

 White Paper

# The Growing Enterprise Demand for Skill-Building Networks

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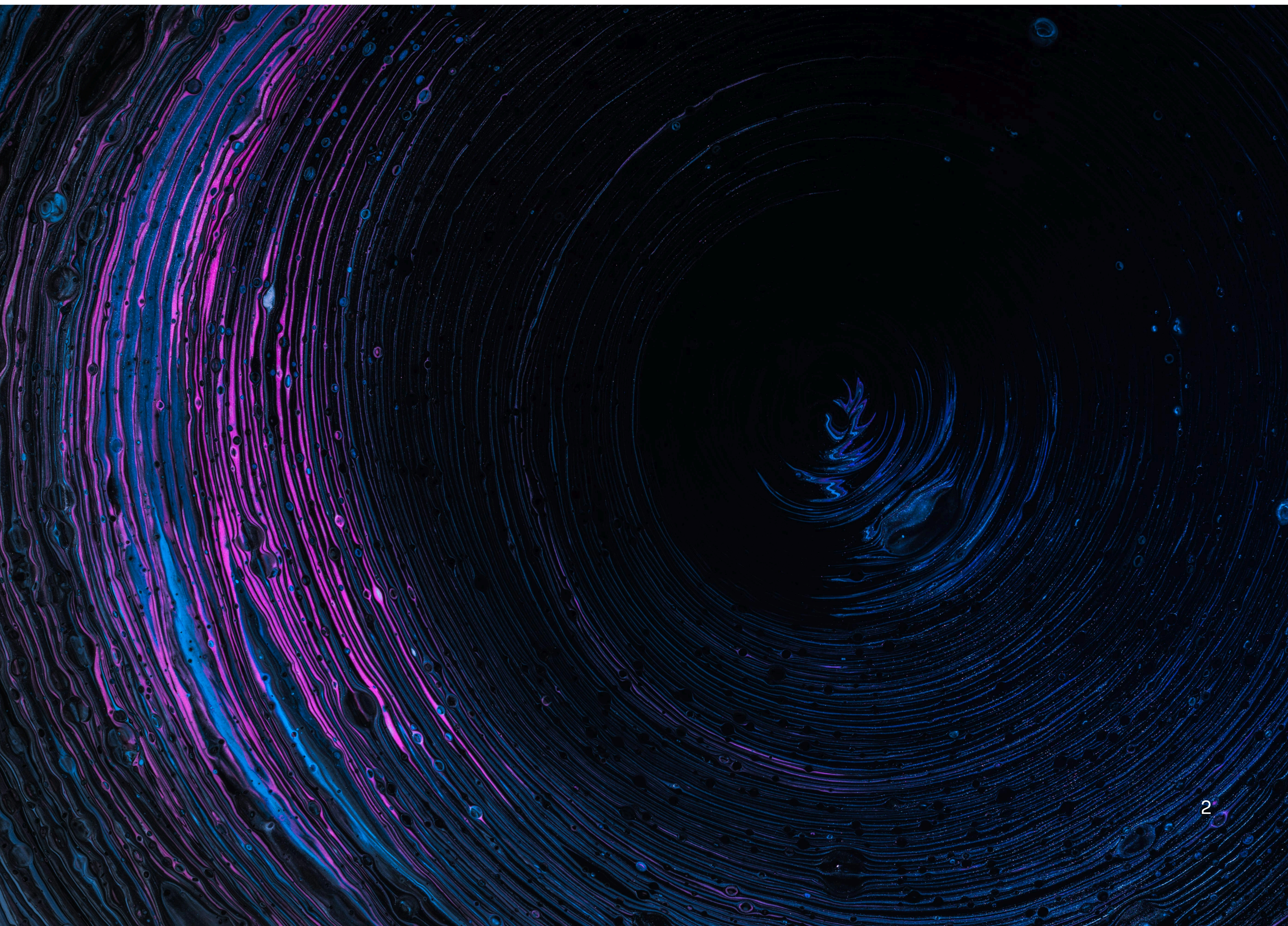


As the pace and scale of change accelerates, organizations will find it increasingly harder to develop the key skills needed to remain competitive. This dramatically increases the need for rapid and effective employee skills development, fueled by AI-powered networks of learners across the organization.

This paper highlights the needs of organizational decision-makers, such as C-suite, line-of-business, and HR to create “skill-building networks,” as they seek to ensure they will have the skills they need to solve the problems of today and tomorrow.

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# Key Skills Are Becoming Harder to Find and Keep...

Throughout the world, organizations report increasing challenges locating the skills they need. In Brazil, nearly 60% of companies say they are having trouble hiring for the right skills, and more than 75% of organizations in the U.S. report talent recruiting challenges.

Many industries are especially challenged by this “global skills mismatch,” which Boston Consulting Group says affects 1.3 billion workers worldwide. Organizations in technology, healthcare, construction, energy, mining, and hospitality all report significant workforce skill gaps around the world, and some see those gaps increasing dramatically in coming years.

Widespread demand for AI-related skills increases the challenge. In a 2024 survey, General Assembly found that nearly all companies surveyed want to leverage generative AI and related technologies for products or operations, as well as requiring “AI skills” for non-technical job requirements — and demand is projected to dramatically increase. Since over two-thirds of HR managers reported having trouble recruiting “AI-proficient talent,” the AI skills gap will also increase: A report by contingent workforce provider Adecco said that over half of workers would like to be trained in using AI tools.

Even without the influence of AI technologies, many workers are finding their jobs changing dramatically, and they are often

unprepared for the new skills that are required. According to a recent study by research firm Gartner, the average job requires 10% new skills every year, and 30% of the in-demand skills from three years ago are rapidly becoming irrelevant. For example, as an increasing number of organizations implement AI-related technologies such as auto-response chatbots and workflow agents, work roles such as customer support and executive support will require workers to develop new skills at an even faster rate.

Not only do organizations need to help employees to rapidly develop new skills, they need to retain their trained employees. Yet just as the demand for new skills is at its greatest, many organizations are struggling with a dramatic lack of employee engagement — which can dramatically reduce worker retention. In fact, engagement and retention are deeply intertwined. Gallup's most recent annual study revealed that globally 77% of workers are disengaged from their work, and therefore are far more likely to look for new work. But research shows that the greater the organization's level of "social cohesion" — the degree of connectedness and solidarity between teams and groups of workers — the lower the turnover the organization is likely to experience. For example, workers who have close friends at work say they are significantly more likely to have a greater sense of belonging, and 76% say they are far more likely to stay with the organization.

# ...But Traditional Skill-Building Approaches Are Not Up to the Task...

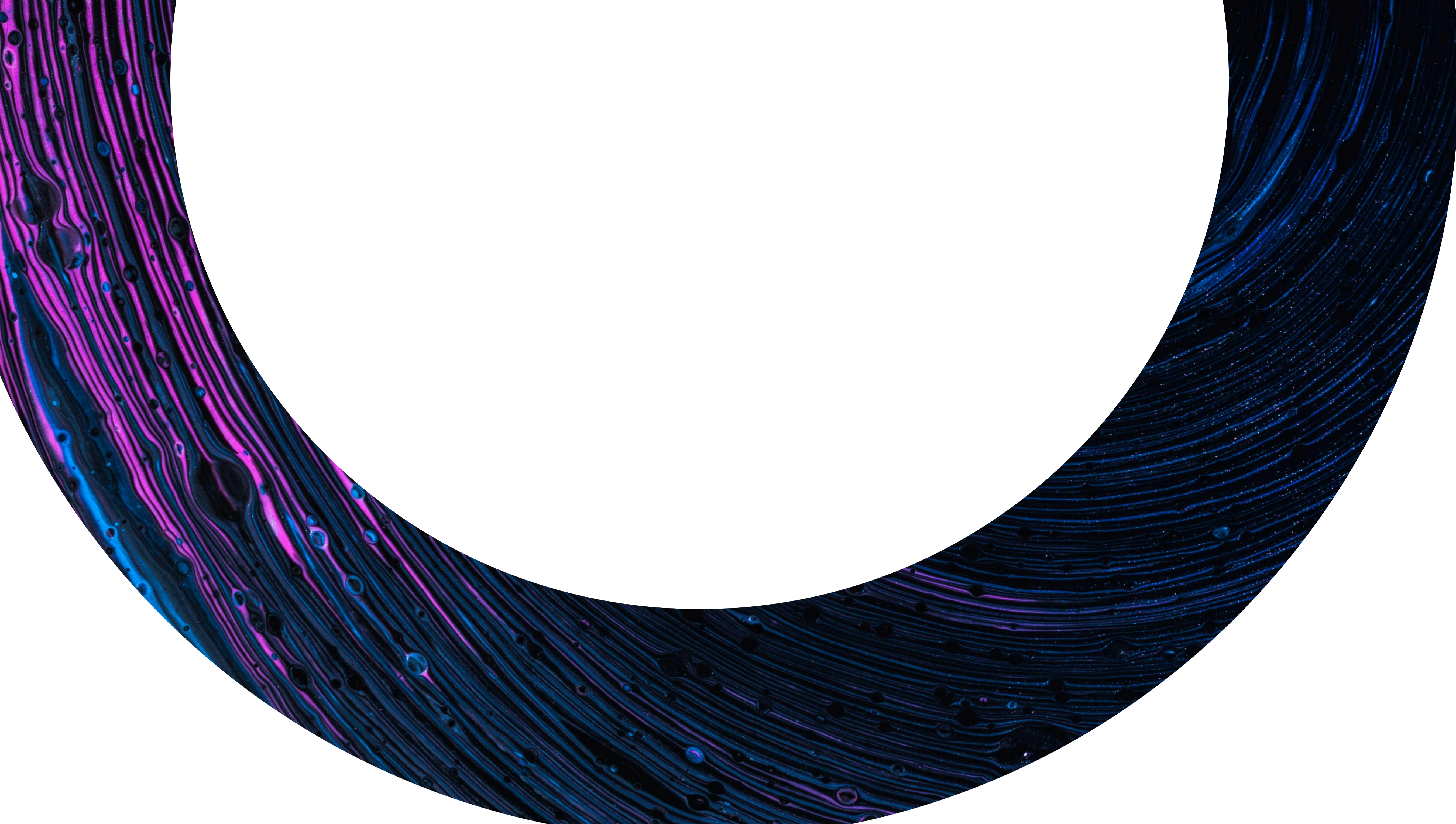
Add all of these pressures together, and 70% of organizations report investing in Learning & Development (L&D) initiatives. Yet HRDive cites a report that over 80% of Learning & Development (L&D) executives say that talent acquisition and employee retention remain their greatest challenges.

It turns out that learning initiatives can also be a great way to keep workers. A LinkedIn report says that training is the top retention strategy for over 90% of the organizations surveyed, and over 90% of L&D leaders maintain that effective learning programs improve employee retention. The data backs them up: Workers with opportunities for professional development are 34% more likely to stay.

When it comes to the process for actually helping workers to learn new skills, the traditional approach to skills development in the enterprise is to implement learning management systems (LMS). Yet although 92% of workers want access to professional development, in many organizations only half of workers use learning systems. Worse, BCG says that only 28% of the workers they surveyed would consider using self-service content.

As a result, these offerings often fail to generate clear return-on-investment. Many organizations simply measure the number of minutes that workers spend watching training videos, or define generic learning paths that aren't tailored to the specific learning needs of each worker.

Many times, these programs aren't even aligned to the skills needs of the organization — or the career needs of the worker. According to a Gartner executive, “HR is often wasting time and effort on irrelevant learning that won't ever be used to further the business or the career of the employee.” Gartner points to three recurring challenges of such programs: The inability to understand the need for new skills in real time across the organization, challenges in helping workers see the need for those in-demand skills, and barriers to training for needed skills in real time.



## ...But there is a solution

The answer comes from the marriage of learning pathways and social cohesion in the organization: What we call “skill-building networks.” Leading organizations in Brazil, such as Nubank, Vale, AEGEA, iFood, and Anima Education, as well as world-class multinationals such as Ambev and BASF, are all taking advantage of acaso’s next-generation approach to skill-building networks.

The first step that leading organizations must take is to embrace a skills model for continuous competency development. As author Ravin Jesuthasan states in [The Skills-Powered Organization: The Journey to the Next-Generation Enterprise](#), many leaders realize they need to embrace the process of continuously understanding, developing, and planning for the skills of workers. For example, in Brazil agencies like Escola Nacional de Administração Pública (ENAP) have adopted [competencies frameworks](#) for their training programs. And to encourage the development of critically-needed skills, Brazil’s [Skills Accelerator](#) is co-chaired by Microsoft Brazil and the ministers of Labour and Education, under the National Service for Industrial Training (SENAI).

acaso’s AI-powered Skills-As-A-Service offering enables extensive mapping of an organization’s members, performing an enterprise-level task analysis and skills inventory process, and creating a sort of scan of each individual’s human

potential, empowering workers to conduct the most appropriate work based on their experiences, knowledge, skills, and ways of working. The deliverable to enterprise decision-makers is a dashboard of the organization's skills assets, providing a snapshot of its broad portfolio of skills, and offering critical insights to fuel decision-making about future skills. We call this the “boost/build/buy/borrow” process, allowing organizations to decide what future skills are needed, and whether to help existing workers develop skills rapidly (boost), commit to longer-term learning paths (build), to hire when there are great skill gaps or increased skill demand (buy), or to leverage third-party providers to source needed workers (borrow).

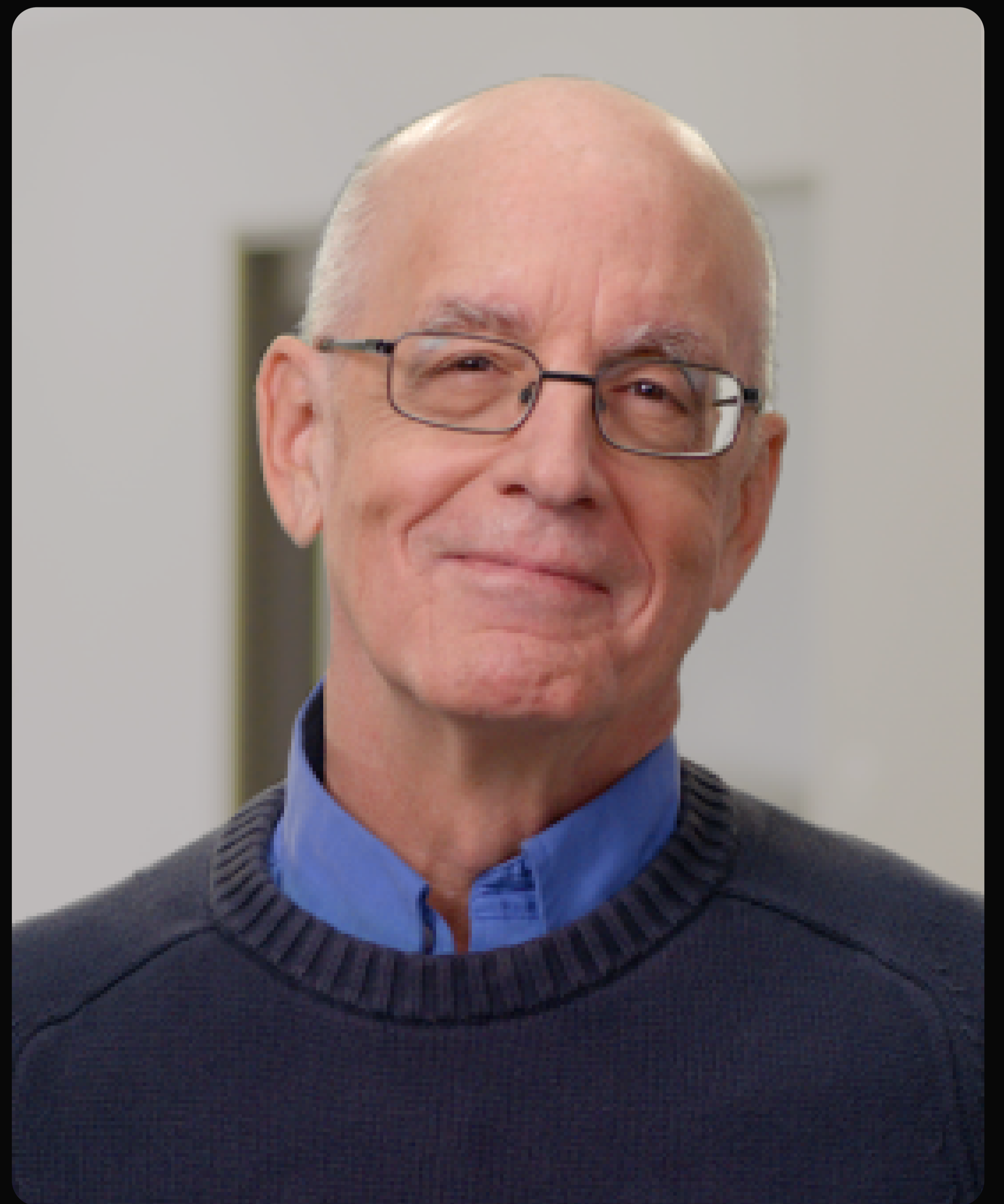
Next, organizations must see learning cohorts as an opportunity to double down on team dynamics. By increasing the connections between workers in teams, they can dramatically increase social cohesion across the organization. A recent study by KPMG reinforced the need for developing strong relationships. “Most professionals feel work friendships help them feel more engaged (83%), satisfied on the job (81%) and connected to their workplaces (80%).” These connections are best reinforced through co-learning — what are often called Sometimes called networks of competence. By leveraging Acaso's software-based WorkNet approach, each worker can define learning goals, and find allies throughout the enterprise, with flexible relationships such as mentorships and learning cohorts, leading organizations can reinforce social cohesion at the same time critical skills are being built.

Finally, the organization has the opportunity to redefine hierarchical structures and create far more nimble groups of workers who are committed to supporting each other's continuous skills development. These are company structures that serve as an alternative to the traditional organizational pyramid, which McKinsey calls a network of teams. These organizations typically outperform competitors in their industry categories, and are able to dynamically reconfigure to meet competitive threats and new business opportunities.



# To Become a Learning and Adaptive Organization, Leverage Skill-Building Networks

Deloitte Insights research confirms that skills-based organizations have 1.57x greater ability to anticipate and react to change. But workers must be engaged in the learning process. The global personnel giant Adecco maintains that “93% of future-ready workers are given personalised development by their employer, and 95% regularly participate in training provided by their employer.” To deliver such high levels of personalized and participatory learning, and to remain competitive in a world of rapid change, organizations must empower workers through skill-building networks, connecting employees throughout the enterprise to support each other on their learning journeys, and to power the future-ready organization.



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