

 WHITE PAPER

# Are Your Employees Digital Ready?



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## **INTRODUCTION**

Today's workplace requires employees to be digital ready: they need both technical and cognitive skills to efficiently use provided productivity and collaboration tools. What assessment and enablement supports are available when employees are hired with knowledge and skills gaps? Once skill gaps are identified, how do you assess and meet employee learning needs?

Assessing and training employees in digital skills results in improved productivity, innovation, agility, and work quality. This whitepaper explores the impact of digital skills gaps on organizations, how to determine if you have a gap in productivity and collaboration tools skills, and how to improve digital skills across your organization.

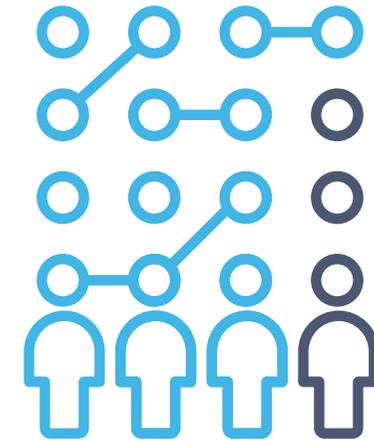
## YOUR DIGITAL SKILLS GAP

Today's digital landscape is changing the way we all interact with the world, the way we do business, the way we buy products and services, and the way we manage our personal lives. The impact on businesses is astounding. CEOs see disruptive change permeating their organizations.<sup>1</sup> To compete in these conditions, organizations understand that digital transformation is a requirement for ongoing survival. While many organizations have set goals around digital transformation, research shows that 70% of business leaders feel their workforce needs to improve their skills to be competitive in this new digital environment.<sup>2</sup>

How do your employees measure up? Digital skills proficiency allows workers to do their jobs more efficiently and effectively. With broad changes to how organizations must do business, most, if not all, jobs are changing. To complete everyday tasks and work more efficiently and effectively, employees need to be proficient at using common productivity and collaboration tools.

Between 2002 and 2016, 48% of jobs that once required a low degree of digital proficiency changed to require proficiency in both productivity and collaboration tools.<sup>3</sup> In fact, 82% of middle-skill jobs (jobs that require more than a high school diploma but less than a college degree) now require digital skills in productivity and collaboration tools.<sup>4</sup> Technological advances and changes to business processes are innovating the way individuals perform their roles in industries such as finance, healthcare, and agriculture. Existing jobs in areas such as HR, business administration, and marketing are all seeing the impact of new digital technologies. High-demand topics such as analytics, project management, collaboration, and data-driven decision making are examples where digital skills cross the "high-tech" barrier and are used in an increasingly diverse set of roles. With actual proficiency in some of these areas as low as 39%, there is much to be done to ensure recent technologies are truly enabling our work.<sup>5</sup>

**70%** of business leaders feel their workforce needs to improve their skills.



1 "Careers and Learning: Real time, all the time: 2017 Deloitte Global Human Capital Trends." Deloitte University Press, 2017.

2 "How prepared is your organization for a digital transformation?" Skillssoft, 2017.

3 "Digitization and the American Workforce." Metropolitan Policy Program at Brookings, 2017.

4 "The Digital Edge: Middle-skill Workers and Careers." Burning Glass and Capital One, 2017.

5 "The Digital Talent Gap." CapGemini, 2017.

## THE IMPACT OF DIGITAL SKILLS

### • ON HIRING AND EMPLOYEE GROWTH

A majority of organizations are worried about finding the right digital skillsets in their workforce. 71% of organizations report that new hires don't have all the required skills when starting a new position<sup>6</sup>. Many believe, mistakenly, that because millennials are digital natives, they have the digital skills needed to be immediately productive in the workplace. While they may be technology-dependent, millennials are not necessarily tech savvy. Millennials spend on average 35 hours a week on digital media, yet 58% of them have low skills in using technology to problem solve<sup>7</sup>.

As roles evolve, businesses look for candidates with a broader range of skills so they can adapt and grow with the organization.<sup>8</sup> Employees need to be versatile and able to move into roles that may not yet be defined or even conceptualized. Employees who start in entry-level positions need both a digital mindset and skillset to move horizontally and vertically within an organization. With the half-life of skills for some professionals now as low as 1.5 years, organizations face increasing pressure to provide in-house re-skilling and up-skilling to keep employees operating at maximum productivity and efficiency.<sup>9</sup>

### • ON PRODUCTIVITY AND PERFORMANCE

Gaps in digital skills result in decreased performance, loss of productivity, reduced number of customers, and, ultimately, less profit.<sup>9</sup> The two main outcomes of under-utilized digital technologies are decreasing productivity and performance.

It's estimated that 7.6% of an employee's time is unproductive.<sup>10</sup> That's nearly 5 hours lost by every employee each month. The cumulative economic impact of lost productivity and time is enormous. Of time lost: 35% is due to inadequate computer skills, 28% is due to inadequate internet skills, 16% is due to problems using tablets and smartphones, and 21% is a result of time lost aiding colleagues. Time lost equates to lost revenue. In the United States, revenue lost to unproductive time is estimated to be valued at \$1.3 trillion annually.<sup>11</sup>



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<sup>6</sup> "Exploring America's Tech Skills Gap and the Parallel Deficits of Applied Tech Skills and Hard Tech Skills." Career Advisory Board, 2017.

<sup>7</sup> "Does Not Compute: The High Cost of Low Technology Skills in the U.S. - and What We Can Do About It." Change the Equation, June, 2015.

<sup>8</sup> "Being Digital: Embrace the future of work and your people will embrace it with you." Accenture Strategy Executive Research, 2015.

<sup>9</sup> "ICT for Work: Digital skills in the workplace." European Commission, Directorate-General of Communications Networks, Content & Technology, 2016.

<sup>10</sup> "Ctrl Alt Delete - Lost productivity due to IT problems and inadequate computer skills in the workplace." University of Twente, January, 2012.

<sup>11</sup> "The social economy: Unlocking value and productivity through social technologies." McKinsey Global Institute, July, 2012.

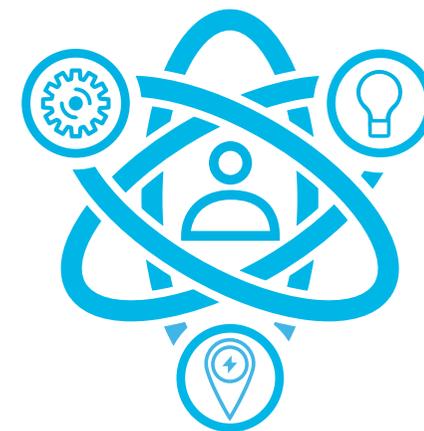
## ASSESSING DIGITAL SKILLS

Being proficient in digital skills means your employees have:

- The right **technical skills** to know how to use existing tools while also being adaptable and flexible when using new applications.
- A **cognitive skillset** to analyze and evaluate information they find and create new information—solving problems and building shared knowledge.
- Required **digital citizenship skills** to interact with others globally in a responsible, ethical way.

How do you evaluate your organization's required digital skills? Here are some guidelines for developing your own digital-ready assessment.

1. **Scope your evaluation effort.** Before you do anything else, make sure you define what you're trying to accomplish. Are you trying to comprehensively evaluate your organization's enabling digital skill proficiency? Perhaps your goals more focused on understanding the current skillset in advance of deploying a new collaboration tool? The scope of the assessment can be very wide or narrow.
2. **Create a Digital Skills Catalog** for your organization. For each role you intend to survey, identify the following:
  - a. What digital technologies are required now? What will be required in the future?
  - b. What technical skills are necessary for employees to use these digital technologies effectively?
  - c. If the technologies have a social or collaborative component to them, what digital citizenship skills or best practices will employees will need to learn to be effective and responsible?
  - d. Will employees need to be able to find and evaluate digital information for accuracy, currency, and reliability when using these digital technologies?
3. **Develop the assessment tool.** To create valid, engaging assessment questions:
  - a. Use internal and external sources to ensure question content accuracy.
  - b. Vary your questions types: multiple choice questions are great, but so are drag & drop matching, ranking, & others.
  - c. Use scenario-based questions to assess judgement, norms, ethics, etc.
  - d. Consider a practice-based exam where employees can show what they know.
  - e. And above all, keep it short and to the point.
4. **Test and adjust.** Identify a sample cohort to take your assessment before widely distributing it. Use the results to resolve any issues in question clarity and intent.
5. **Deploy your assessment.** If you can, use small incentives, like a gift card drawing, to help motivate employees to complete the assessment..
6. **Analyze your data.** Take a look at the results. Where are skill gaps? In certain roles or demographics? With certain technologies?
7. **Take action.** Use data to drive the development of a training program tailored to your organization's needs. Leverage off-the-shelf content to create an engaging, multi-modal learning experience that addresses your organization's digital skills gap.



Here are some guidelines for developing your own digital-ready assessment.

## IMPROVING DIGITAL SKILLS

To stay competitive and retain talent, organizations must proactively provide engaging learning opportunities for employees who need proficiency in productivity and collaboration tools. While 80% of organizations believe that continuous learning is important, only 17% of organizations use current and future digital needs to drive a formal training initiative each year.<sup>12</sup> It's time for learning and development teams to upskill in-house and reap the benefits. 85% of companies who invest in a modern learning and design strategy see almost immediate improvement in productivity, 86% see reduced time for employees to learn new skills, and 75% see a more nimble workforce.<sup>13</sup> The benefits are clear—proactive upskilling translates into improved business outcomes.

- **AT THE POINT OF NEED**

The use of pre-defined assignments that follow a sequential learning path delivered through an organization's learning management system certainly have their place, as do instructor-led training sessions. However, today's reality is that workers must learn and apply new digital skills more frequently and faster than ever before.<sup>14</sup> When an employee has an important "How do I...?" question, they need access to just-in-time digital training that allows them to immediately find the answer and complete the task at hand. Employees spend 19% of their work day searching for information.<sup>15</sup> An employee in the midst of updating a SharePoint page should be able to seamlessly get an answer to an in-the-moment SharePoint question without disrupting the flow of their work. Today's learning must be contextualized and incorporated directly into work practices, strengthening the connection between working and learning.

- **AT THE LEVEL OF NEED**

Not everyone learns the same way. Not everyone needs the same depth of training for the same learning objective. Today's digital training must support both micro- and macro-level learning:

**Microlearning** enables employees to quickly find answers to immediate questions. It is composed of short videos or video segments that are organized by topic, indexed, and searchable by keywords.

**Macrolearning** is a deep dive into a broader category or topic. Rather than lasting minutes, macrolearning often will last hours or even longer. It typically comes with a greater number of learning aids such as exercises, glossaries, and assessments.

<sup>12</sup> "Careers and Learning: Real time, all the time: 2017 Deloitte Global Human Capital Trends," Deloitte University Press, 2017.

<sup>13</sup> "The Digital Talent Gap." CapGemini, 2017.

<sup>14</sup> "Transforming Talent in the Modern Workforce." Fosway Group, 2017.

<sup>15</sup> "The Disruption of Digital Learning: 10 Things We Have Learned." Bersin by Deloitte, 2017.

**17%** of organizations use current and future digital needs to drive a formal training initiative each year.

Both levels of learning are vital in a robust digital skills training program. Often, one connects to the other: macrolearning on creating a JIRA project for the new Agile scrum team may result in follow-up microlearning sessions to answer more specific, nuanced questions. Conversely, a quick microlearning session to answer an immediate question on task allocation may spawn a greater interest in a more comprehensive project management course.

- **AT PACE WITH TECHNOLOGY UPDATES**

Increased adoption of cloud-based technologies results in less IT department control over updates. Now IT teams must keep pace with the frequency of software updates, often many times a year, with little forewarning. With the growing number of browser-based tools available, IT departments have less control over the applications used across the organization. Given the number of updates and new products that hit the market every year, training in productivity and collaboration applications has become an absolute must. This presents a challenge to the L&D team responsible for keeping training content both as comprehensive as possible and also up-to-date. If training content is outdated, learners will seek training elsewhere or not at all.

## **RESULTS OF A DIGITAL-READY WORKFORCE**

Employees with technical and cognitive digital skills help drive productivity, innovation, agility, and improved work quality. A digital-ready workforce achieves business objectives and digitally literate employees are more engaged in their day-to-day work and better equipped to adapt as technological advances evolve their roles.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> "Being Digital: Embrace the future of work and your people will embrace it with you." Accenture Strategy Executive Research, 2015.

## HOW SKILLSOFT CAN HELP

Skillsoft's curated content portfolio provides training for the productivity and collaboration tools used most by today's digital organizations. By using clearly-defined learning objectives as the backbone to our content, learners can easily dive into specific videos for as-you-need it learning, take a course for a more in-depth learning experience, or even pick up an ebook. Our engaging content centers around realistic business scenarios, giving learners practical training and solutions they can immediately apply to their day-to-day activities. Finally, with weekly updates to our catalog, you know the Skillsoft productivity and collaboration tool training content keeps pace with today's technology updates.

*Experience Percipio, Skillsoft's intelligent learning platform, to discover how we can help your organisation become digital ready.*

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Emily is responsible for the driving strategic vision of the Productivity and Collaboration Tools content portfolio. Passionate about enabling people to succeed, she has extensive experience in the eLearning and training industries. Prior to joining Skillsoft, Emily was a product manager at Pearson, where she led a team developing Revel™, Pearson's next-generation interactive learning environment. At Aptima, Inc., she led the development of innovative performance measurement and training technologies for simulation-based training environments. With an MSE and BSE in human factors and industrial engineering from the University of Iowa, Emily has always been enthusiastic about improving the lives of individuals at the intersection of technology and critical, everyday activities. She is excited to be leading that charge at Skillsoft.



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Skillsoft is the global leader in eLearning with a long history of innovation. We train more professionals than any other company in the world and are trusted by the world's leading organisations, including over 50% of the Fortune 500.

We currently serve over 6,700 customers and more than 45,000,000 learners worldwide and provide continuing, hands-on support to assist them in maximising their ongoing success.

Skillsoft has grown rapidly, with 2,500 employees across multiple locations in North America, EMEA and APAC. For more information, **visit [www.skillsoft.com](https://www.skillsoft.com)**.