

It's time for an update

What is the truth about today's labour market — are we experiencing a shortage of talent or a glut?

The answers reside within a complex, ever-changing landscape of often-conflicting information regarding what needs to be done to secure an organization's future.

Three speakers presented their ideas from two different perspectives — the availability of talent ready to work but unable to get in the door, and enhancing employee productivity and engagement.

The sources of readily available talent were not surprising. But while much of what was presented — by Jelena Zikic on the challenges immigrant professionals face, and by Greg Vertelman on the experiences of professionals in career transition — reflected past solutions, little appears to have changed in this arena.

The job search frustrations of Vertelman's outplacement clients today — ageism, impersonal treatment, refusal to give honest feedback — echo those of a decade ago.



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Why don't organizations understand that changing hiring practices to ones that embrace a diverse workforce will positively impact their reputations, ability to attract a skilled, engaged workforce and bottom lines?

On the productivity front, there are exciting new opportunities for organizations to close the skills gap. E-learning is one way the workforce is kept up to speed but plenty of training programs still don't leverage this tech-

nology enough. This is because many of today's trainers come from earlier generations and need to update their training methodologies both to refresh their own capabilities and to tap into the preferred learning modes of the younger generations, according to Emad Rizkalla.

This shouldn't be taken to mean classroom learning is a relic of the past. There are tangible and intangible benefits that accrue from a shared, face-to-face learning experience, such as relationship-building, networking and exposure to diverse perspectives. And gen Ys highly value social interactions with others.

To effectively bridge the digital learning divide, transfer knowledge across generations and, as a corollary, enhance employee engagement, there's much that can be done outside the traditional classroom. However, there are still challenges to overcome before e-learning can be used on its own to close organizational learning gaps.

It's not uncommon for costly online learning tools to be underutilized by employees. Convincing people to give

them a try by putting in place incentives to start and finish e-learning modules is a good place to begin.

What will it take to convince HR leaders they must update their hiring and engagement processes to reflect the dynamics of a global, ever-changing employment and learning landscape? Perhaps warning signs from other countries, like the one delivered recently in New Zealand — that its government will be arranging international job fairs "to recruit skilled expatriate New Zealanders to return home and work in areas where there are shortages" — will do the trick.

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