



INDUSTRY SURVIVAL IN THE FACE OF AN EVOLVING WORKFORCE

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

What's Next for our Evolving Workforce?	3
First: Engagement	4
Second: Culture	6
Third: Communication	7
It's Time for Solutions	8

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WHAT'S NEXT FOR OUR EVOLVING WORKFORCE?

Each generation learns from the previous, either intentionally or not. How has this impacted where we are today?

For the seventies generation – who embraces the Beatles, Go-Go Boots, and Hip Hugger trends, we remember the significant effect these had on younger lives.

For millennials – embracing YouTube, texting, and remote interface, you are living the current trends, new ways of communicating that our ancestors could never have imagined. How is this going to impact future generations?

In addition to communication, local and world events, national policies, and global pandemics to name a few, impact us and our industry on a global level.

And...how will the biotech and pharma industries respond to the challenges of technological change and a multigenerational workforce?

Let us look at these challenges through the lens of engagement, culture, and communication.



FIRST: ENGAGEMENT

For starters, the industry can empower today's tech-savvy team members with authority and resources to advance their organizations in technology while mentoring others. Leaders need support from dedicated, focused communications facilitators and most important, open, safe, cross-challenging environments which, when created, inspire creativity.

Today's workforce has expectations that are different from those of the past few decades. Of course, generational shifts are nothing new. But the pace and magnitude of these shifts are accelerating beyond the capacity of the traditional business methods.

What is important for today's workforce? They need deeper connection to the organization's mission to be engaged and productive. The Employee Engagement Trends Report that surveyed 13,000 employees, showed meaning and utilization to be the biggest factors in engagement.¹

This tells us that we cannot ignore the human side. The human side of business is more important than ever. Today's workforce needs to feel a part of what is going on, connected to the organization's purpose, and feel valued for their unique talents. This does not happen in a vacuum. We need to collaborate across all generations of the workforce.

Direct personal communication, wisdom from the past, and knowledge transfer are key to sustainable, compliant operations. We must blend technology with human interaction to achieve the advantages of both the virtual world and the real need for human connection to achieve true engagement.

¹ The Employee Engagement Trends Report: (Gallup Research, 2021-22)

Themes to Measure Employee Engagement



THE FOLLOWING FASCINATING STATISTICS FROM A RECENT STUDY ON EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT WILL SHOW YOU A WHOLE NEW WORLD:

- **37% of employees consider recognition most important.**
- **Those teams who score in the top 20% in engagement experience 59% less turnover.**
- **Only about 34% of the US workforce feel engaged.**

As technology changes, so do our social norms. Industries and companies that lag in technology will not be able to recruit and retain the best talent, their objectives will suffer, and talent will go elsewhere.

The biopharma industry workforce needs specifically targeted training to be able to embrace technology, transfer knowledge, and realize needed future goals amidst constant change. The need for ongoing development is not optional, and targeted training using state of the art methods must address what off-the shelf training lacks.



SECOND: CULTURE

As we consider workforce challenges and potential solutions, we begin with the premise that the good manufacturing practices (GMP) expectations of our industry will accelerate with the advancements and output necessary to meet and adapt to human needs. As the current, experienced workforce ages, it is essential that their knowledge is captured and transferred to the incoming staff as foundational wisdom.

Unrealistic deadlines and productivity goals create resentment and attrition, and in today's social media environment will deter others from even applying to work in such an environment. The biopharma industry serves a strong purpose and the work within each of the processes in an operation can be interesting to learn and master. As such, we need leaders who provide the big picture and process guidance necessary to be motivated. We can help our employees become professionals by expanding their knowledge and understanding of processes and systems – giving them the tools to connect their current and future roles to the value they bring to the organization and to society and the value it brings to them personally.

But what if there is not a knowledge management process and the knowledge is lost when the experts leave? The result is a knowledge transfer gap – whether facility, process, or system – we need to close this gap to avoid losing our knowledge base which then leads to repeating arduous and costly trial-and-error lessons. Yet evolution of the workforce is leading this industry, and others, down this very path. In our industry, the qualified and qualifiable talent pool is clearly struggling to keep pace with demand. Today's tech-savvy, or more recently tech-immersed, workforce seeks and chooses firms and roles that integrate technology into their daily workflows. At a minimum, they want a level of freedom to adapt their workplace to technology.





THIRD: COMMUNICATION

Who ever thought that we would be talking into our phone asking for directions to a restaurant? Did our ancestors ever imagine that we would ask Alexa to turn on music, the lights in our office or add items to our grocery list? As a result, our communications have become less personal.

Technological advances spoil us by making it too easy and fast, and the result is we communicate with a burst mentality that has limited focus or depth. The outcome is that our communication lacks sufficient context, detail, and even structure to help us convey and/or comprehend the messages we give and receive. And then there are those generational gaps in communication methods. “I’ll give you a call,” “Let’s use Teams,” etc.



Without contextual and complete communication, we risk team misalignment on issues and goals. All industries can analyze the communication atmosphere, then re-assess their internal systems to support integrated, meaningful communications. But how do you create an atmosphere of integrated meaningful communications?

One solution is to educate the workforce in communication. Education can include multiple stages including how to communicate, structured communication skills, being authentic, creating trust, how to manage conflict, and having respectful conversations.

And.... how do educational institutions respond?

Educational institutions are feeling the pressure of disruptive programs and delivery modes while trying to keep pace with technology. Further acceleration of these new educational methods is inevitable. But if we study the problem closely from the demand side, the needs of industry and the evolving workforce are for timely and targeted learning programs serving focused work roles – specialization training that is versatile to a rapidly changing workplace.



IT'S TIME FOR SOLUTIONS

The solutions most likely to succeed will borrow a slogan used by environmental improvement advocates: think globally and act locally.

A region must assemble the right set of stakeholders who will combine targeted capital, educational structure, tech-innovative passion, and industry wisdom. Their mission is to fund and drive versatile educational programs, such as industry certifications, which will reach and prepare a wider pool of qualifiable talent.

While certain roles may require the strength of a higher-level degree, most operational roles simply need more agile, challenging educational curricula that emphasize firsthand experiential training for the roles they are seeking to fill. The program leaders must define the skills required to prepare someone for GMP Operations roles, opening these roles to those who may have historically disqualified themselves from such work. This point makes participation by regional economic development critical since often they know the types of jobs coming to the region and qualified staff is often the primary hurdle to success of development initiatives. Finally, reliable funding for such programs is necessary as it provides certainty for stakeholder planning.

EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS AND INDUSTRY NEED TO WORK TOGETHER IN THE FOLLOWING WAYS:

Use their geographical location as an advantage. Apply on-the-job training strategically to build those key skills where firsthand training is key. Regional industry will then be able to recruit effectively from a talent pool with the needed skill sets.

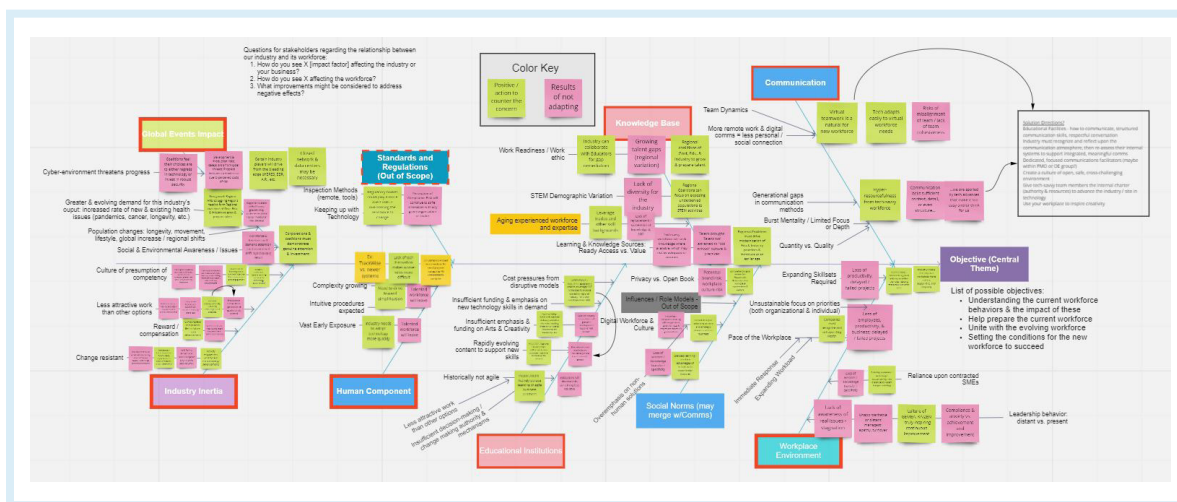
Actively pursue learning of agile business practices. Industry defines their needed skills and should be thinking creatively about how to develop those skills as they partner with educational experts. Educational institutions closely partnering with regional industry will bring their expertise in educational delivery to bear, making sure the talent is ready for available roles.

Experience has proven that when industry and educational institutions collaborate to provide a simulated learning environment focused on specific skill development, the new workforce is ready to perform GMP operations and support industry's' operational readiness objectives.

In parallel, the biopharma industry can respond to workplace stresses, by first, recognizing the challenges, and second, investing properly in focused improvement workstreams that are impactful and measurable. Assign this workplace improvement effort as a dedicated workstream with focused owners, just as you would assign an SME to be a process / system owner for chromatography, filling systems, or QC lab practices. A list of the prioritized action areas and best practices can be found in our related article, [*Reducing Human Error in GMP Operations*](#).

Let us learn from and plan for significant global effects that will change our very existence by blending the strengths of our diverse evolving workforce and leveraging industry and educational institutions to lead the way.

If you are interested in viewing the thinking that went into this article (as pictured below), reference the following [link](#).





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Cheryl is an official correspondent/U.S. Agent for foreign establishments engaged in the manufacture of pharmaceuticals imported into the US and has experience in the authoring of regulatory submissions for the US and Europe.

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Serving as the Director Human Performance Services at CAI, Harry Benson leads a team of experienced professionals in developing and executing programs, processes, and tools with our clients to standardize and improve the performance of their people. A former nuclear-trained submarine officer and Master Training Specialist, he is an expert in learning solutions design and

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