



Navigating the Digital Skills Gap: How Business Leaders Can Empower Continuous Learning



Contents Page

- 3** Executive Summary.
- 4** Introduction
- 5** The Impact of the Digital Skills Gap
- 6** The Power of Continuous Learning
- 8** Continuous Learning & Diversity
- 10** Strategies for Empowering Continuous Learning
- 13** Grayce's Approach to Addressing the Skills Gap
- 16** Conclusion



Executive Summary

Grayce partners with some of the world's most ambitious organisations to help deliver change and transformation.

With over a decade's experience developing and deploying high-performing talent, Grayce delivers a low-risk and scalable solution and enables long-term capability build.

Our Accelerated Development Programme has enabled thousands of talented individuals to launch successful careers and, coupled with our proven delivery model, has seen Grayce support over 2000 projects across more than 100 organisations. As a consultancy with a vested interest in understanding the importance of ongoing training, our business has been studying the Skills Development landscape for over a decade.

Since our inception, we have been strong advocates for continuous learning as an effective way to develop our people and, in turn, ensure those people can build capability for our clients through a well-rounded, relevant skill set.

This paper provides insight into how business leaders can foster continuous learning in their own business and utilise the benefits of setting up the emerging workforce for success.



Introduction

The digital revolution has reshaped our world, impacting every facet of our lives. In this era, businesses must rely on digital tools to drive, grow, and maintain a competitive edge. This rapid rate of change has made it challenging for individuals and organisations to keep up with the latest developments, creating knowledge gaps in the workforce that are difficult to bridge - the Digital Skills Gap. In short, the rate at which we are adopting digital technology is far exceeding the availability of qualified talent who can create, secure, and implement it.

Skills Gap

Addressing this Digital Skills Gap is a complex issue. It is influenced by numerous factors, including technological advancement, education, social mobility, and investment in training. A stark reality persists that many organisations do not allocate sufficient resources to employee training and development. Consequently, countless employees lack the necessary support, opportunities, and tools to develop efficiently and to their full potential.

At Grayce, we are committed to helping businesses build a lasting talent pipeline. We believe that the answer to bridging the skills gap lies in the development of diverse, high-performing, emerging talent.

Did You Know?

67%

of UK businesses are concerned about the Digital Skills of their employees*

84%

Of UK businesses believe Digital Skills are highly important to their growth**

As a leading provider of emerging talent, Grayce possesses valuable first-hand experience of the challenges businesses face in this new era. Organisations have a duty to equip their people for success if they want to cultivate the next generation of leaders and innovators. Grayce provides a full wraparound support system to clients and business leaders seeking to bridge their gaps with bright and curious talent, empowering them to thrive in the digital age.

*According to CBI Media

**According to Amazon



The Impact of the Digital Skills Gap

The Digital Skills Gap is a challenge that business leaders have been grappling with for decades. With the current half-life of technical skills at just two and a half years, skills development remains a growing priority for employers. The popularisation of hybrid working, and rapid digital transformation prompted by COVID-19 has brought concerns about the skills gap and future employability into even sharper focus.

Stats show that in the UK, 72% of organisations have unfilled positions that require digital skills, and 68% face challenges in hiring the digital talent they need. The rapid technological change underpinning digital transformation has created numerous opportunities for specialised talents in fields such as artificial intelligence (AI), machine learning (ML), automation, cloud, data science and engineering, cybersecurity, and enterprise software applications, to name a few.

As we progress towards 2030, an estimated 75% of jobs will demand advanced digital skills. The current talent market is fiercely competitive, underscoring the imperative for organisations to invest in training, upskilling, and reskilling their workforce.

According to a McKinsey study, half the people born after 1997 in developed countries could live to 100 years old, meaning they will likely spend many more years working – and gaining new skills. That's why it's not enough to only provide your employees with the skills they need today, with long careers ahead of them, continuous learning opportunities need to be offered within organisations to not only retain talent – but to futureproof today's businesses.

It's a challenge that faces many large-scale organisations and long-established industries, and one many readily admit they aren't prepared for. However, providing the workforce with relevant learning opportunities will set them ahead of the competition.



The Power of Continuous Learning

Talent management has experienced a rapid transformation in recent years. If organisations want to be an employer of choice, they must ensure that their talent management efforts have tangible benefits for their employees, and they are not just a box-ticking exercise.

Therefore, it is essential that businesses shift their focus towards the future and hire individuals based on their potential, soft skills, and capabilities rather than solely assessing their skills during an interview. Business leaders must cultivate a workplace environment that nurtures talent through a commitment to continuous learning rather than a dependency on a ready-made employee.

Continuous learning, the ongoing process of Learning and Development that takes place throughout an individual's career, plays a pivotal role in addressing the Digital Skills Gap, improving diversity in the industry, and driving business success. In today's digital skills landscape, staying competitive in the job market requires employees to keep pace with rapidly evolving technical skills.

It is essential for individuals to proactively engage in continuous learning to meet these evolving demands.

By embracing continuous learning within their organisations, businesses enable a culture of growth mindset in their employees and enhance their competitiveness in the market.

Nurturing future leaders requires you to equip them with the tools and resources they need to further develop their skills. According to an [Oxford College study](#), 42% of organisations experienced an increase in income after introducing e-learning, suggesting that investing in upskilling employees can lead to improved financial performance for businesses.

In fact, [estimates show](#) that disengaged employees cost the UK economy more than £340 billion annually in costs, suggesting higher employee satisfaction arises when workers are provided with continuous learning opportunities.



The Power of Continuous Learning

By ensuring that training and development programmes are accessible and inclusive, organisations can empower employees from diverse groups, ensuring underrepresented individuals have a fair chance to participate and contribute to the digital economy. This approach not only supports individual growth but also helps organisations build a more diverse leadership pipeline that reflects the diversity of their customer base and broader society, as well as helping to bridge the gap between different talent pools.

Emerging Talent

Emerging talent has the potential to lead the most effective digital transformation. These inquisitive individuals that harness a growth mindset are already driving large-scale digital transformation projects. Organisations don't advance by adopting an "if it ain't broke, don't fix it" mentality. By investing in the newest technologies that long-time employees may not be familiar with, as well as listening to individuals who challenge conventional ways of thinking and ask the right questions, employers can achieve enormous efficiencies.

Creating a culture of continuous learning requires buy-in from all levels of the organisation, from senior leaders to front-line managers. Leaders can set the tone by prioritising learning and development and allocating the necessary resources to support it. They can also lead by example, investing in their own skills and establishing expectations for their teams. Front-line managers play a critical role in supporting continuous learning by providing regular feedback and coaching and fostering an environment that encourages experimentation and innovation.



Continuous Learning & Diversity

We know that our differences make us stronger. Diversity of thought recognises the power organisations can harness when embracing each person's unique perspectives. When people from a variety of backgrounds, with different ways of thinking collaborate, they are better equipped to imagine new ways of working, creatively problem solve, and drive efficiencies.

In today's rapidly evolving tech industry, fostering diversity and inclusion is not just a moral imperative but also a strategic advantage. As business leaders, digital leaders, and C-Suite executives, you have the unique opportunity to drive meaningful improvements in diversity within the tech sector.

The benefits of diversity in the workplace are well-documented. Diverse teams bring a wealth of perspectives, ideas, and experiences that can fuel innovation, enhance problem-solving capabilities, and overall drive better business outcomes. By embracing diversity and inclusion, organisations can tap into a broader talent pool, attract top talent from diverse backgrounds, and better understand the needs and preferences of a diverse customer base.

Research suggests that women who are keen to break into the tech industry lack training opportunities, with 32% of women worldwide believing training is one of the biggest challenges they have faced throughout their tech careers. Grayce recognises and addresses this issue by offering opportunities for individuals from underrepresented groups to acquire new skills, expand their knowledge, and advance their careers in the tech industry.

Achieving meaningful diversity and inclusion in tech requires more than just good intentions; it demands deliberate actions and a commitment to continuous learning. Grayce offers opportunities for individuals from underrepresented groups to acquire new skills, expand their knowledge, and advance their careers in the tech industry. For example, Grayce regularly hosts, and provides mentorship and career support for CodeBar, a charity running workshops enabling minority group members to learn programming in a safe and collaborative environment and expand their career opportunities.



Did You Know?

32%

of women worldwide believe training is one of the biggest challenges they have faced throughout their tech careers



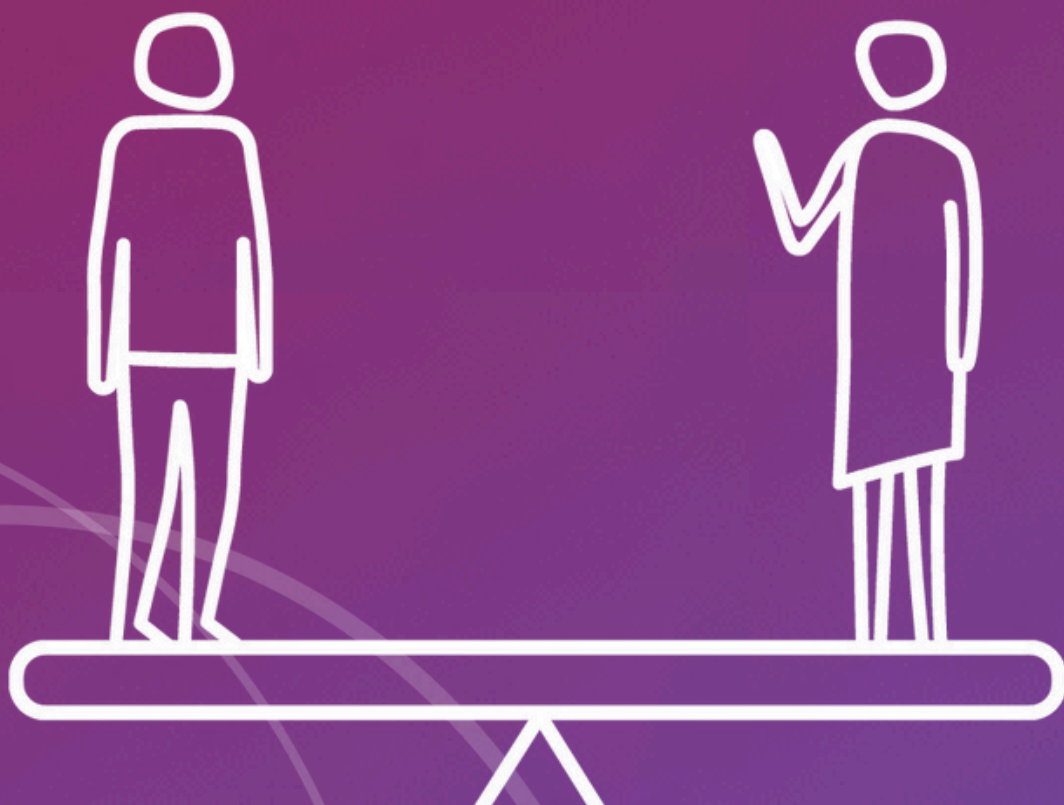
Continuous Learning & Diversity

Far more is needed to be done to encourage women to pursue STEM fields, sadly just 15% of all STEM workers are currently female.

Furthermore, research conducted by Business Matters Magazine revealed that half of women in tech drop out by the age of 35, adding to worries of a growing digital skills and gender gap. This drop out was reportedly due to numerous blockers, including maternity leave, double standards between men and women, and family-life balance. In order to contribute towards bridging the gender gap in tech, it is essential for business leaders to address these blockers now.

In addition to being essential for the UK's economic recovery, equal employment opportunities and the pursuit of gender parity in the tech industry are also matters of integrity for outstanding women and girls selecting STEM careers. With the critical shortage of relevant skills clearly threatening the UK economy's ability to prosper, we believe that investment in digital skills is the solution and women must have access to relevant digital skills training and reskilling opportunities.

There is no question that the UK economy must close the skills gap and make greater use of the emerging workforce. More must be done to encourage young, diverse graduates with imprecise academic backgrounds to consider retraining or learning new skills through learning and development initiatives. The future of the UK economy depends on educating and providing young people with the right skills to drive innovation.



Strategies for Empowering Continuous Learning

Building a future ready workforce

Learning & Development is a \$130 billion global market. Employers across the world are investing heavily in training, but it's often unclear how this is benefitting employees and the organisation.

With such large investment but fewer than 45% of organisations having a written business plan for learning, it's clear that organisations believe L&D is a priority, but there is still much confusion around the most effective learning approaches and their results.

Organisations need to know and understand their employee mix, what they want from their careers and their own development. The most recent generation to enter the workforce differs from their older counterparts in terms of working preferences and is more open to career side steps or portfolio careers.

This generation value more independence, with nearly half of Gen Z respondents in a LinkedIn study stating they prefer a fully self-directed and independent approach to learning.



Creating a Learning and Development Strategy

Encourage Self-Directed Learning

Compared to those who are only following a predetermined training plan, employees who are self-directed in their learning are frequently more motivated and engaged. Businesses can promote self-directed learning by giving employees access to internet resources and encouraging them to take charge of their own growth.



Provide Coaching and Mentoring

Programmes for coaching and mentoring can be a great resource for employees who want to enhance their careers or learn new skills. These programmes can be especially helpful for young professionals just beginning their careers because they can boost confidence and offer advice on negotiating the difficulties of the contemporary workplace.

Provide Opportunities for On-the-Job Learning

Since it enables workers to apply what they are learning in a practical setting; on-the-job learning can be a very effective way to acquire new skills. Businesses can give staff new challenges or duties and encourage them to take on stretch assignments to create possibilities for on-the-job learning.



Foster a Culture of Experimentation and Innovation

Businesses need to be open to innovation and experimentation if they want to keep up with technological development. As it offers a secure environment for trying out novel concepts and methods, fostering an environment that values experimentation and innovation can support employees' continuous learning and development.

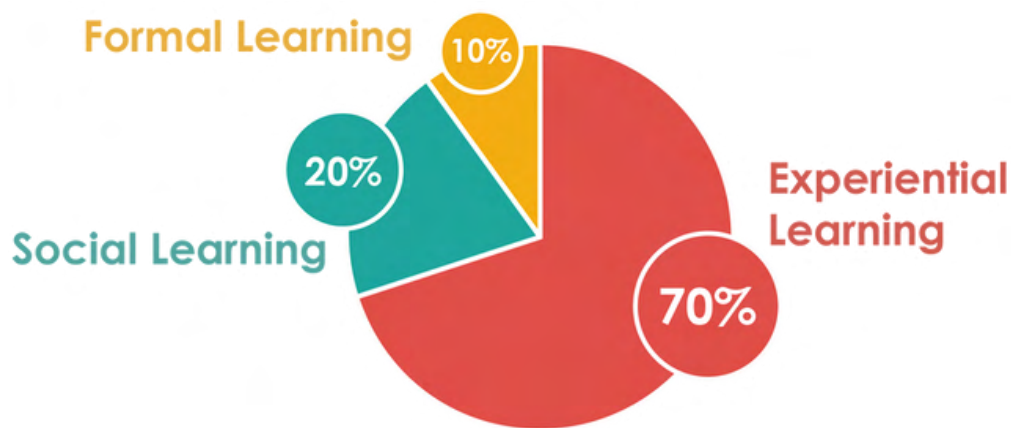
Provide Incentives and Recognition

Offering rewards and recognition can encourage workers to participate in learning and development initiatives. This might be giving out prizes for finishing training courses or getting certifications, or recognising staff members who show a dedication to lifelong learning.



Create a Learning and Development Strategy:

As experts in continuous learning and development, at Grayce, we leverage the 70:20:10 learning model. This method combines 70% experiential learning, 20% social learning, and 10% formal learning to optimise knowledge acquisition and skill development. It is a proven approach that has gained significant recognition for its effectiveness in fostering continuous learning and development. Research done by Charles Jennings and Towards Maturity shows that 90% of employees find collaboration essential, making the 70:20:10 model extremely valuable.



There has been a resurgence of interest in combining a holistic approach to employee training initiatives and how to best deliver these opportunities to maximise engagement. This strategy promotes small, frequent learning interventions – or microlearning – that are spread into manageable chunks and integrate training into the roles of employees. Not only can bite-sized information be processed quickly, but it boosts retention rates above 90%.



As 70:20:10 does not rely on formal training alone, it allows managers and other employees to get involved. This provides the purpose and drive needed to keep them happy and engaged in their roles. In turn, these long-term employees benefit from a deep understanding of the organisation's proposition, customers, and culture. It removes some of the additional stress associated with learning in a classroom-style environment and adopts a more interactive methodology. Find out more about the effectiveness of this model for today's workforce [here](#).

Grayce's Approach to Addressing the Skills Gap

At Grayce, we are committed to addressing the Digital Skills Gap through a unique and innovative approach. Unlike traditional talent consultancies, we prioritise long-term impact by investing in the development of young professionals and cultivating a diverse, skilled, and sustainable workforce for the future.

Our approach involves partnering with businesses to gain a deep understanding of their specific needs in order to accelerate organisational transformation. Based on this understanding, we create tailored training as part of our Accelerated Development Programme.

As an emerging talent organisation, Grayce is constantly looking for ways to innovate and enrich their proposition for clients, discovering and continuously developing high-calibre talent in change and transformation, technology and data. The recent launch of our four-year leadership and management programme is designed to give participants the skills, knowledge, and competencies needed to become an effective leader and drive organisational success.

The Development Programme has naturally evolved over Grayce's lifespan to accommodate in-demand skills and a huge part of the talent management work we do is creating a culture of lifelong learning. We cultivate emerging talent into empowered professionals, bolstered by a growth mindset. Wherever their career takes them, we know that we've sown the seeds of success by empowering them to drive their own development from day one.

“Since Grayce, I have moved on to working at a sports technology company, where I am the Director of Product Strategy. Grayce really set me up for this, providing me with the fundamental learnings of business analysis and project management.”

Liam
Grayce Alumni



Grayce's Approach to Addressing the Skills Gap

Grayce believes in the power of new talent and fosters a continuous learning and growth mindset philosophy.

Grayce's Performance and Development Director, Gemma Collins says: "We're committed to setting our people up for success. The core of that mission is keeping up to date with the latest in-demand skills and learning approaches to ensure that we equip our people with the well-rounded skillset that employers are looking for."

"We don't just want to set them up for success today. Focusing solely on emerging talent, we know how formative a person's first professional role is.

So, we are committed to equipping them with the tools, skills and support required to establish a meaningful career."



Gemma Collins
Performance & Development
Director



Grayce's Approach to Addressing the Skills Gap

Unlike many other development programmes, we don't front-load our training. Instead, we deliver a range of formal training interventions throughout our Accelerated Development Programme, alongside ongoing eLearning and mentoring. The hybridity of our skills development allows Analysts to focus on both their soft and technical skills, resulting in us being able to deploy well rounded transformation professionals. Our high employee retention rate is testament to the effectiveness of our approach. Grayce Alumni have gone on to work at leading FTSE100 organisations, taking the growth mindset cultivated at Grayce with them.

We take a collaborative approach to addressing the skills gap, working closely with businesses to encourage knowledge transfer. This involves embedding Grayce Analysts within client teams and providing wraparound support to both the Analysts and the wider client team. By working closely with businesses in this way, Grayce can facilitate the transfer of skills and knowledge between different parts of the organisation, building a more cohesive and integrated workforce and accelerating organisational transformation.

By focusing on long-term impact and investing in the development of young professionals, we are helping to build a more diverse and inclusive workforce for the future. Improving diversity in technology is about more than attracting diverse talent. We are ensuring that young professionals from all backgrounds are supported and encouraged to stay in the industry long-term.



Conclusion

We all bear a vital responsibility in bridging the Digital Skills Gap. By investing in robust training and development programmes for your employees, fostering a culture of continuous learning, and championing initiatives that promote and support diversity and inclusion, you can forge a workforce that is not only more effective today but also fit for the future.

The journey into the working world for young people who have graduated in the pandemic era has been anything but traditional. In a world where the future is increasingly unstable and unknowable, with no one path to success, we must subvert our notions of skills development, career progression, and organisational structure in order to succeed.

At Grayce, we cultivate innovative solutions that empower organisations to construct high-performing teams and foster sustainable growth. We collaborate closely with our clients to support their strategic workforce planning and co-evolve our development model to suit their specific digital needs. We are also expanding our wrap-around solution to support a larger, more diverse pool of emerging talent.

We know that the future of continuous learning in the workplace is bright. By embracing a culture of ongoing development, businesses can create a more adaptable and resilient workforce capable of tackling the multifaceted challenges of the digital age. It is imperative to recognise the significance of investing in employees' professional growth, not only for their own achievements but also to fortify the UK tech economy and solidify our position as a leading technological nation.



Join us in shaping a future where continuous learning empowers diversity and inclusion, propelling us toward collective success. Contact Grayce today to explore how our transformative solution can elevate your organisation, foster a culture of learning and growth, and usher in a new era of digital excellence. Together, let's secure a future that thrives on the strengths of a diverse and skilled workforce.





Join the Conversation

grayce.co.uk

