5 reasons for investing in your people

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In 2020, a report by Udemy found that nearly 4 in 10 (38%) of the global workforce had upskilled, a significant uptick compared to just 14% in 2019. This meant that a good proportion of workers were looking to build upon the skills they already had or learn brand-new skills.

The turbulence of the last few years has demonstrated just what an asset a highly skilled workforce can be. Organisations with a focus on continuous learning are better equipped to manage change and uncertainty while also supporting stable growth.

Upskilling can also help meet current business challenges. The employment rate is high, meaning few people are actively looking for work and causing skills gaps to widen even further. New tools and technology create a continuous need for updated technical skills, with new ways of working accelerated by the pandemic demanding new soft skills too.

Technical skills

The world is moving at an incredibly fast pace, and technology and automation undoubtedly reign supreme across the business landscape. According to a report by McKinsey, 50% of work activities in 2017 were technically automatable. Fast-forward five years and this is likely to be a higher percentage. By 2030, up to 800 million people globally could be displaced by automation and 375 million will need to change their occupation.

2030 may feel like a while away but the effects of skills gaps are already being felt by organisations all over the world. According to the 2022 LinkedIn learning survey, 46% of learning and development professionals say that the skills gap is wider in their organisation compared to the previous year.

To remain ahead of the competition, teams must be highly skilled in technologies and tools that enable them to evolve with the rapid rate of change required. Regular investment in upskilling from leaders will ensure a prepared and ready business that is futureproofed.

Of course, upskilling isn't just applicable to technical skills. A thriving organisation also looks to improve its knowledge and understanding of non-technical and interpersonal skills and assets, especially in times of change.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DE&I)

The business case for practising good DE&I within an organisation has been made time and again. Indeed, as the years have gone by, the statistics have only become clearer, with those businesses that create diverse and inclusive cultures more likely to outperform their more homogenous competitors.

However, good organisational DE&I isn't something that can happen overnight. It takes commitment, time, learning and understanding. Upskilling in this area has become a key goal for businesses globally. 45% of learning and development programs being deployed in 2022 are centred around DE&I, compared to only 34% in 2021.

Health and wellbeing

According to the World Health Organisation, the COVID-19 pandemic triggered a 25% increase in the prevalence of anxiety and depression worldwide. In March 2020, 46% of UK workers felt more prone to extreme levels of stress compared to the year prior. Between 2021 and 2022, 70% of workers across seven countries suffered with burnout. Now, the lasting effects of this loom over the business landscape with the total annual cost of mental ill health

having increased by 25% since 2019.

There is a tangible link between mental health and our careers. The world of work can be a stressful place, causing ill health among employees. Organisations have a vested interest in ensuring positive mental wellbeing among their employees, to reduce sickness and improve productivity. Mind estimates that better mental health support in the workplace could save businesses up to £8 billion each year.

The charity is clear with its sums. Mind suggests that promoting wellbeing at work through personalised information and advice, a risk-assessment questionnaire, seminars, workshops and online materials would cost approximately £80 per employee per year. For a company with 500 employees, where all employees undergo the intervention, it is estimated that this initial investment of £40,000 will result in a net return of £347,722 in savings. This is down to reduced presenteeism and absenteeism.

Employees are clear, too. 81% said that support for mental health would be an important consideration for them when they look for future work.

Upskilling and staff retention

Not only does upskilling in the workplace ensure adaptability and agility, but it also helps with staff satisfaction and team retention. In this new era of work, there is an expectation from team members that their career progression is placed highly on the priority list of their employer.

They want to know that what they bring to the table will be valued and that their interest in bettering themselves professionally is taken seriously. Indeed, according to research from LinkedIn, 94% of employees said that they were more likely to stay with a company that invests in their growth.

What does this mean for Jersey businesses?

According to the PwC Channel Islands Future of Work and Skills Survey 2022, 90% of Channel Island companies recognise the importance of rapidly adjusting the workforce to change. However, with the ongoing challenges within the business market and the wider economy less than a third believe they are in a position to rapidly reskill and redeploy their current workforce.

Nevertheless, the future is bright for the Islands. As we head towards the end of 2022 and into 2023, business leaders continue to work hard – and work

together – to be agile and adaptable to the ever-changing needs of the business landscape.

The understanding that upskilling and training opportunities are no longer a ‘nice to have’ but imperative to business success has created a working ethos of professional improvement. Many organisations have invested, or look forward to investing, in reskilling, upskilling, and empowering their existing workforces to match the needs and wants of their employees and their markets.

If you’re looking for a confidential sounding board to discuss your people or business challenges in this new era of work, get in touch with Jersey Business.

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