



Gartner HR Research Finds 58% of the Workforce Will Need New Skill Sets to Do Their Jobs Successfully

STAMFORD, Conn., February 4, 2021 — HR leaders are finding it increasingly difficult to quickly find and develop talent with the most in demand skills, yet 58% of the workforce needs new skills to get their jobs done, according to Gartner, Inc.

Gartner TalentNeuron data shows the total number of skills required for a single job has been increasing by 10% year-over-year since 2017.

Furthermore, one in three skills in an average 2017 job posting in IT, finance or sales are already obsolete. Emerging skills gaps due to ongoing business disruption and rapidly evolving needs have accelerated as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

“Many organisations have focused on talent acquisition to get the skills they need, however a 2020 Gartner survey revealed that 74% of organisations froze hiring in response to COVID-19,” said Alison Smith, director in the Gartner HR practice. “In today’s environment, hiring is not possible for many organisations. Instead, companies can look at current employees who have skills closely matched to those in demand and utilise training to close any gaps.”

When considering skills adjacencies, to address skills needs, HR leaders should do the following:

Increase transparency of current employee skill sets
Identify and mobilise nonobvious skills adjacencies
Adjust career pathing strategies to encourage flexible career progression
Gain Better Insight Into Employee Skill Sets

The first step to leveraging skills adjacencies is for HR leaders to collect information on current employee skill sets, which enables them to map out secondary and tertiary skills. Rather than creating a complete picture of current employee skill sets, many leading organisations focus on collecting key skills data that is just comprehensive enough to allow them to easily keep it current. Employees and their managers must be empowered and encouraged to main a portfolio of skills that are visible to HR, which will then enable HR to maintain a current view of skills for the organisation.

Understand and Prioritise Skills Adjacencies

To address critical skills needs through leveraging skills adjacencies, HR must determine which secondary or tertiary skills to begin building upon. Leading organisations are using machine learning and large data to identify and unlock the power of skills adjacencies at scale. Some progressive HR leaders have partnered with their own internal data science teams to ground upskilling efforts in current knowledge of employee capabilities and prioritise immediate skills application.

Encourage Flexible Career Progression

Traditional career frameworks rely on the assumption that roles will remain relatively unchanged for years and move in a ladder-like trajectory. As skills adjacencies begin to uncover new connections and career options, career paths will need to be more fluid and unrestricted by traditional roles and skills requirements.

“Career paths need to be flexible enough to enable employees to move around in — often unconventional — ways that allow the organisation to best leverage employees’ skills adjacencies,” said Ms. Smith. “Uncoupling employees’ concept of ‘progress’ away from just roles and titles empowers employees to be dynamic and ready to change course as the organisation needs.”

Gartner clients can read more in the report “Leveraging Skills Adjacencies to Address Skills Gaps.”

About Gartner TalentNeuron

Gartner TalentNeuron™ is the premium end-to-end labour market intelligence solution combining real-time insights from trusted global data sources, deep research, and expert advisors to guide decisions on location, talent and competition. Learn more or schedule for your personalised demo.

About the Gartner HR Practice

The Gartner HR practice brings together the best relevant content approaches across Gartner to offer individual decision makers strategic business advice on the mission-critical priorities that cut across the HR function. Additional information is available

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