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Executive Summary

The predominant career model of today has its roots in the mid-19th century. The "9-5," the notion of vertical career progression, the one career for life — all these characteristics suited the repetitive, production-line type of work typical of the late 1800s and early 20th century. They also suited the workforce at the time, the vast majority of which was white and male.

Fast-forward to the current age, however, and Robert Owen - an early industrialist who in the late 1800s championed the idea of "eight hours' labor, eight hours' recreation, eight hours' rest" - wouldn't recognize the workforce of 2020. Nearly half of today's workers are women. Nearly 40% in the U.S. are from a minority population, whether African-American, Hispanic/Latino, Asian-American or Native American.¹

The "mismatch" between how we think a career should work and how people work today is increasingly evident - and troubling. While many businesses are striving to fix their diversity imbalances and encourage a culture of inclusion, these efforts will prove suboptimal without adjustments to the very concept of how careers actually unfold for the workers of today.

One of the core reasons that women and other diverse groups struggle to progress at work is that the design of work itself doesn't suit them. The traditional career model is hindering the chance for diverse workforce groups to progress into more influential roles. This should concern any organization for a number of important reasons, including the increasingly apparent operational and financial downsides of this misalignment. Research shows that companies with a high degree of ethnic or gender diversity outperform industry norms by 35%² and earn 19% more revenue.³

The design of work is certainly not the only reason that businesses struggle to foster a sense of inclusion and belonging in the workforce. It is, however, an impactful reason more so than businesses realize - and one that is within their direct control and in line with ongoing talent development suitable for the digital age.

This report explores the gap between traditional work models and the actual needs of a diverse workforce. It also outlines new ideas for organizations to embrace in order to meet their goals of inclusion, attract the best workers and get the most from the talent available today.

Key findings of our research include:

- I The threads binding the workforce and traditional career models are starting to fray. The mismatch between older career models and workers' needs are blocking efforts to increase diversity at all levels of the organization.
- I The traditional work model reinforces outdated and biased beliefs. Too many businesses continue to equate physical presence with value, base their hiring and promotion decisions on a narrow set of traits and punish career interruptions. Career models and talent management practices need to become inclusive, unbiased and data-driven.
- I An inclusive, data-driven career model can help break entrenched behaviors and thought patterns currently supporting the status quo. This model incorporates five key components: embedded flexibility, new ways to measure performance, multi-directional career growth options, a data-driven approach to matching workers with job roles, and a purpose-driven culture.

The design of work is certainly not the only reason that businesses struggle to foster a sense of inclusion and belonging in the workforce. It is, however, one that is within their direct control and in line with ongoing talent development suitable for the digital age.

THE CAREER MODEL HASN'T CHANGED, **BUT THE** WORKFORCE HAS

The career model popularized in the early 1900s kickstarted a massive movement toward bureaucratic, repetitive, process-driven, highly regimented practices that continue to influence work today (see Figure 1). Emanating from a time when the workforce was roughly 70% male,⁴ these processes were (naturally) designed by - and for - men.

The outdated career model we all know and (don't really) love



Since then, the face of the workforce has changed considerably (see Figure 2, next page). Back in Owen's day, women didn't work on production lines; they mostly took up administrative jobs, and people from minority groups weren't counted as part of the workforce. They typically worked in roles like servants, porters and jobs involving manual labor.

Workforce demographics started to change during the world wars, as women of all ethnicities joined production lines to fill the space left behind by men fighting on the front lines. The numbers of women in the workforce climbed until the turn of the century, in line with the women's rights movement. Today, 47% of U.S. workers are women,⁵ and 37% are from minority populations.⁶ In the next 50 years, minorities are expected to be a majority of U.S. workers.⁷



The face of the workforce has changed dramatically

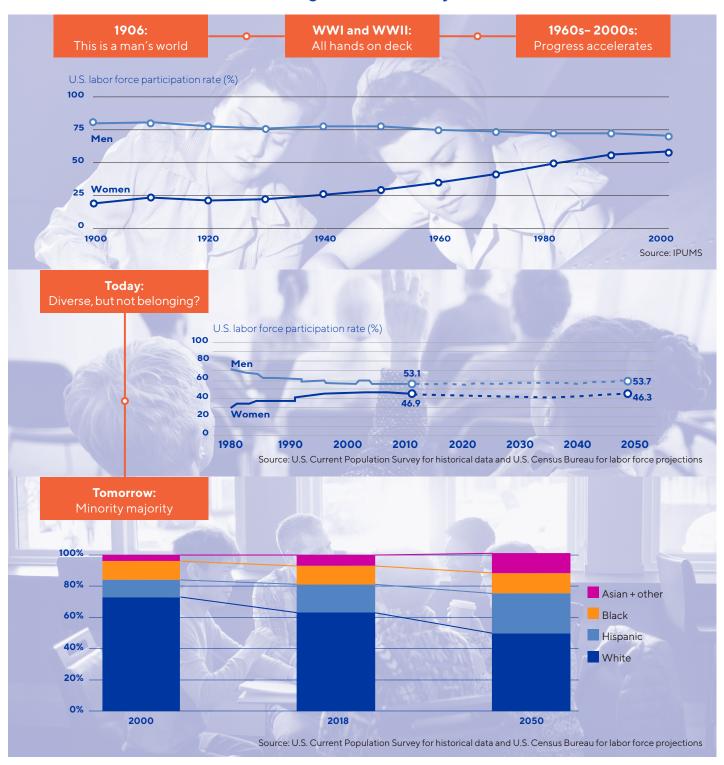


Figure 2

In the face of all this change, the threads binding the workforce and traditional career models are starting to fray. For example, many women who struggle with the realities and rigidity of entrenched career models are turning away from full-time employment and are increasingly drawn to part-time and self-employed employment models (see Figure 3, next page). This brain drain is avoidable; in a study by Boston Consulting Group, 69% of women with advanced degrees who left their jobs said they would have stayed if their employers had offered more flexible work options.⁸

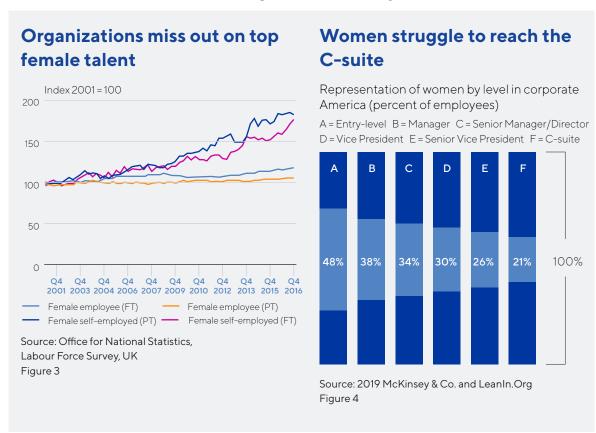
What's more, organizations aren't retaining diverse talent or getting the best out of them. Recent research from McKinsey & Co. shows that women aren't progressing past managerial levels effectively enough (see Figure 4, next page). And while 17% of the working population is from Hispanic and Latino ethnicities, and 12% is Black or African American, fewer than 10% of either population have attained managerial positions.⁹

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Women and minorities are also struggling to infiltrate the most modern and influential industry of our time: the technology sector. Only 25% of all computing jobs are held by women, 10 as are 11% of executive positions in Silicon Valley. Tech executives are predominantly white men, who represent 83% of senior leadership roles vs. just 2% of African Americans and 3.1% of Hispanics. Google, one of the most highly sought-after employers by ambitious tech professionals, has a workforce that's 2.5% African American and 2.5% Hispanic, but the company's attrition rates are also highest for these groups, according to Google's 2018 annual report.12

Not only does this stop a diverse pool of talent from attaining key decision-making roles, but it's also a cost drain for organizations. Businesses risk investing in developing diverse candidates only to unwittingly block them at a stage where they would otherwise start to wield significant influence.

Current career models block gender diversity



Quick Take

The education-employment-leadership gap for women

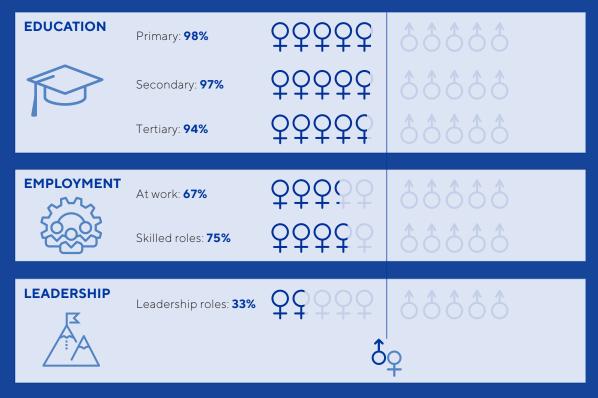
Much progress has been made in the last century when it comes to offering women the same opportunities as men. Today, women are educated on average at the same rate as men and have reached near parity in the workforce as a whole.

The sticking point (and subsequent focal point for organizations) is at the leadership level, where women still account for less than 20% of professionals (see Figure 5, next page). It is typical for organizations today to achieve gender parity up to managerial levels, for example, but then drop off severely at more senior levels (see Figure 4, previous page).

For members of Generation Z entering the workforce, this reality is jarring. Coming from a gender-balanced academic environment into one where men are dominantly in charge is an even more unsettling experience than it was for earlier generations, who perhaps experienced inequality from an earlier stage.

It's typical for organizations today to achieve gender parity up to managerial levels but then drop off severely at more senior levels. For organizations to attract and retain new entrants to the workforce, they need to aim for parity across all levels of the organization. By rethinking career models and removing the blockers of traditional progression paths that hinder women as they reach management levels, organizations can commit to a future where parity is ubiquitous.

Education, check. Employment, check. Leadership?



Source: World Economic Forum Figure 5

Outdated notions of "professionalism"

There are three core components of the traditional model of work that exemplify why male-friendly career models are misaligned with the needs of the broader workforce when it comes to starting and sustaining a long and successful career.

Overvaluing being "present" vs. being participative

In too many businesses today, the best way to prove your value is to show up and be seen. Even if your actual contributions are minimal, simply being present in these organizations ensures your reputation in the eyes of senior decision makers.

Research from the University of California shows that managers view employees who are seen at the office during business hours as highly dependable and reliable. One manager in the study said: "So this one guy, he's in the room at every meeting. Lots of times he doesn't say anything, but he's there on time and people notice that. He definitely is seen as a hard-working and dependable guy."13

Such inflexible work practices have a famously negative impact on working parents or those dealing with chronic disease or disability. The unemployment rate for disabled workers is 8% in the U.S., compared with 3.7% for abled workers. 14 With half of Americans predicted to be suffering with some form of chronic illness by next year, it's increasingly crucial to find flexible working practices that support them.¹⁵ Chronically Capable, a recruiting startup that connects job seekers who are chronically ill or disabled with meaningful work and flexible employers, is doing just that.¹⁶ (For more on chronic illness and the future of work, see: "Living with Invisible Illness: Is There a Future of Work?")

A bias toward traditional traits

Bias in hiring is well-documented. One study found that people with "white-sounding" names receive 50% more call-backs for interviews than "African-American-sounding" names. "Jamal," or "Lakisha," for example, would need eight more years of experience than "Greg" or "Emily" to be considered equally qualified.¹⁷ This is just one good reason for the recent trend toward blind recruitment. Other studies have verified hiring bias against gender, sexual orientation, disability, clothing (e.g., headscarves) and age. 18

When it comes to promotion bias, we might be moving past the days of golf swings and liquor tolerance being the core rungs of the promotion ladder, but many workplaces still look more favorably on characteristically male tendencies (self-promoting, overtly confident) than stereotypically feminine ones (accommodating, quick to apologize). In 1978, researchers coined the term "imposter syndrome" to describe professional women who think they aren't good enough for their position, working in fear that someone will call them out as incompetent - an "imposter" - at any moment. 19 While men aren't exempt from these feelings, these fears are more likely to block career progress for women.

The female confidence challenge has a serious impact on women's career trajectories. One study found that while 80% of women felt underpaid, two-thirds had never asked for a raise – and those who had, described it as one of the most stressful things they'd ever done.²⁰

3 Little tolerance for career interruptions

Taking a leave of absence to have children or deal with illness or injury for oneself or a family member can negatively impact upward career trajectories.

Let's take women and maternity leave as a prime example. Mothers receive 5% to 7% less pay than non-mothers, according to research from Stanford University. ²¹ Fathers, meanwhile, enjoy a wage premium of 11% on annual earnings over non-fathers. ²² Somehow, it seems that men are seen as more responsible when they have children, while women are penalized.

An outdated career model certainly isn't the only barrier to better diversity and more inclusive work environments. But organizations that modernize their talent management attitudes and processes will improve their ability to attract and retain diverse workers, improve employee engagement and boost productivity. Not to mention, new models have the power to change the day-to-day experience for underrepresented groups globally – making work a happier and more satisfying place to be.

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Quick Take

The entrenched challenge: the parent penalty

The conversation about the "parent penalty" has, for a long time, been a gender-distinct one. But as gender roles continue to blur in the 21st century, younger generations, regardless of gender, fear a future where their careers will be threatened when they have children.



You're in your late 20s, early 30s, and you're just getting somewhere in your career. Your network is buzzing, and the job offers are coming in, proving that your personal brand is glowing (that last LinkedIn makeover did the trick). You're so busy that it feels impossible to get in a morning workout twice a week. How on earth are you going to fit in having a kid?

In two years, you'll get that promotion that will secure your position on the corporate ladder. Then you can take time off for parental leave. But, hang on, you've been saying that to yourself for the last six years.

Organizations that want to retain young workers need to break the "parent penalty" model once and for all. This is no easy task. One year on parental leave equates to no fewer than 2,000 hours of work. It's just as unfair to penalize new mothers and fathers who take time away from work as it is to equate them upon their return with whatever successes their peers achieved during their absence. The goal needs to be about providing opportunities to these workers - whether to catch up or to find meaningful work - rather than limiting them, whether they're returning from or planning for parental leave.

Organizations that crack this seemingly intractable conundrum will realize an incredible competitive advantage with soon-to-be parents who will want to work for that company.

REMAKING THE **CAREER MODEL:** INCLUSIVE, UNBIASED, DATA-DRIVEN

To attract and retain a diverse workforce, organizations need to develop a model that is relevant and personalized to individual workers and their needs. The key to this personalized employee experience is data. Just as consumer-focused businesses have created personalized experiences based on customer data, organizations must shift to data-driven talent management processes, creating career paths for individuals, not archetypes.

This isn't just about attracting and retaining a diverse workforce – it's also about getting the very best out of the whole workforce. The traditional model encourages a rather stale approach to work – repetitive tasks result in repetitive cycles of work that seldom inspire innovation or ingenuity. By rethinking how we work, organizations can turbocharge a more energetic attitude toward work that's necessary in the modern economy. (For more on this topic, see our report "Cycling through the 21st Century Career: Putting Learning in its Rightful Place.")

To attract and retain a diverse workforce, organizations need to develop a model that is relevant and personalized to individual workers and their needs. The key to this personalized employee experience is data.

There are five key aspects of an inclusive, data-driven career model (see Figure 6) that can help break entrenched behaviors and thought patterns currently supporting the status quo. By following this model, businesses will start to promote people based on their unique perspective and contribution rather than the traditional traits equated with success, and enable people from different backgrounds to bring their authentic selves to work.

A new and improved career model



Encourage open conversations about non-traditional work arrangements. Institute a campaign showing that remote workers are just as dedicated and hard-working.

Embedded flexibility

Instead of the age-old model of clocking in at 9:00 a.m. and clocking out at 5:00 p.m., a far more relevant approach to work is to understand that we all have lives outside the office, with commitments, responsibilities and setbacks that don't obey the confines of an eight-hour workday. Most organizations today allow for one-off flexible allowance - an extended lunch for a doctor's appointment, for example - but long-term embedded flexibility is still met with skepticism: "Why should they get to leave at 4.30?" "Coming in at 10 a.m. again? Alright for some"

This isn't just about working parents but anyone with needs outside the workplace that demand attention - those managing chronic illness or aging parents, for example. Ultimately, flexible working options need to be personalized to individuals and their needs.

Schneider Electric, for example, offers a wide range of flex options, including part-time hours, compressed hours, home/remote working, flexitime (varied start and finish times) and care leave. Schneider reports higher productivity and loyalty from employees as a result. Moving forward, Schneider is focused on driving inclusion by encouraging senior employees to role-model flexible work options for the rest of the organization.²³

Here are three ways businesses can embed flexibility into workers' lives:

- I End the days of "can everyone go on mute?" Businesses need to invest in infrastructure that enables remote work arrangements to be a viable option for everyone (an effective videoconferencing platform that doesn't cause more trouble than it's worth, for example). Some companies, such as software developer Articulate, offer a stipend for employees to set up a home working environment.²⁴
- Advertise. Even though 63% of full-time employees have the option to work flexibly, fewer than 10% of jobs are advertised as "flexible." 25 Don't miss out on attracting top talent by failing to broadcast something you already offer.
- I Build trust: Encourage open conversations about non-traditional work arrangements. Institute a campaign showing that remote workers are just as dedicated and hard-working. The more that people see others trusting each other to work outside the office, the more likely it is that your organization will build a culture of respect and empathy, which make up the foundation of an inclusive culture.

New ways to measure performance

It makes less and less sense to measure productivity in hours, given that work is increasingly knowledge-based, always-on and variable. And yet many organizations remain wedded to this antiquated approach, even as intelligent machines take on the rote, repetitive tasks that easily filled an eight-hour workday 100 years ago.

Likewise, collaboration is the cornerstone of knowledge work - the exchange of ideas leading to innovation and diverse networks sparking new, inventive ways to tackle challenges that keep organizations on the cutting-edge. But collaboration has been notoriously difficult to measure. By investing in people analytics, 26 and making the most of new tools and technologies that can measure modern work, organizations can create more objective, unbiased and relevant performance criteria and evaluation processes.

New ways to measure performance include the following:

- Invest in new measuring tools. Tools like organizational network analysis (ONA) systems can provide deep insight into how the workforce actually collaborates, instead of relying on the static (and often irrelevant) org chart. ONA tools can be both virtual (for example, Microsoft Insights built into Outlook) and physical (Humanyze is an analytics company that gathers data from employee ID badges.27)
- I Use data to drive diversity. New insights from ONA tools are being used by organizations to reveal differences among workforce populations, such as how male and female networks differ. Such insights can be used to identify potential promotion blockers or uncover generational biases (people's networks tend to be strongest within their peer group). Data like this can help promote reverse mentoring programs or sponsorship relationships.28
- **Be transparent.** Clearly communicate with employees what data you're collecting and why. Doing so will encourage data sharing as it establishes a basis for ethics and privacy.²⁹

One way to understand the use of ONA data is through the lens of an oft-repeated saying in D&I circles: "Diversity is being invited to the party; inclusion is being asked to dance." We would add that "belonging" is knowing all the songs.30 (For more on this topic, see our recent report "What It Means to Belong @Work.")

To understand who's invited, you would rely on straightforward HR data. To understand who's being asked to dance by whom, you'd complement this information with interaction data gathered through ONA tools. Only then can you start to get a realistic picture of who knows all the songs vs. who needs more support learning the lyrics - and feeling more valued in your organization's community.

Career growth in any direction

Rather than inhibiting career progression via a linear hierarchy, organizations need to facilitate more fluid movement across job roles. This kind of movement embeds more flexibility into work, accommodating a sudden change in circumstance or time off. Rather than viewing careers within the silo of one job function or one job role, they should be seen as a collection of roles that evolve over time. Businesses should encourage career changes rather than view them as difficult, uncommon, risky moves. Doing so is vital to fostering the inclusion of the aging workforce and all four generations currently at work.

Shifting to a new environment of fluid movement encourages "creative abrasion," a concept that describes the productivity benefits of taking on new challenges and interacting with people from different backgrounds. By facilitating this frictionless movement, organizations can ensure innovation is the cornerstone of their business.

Businesses can promote fluid career growth by doing the following:

- I Shift their mindset from "jobs" to "tasks." We need to change the language of work. HR should focus on reinventing the nomenclature, breaking down job roles into tasks and skills. Workers could then pivot from task to task without being stuck in outdated notional confines of a job.
- **I** Encourage internal mobility. Fluid movement across tasks requires a much broader breakdown of the organizational structure, where internal mobility across projects, teams and departments is facilitated. Not only does this offer individuals the chance to find work that is more meaningful and better suited for them, it also makes great business sense too.

4 Matchmaking isn't just for Tinder

Central to a fluid and inclusive career model is the democratization of opportunity. Instead of relying on human decision-making (and the bias it naturally entails) for promotion, organizations should focus on using data to align people with work that best suits their ambitions, goals and personal purpose. This more objective approach to progression creates a superior employee experience, making it easier for organizations to attract and retain diverse talent.

Landit, for example, provides a personalized career pathing platform that enables companies to effectively develop and retain high-potential diverse talent. Specifically designed with women and minority groups in mind, the platform's goal is to offer more objective career growth opportunities by linking them to data-driven skills profiles.³¹

Gloat is another solution that creates personalized dashboards for each employee and surfaces relevant job opportunities based on the individual's current skillset and aspirations. The user can simply "like" or "dislike" an opportunity (akin to swiping left or right on popular dating apps). Likes generate alerts to relevant HR managers, who advance the request to the next stage. 32

Unilever has rolled out the system to 30,000 employees in 90 countries. The company has seen a measurable increase in employees working in collaborative, empowered networks; higher employee development, engagement and satisfaction; and increased workforce capacity and productivity, with 30,000-plus hours unlocked each month.³³

Instead of relying on human decisionmaking for promotion, organizations should focus on using data to align people with work that best suits their ambitions, goals and personal purpose. Businesses can adopt a data-driven approach to matching workers with job roles by doing the following:

- Invest in data-driven HR. Talent management needs the right measurement tools in place to understand the inventory of skills and job opportunities across the organization. With a robust competency framework and skills profiles for each individual, businesses can make meaningful recommendations for opportunities across the business.
- I Provide transparency through communication. Make sure every employee has access to information regarding internal mobility opportunities. It's no good having the process in place if no one knows enough to take advantage of it.
- I Make it stick. Working with business leaders across the board, HR needs to inculcate a culture of fluidity and flexibility. Ensure that movement in any direction (not just vertical) is celebrated and rewarded.

Let purpose be the anchor of culture

"Purpose" means having something more than just dollar signs to drive business performance, worker productivity and employee engagement. It's about providing employees with a deeper meaning for why they wake up every morning, switch on their devices and get to work. According to a recent study, companies with teams focused on their organization's purpose realized annual growth rates nearly three times higher than their entire industry.³⁴

Organizational purpose is often defined in a mission statement. For example, Twitter's is "to give everyone the power to create and share ideas and information instantly, without barriers," and Google's is "to organize the world's information and make it universally accessible and useful."

But even as modern workers seek alignment between their own personal purpose and that of the organization, hiring biases based on "cultural fit" often lead to homogeneity. This further reinforces outdated, exclusive cultural norms.

Without a defined purpose, the workforce will struggle to find the motivation needed to adopt more agile and productive approaches to work. Here are three steps for embedding purpose in the organization:

- **Define your purpose.** Although 89% of executives in a recent study said a strong sense of collective purpose drives employee satisfaction, only 46% of businesses have one.³⁵ Don't delay in defining yours.
- I Reduce biased hiring practices. Clarify objective criteria for any open role against a defined organizational purpose and rate all applicants using the same rubric. When one insurance company began hiring this way, it ended up offering jobs to 46% more minority candidates than before.³⁶
- **Dedicate roles to driving a better culture.** Companies like Roche Pharma India and Salesforce. com are employing a chief purpose officer and chief equality officer, which speaks to these companies' commitment to an inclusive and purpose-driven culture.

PAVING THE WAY TO SUSTAINABLE, INCLUSIVE, DECADES-LONG CAREERS

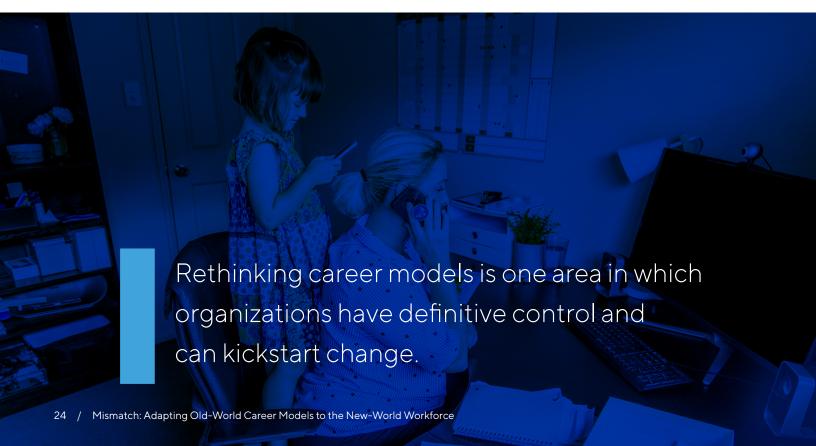
People entering the workforce today could be looking at careers lasting 60 or even 70 years, as life expectancies continue to rise.³⁷ Over this time, the workforce will grow even more diverse. Beyond cultural, religious, racial, age, gender, sexual orientation and disability diversity, the future may also give rise to new measures of diversity: genetic, machine, cyborg. (For more on this topic, see our description of the genetic diversity officer role in our "21 Jobs of the Future" report.) As this happens, it's even more important to overwrite the mismatch between old-world career models and the new-world workforce.

Of course, rethinking career models isn't the only way to ensure inclusion, and there's certainly work to be done in other areas of the workplace. But this is one area in which organizations have definitive control and can kickstart change by addressing the five aspects of our modern career framework:

- 1. **Better embed flexibility** across the organization.
- 2. **Invest in new, modern ways** to measure performance.
- 3. **Promote career growth** in any direction.
- 4. Play matchmaker and connect the workforce with better, more relevant work.
- 5. **Embed purpose** throughout the organization.

Data is at the heart of this new approach. Driven by data, consumer experiences today are highly tailored and personalized; employees' day-to-day work and career experience needs to catch up, and fast.

With a focus on creating career structures that are data-driven, fluid, less hierarchical, objective and personalized, businesses can supercharge efforts to promote diversity, inclusion and belonging at all levels of the organization.



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Caroline Styr is a Senior Executive in Cognizant's Center for the Future of Work in Europe. In this role, she develops thought leadership to challenge perceptions of the future of work. Above all, she is dedicated to demystifying what the individual needs to succeed in the modern organization. Prior to joining the CFoW, Caroline was part of Cognizant Consulting, working in international digital services and transformation across the retail and healthcare

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About the Center for the Future of Work

Cognizant's Center for the Future of WorkTM is chartered to examine how work is changing, and will change, in response to the emergence of new technologies, new business practices and new workers. The Center provides original research and analysis of work trends and dynamics, and collaborates with a wide range of business, technology and academic thinkers about what the future of work will look like as technology changes so many aspects of our working lives. For more information, visit Cognizant.com/futureofwork, or contact Ben Pring, Cognizant VP and Managing Director of the Center for the Future of Work, at Benjamin.Pring@cognizant.com.

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Cognizant (Nasdaq-100: CTSH) is one of the world's leading professional services companies, transforming clients' business, operating and technology models for the digital era. Our unique industry-based, consultative approach helps clients envision, build and run more innovative and efficient businesses. Headquartered in the U.S., Cognizant is ranked 193 on the Fortune 500 and is consistently listed among the most admired companies in the world. Learn how Cognizant helps clients lead with digital at www.cognizant.com or follow us @Cognizant.

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