Center for
Creative
Leadership®

TALENT REIMAGINED 2020

THE HUMAN ELEMENT OF DISRUPTION

TRENDS REPORT

DISRUPTIVE FORCES ARE ALL AROUND...

DOES YOUR ORGANIZATION HAVE THE HUMAN CAPABILITY NEEDED TO NAVIGATE THE FUTURE?

As a new decade begins, every leader in the world at every organizational level faces a shared challenge: grappling with the impact of rapid innovation, a changing workforce, and powerful cultural and societal shifts. At CCL®, we believe there's also a shared **answer for thriving in our era of vast uncertainty: world-class leadership** — the kind that embraces change, drives results, and transforms individuals, organizations, and entire communities — the kind of leadership that never stops searching for better solutions to our biggest problems and opportunities.

In this new report, we're pleased to explore the leadership skills needed to navigate the most disruptive business trends that global leaders foresee coming in the next 5 years, from analytics and innovation to artificial intelligence; communications; and equity, diversity, and inclusion. In all of these areas, addressing the human element of disruption will be absolutely critical for success. Here, we offer specific strategic recommendations, based on our extensive experience and cutting-edge research, to **help you and your organization develop the talent pool, strategic leadership capability, and culture needed** to turn these disruptive forces to your advantage in 2020 — and for years to come.

We're confident you will benefit from these insights — and we're grateful for your interest in the CCL community!

Warm regards,

John R. Ryan
President and CEO
Center for Creative Leadership

Center for Creative Leadership®

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Skim the headlines in any news cycle, and you'll be bombarded with stories of **new technologies**, upstart businesses, ousted leaders, and economic and geopolitical **uncertainty**. Drill down into any industry or market, and you'll witness established companies repositioning themselves as they face **being disrupted by** emerging players. Talk with fellow executives, and you'll hear about **digital transformation** and the micro and macro shifts affecting their roles, departments, and organizations.

At the Center for Creative Leadership (CCL)®, we work with leaders around the globe who are experiencing — and shaping — **disruption** every day. Consistently, they're looking for ways to equip themselves, their people, and their organizations to manage these disruptive forces and turn them into an advantage.

To better understand the state of disruption and its implications, our research team conducted a study asking leaders around the world to name **the disruptive trends that will significantly affect their organizations in the next 5 years.** We followed up with questions to understand the innate complexities or tensions that organizations face in how they leverage or respond to these forces. We found that these disruptions hold **both potential opportunities and drawbacks** for leaders at every level.

Specifically, we found that:

- While the current level of disruption is extraordinary, the **underlying human element** remains familiar. The challenges of today's disruptions remain rooted in classic leadership challenges, *making your organization's talent and culture more critical now than ever.*

- To unlock the opportunity of a disruptive force, understand **how your people amplify (or undermine) your organization's ability to respond to it.** You'll want to increase your collective capability to change, solve big problems, and drive results.

- **The most forward-thinking leaders will shift their mindsets and decision-making to accommodate complexity,** moving from *either/or* toward *both/and*, knowing that there are competing tensions inherent in these disruptions, and no single right response to them.

In this report, we describe **the powerful opportunities offered by the top 5 disruptive trends and the foundational human elements of each** that are crucial in realizing the disruption's positive potential. We also offer **specific strategic recommendations for you and your organization** to develop the talent pool, strategic leadership capability, and organizational culture needed to harness these disruptive forces in 2020 — and beyond.

ABOUT THE RESEARCH

Data collection included both qualitative and quantitative phases, both conducted in 2019. First, our research team **held in-depth interviews with C-suite executives around the world**[1] to inform the later online survey design. From these interviews, we identified the top disruptive global trends that senior leaders anticipate affecting their organizations, and the competing demands or tensions ("polarities") they face in relation to each.
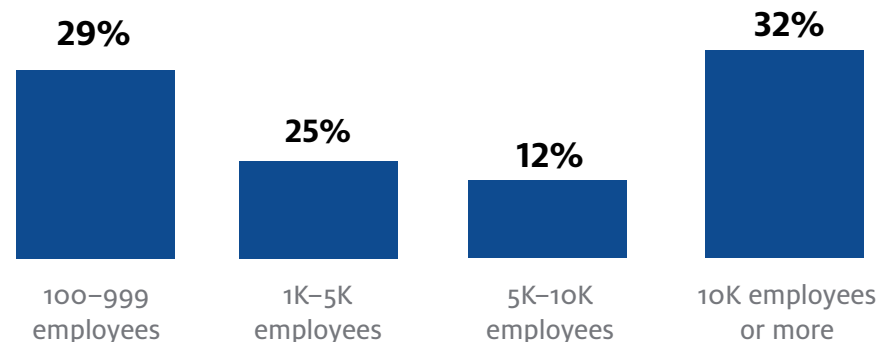
We then conducted **an online survey of VPs, directors, and managers.**[2] Each respondent selected the top 3 trends likely to impact their business from a list of 10 potential trends (derived from a comparison of 14 industry reports and the earlier interviews). After selecting the top 3 most disruptive trends, each respondent indicated how they would balance 3 subsets of inherent polarities in that trend. They also provided rich, open-ended feedback regarding the anticipated impact of that disruptive trend on the ability of individual leaders and teams to achieve organizational and business goals.

We evaluated **the 504 responses thematically and by sentiment,** conducting both auto-coding and hand-coding text analysis.

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[1] In the qualitative phase, our research team held 18 in-depth interviews with C-suite executives — 6 each in the Americas, EMEA (Europe, Middle East, and Africa), and APAC (Asia-Pacific).

[2] In the quantitative phase, we conducted an online survey of VPs, directors, and managers who participated in a CCL leadership development program from 2011–2019. We received a 25% response rate, with 504 respondents.
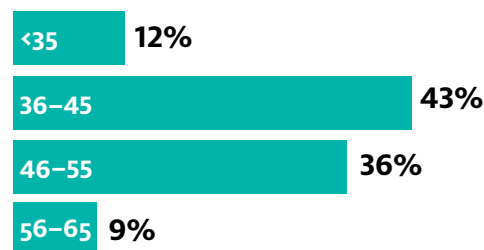
Respondents included mid- to senior-level leaders in various job functions at organizations of every size:

29%	25%	12%	32%
100–999 employees	1K–5K employees	5K–10K employees	10K employees or more

Leader Levels:

42% MANAGER

24% VP & C-SUITE

34% DIRECTOR

Age Ranges:

<35	12%
36–45	43%
46–55	36%
56–65	9%

Gender:

34% FEMALE

65% MALE
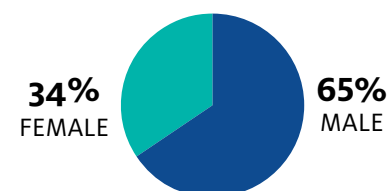
Note: Some percentages may not add up to exactly 100% because respondents declined to answer some questions.

UNLOCKING THE POWER OF ANALYTICS

UPSKILL YOUR TALENT & UPGRADE YOUR CULTURE FOR BIG DATA

ORGANIZATIONS ARE COUNTING ON THE POWER OF DATA TO MAKE FASTER, SMARTER DECISIONS...

...*But* they're confronted by the current limits of their people and culture as they try to leverage it.

Massive data sets come with massive potential: to reveal information, trends, and patterns that can drive performance. **With the right analytics, organizations can make better, faster decisions and create competitive advantage.**

"Big data and analytics" was the number one disruptive trend in our survey, with **56%** of our respondents agreeing that it will significantly impact their businesses in the next 5 years.

Organizations everywhere are investing in systems and services to gather and mine data and use it to make predictions and create improvements across all aspects of the business — from financial forecasting, talent management, and product development to market intelligence, customer experience, and more.

While organizations and leaders are eager to adopt cutting-edge data analytics, our survey revealed **a tension between having access to big data and actually using it effectively.** It's not always obvious what data is most important. Extrapolating insights from it is not in everyone's skillset. And groups often have different expectations about how to select, manage, process, analyze, and act upon data.

That's why **the expertise and skill of your people — both individually and collectively — is required to unlock the true power of data.** Yet many organizations have not adjusted their talent, leadership, or culture to align with their big-data aspirations.

In our study, respondents were clear that only "the right, focused data" and "expert analysis" would provide the expected benefits or competitive advantage. **The abundance and availability of data must be met with critical thinking** to drive insight and action. While respondents were aware of the much-discussed potential for "democratizing data" — putting information directly into the hands of many — they were wary of doing so without having strategic and tactical clarity.

To take advantage of the analytics opportunity, **organizations need to upskill their talent and upgrade their cultures.** Leaders at all levels of the organization need greater fluency with data analysis and data-driven processes. Functional and business unit leaders need to step up their strategic mindsets to steer and align analytics efforts and make more data-driven decisions. And the culture itself must become more data literate, transforming to match the needed new level of complexity and to allow insights from data to flow freely up, down, and across the organization.

WHAT LEADERS TOLD US ABOUT ANALYTICS...

DATA CAN CREATE COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE.

"Data will give us a clearer picture of our customers' purchasing behaviors, but we have not yet cracked the drivers that are necessary to fully anticipate their next product decision. Whoever gets to this point first will have a massive competitive advantage in our industry."

SOME LEADERS DON'T RECOGNIZE DATA'S POTENTIAL IMPACT.

"There's a lack of awareness at the top among the older generation of leaders about the importance of big data and how it can be leveraged to add value to the company."

"I don't think we fully grasp the power of big data, and we don't currently have the infrastructure to support this kind of analysis. We, as leaders, will need to adjust how we lead and the tools required."

BOTH TALENT & CULTURE MUST CHANGE TO UNLOCK DATA'S POWER.

"Our organization lacks sufficient staff to effectively manage and utilize the data available. We create thousands of data points for each customer, but lack the personnel, tools, and direction to use the data effectively."

"There will be some directional challenges when determining what data to use. Without knowing what works, there could be some pushback by employees and some conflict between managers."

"We will need to be ready to redefine ourselves, value contributions, and expand our knowledge/skillset. Many of us will be learning together for the first time, and will be challenged to resolve decision points or set direction in thinking through data governance and ownership."

STRATEGIES TO UPSKILL TALENT & UPGRADE CULTURE FOR BIG DATA

ASSESS SKILLS, THEN FILL GAPS THROUGH TARGETED TALENT AND TEAM DEVELOPMENT.

Organizations everywhere need more people who are comfortable with data and can use it to set actions. This may mean they create new data analytics teams and hire technical specialists. But it also means organizations should evaluate the capabilities of groups tied to business priorities that will be most reliant on data. Consider communication skills as much as capabilities around data governance and interpretation. **Are your people able to make insights from the data understandable to others to enable smarter business decisions?**

Individual and team assessments can help you gauge technical skills — as well as needed critical thinking, communication, and influence skills. With clarity on competencies and areas for improvement, you can set priorities for development and map out specific steps for improvement. **Encourage your workforce to be open to the results of assessments and feedback,** identify overarching themes and patterns, and set realistic goals as they work on areas of opportunity. Stretch assignments and short-term rotations are other ways for people to learn new skills while on the job.

Programs and training can be created specifically around communicating insights gleaned from data and analytics, tailored to context and role. **Developing your leaders' communication and coaching skills will enable them to have more effective coaching conversations** as they help their people to understand skill gaps and support them in their development. Ongoing feedback about on-the-job learning and real-life challenges can help leaders and teams practice and learn new skills and behaviors.

Establish *learning networks* (small groups of people who are similarly situated) and *reverse mentoring* programs (pairing younger, more digitally savvy people with more senior or established colleagues) to connect those who already have needed skills or technical proficiencies with those who aren't there yet. And offer executive coaching for senior leaders to provide one-on-one, tailored development opportunities as needed.

ENSURE LEADERS ARE ABLE AND WILLING TO THINK, ACT, INFLUENCE, AND LEAD STRATEGICALLY.

To make the coveted quick decisions and bold moves, organizations need to know that their people are informed and confident in the data. That requires leaders to be willing to dive into the big data revolution.

Leaders must recognize what they don't know, expand their skillsets, and redefine their value. Those who don't grasp the power of analytics and rely on gut instincts and past experience for decision-making will be left behind as more and different data sources are available. But it's not just about understanding how data systems work; it's about the ability to apply the volumes of information that can be produced.

Senior executives must step up their strategic leadership capabilities to steer and align data analytics efforts. Even the best and boldest business strategies will fail without effective leaders who can implement data-driven strategic changes. This is especially critical for leaders of regions, business units, departments, or functions — they must hone their ability to think, act, and influence strategically. Getting everyone aligned around the same goals and committed to the larger organizational picture is no simple task.

Analytics-driven strategic leadership skills include being able to identify possible uses of data, understanding the drivers of organizational strategies, and determining relevant performance metrics to track. **Leading strategically also involves effectively addressing conflicting priorities** that are revealed through data, balancing competing interests, and keeping your people focused and moving toward achieving key business goals.

TRANSFORM YOUR ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE TO HARNESS THE BIG DATA OPPORTUNITY.

A strategic initiative or change effort can succeed only when the culture supports it. As organizations pursue more possibilities for collecting and analyzing data to improve every aspect of the business, cultures must transform to match the new level of complexity people are facing.

These kinds of transitions introduce new policies, procedures, and technologies, but also require new mindsets, behaviors, and ways of working. In addition to providing your talent with opportunities for *horizontal development* — developing new skills, competencies, and knowledge — organizations also

need to invest in *vertical development*, which advances individual thinking capability and collective leadership capacity.

Vertical leadership development enables leaders to unleash the human potential of an organization. It helps individual leaders better navigate complex challenges, see broader perspectives, and become "systems thinkers." It also helps them better understand the people dynamics at play. As leaders — both individually and in teams — begin to develop vertically, **organizations build a new collective leadership capacity.**

When executive teams get a clear-eyed view of their current leadership culture, they can then make explicit choices about beliefs, practices, and systems. When senior leaders commit to changing themselves through vertical development and a shared learning process, they increase their ability to think in more systemic, strategic, and interdependent ways. And when you model and foster these changes broadly, you **elevate your organization's culture and its ability to embrace disruption,** unlocking the true potential of data and ensuring that strategic initiatives succeed.

THE TAKEAWAY:

Data fluency, strategic mindsets, and organizational transformation are required to unlock the power of big data & analytics.

HOW CCL CAN HELP:

Grow your team's skills by starting with personalized leadership assessments, then provide them with tailored support with our leadership coaching services, including executive coaching or integrated coaching wrapped around a larger development experience.

Help senior leaders of departments, divisions, functions, and regions to see the bigger picture and align the organization through our Leading Strategically program, or to balance short- and long-term perspectives through our signature "Looking Glass Experience" in Leading for Organizational Impact.

Partner with us to transform your organization and build a culture that makes strategy happen. Our organizational leadership culture change service can help you develop the beliefs and practices needed at the top while activating leaders at all levels to scale a transformation toward a more innovative, data-driven culture. We can customize solutions that will work with your unique corporate values, needs, and challenges.

Give your senior leadership team a clear-eyed view of the current culture and position them to lead organizational transformation. We can customize an executive team engagement to develop the team as a collective of enterprise leaders in service of the organization's strategy and performance goals.

FURTHER READING:

ccl.org/trends2020

- *What's Reverse Mentoring, and How Can It Help Me?*
- *The Best Way to Approach Assessment Feedback*
- *What's Your Strategy for Doing Strategy?*
- *Vertical Development: Culture Still Wins Over Strategy*
- *Changing Culture: 5 Principles for Interdependent Leadership*
- *Developing Talent? You're Probably Missing Vertical Development*

CRAFTING AN INNOVATION CULTURE

CHAMPION AGILE INNOVATION BY INCREASING RISK TOLERANCE

LEADERS VIEW RAPID INNOVATION AS CRITICAL FOR SUSTAINABLE SUCCESS...

...*But* they're challenged with mindsets and cultures that undermine collaboration and block new ideas.

The goal of agile innovation is to accelerate business outcomes by enabling swift responses to customer needs, quick adaptations to market shifts, and the seizing of new opportunities as they arise.

With the potential for faster time-to-market, smoother customer experiences, and operational efficiencies, it's no wonder agile innovation was named a top disruptive trend by **53%** of our survey respondents.

With agile innovation, cross-functional, interdependent teams work quickly to gather diverse input and create multiple iterations, rather than creating solutions in isolation. **Organizations can then leverage new knowledge that allows them to rapidly change course, implement an innovative idea, or produce a new offering quickly.**

Done well, this collaborative approach to innovation helps organizations lead their markets, establish brand, increase value to shareholders, and drive profitable growth.

While our respondents clearly invest in agile innovation, they noted it's not simply a matter of reconfiguring teams and introducing new processes. Throughout the organization, people need the mindsets and behaviors that foster and reinforce innovation and collaboration.

For optimal solutions developed at maximum speed, trust, open dialogue, and psychological safety are needed within and across teams, groups, and levels in the organization. Unfortunately, many organizational cultures and systems prevent people from challenging the status quo, offering new ideas, or trying new things. Employees may be cautious about sharing information, challenging assumptions, giving honest feedback, sharing reasonable objections, or partnering with unfamiliar people and teams. And leaders at all levels may unwittingly undermine innovation through the spoken and unspoken messages they send.

To successfully implement agile or rapid innovation, **consider whether your organization has a culture where creativity can thrive.** Support innovative approaches by facilitating cross-boundary collaboration, demonstrating true risk tolerance, establishing a strong foundation of psychological safety, and strengthening the capacity for meaningful conversations across leaders at all levels.

WHAT LEADERS TOLD US ABOUT AGILE INNOVATION...

AGILE INNOVATION CAN ACCELERATE GROWTH.

"As part of a large, older organization, we grow slowly and processes take too much time for us to change the course of the business and react to market change. Agile innovation is a key factor to ensuring the company's success."

LEADERS MUST BRIDGE SILOS & TOLERATE RISK.

"Innovation requires more than one group and may come from many different cross-functional interdependent teams who will have to align. If alignment occurs more frequently, then innovation will happen more frequently."

"Great leaders will be the ones who can bridge knowledge and information across many specializations and provide a more holistic approach to decision-making."

"Everyone will need to learn from small failures along the way — taking risks and failing will need to become appreciated as a learning opportunity, not be a reason for removing people from their roles."

TEAMS NEED TO STRENGTHEN TRUST & COMMUNICATION SKILLS.

"Working on cross-functional teams in a global environment brings its own challenges (time zones, cultural differences, virtual meetings). Trust is harder to build from a distance and people are often on their guard."

"Teams have to learn to be patient and skillful in communication. Navigating this area requires tremendous interpersonal skills."

STRATEGIES TO DRIVE AGILE INNOVATION

BUILD TRUSTED CONNECTIONS TO BREAK DOWN SILOS & STRENGTHEN COLLABORATION.

Simply expecting cross-functional and geographically dispersed teams to be effective misses the reality that **collaboration isn't easy.** Humans naturally sort themselves by expertise, role, location, demographic, level, and so on, and those boundaries do not disappear automatically when people are assigned to a problem or project. **Until relationships are well established, people may be cautious** about co-developing ideas, iterating quickly, and testing together.

Physical distance among team members who are working remotely or in different locations can make collaboration and

agility even more challenging. The 3 key factors that contribute to the success of teams who primarily work together virtually are technology, time zones, and team structure. To work effectively, **leaders and members of remote teams need to be intentional** about making meetings feel less virtual by using technology to create real-time connections; formalizing and articulating team norms; and clarifying whose input and involvement is core, versus who can be more peripheral.

To promote cross-boundary collaboration at your organization, set your teams up for success. Encourage employees at all levels to learn about the business broadly by making connections and building relationships outside their group or function. When a new team is formed or unfamiliar groups must work together, remind them to facilitate the group's relationships, *not* just the agile process or team outputs. **Teams have 4 interpersonal needs to build trust:** a shared sense of motivation and accountability, psychological safety, skilled emotion management, and healthy conflict management. Effort spent breaking down silos and increasing trust and collaboration across teams will almost always result in more robust solutions.

INVITE EXPERIMENTATION AND INCREASE RISK TOLERANCE AS YOU CULTIVATE LEARNING AGILITY.

Leaders set the climate for creativity. What a leader says about a new idea or a team working through a problem can support — or stifle — innovation. Caution, skepticism, and dismissal are understandable (and typical) reactions. But those responses **kill innovation.**

For creative ideas to take hold broadly, your organization's **leaders must reinforce a commitment to innovation through their actions.** Without support for those who challenge the status quo, your most innovative thinkers will become wary and disengaged. They will hold back (at best), or leave entirely (at worst) — and the potential wins offered by innovations from your high-potential talent will be undercut.

That's why managers and senior leaders especially need to **watch for unintentional undermining of innovation.** Common mistakes include quickly quashing new ideas or experiments by rushing through their evaluation; pushing a top-down approach and existing structures, rather than pulling and nurturing innovation through new ways of working; assigning innovation to one department, and thereby confining creative problem-solving to just one group; and acting like a know-it-all, rather than showing humility.

Work to **develop a mindset that embraces innovation** — both in yourself and in your teams. This means expressing curiosity, tolerating ambiguity, showing persistence, and staying in a constant learning mode. And look out for employees with these traits as well, to **identify your organization's high-potential talent with learning agility,** an essential trait in any rapidly changing context.

Learning agility goes hand-in-hand with agile innovation, as team members seek and embrace new and challenging situations; make sense of situations through experimentation and learning from mistakes; reflect on and internalize their experience; and then apply learnings to new projects, problems, and experiences. The future of your organization will be in the hands of those who can swiftly adapt to new circumstances, based on an understanding of what has (and hasn't) worked in other situations.

CASCADE INNOVATION THROUGHOUT YOUR CULTURE BY ENABLING BETTER CONVERSATIONS.

The effectiveness of an organization's agile innovation efforts are constrained or amplified by the quality of its conversations. A culture of innovation requires support for experimentation and collaboration. This means creating an environment where candid, even difficult, conversations can take place up, down, and across the organization.

Without quality conversations, your people work at cross-purposes, unspoken doubts later derail projects, and solutions go to market before they're ready. Companies that enable conversation to flow freely and accurately up, down, and across the hierarchy are better equipped to understand and respond quickly to changing environments and shifting customer needs.

To facilitate better conversations, **encourage teams and managers to ask powerful questions of one another** to prompt unscripted discussion, uncover insights, and move beyond their original understanding of a topic or issue. A question like *"How will this information impact your team or change the customer experience?"* or *"What's another way we could respond to this?"* is likely to spark more reflection and lead to greater insights than asking for a nailed-down plan. People should also listen to understand — **not only the data, but also the concerns underlying it,** in order to uncover unstated objections, sensible reservations, and concealed barriers that might torpedo new initiatives.

Also, balance challenge and support. Challenge can stress-test ideas and uncover unexamined assumptions, leading to stronger, shared understanding. But taken too far, offered at the wrong moment, or perceived as punishment, challenge will cause damage, undermining relationships and innovation. Providing support includes assuring people that they've been heard and that their feelings and values are understood, and thanking them for their contributions — even for ideas that aren't implemented or projects that stumble. This provides an important sense of psychological safety, builds trust, and encourages honesty and transparency. Taking these steps and **equipping your people with stronger conversational skills will create a more risk-tolerant organizational culture** where agile innovation can thrive.

Collaboration, psychological safety & candid conversations enable a culture of agile innovation.

HOW CCL CAN HELP:

Cross-functional, geographically dispersed, and generationally diverse teams are becoming the norm. Help your virtual and remote teams increase their leadership skills with The Leadership Conversation, a collaborative digital learning platform. Or, enable team leaders to overcome common challenges with customized guidance around Leading Teams for Impact.

Increase collaboration, tear down silos, and mitigate turf wars with our Boundary Spanning Leadership Workshop Kit, or equip your people to extract the essential lessons from their own experiences and apply them to future situations with the Learning Agility Workshop Kit.

Improve the quality of conversations at your organization to create lasting culture change with Better Conversations Every Day™, available in CCL-delivered versions or a scalable, licensed, train-the-trainer model.

For best results, combine skills development for individual leaders with an innovation-focused leadership culture change initiative. This will help you understand barriers to, and identify practices needed for, a culture that truly accelerates innovation.

FURTHER READING:

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- *How to Lead Virtual Teams*

- *Are You Guilty of Subconsciously Sabotaging Innovation?*

- *How Traditional Organizations Can Innovate Successfully*

- *How Leaders Can Successfully Drive Innovation*

- *Great Leaders Are Great Learners: How to Develop Learning-Agile High Potentials*

- *Better Culture Starts With Better Conversations*

PEOPLE SKILLS IN THE ERA OF AI

STRENGTHEN HUMAN "SOFT SKILLS" FOR THE AGE OF MACHINES

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE WILL DRASTICALLY IMPROVE BOTH THE QUALITY & SPEED OF TASKS PREVIOUSLY DONE BY HUMANS...

...*But* to stay on the cutting edge, organizations must reinvest in what will differentiate their people.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is no longer a fringe or distant technology. As more and more machines are created to think and learn independently, the possibilities for applying AI expand, which is likely why it was named as another top disruptive force by **36%** of respondents in our survey. In addition to operational improvements, **AI also offers the opportunity to fundamentally rethink and restructure the nature of work itself.**

Increasingly, organizations are replacing, repurposing, or supplementing their workers with AI for repetitive, routine, or dangerous tasks. Across functions, machines will drive process efficiencies, reduce human error, and work unceasingly — after all, robots never sleep. While accepting that AI will disrupt work as we know it, our survey respondents emphasized the importance of "getting AI right" to really reap its benefits.

To prevent shortsighted decisions and mitigate shocks to the workforce, organizations need to understand the limitations and constraints of AI — and **double down on the true value of what makes their people distinctively human.**

In the age of AI, work for people will become more interesting, creative, complex, and analytical. Critical thinking, strategy, and discernment are key so-called "soft skills" that will allow people to act on, and make decisions about, the use of data and robots. Institutional knowledge and interpersonal connections are **the hidden, human factors for success** that disappear when jobs are eliminated or restructured, or machines take over.

And while effective deployment of AI can create competitive advantage initially, as use of robots becomes more commonplace, **excellence in "people skills" becomes a crucial differentiator** for both customer and employee experiences. In some organizations or types of work, the personal touch will become more of the exception than the rule, so its price and value will increase due to its scarcity.

As artificial intelligence and machine learning transform business, **prioritize development to ensure your organization has what it takes to differentiate your brand and unleash the talents of your people.** Leaders will want to reinvest savings from AI into the value of what makes their people uniquely human — strengthening traditional soft skills, establishing new purpose and value in work, and aligning the talent strategy with the business strategy.

WHAT LEADERS TOLD US ABOUT AI...

AI CAN PROVIDE COMPETITIVE DIFFERENTIATION.

"AI is the way to reach consumers in the most efficient and effective way to remain competitive. Technology is key in the coming decade and companies should invest in it."

AI WILL FREE UP SPACE TO BE MORE STRATEGIC & VISIONARY.

"AI will change the landscape of how businesses use their workforce for the better and will drive increased innovation. Strategic workforce planning will be a keystone part of business success."

"Less firefighting will help the leadership team focus on the long-term strategy to improve customer satisfaction."

"It's a challenge for leaders to continue to inspire employees whose jobs are affected by AI to develop new skillsets to keep up with the evolution of their position and job description."

JOBS WILL MORPH, BUT PEOPLE SKILLS ARE STILL CRITICAL.

"AI has shifted the responsibility of repetitive tasks to robots and has caused staff members to become more analytical. They are having to stretch their written and verbal communication skills in a relatively short amount of time to keep up with how their positions have changed in the industry."

"Teams and leaders will need to focus on the 'human' elements — soft skills will become even more important and required, versus technical skills."

"Machine learning can be effective to replace manual processes — very interesting for general cost control — but must be balanced with the value personal interaction brings to customer experience."

STRATEGIES TO STRENGTHEN YOUR PEOPLE FOR THE AGE OF MACHINES

INVEST IN SOFT SKILLS FOR EXCEPTIONAL CUSTOMER (AND EMPLOYEE) EXPERIENCES.

In the new era of AI, **human interaction, the personal touch, and emotional intelligence become capabilities to be developed and deployed strategically.** Help your workers understand the skills and behaviors that will be increasingly important for success as they work with one another and engage with partners, customers, and clients on behalf of the brand.

Responding with empathy, using careful judgment to solve problems, creating highly personalized experiences, defusing difficult situations, and facing high-stakes decisions with composure are all critical. Soft skills such as discernment, flexibility, and presence of mind are needed to provide customer experiences that surprise, delight, and differentiate.

Whether an individual contributor, a first-time manager, a senior executive, or someone leading from the middle, 4 critical skills must be learned. Known as **the "Fundamental 4" leadership skills** — self-awareness, communication, influence, and learning agility — these are timeless competencies needed by people throughout an organization, regardless of role, industry, or location. Sharpening these skills will position your workforce to be able to collaborate together, provide high-touch customer experiences, and develop and adapt in a fluid job context.

Though task-oriented skills and "making the numbers" remain important, **empathy is also a critical success factor in today's workplace.** It can be learned and developed, and our research has found that empathy is positively related to job performance — managers who show more empathy toward their direct reports are rated by their bosses as better performers. So, make it clear that your organization truly values empathy. Encourage leaders to take other perspectives into account, show sensitivity to other cultures, and cultivate compassion by considering the effects that business decisions have on employees, customers, and communities. **Invest in developing the emotional intelligence of your people** — *and* the artificial intelligence of your machines — and your organization is more likely to reap the benefits of both.

LEAD CHANGE BY ARTICULATING THE VISION AND BY PUTTING PURPOSE FRONT & CENTER.

As machines relieve employees of repetitive or routine tasks, people must develop new skills and take on new roles (or even new careers). For many, this will prompt uncomfortable questions about their contribution and value, their identity and purpose. One of the most important things you can do is **help people create new meaning and adopt new identities as the work and organization evolve.**

Leading enterprise-wide change successfully requires leaders to address beliefs and behaviors throughout the organization so that everyone, from front-line workers to the executive team, supports the transformation.

You can reduce fear of disruption by sharing an inspiring vision of the future tied to the use of AI and by **following the "3 Cs" of change leadership:** *Communicate* the "what" and the "why" of the changes, connecting the expanded use of robots to supplement human labor to the organization's values and purpose it serves. *Collaborate* across boundaries, bringing people together to get input on how work changes, how decisions are made, and how individuals and teams can shape their future roles. *Commit* to changing yourself, expressing your own sense of purpose and making sure your behaviors are consistent with the larger message.

Help your teams and direct reports see that what they're doing is important and how it connects with the larger business priorities. Engage employees in conversations and experiences that enable them to **rethink their roles** and find a new sense of purpose in their work: *What do they do that is unique or important? What makes work personally meaningful? How are they part of something bigger, supporting business goals while making a difference to colleagues or customers, or to a larger community or society?*

EVOLVE YOUR TALENT DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY FOR THE NEW WORLD OF WORK.

As the organization sets the business strategy and maps the deployment of AI, a key question to consider is: *Do we have the talent we need for the strategy we've set?* Savvy workforce planning and **talent management and development are needed now more than ever** to ensure organizations implement AI with the right people, with the right skills, in the right positions.

Aligning talent with the organization's overarching strategy includes looking ahead to understand future needs for technical, professional, and managerial talent. As part of the planning and rollout of AI systems, HR and functional leaders should conduct job analyses to tease out the human-driven components and characteristics of roles and tasks. **Predictive analytics can be used to guide decisions,** set priorities, and determine where to invest time and resources. They can help you identify what practices are most effective at retaining and engaging your top talent, and which people investments will yield the greatest impact on customer satisfaction and business performance.

The plan should also address how to **develop existing talent and fill your leadership pipeline.** Importantly, HR leaders and people managers should acknowledge the learning curve for employees whose roles are being replaced or significantly changed by AI and provide a variety of options for development.

Keep in mind, the talent needed in the near future may look a lot different from the past. To reduce vulnerability to shifts in the marketplace, bridge talent gaps, and harness a dynamic and diverse talent pool, **diversify your talent portfolio just as you diversify your financial portfolio.** This might include leveraging (and developing) the soft skills of your freelancers, part-timers, and gig economy workers, as well as those of your full-time workforce. Embrace disruption through your talent management practices for maximum agility in the new world of work.

What makes us human will matter more than ever as we ready ourselves for the age of AI.
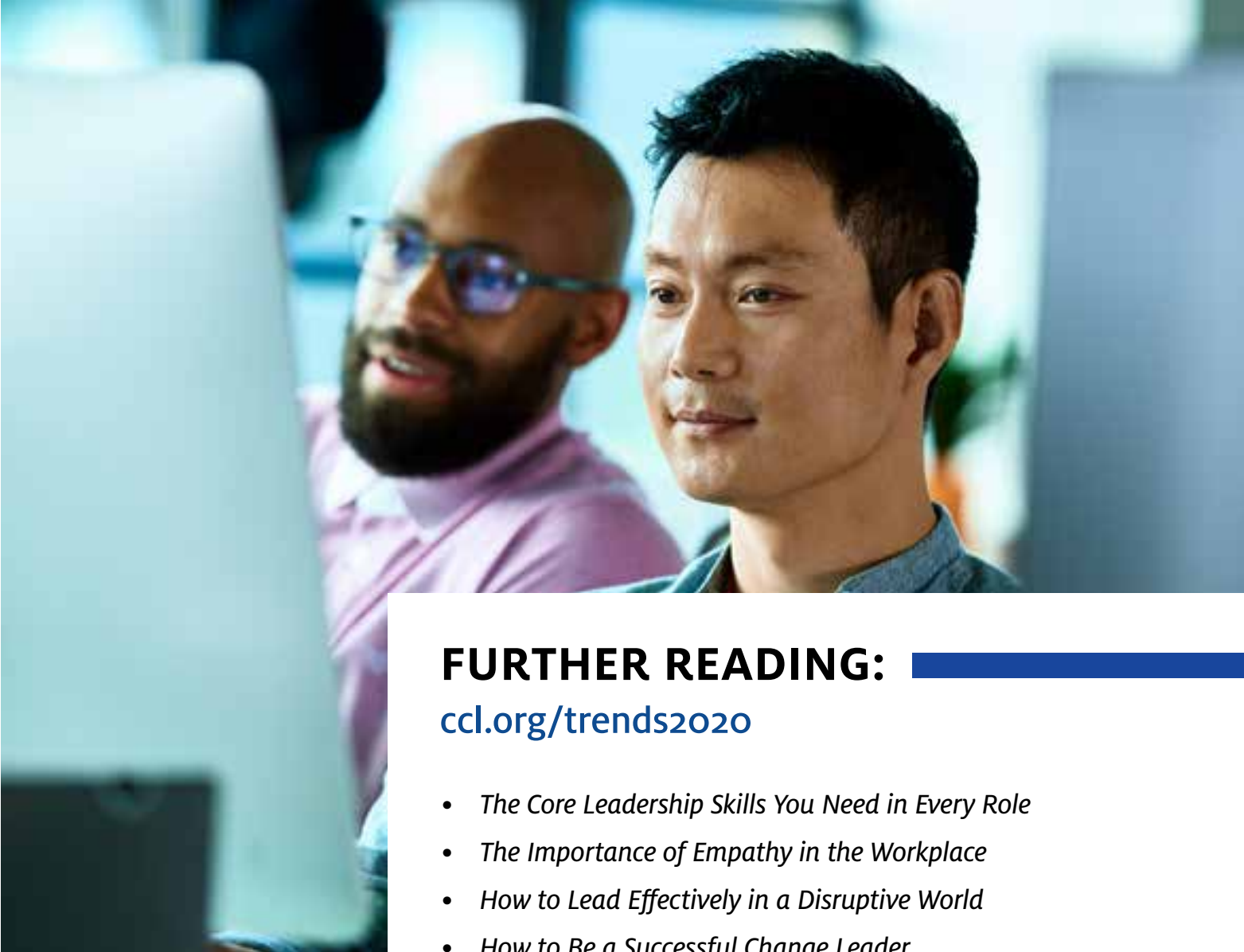
HOW CCL CAN HELP:

Enable your leaders at all levels to develop greater empathy and the "Fundamental 4" core leadership skills of self-awareness, learning agility, influence, and communication in any of our open-enrollment leadership development programs or via our licensed program Lead 4 Success™.

Artificial intelligence and digital transformation will disrupt your business. Partner with us to develop an organizational leadership strategy that aligns your talent with your evolving business strategy. The experts in our Leadership Analytics practice can help, leveraging your people data with our predictive analytics tool CCL Fusion to help you set organizational priorities and determine where to invest time and resources for maximum impact.

Go beyond change management by partnering with us to develop customized organizational change leadership. Or, help your leaders leverage the power of the "3 Cs" with our Leading People Through Change Workshop Kit.

Our Embracing Disruption Through Talent Workshop Kit is an interactive half-day experience to promote strategic thinking around how talent is utilized and developed, helping your organization leverage nontraditional and gig economy workers in a turbulent talent environment.

FURTHER READING:

ccl.org/trends2020

- *The Core Leadership Skills You Need in Every Role*
- *The Importance of Empathy in the Workplace*
- *How to Lead Effectively in a Disruptive World*
- *How to Be a Successful Change Leader*
- *Using Predictive Analytics for Leadership Development*
- *Redefining Talent for the New World of Work*
- *Putting Experience at the Center of Talent Management*

EQUITY, DIVERSITY & INCLUSION

HARNESS MULTIPLE PERSPECTIVES FOR TOMORROW'S WORKFORCE

EXECUTIVES UNDERSTAND THE BENEFITS OF DIVERSITY AND RECOGNIZE A NEED FOR MORE EQUITY & INCLUSION...

...*But* they're unsure how to move from awareness to action and real impact.

Increasingly, organizations have high expectations and significant goals around the concepts of equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI). Defined in our survey as ensuring fair treatment, representing all identities and differences, and building a culture of belonging, EDI was viewed as a top disruptive force by **33%** of our survey respondents, who seemed to **understand the value of a diverse workforce, but had some uncertainty about how to move past awareness.**

They noted that **companies are more effective, profitable, and responsive to complex challenges when they unleash the full potential of** *all* **their talent.** Further, ensuring fair treatment, representing all identities and differences, and building a culture of belonging is expected by today's job candidates and employees, and by savvy clients, customers, and markets.

Yet in their comments, many of our respondents revealed their uncertainty about how to ==move from awareness to action== and **from small steps to real impact.** They identified the need to change mindsets and behaviors, but did not see a clear path forward. Challenges they expressed included approaching EDI with authenticity and consistency; creating a shared corporate culture while honoring individual and regional ones; addressing conflict and managing perceptions of fairness; and expecting and supporting development of new behaviors from established leaders.

The way forward is different for each organization as it determines what EDI looks like and how it is experienced among its different groups and individuals. And while **diversity strategies and awareness training are not new, more and more organizations are confronting the limitations of those approaches.** Unfortunately, most diversity programs aren't actually increasing diversity. And awareness-building alone doesn't result in desired lasting change.

Fast-forward your organization's efforts using our 4-stage ==REAL™ framework:== *Reveal* relevant issues and opportunities through a facilitated discovery process; then select 2–3 strategic actions to *elevate* equity, *activate* diversity, and *lead* more inclusively. Specific strategies to increase EDI include building trust by taking steps to ensure equity at your organization, identifying leader behavior and opportunities through network analysis, and equipping your people with the skills to hold coaching conversations and reach across boundaries.

WHAT LEADERS TOLD US ABOUT EQUITY, DIVERSITY & INCLUSION...

EDI SUPPORTS BUSINESS GOALS AND MATTERS TO YOUR EMPLOYEES & CUSTOMERS.

"The world is a diverse place, and we need to engage associates and customers alike on their ground, in their culture. To successfully achieve our business goals, we have to find that common ground where everyone has the confidence to create and innovate."

"Our ability to bring in diverse talent while creating an inclusive environment will provide assurance we are getting the best ideas at the table for achieving our corporate objectives."

INCREASING EDI IS THE NEW STANDARD OF LEADERSHIP.

"Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion is a thread throughout our strategic plan — it's so important that we have developed a human capital plan that aligns to our strategic plan. We have made it our mission to ensure our leaders are responsible for this part of our culture and have made it a critical element in their performance standards."

CREATING NEW NORMS TAKES TIME.

"Continued training and education is needed at all levels, with the appropriate depth so employees (and leaders) can challenge their historical understandings and perception of norms. Leaders need to embrace how company culture does the same thing, being progressive where needed."

"It can be a challenge for a leader to cope with the cultural differences that can exist within a team. Managing issues requires finesse and almost a personalized approach, depending on who is involved."

"This is a journey, not a destination. The only way we can be successful in this area is to embrace new ideas. Having an open mind is critical to success."

STRATEGIES TO INCREASE EQUITY, DIVERSITY & INCLUSION (EDI)

TAKE ACTION ON EQUITY TO BUILD TRUST AND SHIFT THE CULTURE.

Pursuing a diversity and inclusion strategy without investing in the culture to support it will lead to disappointing results. It takes time, but **equity is the place to start**. Without equity, efforts to promote diversity and inclusion are laudable, but not sustainable. Without equity, employees may be guarded, and trust is difficult to build. Engagement suffers, collaboration breaks down, and performance is compromised. Many become frustrated and disillusioned with their organization's well-intentioned, but ultimately ineffectual, diversity efforts.

Organizations that prioritize equity first take action to ensure all people have fair opportunities to attain their full

potential. They acknowledge the reality that inequity exists and that their organization isn't a level playing field. People enter the world of work and advance through their careers with unevenness of advantage, opportunity, privilege, and power — so what is "fair opportunity" is not the same for everyone.

Individuals, teams, and organizational leaders can identify a few levers or actions that demonstrate a commitment to equity, set goals accordingly, and hold each other accountable. For example, individual contributors could invite an overlooked colleague to give a presentation or suggest them for a high-profile assignment. Teams could review their norms and unwritten rules around how work gets done (examining things like schedules, approvals, response times, and assignments) by holding candid discussions around questions such as: *To whom is this a burden, to whom is this a benefit, and what could we change for greater equity?*

At the same time, the **organization might analyze metrics and patterns in recruiting, hiring, and promoting, as well as compensation data, with the goal of rooting out systems that unintentionally foster inequity.** They could dig deeper into inequities in their employee development practices, asking tough questions to see the ways they are overlooking talent: *Who has access to on-the-job learning and key assignments? Who is tapped for training or leadership development experiences? Who is receiving coaching, mentoring, and sponsorship? What assumptions are being made about individuals' current capability and future potential? Are different standards applied to some people or groups?* These steps **signal a serious commitment to increasing equity,** the true foundation of your organization's diversity and inclusion efforts.

USE NETWORK ANALYSIS TO GAIN INSIGHTS ABOUT LEADERSHIP BEHAVIOR & OPPORTUNITIES.

While people might imagine new ways of leading to foster EDI, many are at a loss as to what *specifically* to do during the usual course of their daily interactions and decision-making. Multiple feedback mechanisms are needed to help them understand their behaviors and new possibilities. Network analysis is one powerful tool to help leaders understand how they're inadvertently creating inequity or preventing inclusion of diverse people or perspectives.

Network analysis begins with customized surveys or data collection through other mechanisms such as email traffic, which are then used to map patterns of relationship and interactions that are often hidden. The results typically reveal overreliance on a few people or groups and an under-leveraging of those who have relevant and potentially valuable expertise, perspective, or connections to contribute, but who are not consulted or involved. With an EDI perspective, leaders can see how *unconscious bias* or barriers might be built into their networks and the resulting limitations for them and their teams. Using this information, you can then identify additional people or groups you're not accessing, and set goals to diversify their networks. You can also take steps to engage others across boundaries and bring multiple perspectives into teams and projects, knowing that more diverse teams have been proven to drive better business performance.

In addition, all successful leaders need a network of champions who, over the years, play various roles in helping them learn and advance in their careers. *Mentors* can provide guidance and support, listening to their mentees' experiences and giving constructive, direct, and honest feedback. And even more critically, those with some level of authority in an organization can act as *sponsors*, working actively to advance the career of their "sponsoree," touting their accomplishments and potential, connecting them to others in their networks, and recommending them for bigger roles. A sponsor pushes their "sponsoree" to take on challenging assignments and advocates for them — including in off-the-record or closed-door meetings with other leaders. But establishing those key relationships requires intention and effort — and often, ideal mentors or sponsors (or mentees or sponsorees) are on the edges of a person's network. Many people don't have access to, or awareness of, those important connections. Network analysis can provide insight for ways to foster and build those crucial career connections.

TEACH MANAGERS HOW TO COACH & PROVIDE FEEDBACK KEEPING THE EDI PERSPECTIVE IN MIND.

Many EDI talent strategies focus on recruitment alone. But **recruitment without focused efforts around retention, development, and advancement will result in underutilized and disengaged employees, brain flight, and wasted resources.** To disrupt the status quo, establish an EDI-informed coaching culture, invested in the success of every employee.

Statistically, in today's organizations, men still dominate leadership roles, especially at the senior levels. Since people naturally gravitate to others who are like them, male leaders may unconsciously be inclined to coach and champion other men. Women, people of color, or anyone whose identity is "different" from the dominant group

may feel uncomfortable asking a manager or supervisor — especially if in a different demographic or from a different background — for advice. And when they *do* receive feedback, research has found it is less likely to be constructive and actionable, and more often vague, personal, and unhelpful. This unintentional disconnect often leaves people without information needed to excel and grow in their careers.

To shift this pattern, **people managers at all levels must understand social identity.** *Social identity* comprises the parts of a person's identity that come from belonging to particular groups — including (but not limited to) age, ethnicity, race, religion, gender, sexual identity, nationality, education, and socioeconomic status. It fuels their distinct perspective and unique value and defines sources of power and privilege. Much of inequity is driven by long-established structures, unconscious assumptions, and experiences tied to social identity. Through training and conversation, **managers can learn to recognize how their *own* social identity subtly influences how they coach direct reports.** They can also learn and consider how the dynamics of social identity may be shaping others' experiences.

Organizations can provide scalable opportunities for people to learn and practice coaching and conflict management skills. With training, managers can learn to ensure *all* their direct reports are heard, given feedback, provided support, and offered opportunities. Developing people's boundary spanning and conflict management skills helps as well. Many conflicts, when handled properly, can push forward an atmosphere of greater creativity, community, and collaboration. **Intentionally building your people's coaching skills and a culture of feedback will yield a more equitable, diverse, and inclusive workplace** at your organization for years to come.
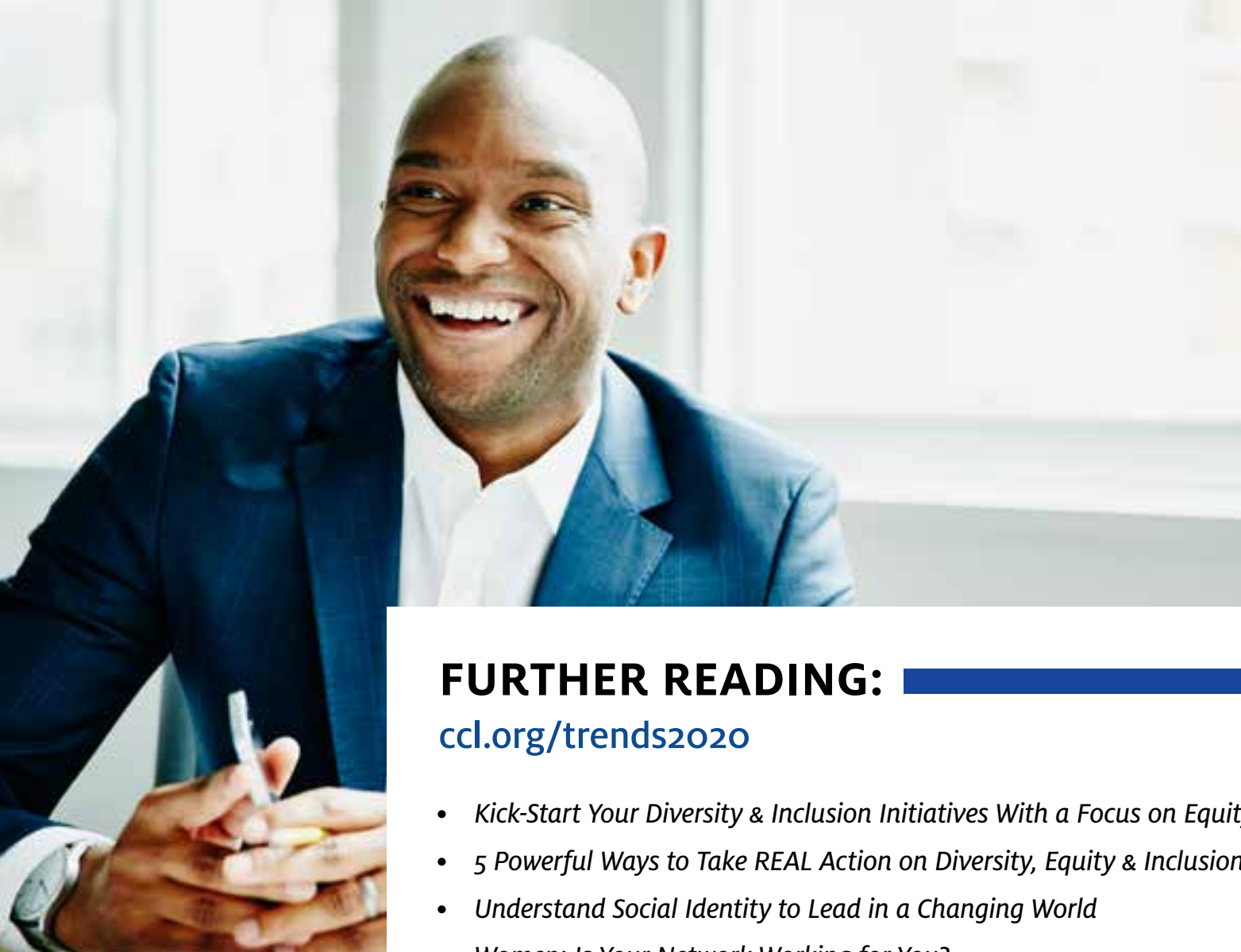
Take action on equity and strengthen networks & culture to accelerate the impact of **diversity & inclusion** efforts.

HOW CCL CAN HELP:

Our Equity, Diversity & Inclusion practice is rooted in decades of research and experience developing leaders representing different identity groups, as well as understanding diversity at both the team and organization levels. We can craft a strategic approach to diversity and inclusion for your business, customizing our content on network analysis, social identity, and leading across differences for initiatives tailored specifically to your organization's unique context.

When people work together, they inevitably bring differing perspectives that can lead to conflict. Strengthen your organization's culture by improving the quality of conversations with an EDI-focused, customized version of our Better Conversations Every Day™ training. Or, our Boundary Spanning and Step Up to Conflict Workshop Kits can equip your in-house training teams to lead productive discussions, reframe boundaries, and create an atmosphere of greater inclusivity and community.

The Women's Leadership Experience equips women in senior management with the skills they need to have an even greater impact on their organization. And our custom Advancing Technical Women program can help increase retention and advancement of high-potential women with STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) expertise.

FURTHER READING:

ccl.org/trends2020

- *Kick-Start Your Diversity & Inclusion Initiatives With a Focus on Equity*

- *5 Powerful Ways to Take REAL Action on Diversity, Equity & Inclusion*

- *Understand Social Identity to Lead in a Changing World*

- *Women: Is Your Network Working for You?*

- *Why Women Need a Network of Champions*

- *Why You Should Collaborate Across Boundaries*

- *How to Have a Coaching Conversation*

COMMUNICATION OVERLOAD

COUNTER COMMUNICATIONS CHAOS WITH BETTER CONVERSATIONS

PEOPLE HAVE EMBRACED COMMUNICATION TOOLS TO BOLSTER COLLABORATION AND STREAMLINE WORK...

...*But* complexity, confusion, and overwhelm are often the result.

For decades, communicating information and ideas has been consistently rated among the most important skills for leaders to be successful. But **managing internal and external communications has become more challenging with the collision of technology and the pace of change.**

Defined as monitoring and controlling communications to different stakeholders to ensure information needs are met, communication management was ranked a top disruption by **34%** in our survey.

Effective communication remains foundational for a ==healthy organizational culture.== Transparency, authenticity, and broad information-sharing are needed to keep stakeholders informed and on board in fast-changing environments. But over time, internal and external communications just keep amping up more and more.

The assumption might be that communication is easier than ever today, because of so many widely available tools to facilitate it. From texting, live chat, and advanced videoconferencing to online collaboration software and project management platforms — plus the more "traditional" forms of communication like telephone and email — there have never been more ways to stay connected to work. Social media sites too have driven greater openness, transparency, and connection, while also blurring the line between personal and professional identity, what's public versus private. It's never been easier to push out messages or to collaborate across the globe.

Yet while new communications tools help get the work done, they also create new ==challenges and stresses==.

Employees are working with multiple real-time communication channels, collaborating with multiple dispersed teams, and contributing to multiple projects on tight deadlines. They're taking in information from leaders and colleagues across the organization and around the globe, and often feel expected to be accessible and responsive 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. **Systems are strained and priorities are unclear** as the volume of information shared continually grows. People are overwhelmed.

The amount of information-sharing is only going to continue to increase. **Complexity, confusion, and overload will not disappear, but organizations can counter it.** Leaders can promote wellness practices that allow individuals to become more resilient and focused on priorities, shifting focus from the tools to the relationships to build trust. You can increase both customer loyalty and employee engagement by equipping your people to hold powerful, authentic conversations. And your organization can intentionally build a culture that creates greater direction, alignment, and commitment.

WHAT LEADERS TOLD US ABOUT COMMUNICATION...

GOOD COMMUNICATION ALIGNS TEAMS AND ORGANIZATIONS.

"Internal communications continue to be difficult to manage as our workforce becomes more mobile and remote. In many instances communication (or lack thereof) is the main reason for costly errors as well as in driving frustration."

EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATIONS ARE A STRATEGIC IMPERATIVE.

"Internal communication management is key to ensure alignment up and down (and across) organizations."

"External and internal communications have become a primary, if not the primary, responsibility of strategic leaders. Relying on normal communication channels and practices in times of accelerated change is naive at best and potentially dangerous at worst."

"My organization has been undergoing an almost constant state of transformation for the past half-decade. The causes vary, but the need to assess requirements, adapt organizational workflows, and communicate to the workforce is more important every day."

LEADERS NEED MORE TRAINING TO GROW COMMUNICATION SKILLS.

"The fast-changing environment of the business requires keeping all stakeholders on board and informed about the strategy/direction. Presenting in consumable and understandable pieces is key."

"Communication is imperative in the workplace, but leaders aren't always well versed in it. Increased training may be required."

STRATEGIES
TO COUNTER
COMMUNICATIONS
CHAOS

HELP YOUR WORKFORCE BECOME MORE FOCUSED & RESILIENT BY PROMOTING WELLNESS.

More hours and better technology do not lead to more productivity. With always-on expectations and the constant flood of information, people are overwhelmed and burning out. **While organizations may not be able to scale back demands or cut down on the pace and volume of communication, you** *can* **take steps to help your workers manage stress responses and become more resilient.**

People need mental and physical recovery — time and space to let the demands of work go. Stress, inadequate sleep, poor diet, and lack of exercise directly contribute to declines in cognitive performance and physical health. Organizations can encourage employees to prioritize recovery so they can clear their minds, and they can more easily focus and recognize what's important in both the short and long term.

Provide clear signals that your culture values wellness by setting norms such as limiting email after hours, offering access to healthy snacks or meals at your workplace, and allowing for exercise and movement throughout the day. Consider bringing in mindfulness practices and concepts from positive psychology to lower stress, boost energy, and improve the decision-making skills of your workers.

Crucially, many people are hesitant to take steps that would boost their resilience. They don't set boundaries or make time for their well-being, assuming they must be online and available at all times, or that they need to keep up with all the reams of information. Technology isn't the main problem, however. People blame their companies' poor processes and time management for their overwhelm and inability to recharge. Rather than expecting the nature of communication to change, **help employees at all levels clarify their roles, responsibilities, and goals** with their managers, colleagues, and teams. When people have clarity around their work — what matters most, who else is involved, what they contribute — they can begin to make choices about the best use of their time, talent, and energy.

GROW CUSTOMER LOYALTY AND EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT WITH POWERFUL, AUTHENTIC CONVERSATIONS.

Leaders who can listen well, give actionable feedback, and express ideas and information effectively with different audiences are key for your organization's future success. **The words, behaviors, interactions, and decisions of your people convey your corporate values.** When leaders are clear, transparent, and authentic in their communications, this helps build trust with both employees and consumers. And organizations that **foster authentic alignment between their brand's values and its actions** — and communicate that alignment to internal and external stakeholders — are more likely to have engaged, motivated workers and like-minded, loyal customers.

The ability to give frequent, actionable feedback to teams and individuals is another critical type of communication skill. Equip your people with coaching skills so they're able to hold coaching conversations and provide talent with ongoing feedback. This shows personal interest and helps workers make decisions about what to do more or less of to be effective. Structure a feedback conversation by anchoring the situation to a particular time and place, describing the behavior, and explaining the impact of it. This provides a simple way to have a conversation about outcomes versus intentions. Done well, the experience of **giving and receiving feedback also helps establish trusted relationships** and creates a foundation for managing the in-the-moment reactions when information is moving fast and decisions must be made.

Critically, leaders must break down barriers and an *"us versus them"* mentality, recognizing that dialogue is a two-way street. Whether with colleagues or with customers, get others' perspectives first, before offering your own ideas. At a minimum, active listening — paying attention, withholding judgment, reflecting, clarifying, summarizing, and sharing — is required. **Listening to understand the underlying emotions and values is even better.** Stronger and more robust solutions to your business challenges will emerge when your people are really listening to understand one another. Powerful conversations require real listening, and are the building blocks of a strong and effective organization.

BUILD SHARED DIRECTION, ALIGNMENT, AND COMMITMENT FOR GREATER SPEED & CONSISTENCY.

With so many communications channels and the constant flow of information, your workforce likely struggles to focus and prioritize work. Yet the onus isn't just on individual leaders to learn how to cut through the noise. Taking a whole-system perspective, **leadership happens in the interactions and exchanges among people with shared work** — between managers and their direct reports; among colleagues, teams, and committees; and in the relationships, structures, and processes of the entire organization. The actions, interactions, and reactions of multiple people produce — or inhibit — leadership from happening.

That's why in the context of communications chaos, leaders should **prioritize building shared direction, alignment, and commitment (DAC).** To do this, consider whether there's agreement on what everyone is trying to achieve and a shared understanding of success, as these are critical for *direction*. Look at how different aspects of the work are integrated and coordinated and whether team and individual goals are clearly connected to the larger effort. Does the group have *alignment?* Then evaluate levels of mutual responsibility and shared accountability — is the success of the work a personal priority for all involved? This indicates *commitment*.

To help people better manage the pace and volume of information shared, **focus your communications to build more DAC.** Rather than needlessly going to multiple communication channels to loop others in, and further contributing to communication chaos, people can trust one another's decisions, take ownership as appropriate, and move forward quickly, aligned with the organization's values, strategy, and business priorities.

Finally, consider a focused effort on **improving the quality of conversations at every level of your organization.** When a critical mass of people share a common understanding of both organizational priorities and what constitutes effective communication, it smooths the way for DAC. After all, communication is at the core of effective leadership and is inextricable from your culture. By clarifying what matters most — through candid conversations every day, as well as in formal communiqués — your organization can create the culture needed to sustain disruption.

THE TAKEAWAY:

Resilient people in relationship with one another will **communicate more effectively** and unlock better solutions.

HOW CCL CAN HELP:

Give managers and directors the skills needed to lead from the middle and the resilience required to handle complex, rapidly changing conditions at our flagship Leadership Development Program (LDP)®, the longest-running program of its kind in the world.

The challenges of leadership at the top are far-reaching, complex, and essential to get right. Leadership at the Peak is an exclusive C-suite training that gives senior executives highly personalized development to help them become more "fit to lead" while advancing the entire business.

Effective communication is the cornerstone of effective leadership. That's why every leader at your organization — whatever their level or function — needs to be able to coach, give feedback, and ignite better conversations. Our Better Conversations and Coaching program will provide your team with the coaching skills they need. When combined with Better Conversations Every Day™, you can scale a culture of feedback across your entire organization.

Or, your in-house team can help your people achieve better results through leadership, become better listeners, and deliver more effective feedback with our Workshop Kits on Direction, Alignment, and Commitment (DAC), Listening to Understand, and Feedback That Works.

FURTHER READING:

ccl.org/trends2020

- *How Your Organization Can Help You Recover from Overwork*
- *Leadership Resiliency: Handling Stress, Uncertainty, and Setbacks*
- *Want to Stop Treating Your Brain Like Junk?*
- *Why Communication Is So Important for Leaders*
- *Use Active Listening to Coach Others*
- *Using the SBI Feedback Model to Understand Intent*
- *Your Workers Care About Social Responsibility — You Should Too*
- *Implementing a Coaching Culture*
- *Direction + Alignment + Commitment (DAC) = Leadership*

CONCLUSION

NAVIGATE DISRUPTIVE CHANGE WITH NEW MINDSETS, BOLD LEADERSHIP, AND THE ENGINE OF HUMAN CAPABILITY.

Each of the 5 trends explored here will have a significant impact on **talent, leadership, and culture** in 2020 and beyond. That's why C-level leaders and executive teams are reimagining their approach to talent — in partnership with their HR and talent development groups — and have the responsibility for creating the environment and the structures that enable the organization and its people to adapt and capitalize on these, and other, disruptive forces.

What's more, **these trends and the underlying human elements within them are not operating in isolation.** You and those around you are experiencing and contributing to all 5 of these trends simultaneously. They are interwoven, affecting each other. For example, by unleashing the full potential of your talent through a focus on **equity, diversity, and inclusion,** your organization fosters the collaboration needed for **agile innovation** and better

acts upon the insights gleaned from **big data** and **artificial intelligence.** And effective **communication management** is crucial for developing people, attracting customers, leading any disruptive change, and executing the business strategy.

It's not enough to tackle one disruption. **These disruptive forces' power and potential lie in their multi-layered interdependence with each other and other complex challenges.** As an executive navigating disruptive change, much of your work is to understand there is no one solution or single right answer. Seemingly paradoxical approaches or competing priorities create a dynamic tension that must be held in balance, requiring new mindsets, bold leadership, and the engine of human capability.

That's why forward-thinking leaders are reimagining talent for the 2020s and beyond by ==focusing on what makes us uniquely human==.

TALENT REIMAGINED 2020

Center for Creative Leadership

THE HUMAN ELEMENT OF DISRUPTION

UNLOCKING THE POWER OF ANALYTICS
Upskill Your Talent & Upgrade Your Culture for Big Data

CRAFTING AN INNOVATION CULTURE
Champion Agile Innovation by Increasing Risk Tolerance

PEOPLE SKILLS IN THE ERA OF AI
Strengthen Human "Soft Skills" for the Age of Machines

EQUITY, DIVERSITY & INCLUSION
Harness Multiple Perspectives for Tomorrow's Workforce

COMMUNICATION OVERLOAD
Counter Communications Chaos With Better Conversations

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The Center for Creative Leadership (CCL®) is a top-ranked, global provider of leadership development. By leveraging the power of leadership to drive results that matter most to clients, CCL transforms individual leaders, teams, organizations, and society. Our array of cutting-edge solutions is steeped in extensive research and experience gained from working with hundreds of thousands of leaders at all levels. Ranked among the world's top providers of executive education, CCL has locations in countries worldwide.