



# Creating shared workforce resilience

Navigating the human and  
business impact of COVID-19

The economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic is severe, rapid and global in nature. In March, the International Labor Organization (ILO) predicted that nearly 25 million jobs could be lost by the end of 2020. A month later, the ILO acknowledged that the actual number could be significantly higher.<sup>1</sup>

Organizations globally are experiencing workforce disruption at an unprecedented scale and speed. This is propelling chief human resources officers (CHROs) into the spotlight of this human crisis. Their role has never been more stressful, vital and visible.<sup>2</sup>

**It is daunting, to say the least.**



# Taking action together

CHROs are vital to helping people and organizations navigate workforce shifts en masse through agile workforce strategies. Their expertise is critical in keeping the global economy viable and helping people and their families survive financially, now and in the future.

The good news is that opportunities are appearing as companies and industries work together to keep people in paying work. That means a hard-hit industry like hospitality helps its workers redeploy to an industry that needs extra workers like grocery retailers.

**This report provides pragmatic actions to create shared workforce resilience.**

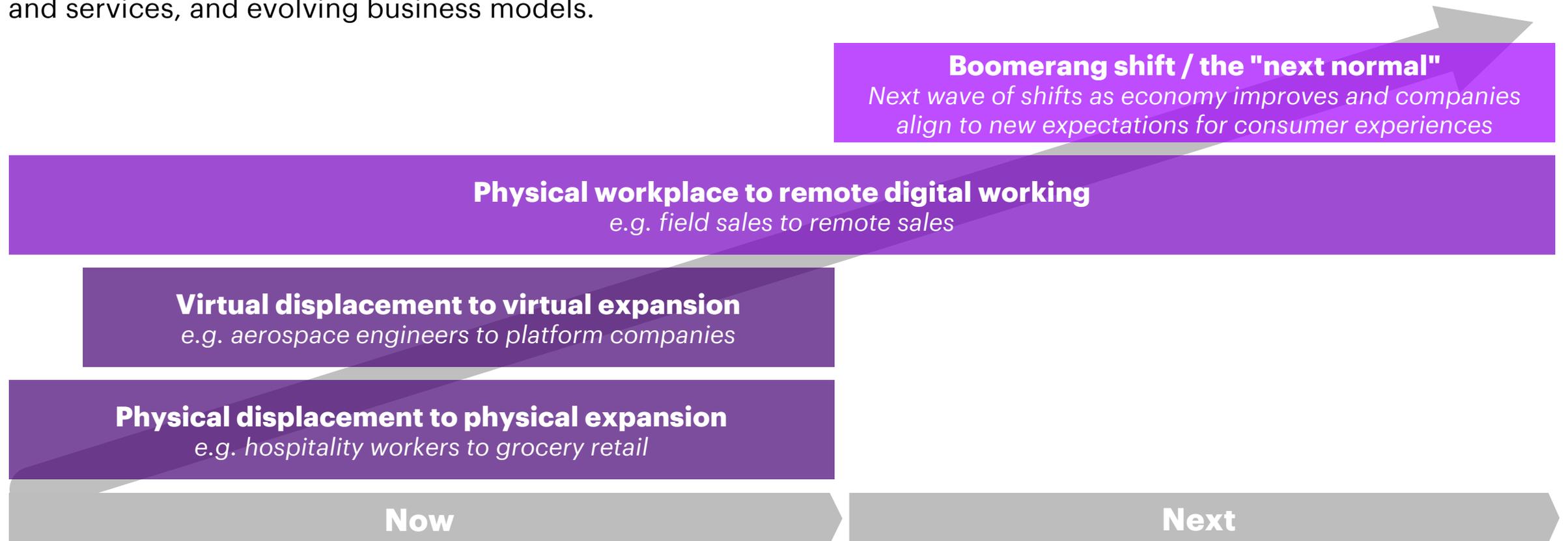
## What is shared workforce resilience?



It means working together to keep as many people healthy, safe and employed as possible “in the now”. With an eye to equipping people with new skills for the future.

# Shifts at scale

Large-scale workforce shifts are not a one-off phenomenon. We anticipate that workforce shifts like those shown below will continue to fundamentally affect the economy based on changes in work patterns, consumption of goods and services, and evolving business models.



Source: Accenture, 2020

■ Company-to-company shift ■ Intra-company shift ■ Company-to-company and intra-company shifts

# Roles are disrupted, but skills prevail

Business leaders typically think in terms of jobs or roles, rather than underlying core skills. However, skills are the new currency and will be the key to rebuilding resilient workforces in the future.

It is only by identifying individuals' skills that you can map people to the high-demand jobs that need filling in healthcare, businesses and governments. (See figure 1).

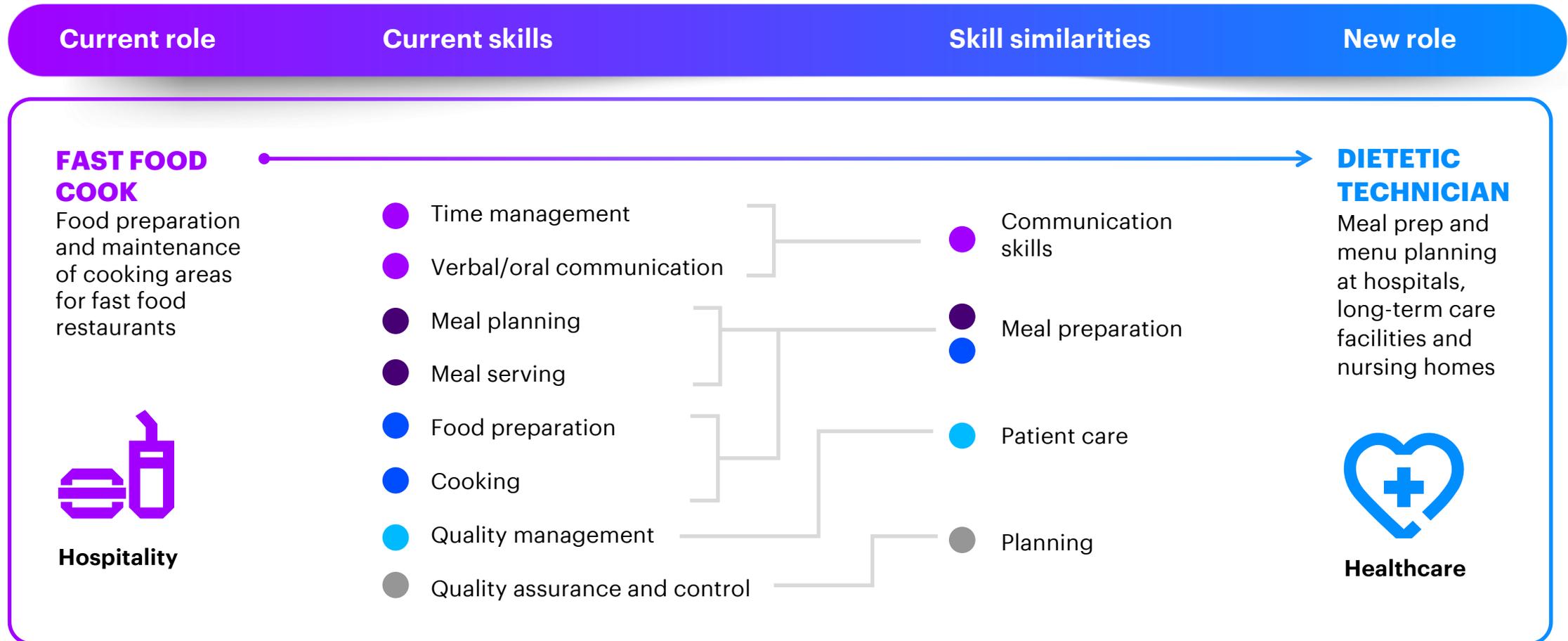
Some people may find limited opportunities in the short term. By working with employers and community organizations, CHROs can help individuals acquire the new skills and mindsets needed for future work.

**This shared workforce resilience can power the best path forward for an organization, its people and the community.**



FIGURE 1

# Skills mapping in action: from fast food cook to dietetic technician<sup>3</sup>



# Innovative solutions forged in disruptive times

People, organizations and communities need answers now. Plans need to be fit-for-purpose today but capable of evolving as the global health and economic environment changes.

No single enterprise can do this alone. Businesses, governments, citizens and non-profits each play critical roles. It is at the intersection of these stakeholder interests where inspired and inspiring solutions can occur.

With that in mind, we propose a human-centered, systems-minded approach that promotes shared workforce resilience. This is not a one-time process. It requires the development of persistent capabilities and relationships across stakeholder groups. Each organization will be at a different level of maturity, and with varied labor laws and regulations around the world, not every company will move at the same speed or follow the same path.



# A plan for shared resilience

CHROs can focus on five key areas to help their organizations achieve long-lasting workforce resilience.



Source: Accenture, 2020

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# 01

## Predict demand shifts

### **Identify and forecast where workforce shifts need to occur.**

The unprecedented disruption and pace of change can make traditional forecasting models obsolete. Rapid, iterative modeling of potential scenarios can optimize decision making. It won't be perfect, but it can be sufficient to start planning and taking action.

### **KEY QUESTION:**

How do you use analytics to understand and prepare for the shifts of workers across functions, industries and companies?

### **KEY ACTIVITIES:**

**Start with possible scenarios and rapidly build a workforce strategy.** Start with current needs and look into the future. Evolve your plan to include elasticity and resilience in workforce skilling and sourcing.

**Hone in on skills.** Outline the future skills and aptitudes required, versus jobs or people. Define the high-level skills profiles needed for both the expanding and declining work in your organization.

**Tap into technology and analytics to uncover what an Excel spreadsheet can't show you.** Use AI and machine learning to reveal local labor-market supply and demand, sometimes in other industries, for potentially impacted work and associated skills.

# Predicting demand shifts: the art of the possible

Accenture has developed a solution to support organizations in making workforce decisions due to demand shifts from COVID-19.

It helps organizations answer questions around near-term workforce needs and plan gradual recovery strategies. Demand shifts are predicted using an organization's internal and external data from the labor market, government agencies, and the World Health Organization and the US Centers for Disease Control on virus spread. Its workforce planning optimization algorithm provides target levels of hirings, redeployments and recovery plans.

We can help companies assess demand scenarios based on business objectives. For example, companies looking to retain their people during the current crisis need detailed insights to plan effectively. The solution is able to model recovery scenarios across specific locations based on factors like virus spread, lockdown patterns, and government directives. Companies can look across various geographies to understand how to get people back to work safely.

## 02

### Assess skill profiles

**Create a baseline for the skills you possess versus skills predicted to be in high demand.** Create future-oriented profiles based on the skills, aptitudes and interests required. Look for unique combinations and consider related adjacent skills that can broaden the range of available roles.

#### KEY QUESTION:

How do you assess the optimal shift in your workforce, both in number and skills?

#### KEY ACTIVITIES:

**Double down on skills.** Develop skill profiles of displaced and in-demand workers with key information like role, skills, proficiency, experience, hours, pay, home and work location.

**Don't underestimate aptitudes and adjacencies.** Move at pace by using AI and machine learning techniques to assess not only skills, but also aptitudes. To account for market shifts, consider and model skill adjacencies for in-demand work.

**Be transparent with your people.** Share information on individual skill profiles, the in-demand skills and development opportunities during the assessment process. Seek to give access and control of the skill profile to the employee.

# Assessing skills profiles: the art of the possible

SkyHive's powerful workforce reskilling technology is supporting rapid COVID-19 responses for governments, companies and communities through a unique machine/deep learning technology that analyzes employees, workforces and labor markets at a skills level in real time.

The platform drives real-time insights into external labor market supply and demand conditions, supports company-level workforce planning, facilitates rapid employment and identifies urgent reskilling with career pathway categorization that enables people leaders to quickly acquire or transition talent.

SkyHive's Skills Passport is a powerful solution for the assessment of individual skills and company-wide workforce insights.

Employees complete an individualized AI-generated skills "passport" profile based on their work, education and life experience which serves as their dashboard. With a passport in place, SkyHive's AI automates the generation of career pathways, matches to jobs within the organization based on skills adjacency, and targets reskilling pathways. This data, coupled with real-time labor market data, can then be aggregated for workforce planning views to support rapid workforce planning and transition.

# 03

Connect workers at scale

**Bring together people at scale by shifting impacted people within or outside the organization.**

Regardless of industry barriers, organizations can partner to build a resilient ecosystem that helps people access continued employment opportunities.

## KEY QUESTION:

How do you collaborate internally across functions and externally across industries to connect people to future work?

## KEY ACTIVITIES:

**Create unlikely partnerships.** Look to develop non-profit, public sector and outside industry relationships. Work directly, or leverage intermediaries, to help match groups of people with needed skills to employers with specific skill needs.

**Reconsider the workforce model.** Look at alternative employment models and other job design options to respond rapidly to workforce shifts.

**Stay grounded in skills and aptitudes.** Connect impacted people by matching their direct and/or adjacent skills to new opportunities and interests.

# Connecting workers at scale: the art of the possible

CHROs from organizations including Accenture, Lincoln Financial Group, ServiceNow and Verizon are helping to address the issue of moving workforce pools.

As unemployment surpasses record highs due to COVID-19, a group of leading companies from multiple industries has formed **People + Work Connect**, an employer-to-employer initiative that brings together companies laying off or furloughing people with those companies in urgent need of workers.

The business-to-business platform enables companies that are best positioned to rapidly share the experience and skills of their laid-off or furloughed workforces to connect at no cost with other companies on the platform that are seeking workers.

The platform is global and cross-industry to maximize the ability to deploy people with similar skills in one industry into other industries where jobs are being created. Ultimately, this will shorten the complex, often lengthy cycle of unemployment for people. The analytics-driven platform pools non-confidential and aggregated workforce information by categories such as location and experience.

For more information, visit:

<https://peopleworkconnect.accenture.com>

# 04

## Accelerate learning

**Use your insights into demand profiles to develop a well-defined picture of the relevant skills needed.** By comparing existing skills to current needs, HR can identify the skill gaps for the organization. Create the ability for people to rapidly learn, in order to change the trajectory of their career.

### KEY QUESTION:

How do you accelerate individuals' learning curves, so they can become more productive? Or, so they can become a productive member of someone else's organization?

### KEY ACTIVITIES:

**Tap into human potential.** Allow people to opt in and choose their learning. Don't underestimate people's willingness to continually learn and grow.

**Address the most critical skillset gaps within the organization.** Leverage agile platforms to quickly develop curated learning pathways and facilitate learning networks.

**Close the gap on skill adjacencies.** Take advantage of the high degree of transferability between needed skills and related adjacent skills. Accelerate learning based on the most in-demand adjacent skills.

# Accelerating learning: the art of the possible

Cognician is a digital change management platform that delivers impactful change activities consistently to global teams.

The company is helping ease clients' transitions to remote ways of working through multi-day challenges. These challenges prompt employees to plan their days, communicate actively, remove distractions, fine-tune their virtual tools, connect with others continually, show empathy and care and look after their health.

The programs build a sense of connection, belonging, and trust at a time of social distancing. One such project, with a regional police force, is for quarantined officers. These new digital tools empower them to do the work they love and contribute meaningfully and connect with the policing community and public.

# 05

## Foster shared resilience

**Creating shared workforce resilience means embracing vulnerability and encouraging open sharing about what's hard and uncomfortable.** These behaviors and mindsets lay the foundation for new ways of working that foster a more collaborative and less competitive talent ecosystem.

### KEY QUESTION:

How do you care for, nurture and foster resilience in people?

### KEY ACTIVITIES:

**Keep innovating and investing.** Explore new operating models that unleash people's ability to quickly adapt to change. Time and money in new alliances, learning and ecosystems will support a more adaptive and resilient workforce.

**Encourage and expect personal growth.** Create the space and opportunity for people to build confidence in their skills and potential as they shift into new work.

**Stay connected with your people.** Continue to foster trust by creating opt-in opportunities for temporarily transitioned people to access ongoing learning and hear about open roles or workforce shifts. Enable people to plan for work transitions with confidence.

# Fostering shared resilience: the art of the possible

meQuilibrium is a digital solution for building resilience at scale for Fortune 500 global enterprises.

Based on over 25 years of scientific research, in both clinical and corporate practice, resilience is proven to be a measurable, learnable set of foundational skills that positively impact health and performance.

Several new companies are enrolling their employees into the clinically-validated meQuilibrium program. All people have access to the Spotlight on Uncertainty page, which provides fresh articles, activities and affirmations daily. People that click through to enroll complete an assessment to get a fully personalized profile, resilience skill gap analysis and learning journey.

Thrive Global, a behavior change technology company, helps individuals and corporations unlock human potential.

Thrive offer clients best-in-class programs to increase employee well-being, performance and drive better business results. Its recently launched program, Thriving in the New Normal, provides the latest science and actionable microsteps to help individuals and companies manage through this unfolding crisis.

One example, Thrive Global recently partnered with the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health to launch a health and wellness program designed specifically for the emerging needs of health workers on the frontline of COVID-19.<sup>4</sup>

# Moving forward

The global pandemic has created an unprecedented sense of shared purpose for political, business, civic and human prosperity. The common global goal of reviving the economy is dissolving traditional industry and organization boundaries, inspiring collective action.

CHROs are on the front line of this response, equipped with the advanced technologies and intelligence they need to help navigate these sudden, massive workforce shifts.

Building these rapid response capabilities go far beyond any one crisis and into a new future of work—one fueled by the courage to try new things, a commitment to responsible leadership and a sense of shared purpose that fosters the greater good.

**How can we create  
shared workforce resilience?**



# Recommendations

## Right now

- Align on design principles and outside realities to inform potential scenario modeling and actions
- Create tight alignment on business strategy including the impact to locations, work, technology and the workforce
- Get a handle on your workforce analytics toolset and modeling capabilities; understand how strong your muscles are here
- Assemble your workforce data in order to develop potential scenarios for planning
- Decide how your organization wants to show up as a stakeholder in the community where your people live and work

## Now

- Assess your ability to uncover, trace and view the skills and proficiency levels of your people
- Create an understanding of what skills will be required for the “next” work
- Reimagine your recruiting functions, processes and key steps
- Review how you communicate and assess people for roles within your organization—are skills the currency?
- Evaluate your learning content and align it to both today's demand and the work of the future

## The next normal

- Move through policy and process barriers; reduce the friction by focusing on shared interests and outcomes
- Communicate business strategy, in-demand skills and available learning
- Provide ways for your people to assess and persistently update their skill profiles
- Provide both onboard and offboard experiences to the workforce to put humans in the best position to do their best work

# Contacts



**David Shaw**

Managing Director  
Talent & Organization  
/Human Potential



**Nicholas Whittall**

Managing Director  
Talent & Organization  
/Human Potential



**Mary Kate  
Morley Ryan**

Director  
Talent &  
Organization  
/Human Potential



**Gaston Carrion**

Managing director  
Talent & Organization/  
Human Potential,  
Asia Pacific lead



**Patricia Feliciano**

Managing director  
Talent & Organization/  
Human Potential,  
Latin America lead



**Tim Good**

Managing director  
Talent & Organization/  
Human Potential,  
Europe lead



**Yaarit Silverstone**

Senior managing director  
Talent & Organization/  
Human Potential, North  
America lead

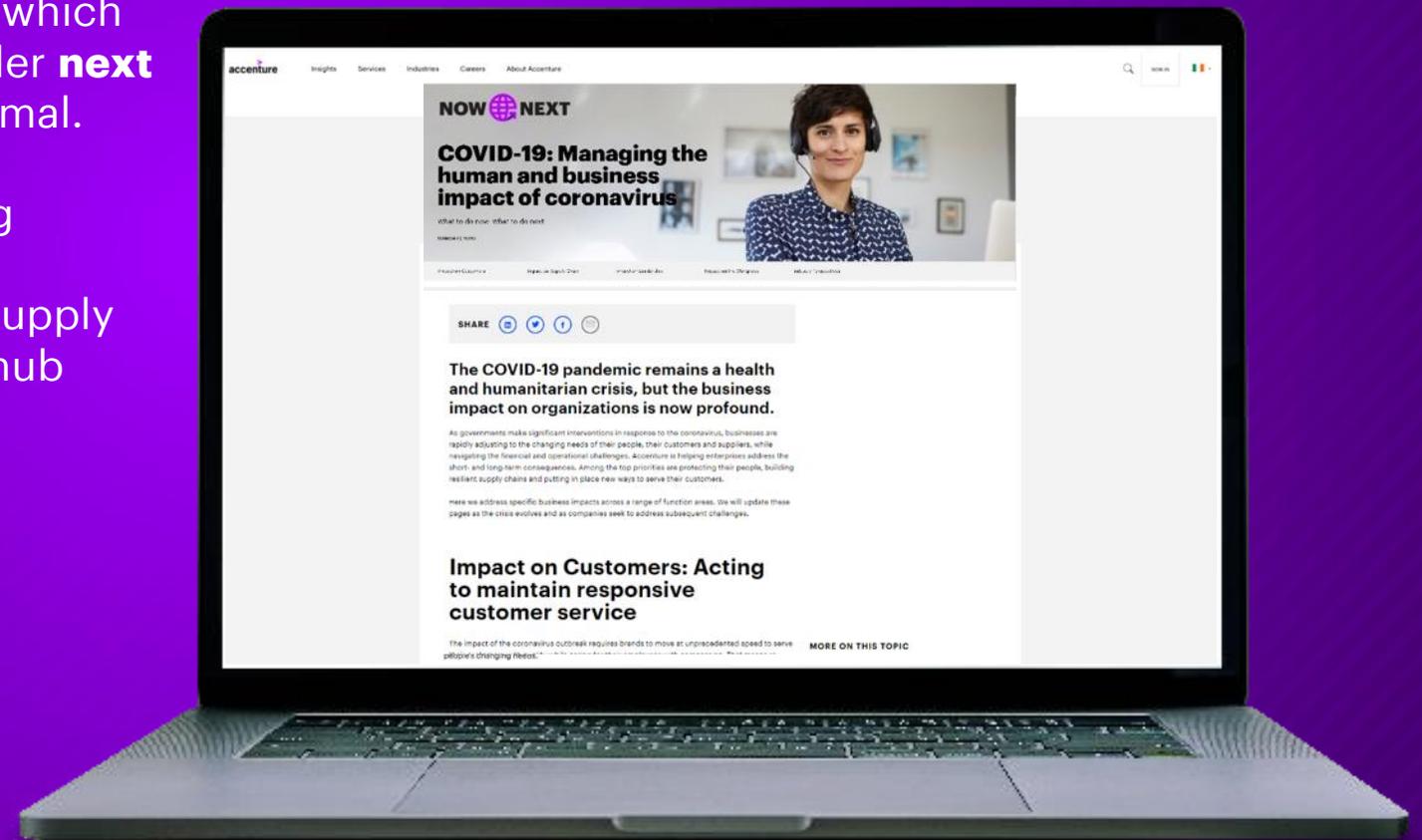
Contact us for more information at [humanresilience@accenture.com](mailto:humanresilience@accenture.com)

To help our clients navigate both the human and business impact of COVID-19, we've created a hub of all of our latest thinking on a variety of topics.

Each topic highlights specific actions which can be taken **now**, and what to consider **next** as industries move towards a new normal.

From leadership essentials to ensuring productivity for your employees and customer service groups to building supply chain resilience and much more, our hub will be constantly updated. Check back regularly for more insights.

[VISIT OUR HUB HERE](#)



# Notes and References

- <sup>1</sup> [“COVID-19: impact could cause equivalent of 195 million job losses, says ILO chief”](#), *UN News*, April 8, 2020.
- <sup>2</sup> [“The coronavirus crisis thrusts corporate HR chiefs into the spotlight”](#), *The Economist*, March 24, 2020.
- <sup>3</sup> The scenario is illustrative based on analysis using Burning Glass and OES-BLS data. For more information on how skills mapping might be done, see <https://www.nber.org/papers/w26844.pdf>.
- <sup>4</sup> [Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health collaborates with Thrive Global to launch The Health and Wellness For All Program”](#), *Harvard School of Public Health news release*, March 16, 2020.

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