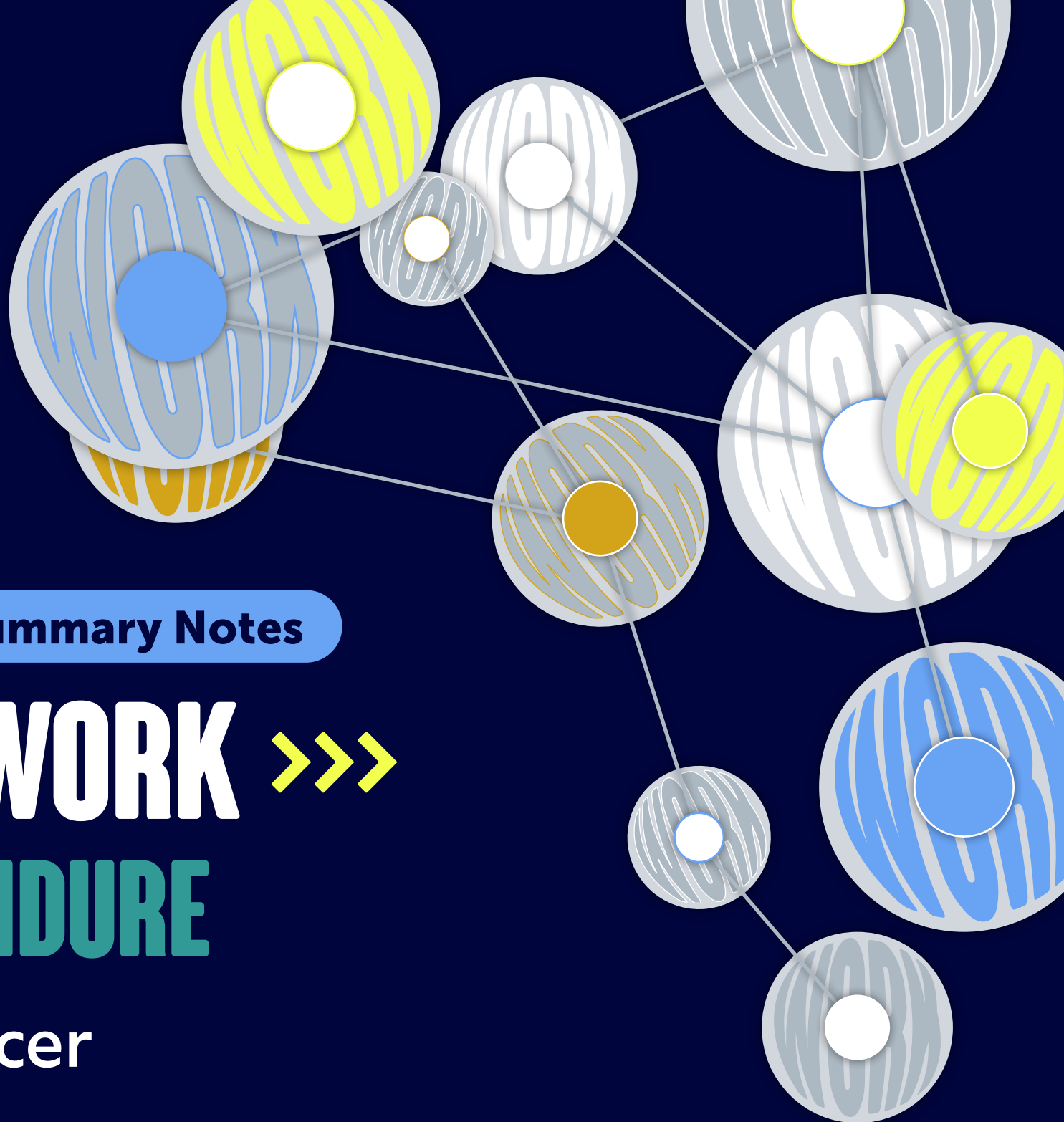




2025 Conference Summary Notes

RETHINK WORK >>>

EVOLVE OR ENDURE

Sponsored by





KEYNOTE SESSIONS	Overall Conference Takeaways
	Leadership in a Time of Disruptive Change
	Evolve or Endure? Designing a Future-fit Organisation
	The 100-Year Life: Rethinking Talent for a Longer Future
PARTNER MASTERCLASSES	Capability Building: The Future of Learning
	Roleplay. Score. Coach. Repeat: A Playbook
	The Butterfly Defect: Managing Global Risks
	Where the World is Heading

FOREWORD



Let's be honest: the world of work isn't going back to 'normal'. Disruption, relentless change and soaring expectations aren't passing storms – they're the new climate. Normal isn't coming back, and disruption isn't going anywhere.

The theme of the 2025 CRF Conference, **Rethink Work: Evolve or Endure**, challenged us all to take a hard look at the world of work as we know it. Is our current work model truly fit for purpose in this rapidly shifting landscape? The impact of AI on our world is like tectonic plates shifting during an earthquake – powerful enough to reshape the entire landscape beneath us in moments. And as that ground moves, we must be ready to adapt and thrive.

Productivity is the #1 driver of transformation plans worldwide. AI holds incredible promise to unlock new levels of productivity, but so far, the results haven't matched the hype. The key to unlocking this potential lies squarely in the hands of HR professionals like us. We have a unique opportunity – to be the architects of a new world of work where humans and machines team up seamlessly to create exciting, meaningful work that drives productivity and sustainability.

But getting there won't happen by chance. It requires a clear, compelling roadmap – one that helps the entire organisation understand why this transformation is essential for long-term success, how it will impact every individual and how to rally support at every level. We need to take our people on this journey, crafting a narrative filled with hope and excitement about partnering with AI to shape the future.

As you reflect on the conference, we ask you to consider three critical focus areas: the work, the workforce and the workplace.

1 The Work – Unbundle to Rebundle

We need to change how we think about work. Work design must evolve to harness AI's power effectively. This means breaking down work into tasks to understand what truly needs to be done and then rebundling them in ways that optimise the collaboration between people and AI. This isn't a top-down exercise – it requires an organisation-wide capability so those closest to the work can design the best solutions. This is a capability that we need to build at speed.

2 The Workforce – Redefine to Refine

The idea of a static, homogenous workforce is outdated. Not only will we have fixed roles, flexible and gig talent but we will have digital employees. With talent pools shrinking and vacancy rates rising, a multigenerational talent strategy is a powerful, yet underutilised, approach to build capability, sustainability and innovation. Leaders must broaden their thinking to embrace diverse talent categories, rethink organisational design and create fluid, career paths. The workforce requires continuous reskilling and upskilling and a mindset of continual learning. Ongoing skill development is essential to keep pace with change and unlock potential.

3 The Workplace – Redesign to Thrive

Hybrid and remote working are fully ingrained in the culture of most organisations. This has led to the emergence of flexible ecosystems of tools, communication networks and physical spaces designed to support workers wherever they are. Given this, it is crucial that these tools provide a seamless employee experience.

Economic centres are shifting, and talent mobility is no longer a luxury – it's a necessity. Rethink your location strategy with talent in mind. Reimagine flexible work practices and foster internal career mobility with 'squiggly' career paths that offer agility and choice.

As HR leaders, you stand at the forefront of this transformation. This is your moment to lead with vision and courage, to rethink how work is designed, how talent is developed, and how workplaces are built to thrive in a world of constant change. Embrace the responsibility to create a roadmap that aligns your organisation, inspires your people and harnesses the power of AI responsibly.

We urge you to evolve intentionally and lead the future of work, the time to act is now.

Maura Jarvis | Marcus Downing | Edyta Prazuch



2025 Conference Summary Notes

Key Takeaways

RETHINK WORK >>> EVOLVE OR ENDURE

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01

We don't know what the future will look like; speakers suggested both an end of employment and the net creation of new jobs. We do know that *"today is the slowest day"* we'll experience, and the pace of change will only increase.

02

AI's impact on jobs will be uneven; routine, rules-based work will automate more easily, while roles like care work will be harder to replace. New roles won't be evenly geographically distributed, risking widening inequalities and a greater sense of certain populations feeling left behind.

03

Personal responsibility and values matter in a fragmented future; we can't assume governments will provide all the solutions and organisations will need to be clear on what they stand for. Leaders should ask – and answer – *"If not us, who?"*

04

We need larger workforces, yet fertility is falling globally. However, the proportion of the workforce aged 55+ is significant and growing. If organisations do not include this increasing demographic, they will miss out on key opportunities. Start by knowing your age mix and creating interventions that bring different generations together.

05

Work is becoming increasingly decentralised, with remote working, self-organised teams and the gig economy all growing. HR must plan how to engage all worker types, not just traditional employees.

06

Redesign, don't just accelerate the old. Use this moment to rethink work, jobs and tasks rather than entrench 20th Century management habits. Consider the post-job social contract – what policies and practices are needed if work evolves radically?

07

We live in a world of increasing risk – more people, places, disruption and increasingly complex and dynamic global systems. Build slack and flex into systems and view resilience as an asset, not a cost. HR should create a flexible talent supply chain, build organisational slack and educate the business that risk is everyone's responsibility.

08

Learning must mirror how humans actually learn – lecture-first models are no longer fit for purpose. Consider: can you accelerate learning through leveraging AI to scale one-to-one coaching? Don't overlook the rapid advances in pedagogical science, which emphasise the importance of imagination and joy in learning – *what if AI's greatest gift to learning is imagination, not just optimisation?*

09

Focus on the Human-AI partnership, treating AI as a co-pilot, rather than a replacement. Focus first on what strategies and capabilities you will need and double down on human strengths such as judgement, empathy or creativity.

10

HR is uniquely positioned to lead at the intersection of technology, people science and organisational change – shifting from a transactional HR to a more strategic and high-impact HR. HR will need to consider: How do we build psychological resilience across the workforce? How do we address global talent mismatches? How can employees partner effectively with AI?



2025 Conference Summary Notes

Conference Chair: Gina Jardine

RETHINK WORK >>> EVOLVE OR ENDURE

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At CRF's 15th International Conference, Rethink Work: Evolve or Endure, delegates gathered in Portugal for three days to discuss future global trends, how a rapidly changing world will impact organisations and HR's key role in preparing for these shifts. These notes summarise the discussion.

Conference Chair Gina Jardine summarised the conference discussions with the following takeaways:

- Work isn't just changing – it's being rapidly rewritten.** While the conference speakers didn't always agree on what the future will look like, the through-line message is that the ground is moving faster.
- There is a possibility for us to lead differently –** not just to design organisations to ride out coming storms, but to shape deeper human connections and imagine futures where technology is an amplifier, not the master.
- We need the courage to ask ourselves and our organisations hard questions,** to rethink practices that have been immovable for decades and to look at what is new with curiosity – not fear.
- We are not bystanders.** The choices we make in the coming months and years will shape the lives of our people and society more broadly.

Gina left delegates with a challenge:

What are you prepared to stop defending today to build the future of work your organisation actually needs?



Gina Jardine is a former C-suite executive who has made her mark on some of the world's largest and most renowned companies listed across the leading stock indices. With a career spanning over 30 years, Gina has worked across public, private, and semi-government organisations, where she was responsible for developing and leading high-performing teams and organisations in her roles as Chief People Officer. Her experience in industries such as mining, building products, automotive and warehousing and logistics, has given her a unique perspective on the challenges and opportunities faced by organisations that have long-term investments in financial and human capital-intensive programmes. She has worked with some of the industry's leading Chairs and CEO's to help organisations deliver their strategy by ensuring the Organisation and People agendas are aligned, the culture drives performance and employees have the capability and engagement to succeed.





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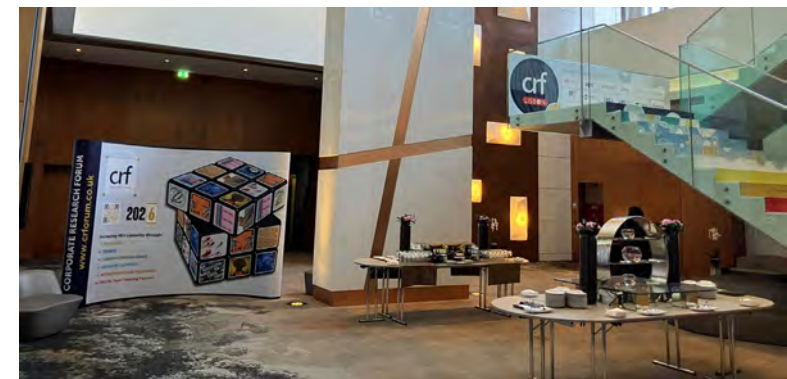
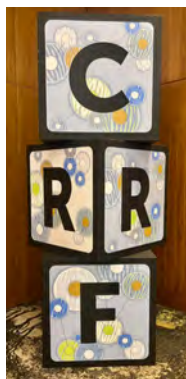
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Rethink Work >>> Evolve or Endure

Prof. Ian Goldin

Leadership in a Time of Disruptive Change

Today's leaders must lead through a world where change is accelerating, systems are more interconnected than ever and the future is less predictable. "Today is the slowest day" we'll experience – the pace of change will only rise.

GLOBAL MEGATRENDS

The megatrends outlined below are interdependent, each shaping the others.

1 Economic

- » Asia is set to dominate global growth. Many Asian economies are expanding at around 5% a year and are likely to keep doing so over the next two decades, while Europe, the US and Latin America grow closer to 1–2%. Compounded over time, this is a fundamental structural shift of the world's economic centre of gravity from the Atlantic to Asia. Sentiment also diverges: many in Europe and the US feel stalled, while in Asia and the Gulf the outlook is confident and opportunity-rich.
- » Growth is slower in Europe and the US due to ageing and maturity. Much of the infrastructure is old, workforces are shrinking and dependency ratios are rising as people live longer, healthier lives.
- » AI's ability to boost growth is likely overblown, given that in many sectors and roles, there is no demand to make services quicker or more efficient (e.g. we do not want teachers to deliver lessons more quickly or carers to provide care more rapidly). Nevertheless, AI will transform some sectors of the economy dramatically, such as manufacturing, production and repetitive, rules-based jobs.

2 Demographic

- » We need larger workforces, yet fertility in two-thirds of countries is below replacement rates.
- » As people retire later and save more, finance tilts toward preserving assets (e.g. homes or savings). With older cohorts holding more votes, politics leans toward protecting wealth.



EMAIL

Prof. Ian Goldin is Professor of Globalisation and Development at the University of Oxford, Professorial Fellow at Balliol College, Oxford University, and from 2006 to 2016 was the founding Director of Oxford University's interdisciplinary Oxford Martin School. He leads the Oxford Martin research programmes on Technological and Economic Change, Future of Work and Future of Development. He has published over 60 journal articles and 23 books, most recently *Rescue: From Global Crisis to a Better World*.





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Prof. Ian Goldin

Leadership in a Time of Disruptive Change

- » Careers will keep changing; lifelong learning is essential. Someone who enters university at 20 may work into their 80s, 90s or even later.
- » Migration drives urban dynamism through both migrant mindsets and because diversity underpins innovation. Research on breakthrough patents shows a higher likelihood that at least one team member is a migrant.

3 Geopolitical

- » There's a growing disconnect between economics and politics (e.g. Miami house prices remain high despite flood risk over the next 50 years). More broadly, there is a disconnect between principles and practice – people want more housing or cheaper energy but block the means to deliver them.
- » The US is no longer the top superpower; the centre of gravity is shifting. Within the US – and many other countries like the UK, Germany and France – many feel worse off, fuelling anger, nationalism and protectionism. Protectionism shuts out skills, investment, trade and cooperation, undermining collective action on pandemics and other cross-border threats.
- » New jobs are being created, but are often in different places to where they have been historically (e.g. industrial-era towns). It isn't realistic to promise high-value jobs everywhere, yet many can't move due to costs – mobility is about half what it was 40 years ago in the UK, France and the US. People feel stuck, fuelling populism and nationalism in left-behind places. Big shocks (e.g. the financial crisis, Covid) intensified these divides.

The stakes are high: this could be humanity's best century – solving for a sustainable planet – or our worst, marked by fragmentation and social breakdown. The difference will be the choices we make now and over the next decade. We can't assume governments or institutions will solve this for us. We need to ensure people feel they have a shared stake in the future and leaders should ask – then answer – “If not us, who?”

Q What could governments in Europe do to boost growth?

A *Lifting growth from 1% to 5% is unrealistic, though lifting it to 2% to 3% is achievable. For the UK/EU, migration is crucial: labour shortages and costs are real constraints (e.g. construction can't expand without workers). This isn't about open borders; it's about having more people in a democratically controlled way. Also address under-investment; when the pace of change accelerates, infrastructure, hospitals, schools, transport etc. all need renewal.*

Q Are education systems still fit for purpose?

A *1-1 tutorial style learning is still fit for purpose. We need to be careful about which skills we outsource to machines (e.g. if we want to cultivate deep learning, we need to be intentional about this). Remote learning is also no substitute for physical. While remote brings efficiency gains, it weakens the long-term trust needed for breakthrough ideas. This is especially important for young people, with most early careers jobs functioning as apprenticeships.*



CRF's FEATURED RESEARCH
**High Impact Leadership
Development**





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Rethink Work >>> Evolve or Endure

Andy Spence

Evolve or Endure? Designing a Future-fit Organisation

The World Economic Forum (WEF) estimates that around 90 million jobs could disappear by 2030. We can't predict the future with certainty, but we do know skills will shift dramatically; the WEF projects 39% of workers' core skills will change by 2030. HR is uniquely positioned to lead at the intersection of technology, people science and organisational change.

FUTURE OF WORK MYTHS

- 1 **"AI will imminently take all our jobs."**
AI will change how we work, but history suggests role shifts, not wholesale disappearance; when spreadsheets arrived in the 1980s, bookkeepers didn't vanish.
- 2 **"Most people work at home."**
Roughly 60% of workers cannot work from home; much work is location-bound and some tasks are not easily automated.
- 3 **"Most people have formal jobs."**
Six in ten workers globally are in informal work.
- 4 **"There is a universal future of work."**
This is like predicting the future of weather – context matters. A locksmith in London and a lawyer in Lisbon will experience different futures.

FIVE MEGATRENDS RESHAPING WORK

- 1 **Global Talent Reset**
 - » China's workforce has peaked (down around 40m in the last decade); India is now the most populous nation. Africa may become a major talent source – half of young entrants to the global workforce in coming years will be in Africa.
 - » In the UK, there are around 700,000 vacancies and 1 million people not in employment, education or training. This isn't just demographics; it's a systemic matching problem.

Challenge for HR

New talent is becoming available, yet 74% of employers say they can't find the right skills. How can HR help address this?



EMAIL

SLIDES

Andy Spence has a passion for making work better. For decades, he has advised global organisations on workforce strategy, becoming a trusted voice for the C-Suite. Andy's career spans work with Big 4 consultancies, startups, and leading his own consulting firm. His pioneering collaboration with Don Tapscott on Blockchain in the workplace has inspired entrepreneurs and technologists, with industry recognition as a key opinion leader in the future of work. As an independent management consultant, Andy has helped build people-centric organisations, working with clients including the NHS, John Lewis Partnership, Novartis, and Deloitte. His writing and media partnerships include Bloomberg, Mercer, HR.com, RSA and Global Drucker Forum.



2 The Unbundling of Work

- » Work is unbundling from jobs into tasks, delivered via platforms. Technology has allowed us to decentralise work through remote working and marketplaces like Shopify or Substack.
- » A growing share of workers rely on non-traditional arrangements, such as platform workers, telecommuters, digital nomads and hourly experts. This creates significant challenges regarding equity and rights – as well as opportunities to include the 2 billion globally without secure employment.

Challenge for HR

How do we design fair work for an increasing number of hybrid workers?



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3 Self-Organised Teams

- » Self-organised teams with slim central infrastructures, including teams outside the traditional organisational boundaries, are increasing.
- » Workforces now mix freelancers, agencies, platform workers and short/long-term contracts.

Challenge for HR

How do we enable these different types of workforces to flourish and stay engaged?

4 Human-AI Partnership

- » Many HR staples (e.g. the CV or nine-box grid) became default tools in the absence of stronger evidence. With new AI tools, follow the evidence, not the hype.
- » Rather than asking "How do we implement AI?", we should ask "What strategy and capabilities do we need?". Use this as an opportunity to rethink work itself, not simply make 20th Century management practices faster.
- » There will be a rise – especially in knowledge work – of 'super-operators': workers whose productivity is amplified ten-fold through leveraging AI.

Challenge for HR

How do we better identify and nurture 'super-operators'?

5 The Social Contract

- » Jobs have long underpinned the social state. We moved from 12-hour days to six-day, then five-day weeks, with many now testing the four-day week.
- » What happens to the post-job social contract? There are possible policy levers governments and organisations can use:
 - Income floors (e.g. Universal Basic Income pilots)
 - Broadened universal services (e.g. transport, care)
 - Work transitions (skills credits, mid-career reskilling)
 - New rights and digital governance (fair platform standards)

Challenge for HR

How can we leverage our role spanning employers, workers and governments to help shape discussions concerning the post-job social contract?

SIX BIG SHIFTS REDEFINING WORK

1. Departments to fluid capabilities.
2. Org charts to networks and ecosystems of people and skills.
3. Top-down control to empowered coordination.
4. Central silos to self-organised teams (inside and outside the organisation).
5. Static jobs to AI-augmented workflows with super-operators.
6. Large transactional HR to smaller, more strategic, high-impact HR.

WHAT LEADERS NEED TO DO NOW

1. Rethink how work gets done (not just where).
2. Embrace diversity of people, ideas and career paths.
3. Use evidence to challenge intuition and bias. CRF's evidence-based HR research is a helpful starting point.
4. Experiment cheaply and often.
5. Shift focus from jobs to tasks, which is often a practical route to building skills.



CRF's FEATURED RESEARCH
A Manifesto for Future-Ready HR



FURTHER RESOURCES

- [The Global Mega Trends Shaping Our Work](#)
- CRF. Research: [The Changing Role of the HR Leader](#)
- CRF. Research: [HR's Contribution to Sustainable Business](#)



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Rethink Work >>> Evolve or Endure

Prof. Céline Abecassis-Moedas

The 100-Year Life: Rethinking Talent for a Longer, Multigenerational Future

CONTEXT

- Longevity combines longer lives with falling birth rates. Life expectancy has risen sharply in recent decades – the 100-year life is now a reality for many – and fertility is decreasing globally. Europe now has a birth rate of 1.4-1.5 (the rate required for substitution is 2.1).
- Population pyramids, once broad at the base and narrow at the top, are increasingly transforming into obelisks or soufflés, with the same number of people of all ages.
- The 50+ population is significant and growing (currently around 60% in the UK). This is a substantial change and work and life patterns will need to adapt.

THE IMPACT OF LONGEVITY ON THE WORKFORCE

- The growth of the working age population is close to 0 and the age mix is shifting. In Europe, the only workforce age group that is growing is 55+. If organisations do not include this growing demographic, they are missing out on key opportunities.
- Organisations often overlook the value of older workers, which includes lower turnover and higher engagement rates. Creativity and innovation require diversity; multi-age teams lead to greater productivity and innovation than single-age teams.

RETHINKING TALENT FOR LONGEVITY

- Know your people** – ensure you have the data you need (e.g. age-mix dashboards).
- Focus on the unique contribution of experienced workers** for example their motivation to share experience through mentoring younger colleagues
- Create inter-generational initiatives** – inter-generational perspectives are often presented as zero-sum, with generations competing; in reality, they can be a source of mutual benefit and learning.
- Think about your market** – ensure you serve older customers; their purchasing power is high, yet many organisations under-focus on this segment.



EMAIL

SLIDES

Prof. Céline Abecassis-Moedas is Pro-Rector for Innovation and Entrepreneurship at Universidade Católica Portuguesa and Professor in Strategy and Innovation Management at Católica-Lisbon School of Business and Economics, where she served as the Dean for Executive Education from 2019 to 2024. She is an Ambassador at the Stanford Center on Longevity and the founder of the Longevity Leadership Executive Education programme. She is a non-executive director at Vista Alegre Atlantis, Lectra, and CUF a leader in private healthcare in Portugal. Céline holds a PhD in Management from École Polytechnique, Paris, and an MA in Management from Université Paris Dauphine.



CRF's FEATURED RESEARCH
Reskilling for Sustainable Growth >>>

FURTHER RESOURCES

- Robins, Rebecca and Dunne, Patrick. **Five Generations at Work: How We Win Together, For Good.** Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2024
- Scott, Andrew J. **The Longevity Imperative: How to Build a Healthier and More Productive Society to Support Our Longer Lives.** New York: Basic Books, 2024
- Taylor, Lisa and Lebo, Fern. **The Talent Revolution: Longevity and the Future of Work** (Updated Edition). Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2025



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The 100-Year Life: Rethinking Talent for a Longer, Multigenerational Future



Q What are the main barriers to investing in these programmes, and how can we overcome them?

A First, awareness and data: many organisations simply don't know their age mix or trends – start by building the facts (e.g. age-mix dashboards).
Second, reframing: treat 50+ talent as an opportunity, not a cost centre – they're a large market segment and a deep reservoir of experience.
Third, options: many in their 60s don't want to work the same way – offer flexible roles, schedules and pathways.

Q Older employees often cost more and hold more favourable terms, which can breed resentment among younger staff. How do we handle that?

A If we want people to work longer, we have to reconcile that some later-career roles will carry different (sometimes lower) compensation. This means HR will need to redesign careers. We also should focus on mutual benefit rather than treating inter-generational work as a zero-sum game. Mentoring – and reverse/diverse mentoring – will be essential.

Q How do we support those who are less financially secure to move into a second career?

A Implement flexible retirement practices. This means organisations will have to adjust, as will societies. In many countries it is difficult to part-retire (i.e. to be partly retired and partly working). This is an oversight, as there are significant societal benefits when someone who is able to continue working does so in some capacity.

Q In reality, due to fixed budgets and fixed number of roles in an organisation, inter-generational working is still approached as a zero-sum game. How can we overcome this?

A It's a real challenge and requires us to rethink career paths. Today they're almost linear with progress nearly always meaning higher pay. If we match careers to life stages, there may be points (e.g. after children's education) when lower pay is acceptable – but this is not yet normalised. We need to accept that we will all work longer and the current conditions are not sustainable. We must adjust how we organise work – for older workers, for longer careers and for an inter-generational workforce.



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Sarah Toms

Capability Building: The Future of Learning

Current models of education are not fit for purpose; we still largely teach using the same lecture-first model used in Ancient Greece and copy this model into every new educational technology. However, rapid accelerations in both consumer-grade digital technologies and pedagogical research have created an opportunity to do things differently. This is a moment to ask:

how can we reimagine learning and development to support how humans truly learn?

Signals from the labour market also support this redesign. The World Economic Forum's Future of Jobs **research** suggests more jobs will be created than destroyed by AI and new MIT **research** analysing 19,000 job tasks found that AI is more likely to augment than replace human work. HR and Learning and Development functions will need to be front and centre in this transformation.

BUILDING NEW CAPABILITIES

What Does it Mean to be Human?

The acronym EPOCH describes core human capabilities, which also align with AI's current blind spots. Our approach to learning and development should mirror them:

- Empathy:** creating meaningful emotional connections.
- Presence:** physical networking and relationship-building.
- Opinion and judgment:** navigating ethical dilemmas and open-ended systems.
- Creativity:** imagination and visualisation beyond the current reality.
- Hope and vision:** leadership and navigating uncertainty.

According to IMD Business School, capability development focuses on four areas:

- Acquisition:** how do we make learning faster and then transfer learnings into the real world?
- Amplification:** how can we a) surface hidden or unidentified talent in organisations and b) access more talent in general.



EMAIL

SLIDES

Sarah Toms is Chief Innovation Officer at IMD. She leads information technology, learning innovation, Strategic Talent Solutions, and the AI Strategy. She previously co-founded Wharton Interactive, an initiative at the Wharton School that has scaled globally. Sarah has been on the Executive Committee of Reimagine Education for almost a decade, and was one of the ten globally to be selected as an AWS Education Champion. She has spent decades working in technology, and was an entrepreneur, founding companies that built global CRM, product development, productivity management, and financial systems. Sarah is also co-author of *The Customer Centricity Playbook*, the Digital Book Awards 2019 Best Business Book.



- Acceleration:** how do we move junior talent into higher levels requiring more complex, sophisticated work?
- Agility:** unleashing adaptability and innovation within our talent.

ADVANCES IN PEDAGOGICAL SCIENCES

We often overlook major advances in pedagogy. The following principles should be front and centre of learning ecosystems:

- Learning is a messy process which engages the full body and senses. For example, we know that emotions accelerate learning; when we laugh, move and feel, we encode faster.



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The Butterfly Defect: Managing Global Risks

Where the World is Heading

PARTNER MASTERCLASSES

Rethink Work >>> Evolve or Endure

Sarah Toms

Capability Building: The Future of Learning

- Joy boosts cognition; a rush of dopamine leads to cognitive benefits such as our ability to process information, improved attention, mental flexibility and stress regulation.
- Joyful, playful design isn't 'less serious', but something that actually *enhances* learning.
- Storytelling is also a key component of making learning sticky – it's the oldest method of transferring information.

In light of the above, we need to consider:

what if AI's greatest gift to learning is imagination – not just optimisation?

GAME-BASED LEARNING

- The above principles can be applied to adaptive, game-based learning for individuals and teams. These are hyper-immersive business simulations where the story unfolds in real time to boost memory retention and transfer.
- Games can build empathy by letting learners step into different persona, change gender etc. and experience different viewpoints.
- There is a key application for early careers, providing practice and early feedback as skills rapidly change.
- AI now enables us to build adaptive games better and faster.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS

- Put the user in the driver's seat – make them the main character.
- Be careful not to only provide binary decisions. This is an opportunity to demonstrate the trade-offs in decision-making and how these can be navigated.
- The core components of a game are: the **capability objectives** you are trying to achieve, the **story, appropriate fidelity** (avoid setting simulations in the same environment as an individual's actual role – this is distracting), and **characters, challenges** and **rules**.

CRITICAL THINKING QUESTIONS

- How can we reimagine learning and development to support how humans truly learn?
- What if AI's greatest gift to learning is imagination – not just optimisation?
- What is your 'one bold move' – one bold learning experiment you are willing to try within the coming week?

Q How can game-based learning be used across countries and cultures?

A One-to-one translation across cultures and geographies is risky. We're piloting GenAI for video and AI avatar for our global audience, but current machine translation is only around 80% accurate, and it often misses cultural context – an essential part of the process. The same applies to games. With human translators in the room, executive simulations work brilliantly worldwide. But if you rely on avatars or auto-translation, you must check cultural and geographic fit – know your audience during creation and design.

Q What are your main frustrations and what can we learn from them?

A We're too complacent about what 'learning' looks like. Much of it is still institutions pushing content, not true learning. We have a chance to redefine lifelong learning as a journey that adapts to the individual over time and recognises capabilities, skills and behaviours gained along the way. Online learning has democratised access and is socially valuable – but quality is often low. As decision-makers, we must be more discerning: great faculty and objectives aren't enough. Offer experiences that adapt to learners. Ask: What does it mean to be me? To be human? What does my human potential look like?



CRF's FEATURED RESEARCH
Building Capability Through Learning Innovation



FURTHER RESOURCES

- The British Psychological Society. [**A Golden Age of Play for Adults**](#)
- CRF. Research: [**The Future of Learning**](#)
- IbyIMD. [**Can you Spot the Talent Markers that Predict Future Success?**](#)
- World Economic Forum. [**Catalysing Education 4.0 Framework**](#)



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Kristofor Swanson

Roleplay. Score. Coach. Repeat: A Playbook for Peak Performance

THE OPPORTUNITY

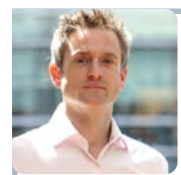
- In most workplaces, we teach people about a task and then expect them to do it. We wouldn't learn the violin by only watching videos – we'd practice, get feedback and adjust. Skills-building at work should be the same.
- One-to-one tutoring can boost mastery by roughly two standard deviations versus classroom learning. We remember better when our brains must actively retrieve and apply knowledge.
- AI makes coaching scalable: generative AI can give everyone access to a coach, without the admin burden and cost of human-only models.

CASE STUDY

At Kris's organisation, new products are launched regularly, requiring teams to learn about them whilst applying their sales principles and competencies – no easy task. Kris showed how generative AI was applied to support performance and learning journeys:

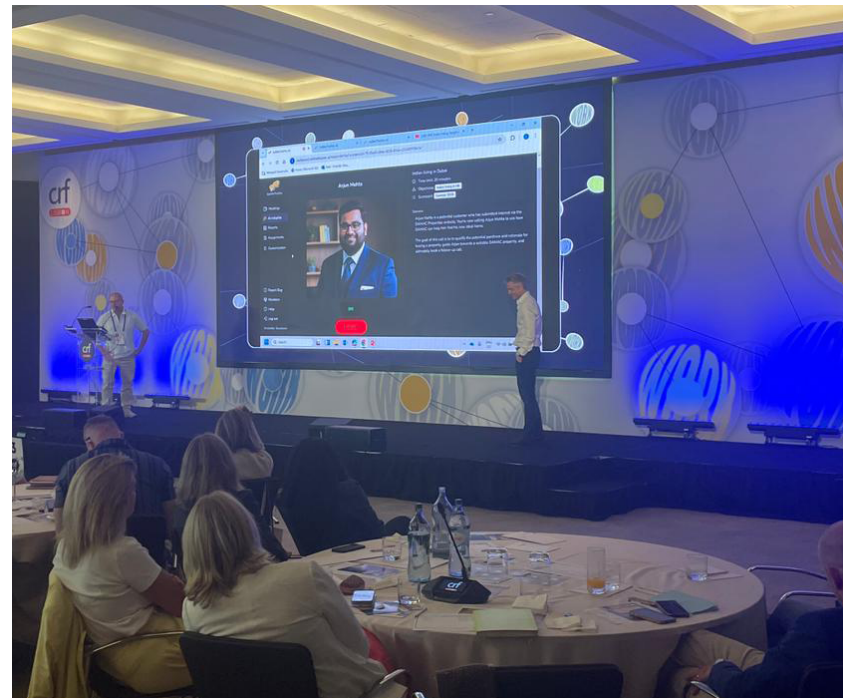
- Used AI to create realistic roleplays** that mirror real scenarios and adapt in real time to learner choices. This was built with simple tools (e.g. ChatGPT and Python) that required no deep technical knowledge.
- Explainable scoring** was mapped to the company's competency framework. This translated role expectations into observable behaviours and clear criteria.
- Targeted AI coaching** was generated from each transcript, producing an individual coaching plan.

Overall, the AI system runs as a continuous improvement loop focusing on practice, scoring, coaching and then repetition, rather than as a one-off intervention.



in LINKEDIN

Kristofor Swanson is a Talent and Learning Executive with 25 years of Digital HR product experience including professional services consulting, corporate learning and development, servicing and employee experience (UX) across a range of industries, countries and cultures. Successfully delivers the vision, architecture and implementation of award-winning solutions that drive business results and behavioural outcomes in large, global workforces. Experience with Fortune 500 companies including Accenture, HP, Avaya, Microsoft, Verizon, Bank of America Merrill Lynch and JPMorgan Chase.





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RESULTS AND ADOPTION LESSONS

- Adoption depended on credibility: scores had to be explainable and leaders needed a clear line from skill gains to operational KPIs.
- After each roleplay, sales teams are immediately scored against the competency framework. Ownership of the tools provides immediate insight, rather than waiting weeks for analytics requests.
- Managers now use objective data points, not just subjective opinions, to assess on-the-job performance.
- Leaders can review coaching sessions before holding real-life conversations.

CRITICAL THINKING QUESTIONS

- Which 2-3 competencies, if lifted by 10-15%, would move your core KPIs?
- How would managers' coaching change if every discussion began with shared, explainable evidence?
- Where can you replace 'content first' with 'practice first', and how will you prove impact within one quarter?

Q How do you link the tool to performance goals in real time?

A *We analyse behaviours and their bottom-line impact, tying outputs into our CRM and real-time sentiment analysis. The risk is weaponising the tool if it's used solely for assessment; our emphasis is on improving skills.*

Q Sometimes IT can be a point of resistance – how do you influence your IT department?

A *This approach is likely something that IT wants to do for their own employees. Therefore partner with them and highlight the mutual benefit.*



CRF's FEATURED RESEARCH
Harnessing HR Technology to Drive Organisational Productivity

>>>

FURTHER RESOURCES

- K. Anders Ericsson et al., [The Making of an Expert](#)
- The Learning Scientists, [Spaced Retrieval Practice Benefits Long-term Learning and Transfer](#)
- SHRM, [The Role of AI in HR](#)
- Training Industry, [Bridging Training Gaps with AI-Enhanced Simulations](#)
- CRF. Conference Summary Notes: [Applications and Implications of Emerging Technologies](#)
- CRF. On Demand Course: [Artificial intelligence: Implications and Applications](#)



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Prof. Ian Goldin

The Butterfly Defect: Managing Global Risks

- We live in a world of increasing risk – there are more people, more places and more disruption, as well as increasingly complex and dynamic global systems.
- This complexity makes it increasingly difficult to know precisely where risks will originate, or how they will impact us: the one certainty is that risk will continue to rise.
- Previous risk management organisational approaches are not fit for 21st Century purposes. The prevailing belief is that spare capacity is 'wasted' and lean approaches are preferred. Resilience is too often treated as a cost rather than an asset. However, the cost of preparation is fractional when compared to the cost of disruption.
- The failure to effectively manage globalisation is leading to a rising number of systemic shocks. The first was the financial crisis and the second was Covid-19. The reaction to each has been inadequate to address the underlying systemic failures. Instead, attempts to withdraw and build higher walls are increasing the vulnerabilities by undermining cooperation.

We need to develop new understandings of systemic risks. In particular, HR needs to focus on:

- Supporting people to be more psychologically resilient and able to live with uncertainty.
- Building a supply chain of talent, knowing there will be attrition and a need for flexibility.
- Designing the slack required to flex into the organisation.
- Educating people on the importance of being agile and flexible in a world of risk.





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The Butterfly Defect: Managing Global Risks

GLOBAL RISKS

1 Pandemic risk

This is the most significant risk. We do not know where a future pandemic will originate, but we do know that all organisations should prepare for this. However, the world is now in worse state of preparation than in 2019 and there is less international cooperation and information sharing – a key requirement for tackling a pandemic.

2 Financial crisis

This risk is also likely. In the US, factors such as debt accumulation, a bubble in tech stocks and market governance issues could all cause a banking crisis. Whilst Europe is slightly more protected, cyber risk remains significant and risk could increase further if there is a turn towards cryptocurrencies.

3 Conflict

Russia is the main concern; China is lower risk as it benefits from globalisation and its leaders prioritise strong foreign relations. By contrast, Russia has little to play for – a shrinking population, a fossil-fuel economy in a world moving to clean energy and an authoritarian leader.

4 Critical place risk

Is often overlooked. We need to diversify business locations and create plans for what happens if key people are unreachable or even killed. This is not a new practice but is now needed at a greater scale.

5 New risks

Are also emerging, such as antimicrobial resistance.

6 AI is turbocharging risk

» AI is unlikely to 'eliminate all jobs' outright. Do not bank on headline job forecasts (e.g. the WEF '170-180m new jobs' statistic) as these are survey-based and reflect popular sentiment, not evidence.

- » However, near-term effects are significant. AI will create roles, but mainly in existing high-value hubs, widening income and regional inequality and fuelling nationalism and protectionism.
- » Rapid advances (e.g. genetic engineering/synthetic biology) lower the barrier for individuals to create new risks. It's therefore critical that individuals feel they have a stake in the world.

ACTIONS TO MANAGE GLOBAL RISK

1. CEOs and leadership teams should collectively own risk – this cannot be delegated to a single function or a Chief Risk Officer.
2. In a fragmented future, values matter and organisations will need to be clear on what they stand for.
3. Risk is everyone's job. Reduce groupthink by involving non-risk specialists.
4. Run regular crisis simulations and derive concrete action plans from them.
5. Build psychological resilience: start with yourself, your CEO and ExCo.

Q At what level are CEOs currently managing risk?

A It's still not fully recognised that the CEO must act as the chief risk officer, because these risks are existential for the organisation. Reputational risk is growing, not only due to the speed at which it can strike, but also because norms can shift quickly (e.g. attitudes to gender/DE&I). However, supply risk is often overstated and diversification has generally worked well.



CRF's FEATURED RESEARCH
Megatrends, Markets and Mindsets





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Deborah Perry Piscione

Where the World is Heading

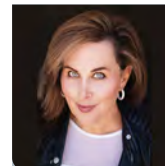
If traditional employment is 'dying, what replaces the social and economic structures we've relied on for 150 years? Acknowledging that nobody knows exactly how AI will affect jobs, Deborah explored one possible future – an imminent collapse of work as we know it.

AI CAPABILITIES

- AI capabilities are accelerating. In 2023, an OpenAI model scored around the 10th percentile on the US bar exam; today it can code better than OpenAI's chief scientist. Tomorrow's humanoids will be able to reason and teach themselves.
- AI is very cheap compared with human labour – roughly 10¢ per hour (and falling) versus a California minimum wage of \$18 per hour.
- In this scenario, AI will handle most cognitive tasks while robots manage physical labour, pushing humans to find new ways to create value in a post-employment world.
- This is not simple job elimination but job evolution: just as economies shifted from agriculture to industry to services, we are moving into a 'Human-AI Collaboration Era'.

PREDICTIONS FOR THE NEW WORK ARCHITECTURE

- We will shift focus from employment to employability, with the gig economy growing in importance.
- Portfolio careers: people will build diverse skill sets and multiple income streams, with more decentralised work that blurs traditional organisational boundaries.
- Expect more decentralised work using Web3 (blockchain-based internet services).
- There will be a move to output-based roles rather than time-based: higher-value workers can deliver in less time.
- A rapid rise in low-cost AI tools such as DeepSeek. Silicon Valley's meritocratic culture rewards agility and curiosity – much can now be built from a bedroom.



EMAIL

SLIDES

Deborah Perry Piscione is a futurist, entrepreneur, and a leading expert in innovation, AI, and web3 technologies. A *New York Times* bestselling author and LinkedIn Learning instructor, she moved to Silicon Valley in 2006, where a chance encounter led to her first startup securing multimillion-dollar funding. Inspired by Silicon Valley's collaborative culture, she wrote *Secrets of Silicon Valley*. Perry Piscione developed the Improvisational Innovation approach, enabling anyone within a company to contribute ideas in a trusted environment, a method now embraced by Fortune 500 companies. Her LinkedIn Learning courses, 'Risk Taking for Leaders' and 'Executing on Innovation,' reach a global audience in multiple languages. As a co-founder of the Work3 Institute and co-author of *Employment is Dead: How Disruptive Technologies Are Revolutionizing the Way We Work*, she guides organisations through the transition to AI-driven work models.





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Where the World is Heading

PRESSURE POINTS IN OUR CURRENT AGE

- We are living in an ongoing survivalist state in a highly charged political climate.
- Premium pricing squeeze: there is a cost of living crisis and Gen Z has 86% less purchasing power than Boomers.
- From December, Meta AI will run across its platforms, listening to conversations and parsing words; some predict this could upend e-commerce.
- Silicon Valley is dominated by a few firms. Expect a winner-takes-all landscape with haves and have-nots. If AI can replace workers, it can capture salaries at scale.
- Smarter and dumber: we're gaining capabilities while losing focus. How do we take back our time and practice a digital detox?

RE-PATTERNING THE FUTURE

Deborah's conversations in Silicon Valley highlight the following potential future trends:

- We may get around 90,000 work hours back in our lifetime – what will we do differently?
- Geographic liberation: people will move to where opportunities are and we'll think differently about geographies.
- Greater self-reliance (e.g. growing our own food) and possible communal living.
- The importance of purpose will grow.

NEXT STEPS

In this changing world, organisations should focus on the following:

- Break the industrial mindset.
- Take simple steps – not necessarily a transformational roadmap.
- Build a small team that's going to take your entire team on this journey.
- Giving people time to learn will be critical.
- Celebrate the results and talk about the impact on productivity.
- Peer to peer sharing is vital.

MONDAY MORNING ACTION PLAN

Monday: Pick your first AI tool + sign up for a free trial

Tuesday: Install and configure basic setup

Wednesday: Train one team member as an AI champion

Thursday: First customer action with AI

Friday: Measure results + plan week 2 expansion



CRF's FEATURED RESEARCH
**Applications and Implications
of Emerging Technologies**



FURTHER RESOURCES

- CRF. Research: [Harnessing HR Technology to Drive Organisational Productivity](#)
- CRF. On Demand Course: [Digital HR](#)



Organisational Leadership: Survive and Thrive, or Stagnate and Perish?

Change is a constant. With influences coming from economic, political and particularly AI-driven technological shifts, people can feel under-prepared, overwhelmed and at risk. Many core organisational skills rely on significant leadership interaction to lead their teams through change successfully. As catalysts of change, leaders need ongoing support in key skill development, including resilience and emotional intelligence.

This Masterclass explored the importance of – and the tools available to support leaders in – managing psychological change and developing emotional awareness of themselves and their teams to help organisations remain resilient, agile and motivated during change.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- 1 Work related stress costs UK businesses £400m per week.
- 2 Leaders are the catalyst for reframing change; workforces that feel safe and supported are often more resilient, innovative and productive.
- 3 Leaders need support too: resilience skills and emotional intelligence can be assessed, learnt, practiced and applied for measurable change.

APS CONTACTS

[Request](#) masterclass slides and materials

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

FURTHER RESOURCES

- 🌐 [Transforming Potential into Performance](#)

CRF MEMBER SPECIAL OFFER

- ★ Exclusive for 2025 CRF International Conference Attendees: Advanced People Strategies invites you to experience a complimentary **Business Emotional Intelligence Assessment** using our industry-leading BEI360 tool. This assessment offers insight into how leaders apply emotional intelligence in commercial settings. To register, please [email](#).

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Bird & Bird

Comply or Die: Navigating UK and EU Compliance for Multinational Organisations

The employment compliance burden for multinational organisations is ever-increasing. In the EU, employers need to comply with the Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive and the AI Act, with Pay Transparency and Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directives following soon.

In the UK, the upcoming Employment Rights Bill will upend years of accepted employment practice for business. HR leaders will need to be on top of these changes: the business will look to you for guidance on how to navigate them successfully.

In this interactive session, we explored how these developments will impact labour relations and corporate governance in international businesses, examining the key legal risks your organisation must address and how you can stay ahead, adapt, and thrive in this new era of accountability.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- 1 Rising Compliance Demands Across Jurisdictions:** Multinational organisations face increasing employment compliance challenges, especially with new EU directives (CSRD, AI Act, Pay Transparency, and Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence) and the UK's upcoming Employment Rights Bill.
- 2 Strategic Role of HR Leaders:** HR professionals are expected to lead the way in interpreting and implementing these changes, guiding their organisations through complex legal and regulatory shifts.
- 3 Impact on Labour Relations and Governance:** These developments will significantly affect labour relations and corporate governance, requiring businesses to proactively manage legal risks and adapt to a new era of accountability.

BIRD & BIRD CONTACTS

Request masterclass
slides and materials

- ✉ **[Alison Dixon](#)**
Co-Head of International Employment Group and Partner (UK)
- ✉ **[Anton Aerts](#)**
Partner (Belgium)
- ✉ **[Jehan de Wasseige](#)**
Senior Associate (Belgium)

FURTHER RESOURCES

- [Horizon Scanning](#)**
- [Mind the Pay Gap Report](#)**
- [Employment and the EU: Tackling compliance in a changing regulatory environment post-event note](#)**
- [EU Compliance and Employment Event Recording](#)**



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Simulation Culture: Practise What Matters Before It Matters

Strategies rarely fail in the boardroom; they fail at the moment of execution – when teams and leaders face ambiguity, pressure and competing priorities. Execution needs both commitment and aligned action; without that dual capability, organisations stall, comply rigidly or burn out with energy but no traction.

A simulation culture reframes preparation. Instead of episodic training, simulations become an everyday way of working – rehearsing the future before it arrives. When people practise strategic conversations, decisions and trade-offs in a safe environment, they build ownership, confidence and speed. Recent research backs this; simulation-based learning significantly improves complex skills when supported by feedback and structured reflection (Chernikova et al., 2020).

INSIGHTS FROM THE MASTERCLASS

- 1 Commitment x Aligned Action:** Strategies succeed only when people believe in them and know how to act. The BTS execution matrix highlights three traps – stalled momentum, rigid compliance or excitement without follow-through – and the target state: actionable strategy and ownership.
- 2 Four design principles:** Simulation cultures are built, not improvised. They depend on:
 - + **Test-driving moments that matter** – building confidence through rehearsal and feedback.
 - + **Designing for adaptability** – creating rhythms and cadences that allow strategies to evolve.
 - + **Authorship equals ownership** – involving people early so commitment is deep, not surface-level.
 - + **Making the future tangible** – helping people see, feel, and connect the strategy to their day-to-day reality.

3 Implications for HR and Talent Leaders:

For HR and Talent leaders, a simulation culture is not a programme but a way of working. It enables organisations to accelerate readiness by practising before disruption hits, build ownership through co-creation, scale leadership development by embedding practice and strengthen resilience by making change a repeatable capability.

BTS CONTACTS

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slides and materials

- ✉ **James Blaker**
Senior Vice President and Head of BTS London
- ✉ **Rafael San Martín Barrios**
Director of Strategy and Head of DEI Europe, BTS London
- ✉ **Ignacio Vaccaro**
Vice President and Head of Strategic Alignment and Business Acumen, BTS Amsterdam

FURTHER RESOURCES

- 🌐 Point of View website: **Built to Shift**
- 🌐 Built to Shift – **A Playbook for Downturns, Disruption, and What Comes Next**
- 🌐 **How Learning Simulations Can Help Organizations Reach Peak Performance**, Jessica Skon, CEO BTS
- 🌐 **Test Drive Your Strategy with Business Simulations**, Ignacio Vaccaro and Alex Amsden
- 🌐 Event: **Simulation Culture to Accelerate Growth in the Age of Agentic AI**



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From Support to Strategy: HR's Moment to Lead Change

At CRF's Annual International Conference in Lisbon, one theme stood out: disruption is no longer background noise. Geopolitics, automation, climate pressures and demographic shifts are reshaping work and business models at speed. Organisations must adapt decisively – and HR's role is to lead that change, not merely support it.

Our masterclass, *From Support to Strategy: HR's Moment to Lead Change*, reinforced this call to action. Strategy alone does not fail – execution does, unless people are truly on board and leaders are mobilised. The session offered a pragmatic playbook for HR to drive transformation with focus, urgency and alignment.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- 1 HR must lead change, not just support it:** The function's future lies in taking ownership of transformation and shaping decisions.
- 2 Wire for execution:** Strategy must show up in weekly behaviours, rhythms and accountabilities.
- 3 Mobilise leaders at every level:** Change succeeds when alignment and ownership are distributed across the organisation.
- 4 Invest in capability that counts:** Prioritise skills that move business performance; use simulations and practice to close the 'know-do' gap.
- 5 Treat risk as a people strategy:** Incorporate regulatory readiness, AI governance and scenario planning into the HR mandate.

At Headspring – a joint venture of the Financial Times and IE Business School – we equip leaders at all levels with the tools and practice needed to make strategy real through people-centred change.

HEADSPRING CONTACTS

[Request masterclass slides and materials](#)

- ✉ [Nick Winwood](#)
VP of Corporate Partnerships
- ✉ [Aicha Zerrouky](#)
Director of Corporate Partnerships

FURTHER RESOURCES

- 🌐 [Corporate Learning Rewired – Podcast](#)
- 🌐 [AI-Powered Learning Solutions](#)
- 🌐 [Financial Times Executive Briefings](#)



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Work Reimagined: What Can We Learn From Progressive Organisations?

As the world of work and traditional work models are challenged every day, organisations increasingly need to reimagine their approaches to work. The good news is that there are many progressive organisations that we can learn from.

In this experiential masterclass, LHH's Claire Jordan and Burak Koyuncu shared some examples and stories of radical practices that are used by many progressive organisations today. Then, participants experimented with the idea of implementing some of those practices (e.g. salary transparency, beyond budgeting, self-managed organisational structures) in their organisations.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- 1 Reimagining work requires courage to try/experiment/ challenge:** What if the way we organise work today is already outdated? And what if we challenged some of the outdated practices and started experimenting with alternative options now?
- 2 New practices can help change some of the commonly held assumptions, but will not solve everything:** Some of the progressive practices shared in the session can only succeed when the culture of the organisation and the leaders are ready for the shift. Hence, the experiments will need to be supported and reinforced together with the shifts in mindsets.
- 3 The principles of how we organise work are changing, and the future is becoming more and more human-centred:** Principles of Trust and Transparency (versus control), Adaptability & Experimentation (versus rigid predict-and-plan approaches), Distributed Ownership (versus strict hierarchy) are some critical shifts we need to make in our mindsets and in how we lead organisations.

LHH CONTACTS

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- ✉ [Claire Jordan](#)
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- ✉ [Burak Koyuncu](#)
SVP, Head of LHH Leadership Development UK&I
- ✉ [Ash O'Reilly](#)
Sales Director
- ✉ [Mitch Pagett](#)
Sales Director

FURTHER RESOURCES

- 🌐 [How Buurtzorg Works](#)
- 🌐 [Panelfisa: A Case Study In Implementing Self-Management](#)
- 🌐 [How Much Pay Transparency Is Right For You?](#)
- 🌐 [Reinventing Salary Models: How Self-Managing Organizations Handle This Touchy Subject](#)
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- 🌐 [Stop Wasting Your Time On Annual Budgeting](#)
- 🌐 [Beyond Budgeting Is Not a Destination – It Is a Journey](#)
- 🌐 [Beyond Budgeting – The Adaptive And Agile Management Model](#)



Future-Readiness Lab: Optimise Talent with AI

Are you ready to redefine the future of talent management?

In an era where AI is not just a tool but a catalyst for change, this masterclass explored the profound impact of artificial intelligence on our work, workforce and HR practices.

The session explored how HR leaders can harness the power of AI across all aspects of talent. It dove into the transformative shifts required to make sure we can do more with less, get the right people with the right skills in the right place and attract and retain talent. The session also discussed how to leverage AI to foster agility and innovation and personalise experiences for the workforce.

Together, participants envisioned what the next 12-18 months could hold for their organisations and how they can lead the charge in this exciting landscape.

FURTHER RESOURCES

-  [Work Design Tool](#)
-  [Skills Gap Analysis](#)
-  [Skills Library](#)
-  [Architecture Customization Tool \(JAT\)](#)
-  [Reimagining Performance Management in the Age of AI](#)
-  [Cracking the Code: Five imperatives for executive assessment success](#)
-  [Women In UK Tech Could Unlock Up To £3.5 Billion In Growth](#)
-  [HR Technology's Impact on the Workforce](#)

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- 1 Vision:** Set out to make work design an organisational wide competence, not an HR initiative being done to people. Imagine if everyone has the mindset to deconstruct, reallocate and reconstruct work and if everyone can spot opportunities to save money, get work done faster and make work more interesting. Make sure that you set a vision that gives a benefit or *"what's in it for me"* for all your different stakeholders. What excites your CFO and what genuinely excites your front-line employee is not likely to be the same thing, so tailor the message accordingly.
- 2 Value:** Be clear on the ROI you are seeking to achieve and collect the data to benchmark the change. It doesn't have to be just quantitative financial data – real value is broader than that, especially if you think about the range of different stakeholders. Whilst the vision is long term, measure time to value in quarters (i.e. 3 months). Tell the different stakeholders what they will get at each quarter. Time to value keeps momentum.
- 3 Va-Va-Voom:** This is about getting things going. Pick an area of the business that is in pain, wants to try something different and where there is enough scale to show impact/results. Talking about things theoretically is fine to start with, but scaled momentum comes when an area of the business tells the rest of the business how much value this is creating for them.

MERCER CONTACTS

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Partner, UK Transformation Leader
-  [Marcus Downing](#)
Partner, Workforce and Organisational Transformation
-  [Edyta Prazuch](#)
Principal | Senior Manager, Workforce Transformation

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PARTNER MASTERCLASSES



Leading in Flux: The New Leadership Equation

In their 'Leading in Flux' masterclass, Anna Barras and Olga Hypponen from RHR International addressed the profound challenges of leadership in a volatile world. They shared data gathered via RHR's *Readiness for Scale* leadership assessments, which reveal that the three dimensions which differentiate the best leaders from the rest are: Seeing the Whole, Creating Shared Values and Knowing Yourself.

Building on this foundation, the masterclass explored three essential leadership imperatives for today's environment:

- 1. **Lead with other-centred purpose:** A focus on benefiting and serving others, rather than pursuing self-interest.
- 2. **Be curious with a strong desire to learn from others:** Having a learning mindset and a willingness to challenge past practices.
- 3. **Demonstrate honesty, authenticity and empathy:** Being transparent with facts and admitting mistakes to build trust.

These imperatives were brought to life through a candid look at recent, real-world case studies which illustrate the importance of leaders' words and actions (especially during times of crisis) in shaping reputation and commercial outcomes. The masterclass culminated in a dynamic, hands-on exercise where attendees in small groups had to accept or reject a series of deliberately provocative statements. This sparked discussion around the real-world tensions leaders must navigate, such as balancing purpose with profit, decisiveness with inclusion and radical authenticity with professional responsibility.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. Amidst global volatility and widespread distrust, business leaders are the only group seen as both competent and ethical (Edelman, 2025). HR's strategic imperative is to cultivate leaders who can uphold this unique trust and act as a stabilising force.
2. Today's leadership equation requires a fundamental shift from self-interest to service. HR must focus on developing three core imperatives: leading with an other-centred purpose, being relentlessly curious and demonstrating empathy to build trust.
3. These 'soft' leadership skills have hard commercial consequences. A failure in empathy or authenticity directly damages brand reputation and business performance. HR must frame these behaviours as critical drivers of resilience, not optional extras.
4. Leadership imperatives are a constant balancing act, not a simple checklist. Curiosity must be weighed against the need for decisive action, and authenticity must be tempered by emotional self-regulation. HR's crucial role is to coach leaders to navigate these tensions with wisdom.

RHR CONTACTS

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- ✉ [Olga Hypponen](#)
Partner

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FURTHER RESOURCES

- 🌐 [RHR Overview](#)
- 🌐 [Leadership We Need Now](#)
- 🌐 [Leadership in Times of Uncertainty](#)



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From Chaos to Clarity: Leveraging Process Automation and Data Visualisation to Enable Smarter HR Decisions

This masterclass explored Ricoh Europe's journey from fragmented HR processes to a unified, data-driven approach that empowers smarter decision-making. The session highlighted how Ricoh has leveraged process automation and advanced data visualisation to transform HR operations across EMEA. Ricoh shared the challenges faced – such as inconsistent onboarding, siloed systems and lack of visibility – and how these were addressed through a fully customisable automation framework and the development of the People & Productivity Dashboard. This dashboard integrates over 18 data sources and enables strategic, actionable insights that align HR with business priorities.

Ricoh also showcased how workforce analytics is driving real business value – enhancing transparency, predicting risks and fostering collaboration between HR and Finance. Attendees saw how metrics like Manager Index, Succession Coverage and Onboarding Experience are used to guide leadership decisions and improve outcomes. The phased rollout approach ensures continuous improvement, with feedback loops and quarterly updates keeping the dashboard relevant and impactful.

FURTHER RESOURCES

- [Four Ways HR Orchestration Drives Operational Efficiency and Strategic Impact](#)
- [Enhancing HR Efficiency and the Employee Experience with Process Automation](#)
- [iPeople The Ricoh Way](#)

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- 1 HR Transformation:** Ricoh Europe has transitioned from a fragmented HR landscape to a unified, automated system that supports consistent processes and strategic decision-making across 26 operating companies.
- 2 People and Productivity Dashboard:** A central feature of the transformation is the EMEA-wide dashboard, which delivers actionable insights aligned to Ricoh's strategic pillars, combining HR and Finance data for enhanced business value.
- 3 Strategic Use of Workforce Analytics:** Metrics such as Manager Index, Succession Coverage and Onboarding Experience are used to drive evidence-based decisions, improve leadership effectiveness and reduce attrition risks.
- 4 Technical Foundation and AI Integration:** The dashboard is powered by a robust data model integrating 18 sources and leveraging AI capabilities like sentiment analysis, predictive attrition and smart narratives to enhance insight quality.
- 5 Phased Rollout and Continuous Improvement:** Ricoh is implementing the dashboard through a structured three-phase approach – foundation, feedback and quarterly updates – ensuring it evolves with business needs and remains a reliable decision-support tool.

RICOH CONTACTS

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slides and materials

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- [Simon Maskell](#)
Senior Data Scientist
- [Zi Hareshe](#)
Process Automation Consultant



Rethink Work >>> Evolve or Endure

With special thanks to CRF Partners

KEYNOTE SESSIONS	Overall Conference Takeaways
	Leadership in a Time of Disruptive Change
	Evolve or Endure? Designing a Future-fit Organisation
	The 100-Year Life: Rethinking Talent for a Longer Future
PARTNER MASTERCLASSES	Capability Building: The Future of Learning
	Roleplay. Score. Coach. Repeat: A Playbook
	The Butterfly Defect: Managing Global Risks
	Where the World is Heading



FURTHER RESOURCES AND OFFERS FROM CRF PARTNERS

Eightfold
[The CHRO's Guide to Agentic AI in HR](#)
[The Talent Table in Review](#)
[The Ultimate Buyer's Guide for a Talent Intelligence Platform](#)

IMD
[How to Measure the Impact of Executive Development](#)
[The C-Suite Program](#)
[Turn AI into ROI](#)

The Oxford Group
Our Amazon Best Seller, *The Neglected Acts of Leadership*, explores how reconnecting with these essential habits – through the lens of music – can reignite purpose and presence.
[Read the opening pages now](#)
[Watch on demand now](#)

To thrive in this new era, leaders must evolve emotionally. Our whitepaper, [Developing Emotional Capital](#), offers a roadmap for building the emotional intelligence needed to lead with empathy and resilience.



2026 Programme



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	The HR Function and Risk Management: Navigating Complexity with Resilience	Jan. 	Jan. 	Jan. 	Oct. 		
	 Future-Ready Workforce	Jan. 	Apr. 				
	Appreciative Inquiry: A Positive Revolution in Change Leadership	Feb. 					
	 Work Psychology: Performance, Teams and Feedback	Feb. 	Feb. 	Feb. 	May 	Sep. 	
	 From Intuition to Insight: Developing an Evidence-Based HR Function	Mar. 					
	 Creating an Effective Learning Ecosystem	Mar. 	Mar. 	May 	May 	Jun. 	Jun. 
	 Employee Relations / Industrial Relations Network	Mar. 	Jun. 	Oct. 	Dec. 		
	Leadership Rewired: Developing Leaders for a Changing World	Apr. 					
	 Designing Jobs in the Age of AI	Jun. 	Jun. 				
	HR Leaders' Dinners	Jun. 	Nov. 	Dec. 	Dec. 		
	INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE Turning Uncertainty Into Advantage	Oct. 	Oct. 				
	 Early Careers and Skills: Equipping the Workforce for What's Next	Nov. 	Nov. 	Nov. 	Nov. 		
	GULF CONFERENCE Teaming: Leading High Trust, AI-enabled Teams	Nov. 					