**Skills Gap**

A recent report highlighted that we have a skills gap over Northern Europe, this gap has come about for several reasons; emerging technologies are coming through at a faster than ever rate, the existing workforce can often feel that they are too old to update their skills and the course’s that are offered by formal educators at college’s don’t always reflect the roles that are available. This was first highlighted in the financial crash of 2008 but since the pandemic has become increasingly apparent. What would have taken possibly years in the planning and huge shift in culture happened in a few short months, but people across the world started working from home. This shifted the way we work to a much more technology dependent way. It’s highlighted the area’s that people needed to be upskilled in, but at the same time it also highlighted how quickly people can adjust to change and learn the relevant skills required to make such a huge change in working from home and business’ continuing to operate.

Why is this a problem?

This could potentially harm businesses in a variety of way’s, the ever changing fast-paced development of new technologies are not able to be utilized as intended and could hamper a company’s strategic evolution, this in-turn could stop the business from moving forward delaying how its planned to operate, when it can implement change and it can impact on staff retention and makes the business less competitive, which can ultimately lead to it becoming less profitable.



What does it look like?

The number of jobs in certain sectors will ultimately reduce, a recent study found that some of the roles that will either no longer exist or reduce dramatically will be.

* Accounting/book-keeping/payroll
* Postal delivery services
* Customer service departments

The area’s that are expected to get the biggest growths are,

* Data Analyst and Scientist
* AI and machine learning specialists
* Big data specialists
* Digital marketing and strategy specialists
* Process automation professionals
* Business development
* Digital transformation managers
* Information security analysts
* Software and app developers
* Internet of Things (IoT) specialists

*Source: Future of Jobs Report 2020 World Economic Forum*

As you can see, some of the biggest areas expected to grow all based around technology.



What can we do?

There are several ways that the potential problems can be addressed. Employers can offer to upskill existing employee’s so that they can grow with the business and the changing world. This aids in staff retention and would encourage applicants to a business, who wouldn’t want to work for a company that is prepared to invest in its people?

We must ensure that the next generation of workers are offered the relevant training and courses to enable them to adapt to the new technologies and change the way we educate so that it becomes a part of our professional growth and as such, it becomes standard that we continually develop ourselves. However, that does not help smaller companies that would not be able to accommodate a large training budget.

Changing the way that we educate throughout schools and further education institutes is also needed, a change in the offer of courses that are available and working with workplaces in the short-term to help bridge the gap.

So, to keep yourself relevant and to take your wealth of experience into new sectors we can take advantage of a few options,

* Online training courses designed to fit in around your current working life, lots of these are free and do not require a level of entry to the course.
* The government has lots of free training courses designed to help bridge the skills gap, they offer a variety of qualifications. Information on this can be found on the Gov.uk website.
* Work with your current employer and see if there is the option for sponsorship or part sponsorship to help them fill the gap they have and upskill yourself. Overall, the cost of recruiting and training/induction to a new business can be quite costly, if they have a trusted employee that they can develop the engagement and reward from that can offset any additional costs.

Some of the changes in the above are out of our control and we will see the impact and change in the future. However, there are things that we can do to be part of the change that’s needed and to help speed it along. So, take a leap of faith, a small gamble and invest in yourself. I’m sure that you will not only find it fulfilling you will also learn new things about yourself, and new possibilities may come your way.

