

HR + L&D INNOVATION & TECH FEST 2026 · JOHANNESBURG

Designing the **Workforce of the Future:** From Foresight to Capability & Skills

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WHY MOST WORKFORCE PLANS FAIL

We're planning the workforce of the future with the language of the **past**.

Headcount Plans

Still counting bodies. Forecasting how many, not what capability. The number fills the box. The box doesn't reflect the strategy.

Generic Upskilling

Courses that look busy. Libraries that feel productive. Almost none of it tied to a strategic capability gap the business can actually name.

Job Descriptions

Posting roles built for yesterday's work. Filtering on credentials and years in title instead of the capabilities the future actually requires.

Gaps That Don't Show Up Until It's Too Late

You hire, you train, you promote, and you still can't execute the strategy. No one mapped the chain from strategy signal to capability to skill to task.



FROM LANGUAGE TO ACTION

This is what you will
do **differently.**



Reframe Workforce Planning Around Capability, Not Headcount

FROM

Headcount Forecasting

"We need 12 more analysts by Q3." The number fills a box.
The box doesn't reflect a strategy.

- ✗ Forecasting FTEs by function
- ✗ Filling open job descriptions
- ✗ Build/buy decisions with no capability context

TO

Capability Forecasting

Identify the future-critical capabilities required to execute strategy. Then make smarter build, buy, borrow, or automate decisions.

- Name the 3-5 capabilities your strategy actually depends on
- Map current capability levels against required proficiency
- Make build/buy/borrow/automate decisions from the map, not from a JD

Replace Static Succession with Dynamic Skill Mobility

FROM

Static Succession Planning

A spreadsheet of names in boxes. Updated once a year.
Tells you who's next in line, not who's actually ready or mobile.

- ✗ Succession tied to org chart position, not capability
- ✗ Internal moves based on manager preference
- ✗ Talent trapped in functions because no one can see their transferable skills

TO

Skill-Based Internal Mobility

Use capability visibility and skill adjacency to mobilise talent fast, without always hiring external.

Align Upskilling to Strategic Capability Investment

FROM

Generic Upskilling

A busy learning catalogue. Completions tracked, impact invisible. L&D spend that doesn't connect to any strategic capability the business can name.

- ✗ Learning library with 2,000 courses and no priority signal
- ✗ Annual mandatory training targeting compliance, not capability
- ✗ "Leadership development" with no named capability gap it closes

TO

Targeted Capability Investment

Every program closes a named capability gap and shows up in real, everyday tasks.

THREE STARTING POINTS

You don't need to boil the ocean. Start with one capability.

START HERE**Name One Capability**

Pick the single capability your 3-year strategy depends on most. The one where a gap would stall the entire plan. Name it. Agree on it. Write it in a sentence, not a list.

THEN DO THIS**Map the Current State**

Assess where your workforce sits on that capability today. Not from a survey. From direct observation, performance signals, and an honest conversation with front-line managers.

THEN DECIDE**Build, Buy, Borrow, or Automate**

With capability data in hand, you can make a real decision. Not "we need a program," but who's ready now, who can be developed fast, what AI can absorb, and what you need to hire for.

Thank you!



Scan for the full resource

skillsleap.com/workforce-of-the-future

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