The Great Rebalancing: Navigating Career Obsolescence and Creation in the Next Decade of Work (2025-2035)

Presented by Futurist Jim Carroll

Agenda

The Global Workforce in Flux

Key drivers of transformation reshaping the labor market

The Great Rebalancing

Quantifying job obsolescence and creation globally

Future-Ready Skills

The new currency of the labor market

Investment Landscape

Capital flows fueling workforce transformation

Organizational Strategies

Approaches for competitive advantage

Timeline & Regional Analysis

Decade of disruption and global variations

The Global Workforce in Flux: Key Drivers of Transformation

The global labor market is entering a period of profound transformation, characterized by the simultaneous obsolescence of established professions and the genesis of entirely new ones.

This is not a cyclical adjustment but a structural rebalancing driven by powerful, interconnected macrotrends.

Organizations and policymakers that successfully navigate this transition will secure an extraordinary competitive advantage, while those that fail to adapt risk significant disruption.

The Four Horsemen of Change

Technology

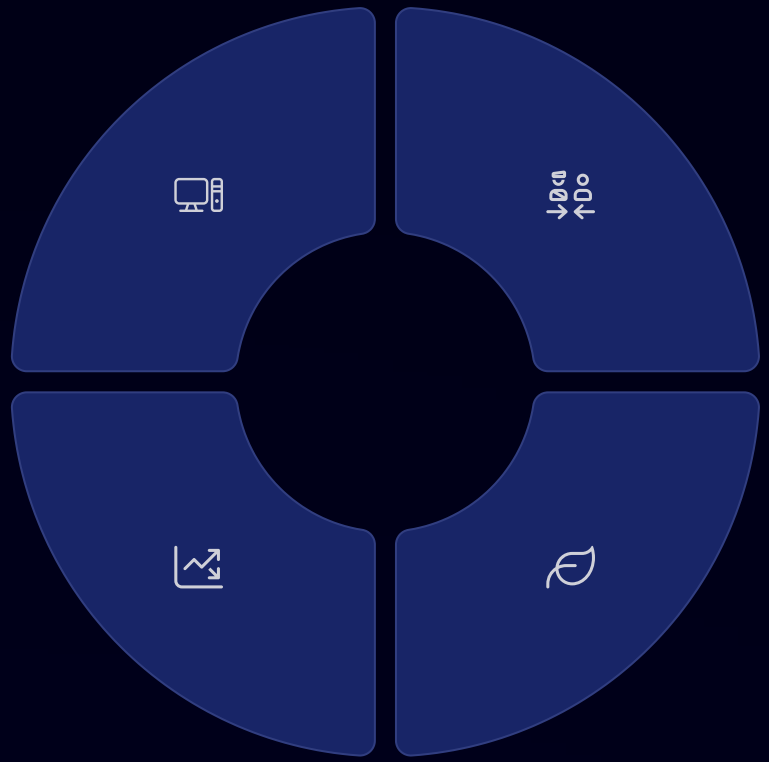
86% of employers identify AI and information processing as transformative

60% expect digital access to reshape business models by 2030

Geoeconomics

Rising cost of living (50%), slower economic growth (42%)

Geoeconomic fragmentation and trade tensions (34%)



Demographics

Aging populations in higher-income economies (40% cite as transformative)

Expanding working-age populations in lower-income economies (24%)

Sustainability

47% of employers expect climate-change mitigation to reshape operations

Driving job creation in new green sectors

Demographics & Technology: A Critical Dynamic

A powerful interplay is emerging between demographics and technology:

- Demographic crisis in developed nations (shrinking workforce)
- Creates powerful incentive for technological adoption
- Labor shortages counteracted by AI productivity gains
- Strategic imperative: accelerate AI adoption to maintain economic viability
- Challenge shifts to reskilling human workforce for effective collaboration with machines

The AI Revolution: Three Phases of Workplace Impact

Automation

Initial wave focused on automating routine, predictable tasks

Model of substitution: machine labor replacing human labor

Primarily targeted clerical and manual labor

Augmentation

Current phase, supercharged by generative AI

AI as collaborative tool enhancing human capabilities

Affecting high-skilled, white-collar professions

Autonomy (Agentic AI)

Next frontier (2025-2035)

Autonomous AI systems capable of reasoning, planning, and executing complex workflows

Rise of "digital labor" expanding organizational capacity

The Great Rebalancing: A Global Ledger

Quantifying the Churn

Between 2025-2030:

- 170 million new jobs created globally
- 92 million existing roles displaced
- Net increase of 78 million jobs (7% expansion)
- "Labor-market churn" equals 22% of today's employment
- Nearly 1 in 4 existing jobs part of massive rebalancing

The Human Challenge Behind the Numbers

The positive net job creation conceals immense human and societal friction:

Skills Mismatch

Displaced workers don't automatically possess skills needed for new roles

Geographic Barriers

Centers of job growth often different from areas of job loss

Financial Constraints

Personal investment in retraining can be substantial

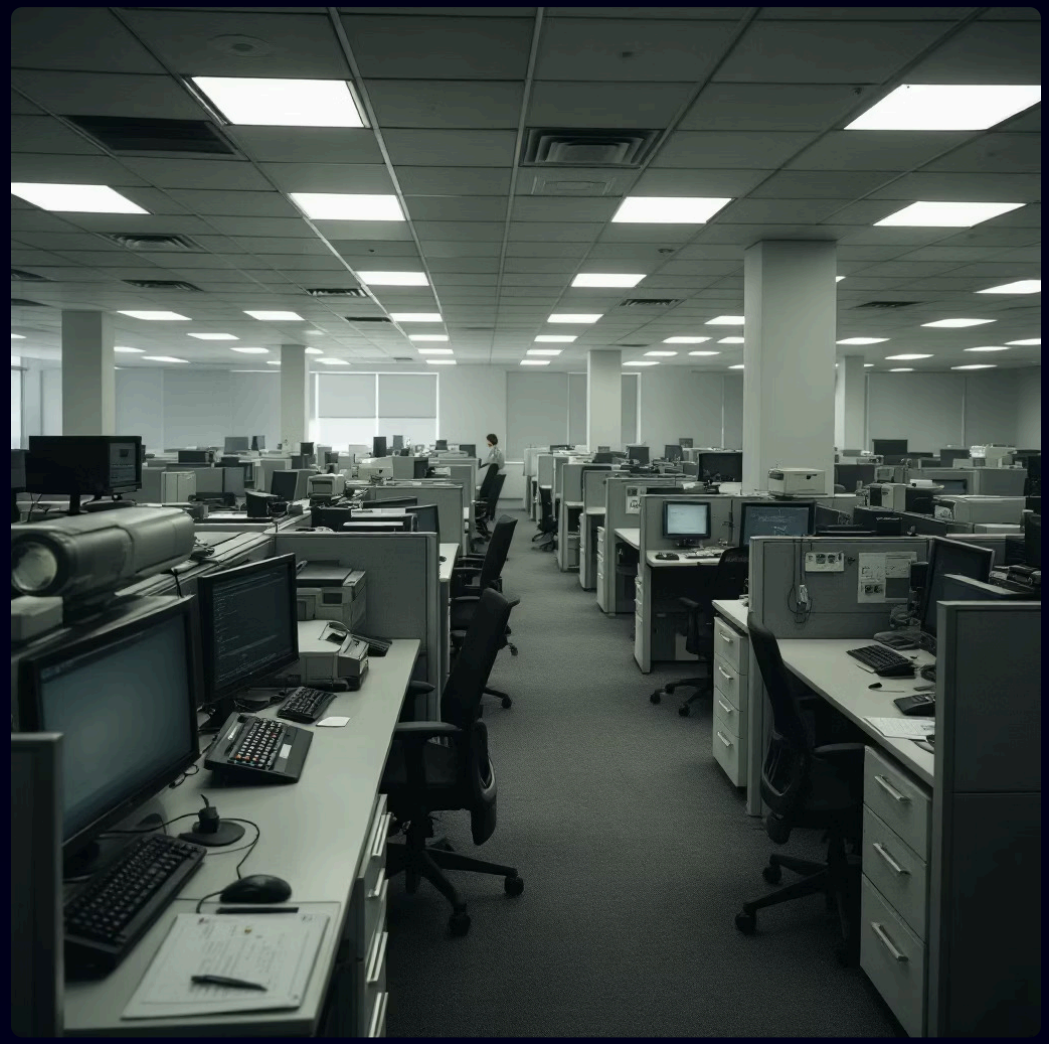
Social Consequences

Without supportive policies, "churn" manifests as unemployment, regional decline, and inequality

Sunset Roles: Professions in Structural Decline

Jobs most at risk are characterized by routine, repetitive, and rule-based tasks:

- Data Entry Clerks
- Administrative and Executive Secretaries
- Accounting, Bookkeeping and Payroll Clerks
- Bank Tellers
- Postal Service Clerks
- Customer Service Representatives
- Receptionists



Sunrise Professions: Technology-Driven Roles

AI and Machine Learning Specialists

Building and optimizing AI systems and algorithms

Big Data Specialists

Analyzing and interpreting complex data sets

Fintech Engineers

Developing financial technology solutions

Business Intelligence Analysts

Transforming data into actionable business insights

Information Security Analysts

Protecting digital assets and systems

Software and Application Developers

Creating and maintaining digital products

Sunrise Professions: Green Transition Roles

Fastest-Growing Green Jobs

- Renewable Energy Engineers
- Solar Energy Installation and System Engineers
- Sustainability Specialists

The transition to a low-carbon economy requires a new workforce skilled in green technologies, environmental management, and sustainable practices.

Projections suggest the creation of 34 million additional jobs in agriculture alone by 2030 due to green initiatives.

Sunrise Professions: Demographics-Driven Roles

Care Economy (Aging Populations)

- Nursing Professionals
- Personal Care Aides
- Social Work and Counselling Professionals

High demand in developed economies with aging populations

Education (Youth Populations)

- Higher Education Teachers
- Vocational Education Teachers
- Educational Technology Specialists

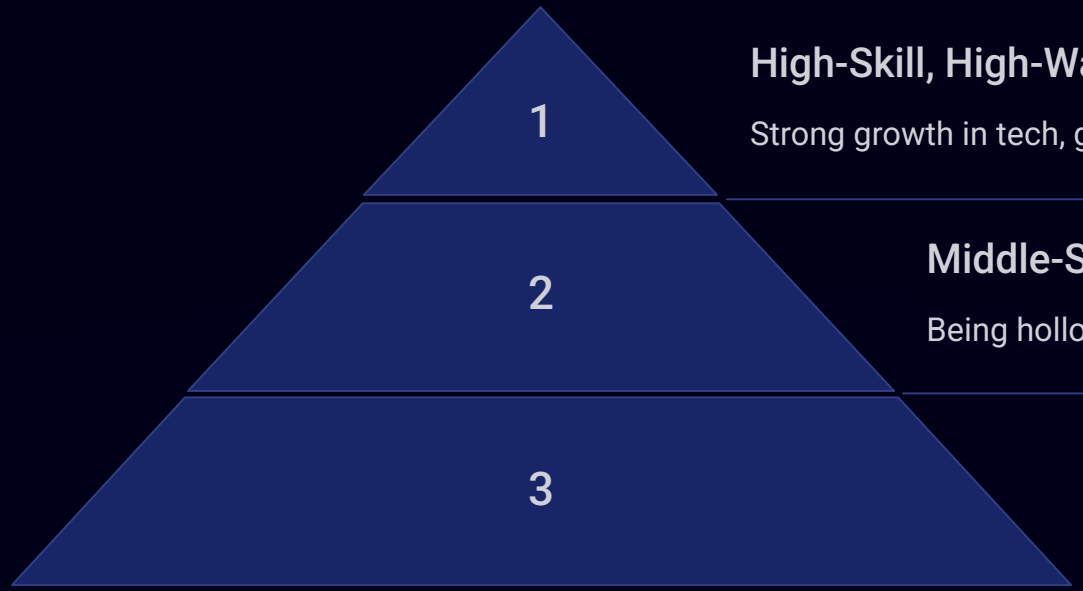
Growth concentrated in developing economies with expanding youth populations

Sunrise Professions: Frontline and Foundational Roles

Largest growth in absolute job numbers often found in foundational, frontline occupations:

- Farmworkers (green transition enhancing food security)
- Heavy Truck and Bus Drivers
- Construction Workers (infrastructure development)
- Food Processing Workers (e-commerce growth)

Labor Market Polarization



High-Skill, High-Wage Cognitive Roles

Strong growth in tech, green transition, and specialized professions

Middle-Skill, Routine-Based Jobs

Being hollowed out by automation, threatening traditional middle class

Lower-Skill, Manual or Service-Based Roles

Significant growth in essential frontline positions

This polarization poses substantial risk to social cohesion and economic equality, potentially exacerbating widening income inequality.

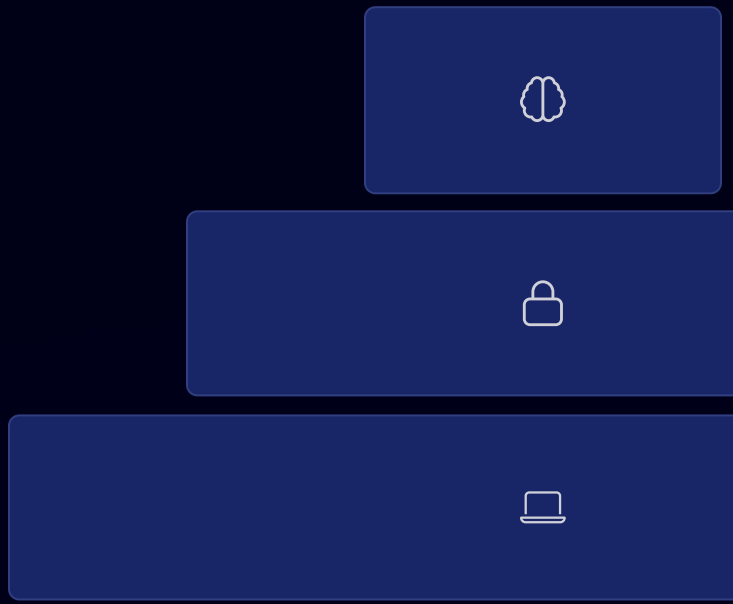
The New Currency: Future-Ready Skills

The value of what a worker knows is decaying at an unprecedented rate, making the ability to learn, unlearn, and relearn the most critical meta-skill for sustained employability.

Employers estimate that 39% of a worker's core skills will be disrupted between 2025 and 2030.

63% of employers identify the "skills gap" as the single biggest barrier to their organization's transformation.

The Technical Skills Stack



AI and Big Data

Machine learning, data science, and AI implementation

Networks and Cybersecurity

Protecting digital infrastructure and data

Technological Literacy

Ability to effectively use a wide range of digital tools

Even in low-income countries, basic digital skills are becoming essential prerequisites for a growing number of jobs.

The Enduring Human Advantage

As technology automates routine tasks, the economic value of uniquely human capabilities is rising.

Cognitive Skills

- Analytical thinking
- Creative thinking
- Complex problem-solving

Self-Efficacy Skills

- Resilience, flexibility, and agility
- Curiosity and lifelong learning
- Adaptability to change

Social Skills

- Leadership and social influence
- Empathy and active listening
- Collaboration and teamwork

The Human-Machine Interface

The integration of technical skills and human skills is where the most value is created.

AI is not just a subject to be learned; it is a tool that amplifies core human competencies:

- A data analyst uses AI to enhance analytical thinking
- A marketing professional uses generative AI to augment creativity
- A manager uses AI to improve decision-making

The most valuable employee will be the one who can effectively operate at this human-machine interface.

Bridging the Gap: Lifelong Learning

The rapid decay of existing skills and constant emergence of new ones make the traditional "front-loaded" education model obsolete.

33%

Training Participation

Only one-third of adults aged 60-65 in OECD countries participated in any form of training

50%+

Young Adult Training

Over half of those aged 25-44 participated in training

47.7%

Skills Match

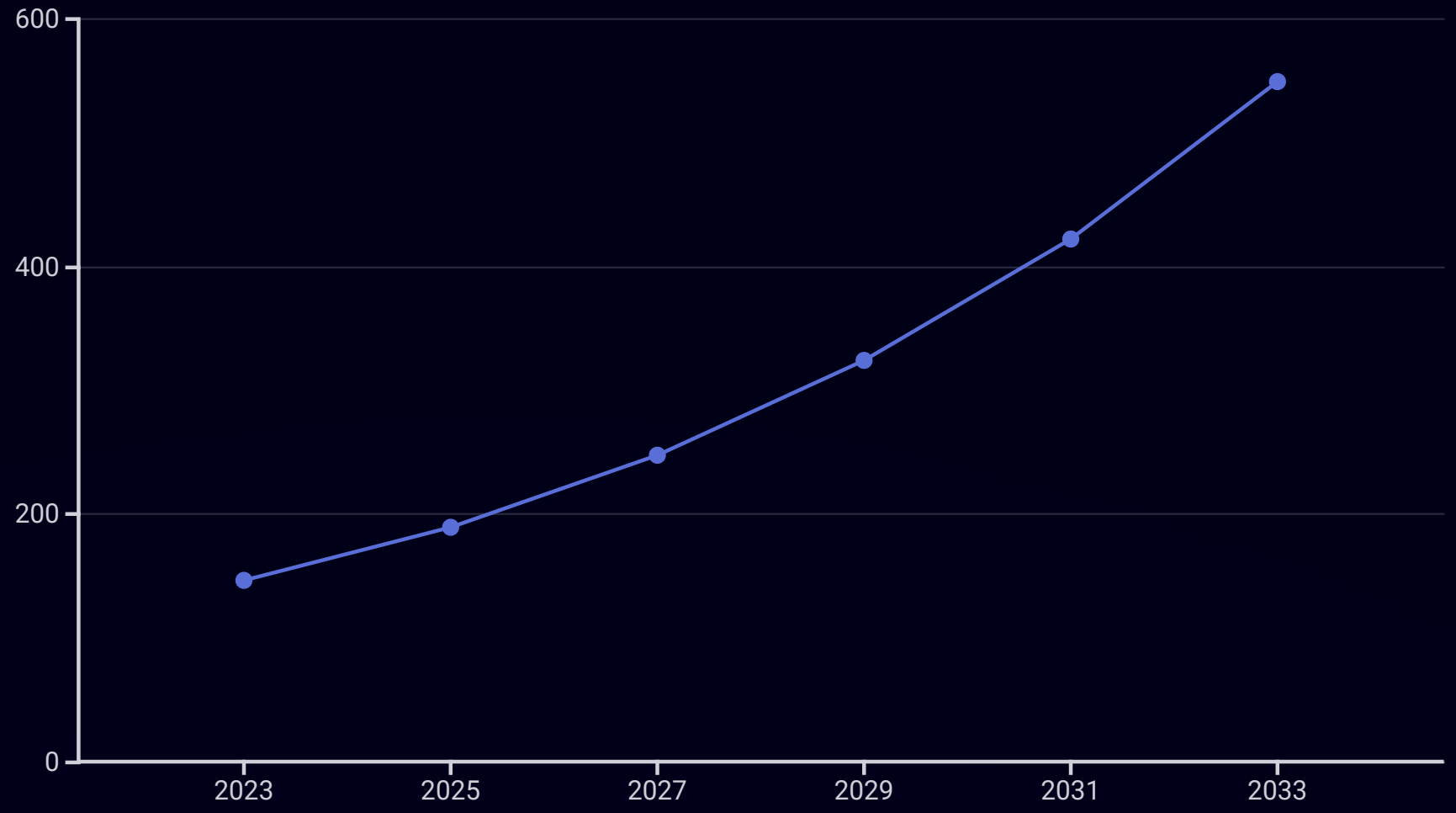
Less than half of workers hold qualifications that directly match their job requirements

The Investment Landscape: Fueling Workforce Transformation

The seismic shifts in jobs and skills are being mirrored by a surge of investment into technologies and platforms that enable workforce transformation.

A new, integrated "Workforce Transformation" technology sector is emerging, attracting significant private and public funding.

The EdTech and HR Tech Boom



The global EdTech market is projected to expand from USD 146.0 billion in 2023 to an estimated USD 549.6 billion by 2033, representing a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 14.2%.

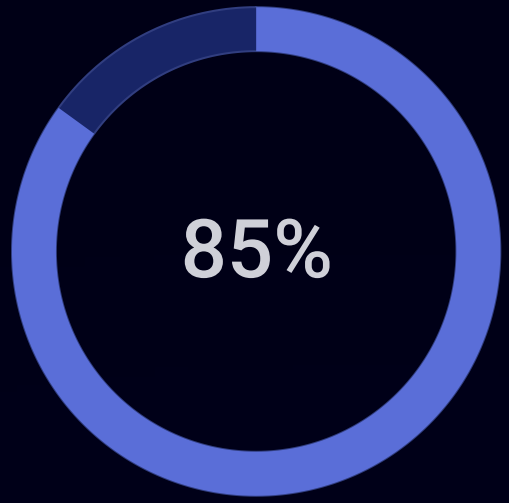
EdTech 2.0: The Converged Future of Work Sector

A crucial trend in the investment community is the rise of "EdTech 2.0" - a broader investment thesis that encompasses:

- Traditional educational tools
- Job placement platforms
- On-the-job productivity enhancement
- Integrated "Future of Work" solutions

In 2024, this converged sector attracted $15.4 billion in funding, 2.4 times larger than traditional EdTech alone.

Corporate Investment: From Perk to Strategic Imperative



Upskilling Priority

Percentage of employers who plan to prioritize upskilling their current workforce as a key business strategy

Verizon Investment

Amount committed by Verizon to reskill 500,000 individuals by 2030

Employee training has transformed from a discretionary "perk" to a strategic imperative for business survival and growth, with substantial financial commitments from major corporations.

Public-Private Partnerships: Collaborative Funding Models

Germany's Qualification Opportunities Act

Enables companies to partner with the Federal Employment Agency to co-finance training programs:

- Government co-funds portion of training costs
- Can subsidize up to 100% of base wages for high-risk roles during retraining
- Siemens' SiTecSkills Academy is a prime beneficiary

This collaborative approach reduces financial burden on employers and ensures skills align with industry needs.

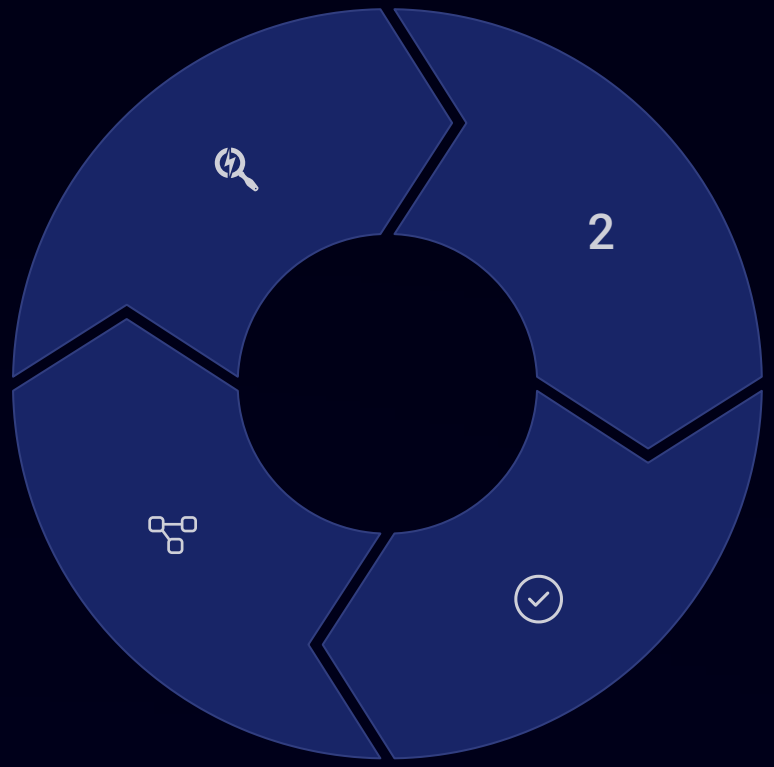
Integrated Workforce Transformation Platforms

Identify Skill Gap

AI analyzes organizational needs and individual capabilities

Deliver Learning

Personalized micro-learning modules target specific skills



Deploy Talent

Seamlessly assign employee to projects requiring new skills

Validate Acquisition

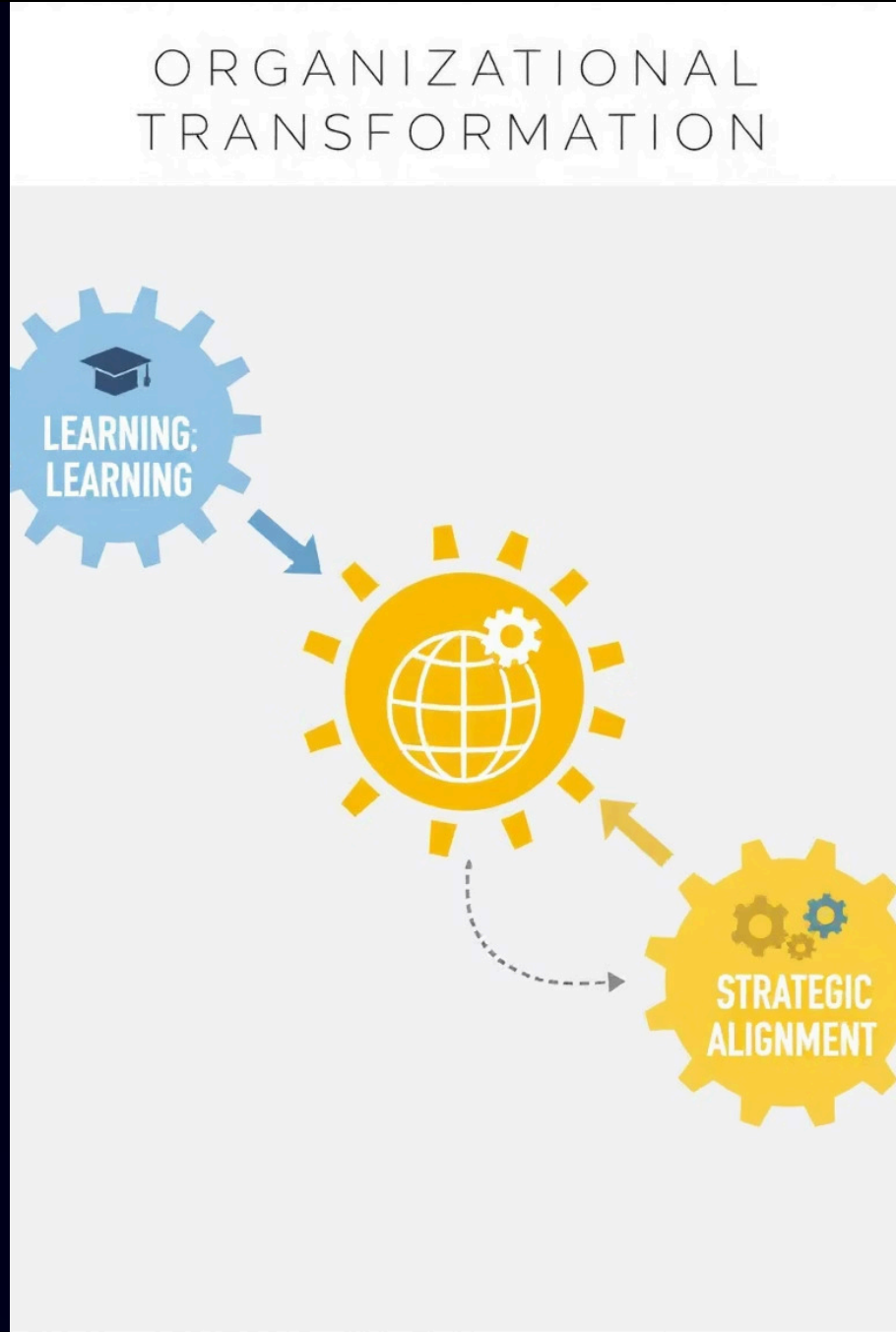
Data-driven assessment confirms skill mastery

Companies that fail to adopt this integrated approach will find themselves at a significant competitive disadvantage.

Navigating the Transition: Organizational Strategies

Leading organizations are fundamentally re-architecting how they develop, deploy, and organize their talent.

They are building dynamic, self-reinforcing systems that cultivate continuous learning, enable fluid internal mobility, and align skill development with strategic business needs.



From Training to Transformation: Best Practices

Strategic Alignment

Reskilling must be a C-suite-sponsored initiative integrated with core business goals

Skills Gap Analysis

Thorough assessment to identify future needs and current capabilities

Personalized Pathways

Learner-centric training tailored to individual needs and learning styles

Leadership Buy-in

Visible and active support from senior executives

Impact Measurement

Clear metrics to evaluate effects on performance and business outcomes

Case Study: Siemens' SiTecSkills Academy

Public-Private Partnership Model

- Addresses critical skills shortages in technical fields
- Trains Siemens employees AND external partners/suppliers
- Focuses on IoT, AI, robotics, and sustainability
- 24,000+ participations since 2022
- Nearly 100% success rate in placing reskilled workers

Example: Retrained electronics technician to become specialist in e-mobility charging infrastructure

Case Study: IBM's "Purple Squirrels"

IBM's strategy demonstrates a sophisticated approach to creating unique, high-value internal talent:

- Identifies functional experts from business units (e.g., HR)
- Provides intensive technical training (e.g., watsonx AI platform)
- Creates "purple squirrels" - employees with rare, valuable skill combinations
- These employees bridge business needs and technological solutions
- Accelerates digital transformation through internal hackathons

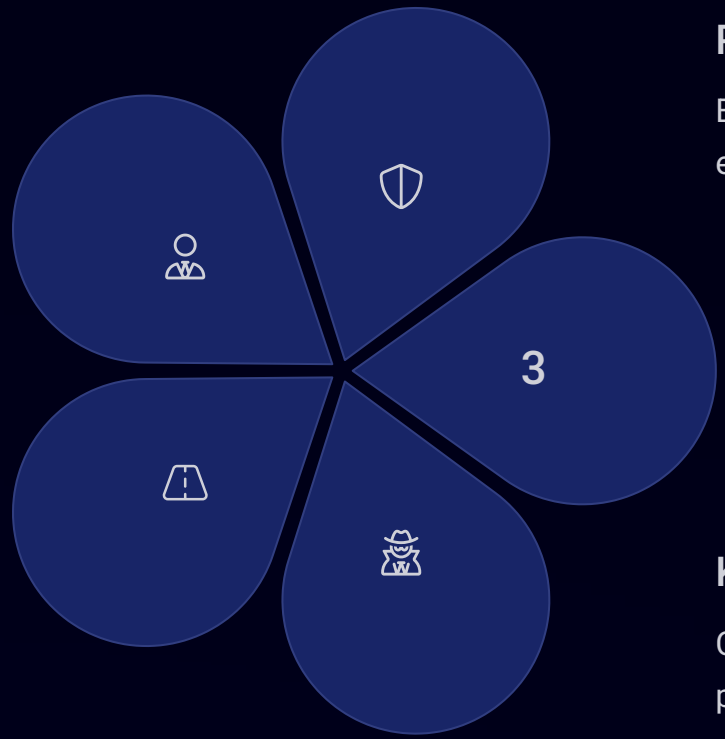
Building a Culture of Continuous Learning

Leadership Modeling

Leaders actively demonstrate growth mindset and learning behaviors

Clear Career Pathways

Explicit link between learning and advancement opportunities



Psychological Safety

Environment where employees feel safe to experiment and fail

Flexible Learning Options

Variety of formats from micro-learning to immersive simulations

Knowledge Sharing

Communities of practice and mentorship programs

The Internal Talent Marketplace

An AI-powered platform connecting employees' skills and aspirations with the organization's evolving needs:

Democratizes Opportunity

Provides visibility into projects, "gigs," mentorships, and full-time roles across the organization

Breaks Down Silos

Enables talent to flow to where it's most needed regardless of departmental boundaries

Unlocks Hidden Capacity

Reveals and activates underutilized skills within the existing workforce

Drives Innovation

Creates unexpected combinations of skills and perspectives

Case Study: Mastercard's "Unlocked" Platform

Workforce Adoption

Percentage of employees actively using the platform

Hours Unlocked

Additional capacity generated through internal mobility

Value Generated

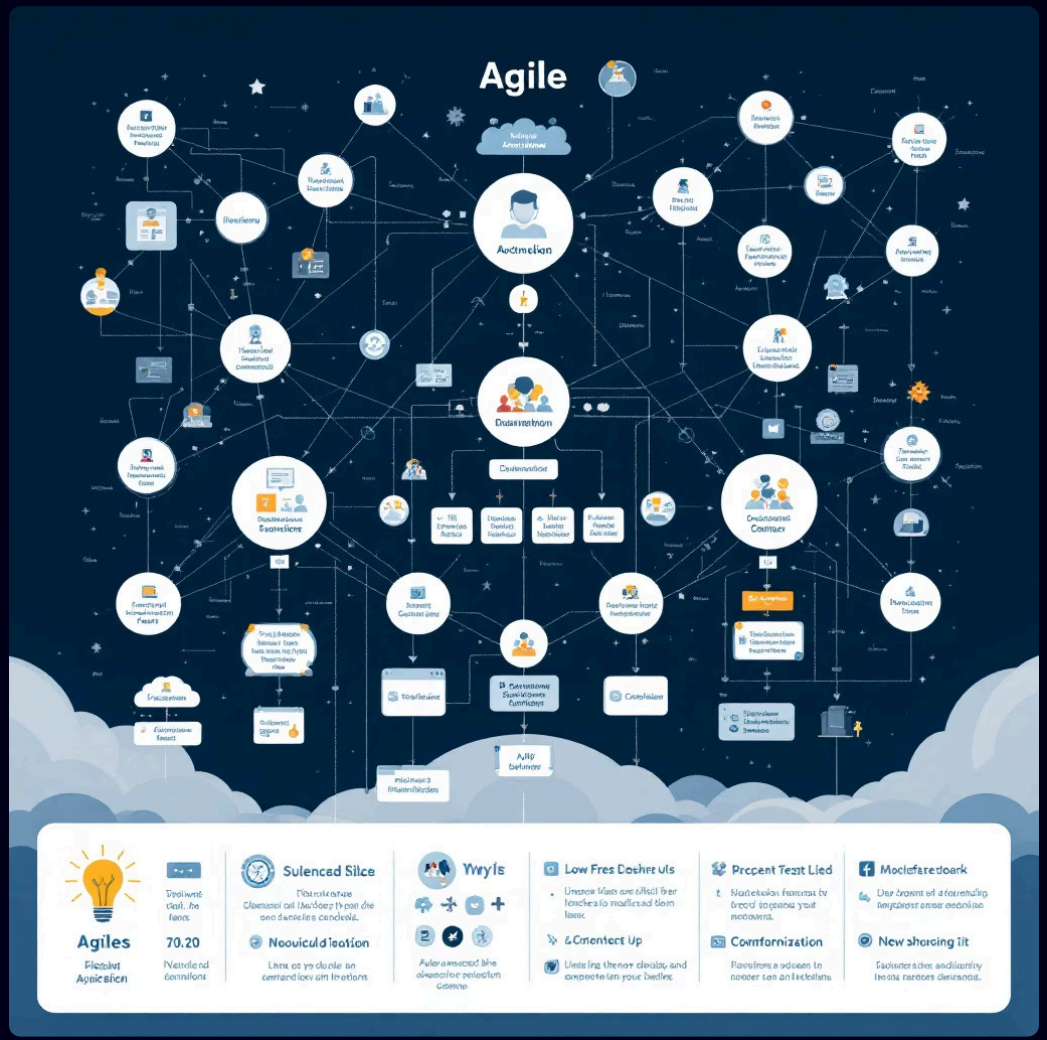
Estimated through increased productivity and reduced hiring costs

The platform has become an engine for innovation, with employee-led interest leading to new business groups exploring emerging technologies like cryptocurrency and NFTs.

Designing the Agile Organization

Traditional rigid hierarchies are ill-suited for environments demanding rapid adaptation. Agile organizational structures feature:

- Flatter hierarchies with fewer management layers
- Cross-functional teams assembled around specific challenges
- Decentralized decision-making closer to the customer
- "Network of teams" that form, execute, and reconfigure as needed
- Frameworks like the "Spotify model" with Squads, Tribes, Chapters, and Guilds



The Strategic Flywheel

Agile Structure

Creates operational demand for flexible, multi-skilled talent

Learning Culture

Motivates participation in marketplace and reskilling

Talent Marketplace

Matches right skills to right projects in real time

Skill Gaps

Marketplace data surfaces emerging capability needs

Reskilling Programs

Close gaps by building capabilities within existing workforce

This integrated, systems-level approach is the strategic blueprint for leading through the great rebalancing of work.

A Decade of Disruption: Timeline (2025-2035)

Phase 1: 2025-2028

1

The Great Reskilling & Early Adoption

- GenAI becomes standard tool for knowledge workers
- First "stumbling" AI agents emerge
- Peak of labor market churn and skill disruption
- Massive investments in reskilling programs

Phase 2: 2029-2032

2

The Rise of the Augmented Workforce

- AI agents evolve into reliable "digital colleagues"
- Human-agent teams become practical reality
- New specialized roles emerge (AI Trainers, Human-Machine Teaming Managers)
- Focus shifts to optimizing "human-agent ratio"

Phase 3: 2033-2035

3

Towards Widespread Autonomy

- Autonomous multi-agent systems become viable
- "Smart Machines" deeply integrated into workplace
- Human roles elevated to strategic direction and ethical oversight
- Concept of a "job" fundamentally transformed

Regional Deep Dive: North America

The "Frontier Firm" and the Race for AI Supremacy

- 79% of business leaders confident they will use AI agents as "digital labor"
- Emergence of "Frontier Firms" with enterprise-wide AI deployment
- Greatest impact on high-paying, cognitive-task-intensive jobs
- Concentration of disruption in major urban technology hubs
- Strategic focus on talent acquisition and restructuring
- Driven by perceived "capacity gap" in workforce

Regional Variations: Europe, Asia-Pacific, and Emerging Markets

Europe

Shaped by policy and regulation with "dual transition" (digital and green). Faces profound aging population challenge. Strong focus on lifelong learning and public-private partnerships.

Asia-Pacific

Manufacturing automation initially increased employment through productivity gains. High vulnerability to next-gen industrial robots. 56 million jobs tied to US consumer demand at risk from trade tensions.

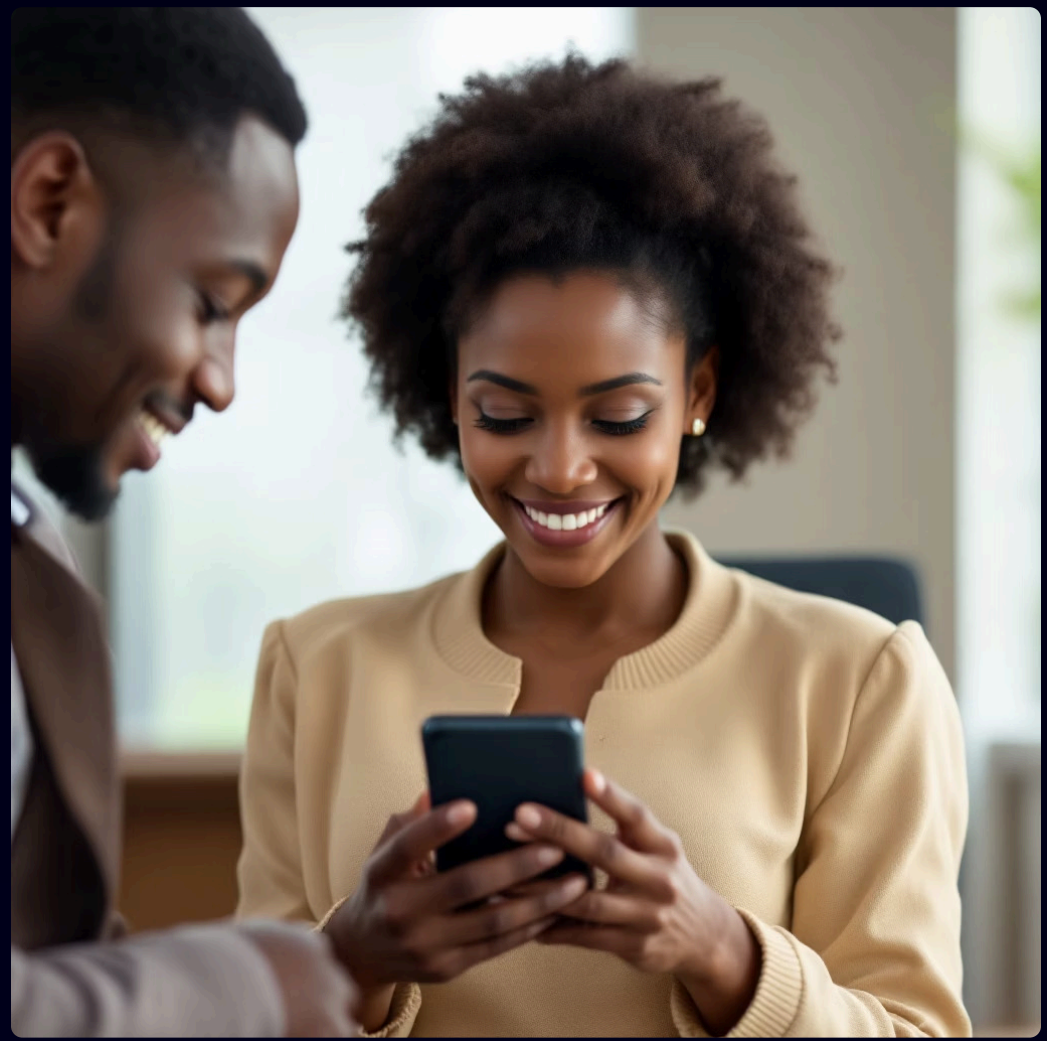
Latin America

AI could impact 38% of jobs (87.8 million workers). Digital divide threatens to exclude 17 million workers. Needs dual strategy of digital connectivity investment and social protection.

Africa: The World's Future Workforce

Africa's workforce transformation is dominated by its unique demographic profile:

- Over 60% of population under age 25
- Youngest and fastest-growing workforce globally
- Projected to exceed 600 million people by 2030
- Significant skills gaps (over half of youth report irrelevant education)
- Inadequate digital and physical infrastructure
- Opportunity to "leapfrog" traditional development stages
- Digital access can boost employment across all education levels



Strategic Recommendations

For Corporate Leaders

1. Adopt the Strategic Flywheel Model as an integrated business system
2. Invest in the "Human + AI" Interface to amplify uniquely human capabilities
3. Lead the transformation from the top with C-suite and board-level priority

For Policymakers

1. Foster a national culture of lifelong learning with reformed education systems
2. Bridge the digital and skills divide through strategic public investment
3. Strengthen social safety nets and active labor market policies

The Imperative of Human-Centric Transformation

"*The future belongs to those organizations that can blend technology and humans together in a way that maximizes the potential of both, leveraging the best that each brings to the table.*"

The greatest competitive advantage will belong to organizations that build the most adaptable, motivated, and continuously learning human workforce.

The great rebalancing of work is not a technological problem to be solved, but a human potential to be unlocked.

Learn more at jimcarroll.com