



# Reskilling and Upskilling Your Workforce in an Automated World



# The Rise of Automation in the Workplace

With each new Industrial Revolution comes big changes to jobs - coal in the 1700s, gas in the 1800s, electronics and nuclear energy in the 1900s. Now that we are in the Fourth Industrial Revolution, it's no different with the rise of digital technology and automation.

The first robot joined the American workforce in 1959 at an automotive die casting plant in New Jersey. By 2017, there were two million robots across the world, with the number projected to almost double to 3.8 million units by 2021.

## This growth can be attributed to a few things:

- 1.** Robots are simply more affordable than people.
- 2.** Robots' capabilities are growing, and they are able to process data quicker than humans.
- 3.** Demand for goods is increasing, and robots can make more products in less time.





## Integrating Automation into the Workforce

Knowing who holds the jobs with the highest automation potential is crucial in planning for the future. In their 2019 report “The future of work in America: People and places, today and tomorrow,” McKinsey & Company found out just that.

### The most affected classes are:

- Education
- Race
- Age
- Sex



## Education

Those with a high school education or less are four times more likely to be in a highly automatable role than individuals with a bachelor's degree or higher – and nearly 14 times more vulnerable than someone with a graduate degree.

## Race

The most vulnerable populations are Hispanic workers, who make up more than 25% of possible displaced workers, followed by African Americans at more than 23%. Caucasian individuals are sitting at more than 22% and Asian-American workers have the lowest rate at just under 22%.

## Age

Workers of all ages will be affected, but young workers face a unique challenge. With automation integrating with service positions first, they will have to find new jobs to build skills in problem solving, decision making, and communication – skills millions of Americans developed working in food and customer service roles as their first jobs.

More than 11 million workers older than 50, despite being close to retirement, could be displaced by automated work.

## Sex

Men mostly make up the pool of drivers and assembly line workers and face up to 53% of the workforce being automated while women in administrative roles face 47% job replacement.



## Heading in a New Direction

Automation will displace many jobs in the years to come, but many others will be created, and some current roles will see their focus head in a new direction. There's likely to be growth in jobs that need technological, social, and emotional skills.

### **Emerging and advanced technologies need people who understand how they work;**

those same people that know how to innovate, develop, and adapt. McKinsey predicts a 50% increase in the time spent on using technology skills.

Machines are a long way from mastering the social and emotional skills that we as humans innately have, such as empathy. This also includes skills to be learned, such as proper communication and etiquette. The demand for these skills will keep growing, and by 2030, we will see a 26% rise in these skills.

There's also going to be a 19% growth in cognitive skills, such as creativity, critical thinking, and decision making – all things, again, humans have the ability to do naturally.

# An Example of A Dynamic Shift

Susan Lund of McKinsey Global Institute shared a great example of jobs shifting in this [MGI podcast](#). She shared that in the 1980s, bank tellers spent their time collecting cash to deposit or doing withdrawals. These tasks were then quickly automated by the introduction of ATMs. But the number of bank tellers didn't decrease (it actually increased!) because they adapted and shifted their focus. Today these bank tellers spend their days helping customers sign up for financial products and services.

For nearly 20 years, this was a boon to the financial services industry. They are now facing new challenges, with online banking, where they will have to adapt yet again as technology advances.

This is a prime example of how automation affected one part of the workforce. Let's look at more of the effects automation is having on our workforce today.







## The Effect of Automation and AI on the Workforce

Automation continues to advance every year. In 2018, there were more than 40,000 industrial robots deployed across the United States, a number that jumps to more than 293,000 in 2020, according to the International Federation of Robotics.

While these technologies will help boost productivity, GDP growth, and performance, it's likely to have a toll on workers. Today, one worker might manage one or two machines, while in the age of tomorrow that same worker could be managing up to 20 machines. As a result, robotics and automation could lead to the displacement of 20 million manufacturing jobs by 2030, according to Oxford Economics.

And that is just one expert's guess on the number of jobs that could be affected in just one sector. MIT conducted research and found varying answers from different sources.

# Employees' Perspective on Automation

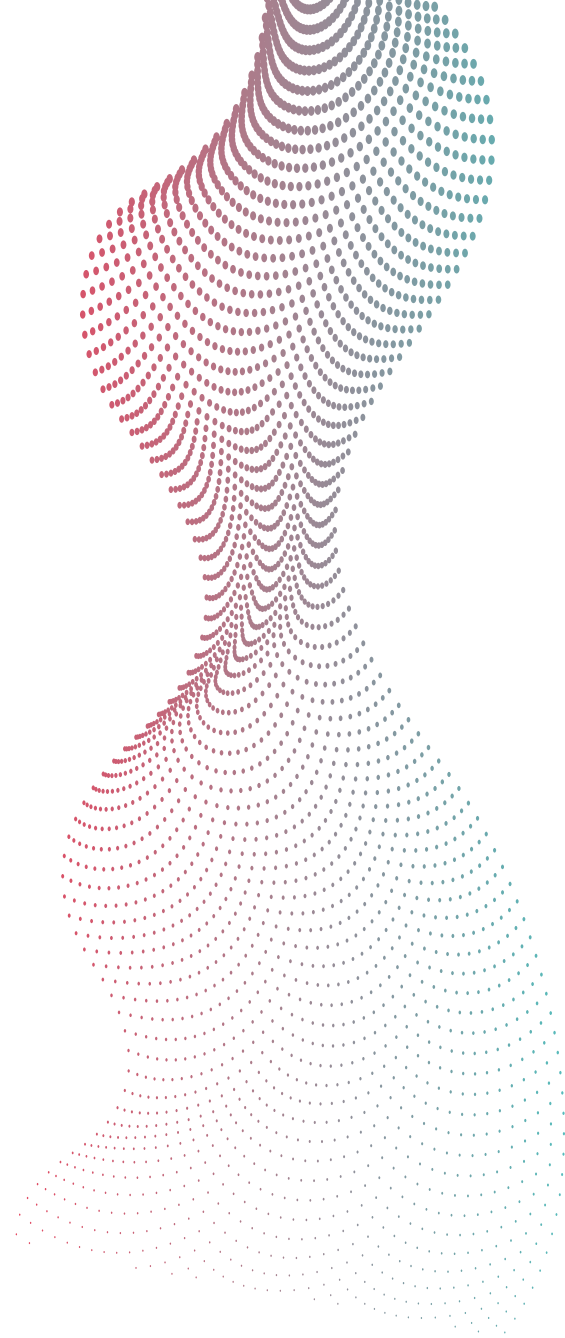
It's important to look at how employees – the people most affected – feel about automation. Hot Spots Movement collaborated with BritainThinks and sat down with employees most at risk of losing their jobs to see how they felt about automation and the future.

Many participants shared that they imagine the positive effects of automation, one being removing the more repetitive aspects of their roles. Automation means more time is spent on “intellectually challenging tasks” while jobs become more exciting for workers.

While they can see the positive effect automation can have, they have anxiety, too. Employees need time to prepare for what may seem like the inevitable. Without advance notice, employees will worry about their jobs, families, and futures, and be left to speculate, which can fuel and spread rumors.

With this advance notice, employees will be able to accept that they must relinquish parts of their jobs while, in turn, developing new skills. If you don't provide that support for them, any rollout plans you have can fail, and enthusiasm will dwindle.

With any rollout plan, it's crucial to focus on employees and their futures. It will be important to offer them the training they need to work in tandem with their new “coworkers.”







## Adapting to Automation in the Workforce

With changing technology and the shift in skills needed, how will workers and organizations adapt? Would hiring new employees outright or simply reskilling the current workforce be better?

The cost of hiring someone to fill a vacant position is around 33% of the vacating employee's salary. For an employee making \$50,000 annually, it costs about \$16,500 to replace them, and the cost increases as the salary increases. A survey by Lighthouse Research found that reskilling an employee costs less than \$10,000.

## However, there are more benefits than just monetary savings.

Not investing in your employees could hurt your overall culture and reputation. Around 40% of workers give their companies a negative rating on how well they help their employees advance their careers. Putting in the time and effort to provide training and development makes your employees feel appreciated and valued. This is what fosters loyalty, which brings in talented candidate referrals, decreases turnover, and boosts engagement.

To be successful and on top of the emerging skill shift, companies will need to retool how they go about business and training.



# Addressing Skill Gaps



The skills gap has been widening in major sectors of the workforce for several reasons. There is a growing lack of STEM skills among the current pool of workers; there's a focus on four-year degrees and college education over trade schools; and there's generally a negative perception of service-sector, manual-labor careers. All those factors mean jobs are going to be left open until the gap is closed.

## "How to Find and Close Your Organization's Skill Gaps"

Our ebook will provide strategies for identifying and closing skill gaps in your company.

[View Ebook](#)

As some jobs are eliminated due to the growth of technology, new jobs will emerge. Companies will need people with the right skills to take care of automated equipment and digital processes and to do the jobs that machines cannot. The demand for technological skills (such as interacting with technology) is expected to rise by more than 50%, and the need for complex cognitive skills is set to increase by 33%.

To address these, the future of work will require two changes: upskilling and reskilling.





# Upskilling Your Current Workforce

Upskilling is providing employees with access to new skills and tasks within their same job. It focuses on helping employees become more skilled in their current position. Executives of companies on the front lines see upskilling their current workforce as an urgent matter they need to fix.

Knowing that the landscape is changing presents a unique opportunity to invest in upskilling employees now. Employees can be trained in digital literacy – learning how to work with emerging technologies rather than being left behind.

**Upskilling your employees gives them the opportunity to grow in their careers with your organization. This can include technical skills (like software or IT) as well as soft skills (communication, agility, leadership, resilience, etc.)**

One way that upskilling benefits both employees and the organization is increased productivity. Employees feel more productive and are able to accomplish more when they have received new training. This helps them to work more effectively and efficiently, which means better results overall.

As for benefits to the organization, helping employees learn new skills will keep them in their roles – which means employee retention will be higher (and turnover costs lower). With that comes better morale. Employees who feel invested in are generally happier in their roles and have a brighter outlook on their future with the company.



## *How to Upskill Your Employees*

Now that you've discovered your skill gaps, here are ways you can upskill the people you already have in place, rather than spending money hiring new workers.

**Make training readily available for everyone.**

Regardless of seniority, department, or anything else, make sure everyone has the same access to learning opportunities. You may find that otherwise indifferent employees find something to be passionate about when they're offered the chance to learn. By using a blended learning approach – mixing classroom learning with online resources, for example – you can make upskilling very effective. Encouraging exploratory learning alongside assigned training allows for individuals to grow in their own areas of interest, as well as developing the growth you want to see in your employees.

You'll need to market the learning tools you have available and encourage employees to engage with them. You should also keep skill gaps top of mind so you can develop appropriate training plans and suggested learning. By using an off-the-shelf content library, this becomes easy, since the courses and lessons are already produced, easy to assign, and ready to be discovered by employees.

**Accomodate  
different learning  
preferences.**

Providing training for all learning preferences ensures that engaging training content is available for everyone. Whether it's through classroom instruction, self-study, or microlearning, make sure there are formats for everyone to access high-quality, accurate information.

**Target training  
to specific roles**

While the general soft skills are the same (communication, for example), you likely want some employees to have additional training specific to their roles. Sales could have extra customer service training while managers have coaching training. By suggesting or assigning learning paths or playlists, you can curate content for specific roles.

**Put employees  
in charge of their  
learning journey.**

Giving employees the controls to their future and professional development helps them make decisions about where they want to go with their career. When they feel like they have the freedom to explore their own interests, they will buy into upskilling much more quickly, allowing your organization to reap the rewards of having higher performing teams.

As a reminder, everyone is motivated by different goals, so providing your employees with a variety of learning options and content will produce the best results.







## Reskilling Your Current Workforce

Reskilling is the act of providing training that helps employees gain new skills so they can move into new jobs and roles. It's simply not feasible for organizations to sit back and wait for the perfectly skilled people to come along. Innovative technology is changing the landscape for learning and development and it's imperative to have a clear strategy for matching skill gaps with training.

In the 2018 PwC survey

### **"The talent challenge: Rebalancing skills for the digital age,"**

67% of CEOs said that they have a responsibility to retrain employees whose tasks and jobs are at risk of being automated out of existence. A separate survey by McKinsey said that 66% of respondents see "addressing potential skills gaps related to automation/digitization" within their workforces as at least a "top-ten priority."

The industries and sectors most likely to need reskilling include manufacturing, transportation, retail, and maintenance because of repetitive tasks often completed by their workers.

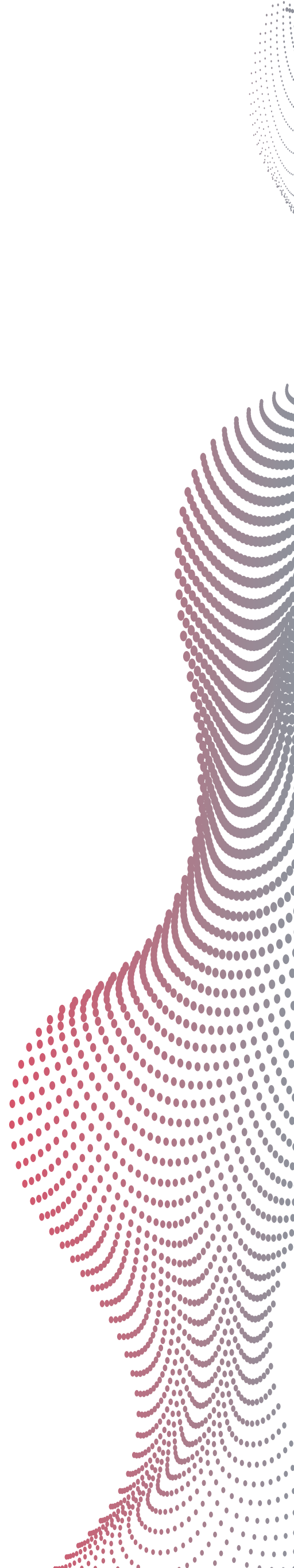
So, what are some of the challenges of reskilling?

# *How to Reskill Your Employees*

The personal goals and aspirations of employees are a major factor in their productivity, engagement, and loyalty. But if a company doesn't know how to harness those aspirations, reskilling will be next to impossible. Have managers discuss with employees what they enjoy learning about and working on – this will help with laying out development plans that factor in employees' interests and goals. Compare that information with a needs assessment to address skill gaps and help with overarching training goals.

Technical skills change quickly. Just when we think we have something down, there are updates ready to change everything. The skills people possess now may not be the skills they need five or 10 years from now. It'll be crucial that L&D teams focus on their reskilling and training initiatives to make sure they remain relevant and up to date. Keeping up with technical skills can be done very efficiently by using off-the-shelf training content produced by experts. Employees can complete a course individually in 30-90 minutes, rather than taking a whole group of people off the job for a half-day class where everyone is at different skill levels. Online options allow more personalization in reskilling and therefore more efficiency.

Retraining is most successful when it happens on the job and in shorter timeframes, so employees can then put what they've learned into immediate action, boosting knowledge retention. Being able to connect what they are learning into the flow of work keeps people engaged in training.





## **Benefits to Training Employees with BizLibrary**

Employee training is an opportunity to invest in your people and expand their current knowledge, allowing both the employees and your organization to reap the benefits. Through a modern training program, employees become more motivated and morale increases, bringing higher retention and increased efficiency.



At BizLibrary, we think it's smart to use a blended learning approach for employee training. Blended learning gives everyone choices and flexibility - providing both classroom and online offerings means that all learning preferences are covered to accommodate all employees. It can also save money and provide better insights and metrics to measure training success.

## **Two popular options for online learning platforms are a Learning Management System (LMS) and a Learning Experience Platform (LXP).**

BizLibrary offers both of these platforms, and either one is a valuable option for managing training. With our platforms, training can be completed anytime, anywhere, and with microlearning, employees don't have to be taken off the job for long periods of time. On top of that, our platforms can help manage your classroom-style training as well.

Administrators can easily find, curate, and assign training content from our online library for specific skill development through curated learning paths, playlists, and prescribed learning.

When you invest in a robust learning solution, there can be a lot to dive into, so BizLibrary provides a consultant who understands the ins and outs of our products and can help ensure you're getting the most out of your employee training efforts. They'll be a crucial resource when it comes to using training to overcome business challenges, getting leadership buy-in, developing marketing efforts, and executing flawless program management.



Our expansive library provides employees with searchable content that piques their interest and fits what they're looking to learn. When they're able to elect what they're learning, a strong learning culture begins to take root.



BizLibrary client PV Fluid Products used to get training content from many different vendors, including free content online. The decentralized training process made organizing high-quality training a major headache. However, by using BizLibrary to bring all of their training into one place, they began seeing results (better compliance and completion records) by providing multiple training styles catered to the individual's needs.



# Choosing the Right Training Platform for Your Organization

Selecting the right training platform for employees is crucial for utilization. It will need to fit into the flow of work while effectively helping to close skill gaps.

## The BizLibrary LMS

The BizLibrary LMS is perfect for prescribing mandatory training to employees, while still giving them the opportunity to explore useful content on their own. The system is built to better plan, track, and centralize training while also helping to build a stronger program overall. This is a great tool for reskilling employees and teaching everyone the skills they need to move into new roles.

## The BizLibrary LXP

BizLibrary's LXP provides a modern, learner-centric tool that puts on-demand learning at their fingertips. Employees can quickly and easily search for the skills they want to learn and share that content with other team members. The system offers a personalized experience through a recommendation engine that suggests related content for each user, which helps employees take upskilling into their own hands.



See why organizations like yours trust us to help them build a stronger workforce through modern training solutions.

[Learn More](#)

Ready to get a closer look at our solutions and see how they can be tailored to your needs?

[Request a Demo](#)

## *Recommended Resources*

For even more helpful information, check out these additional resources.

The  
Ultimate  
Buyer's Guide to  
**Online Learning  
Solutions**

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How Teel Plastics  
Improves Training  
Results with BizLibrary.

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How to Close the  
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Manufacturing  
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