An SRG Guide

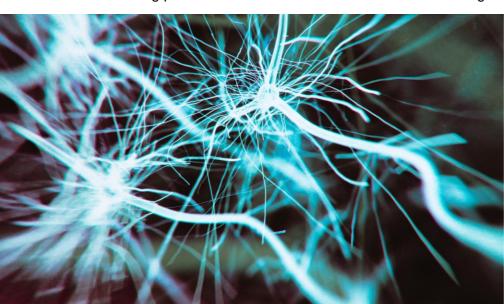# The future of work in the lifesciences industry.

**Introduction**

*Increasingly, advances in technology are opening up new opportunities for life sciences businesses and their employees. This process has been accelerated by COVID-19, with digital transformation taking place across organisations much quicker than initially planned.*

Running parallel to this trend has been the remote working revolution. In response to the disruption caused by the coronavirus outbreak, large swathes of the workforce have become acclimatised to working from home. Meanwhile, businesses that cannot provide remote working are navigating uncertainty by taking services and offerings online and helping key workers adapt to reduced capacity.

The chaos that COVID-19 has wreaked on society means businesses need to be more agile and resilient than ever. As economies start to reopen and people anticipate a return to the workplace, how will the effects of COVID-19 impact long-term workforce strategies? This report will identify the key drivers of the future of work and propose strategies to help life science businesses remain sustainable, agile, and attractive to candidates and customers alike.

In doing so, this report will cover:

1. Upscaling with technology
2. Infrastructure
3. New business models
4. Company culture
5. The skills gap

Despite longstanding, legitimate concerns about automation pushing millions out of work, by 2022, the technological forces underpinning the Fourth Industrial Revolution will have created 133 million jobs to replace the 75 million that will be lost [1]. In keeping with this hopeful statistic, this white paper will take an optimistic if pragmatic view of the future of work; a future in which forward-thinking organisations can implement effective measures to stay afloat and thrive amid the choppy waters of the post-COVID economy.

# Technology

In recent years, the life sciences industry has steadily embraced the digital workforce. This is particularly true in the application of hyper-automation, which involves combining technologies such as AI, machine learning and RPA (robotic process automation — an application of technology governed by business logic and structured inputs) to fully automate any repetitive tasks executed by business users.

In a 2017 Deloitte survey on RPA, 53% of respondents reported that they had already started their RPA journey [2]. In 2018, the global RPA market grew by 60%, making it the fastest-growing enterprise software segment [3]. Thanks to growing investment, this technology is quickly advancing beyond the task-based RPA of the past.

The need for process optimisation, regulatory compliance, patient service and supply chain improvements are all driving investment in this area. RPA technology comes into its own where highly skilled teams are involved in running mundane, time-consuming, and low-value but important tasks on a repeated basis.

Take AstraZeneca's Patient Safety Team, for example. Previously, collating and reporting the documented adverse events from medicines was largely a manual job in which countless human man-hours were spent processing and closing the events. After undergoing a full computer systems validation (CSV) process to demonstrate regulatory compliance, the Patient Safety Team deployed an automated solution that freed up resources to focus on value-adding activities instead. Workloads were managed without increasing costs, and quality and compliance were maintained. The outcome? Response rates from healthcare professionals increased and job satisfaction improved among the Patient Safety Teams.

In the 2020s, hyper-automation will continue to disrupt the RPA market. A Gartner report predicts that, by 2024, organisations will lower their operational costs by 30% through a process of morphing offerings, combining automation tools with multiple machine learning applications, as well as ongoing zeal for operational excellence [4].

## Pitfalls to avoid

According to the Deloitte RPA survey, only 3% of organisations have scaled up their digital workforce. For those that have upscaled, however, RPA was found to have an attractive payback period of just 12 months, while 52% of FTE capacity was freed up to concentrate on value-adding activities.

But what is hindering the scale-up efforts of many organisations? For one, businesses frequently start implementing RPA programmes as an experiment and then get mired in the pilot stage. IT issues, the complexity of processes, and unrealistic expectations also keep them from fully integrating their digital workforce.

Oftentimes, the approach is to deploy technology within teams without considering the wider business impact. If technology is adopted in silos, it is less likely to be scaled up unless stakeholder support is able to convince leaders of its benefit to the business as a whole.

## Adopting technology in an agile manner

Laying the right foundations and attitudes across an organisation — in other words, the right mindset — underpins any successful upscaling operation. The human workforce needs to be engaged and non-threatened and teams need to be agile. As our guide to Stakeholder                    Engagement                    reported

the five primary causes of project failure are:

- Change in the organisation's priorities
- Change in project objectives
- Inaccurate requirement gathering
- Inadequate vision or goal for the project
- Poor communication

All these project pressure points are related to the stakeholder process. Without a robust stakeholder engagement strategy in place, businesses are very likely to repeat the same mistakes time and time again.

Here are the top five challenges to consider before investing in RPA programmes:

**1) Process standardisation.** This cannot be emphasised enough. Companies should review processes across business sectors before implementing an RPA programme. This will ensure they are not trying to shoehorn technology into processes that are incompatible.

**2) IT buy-in and support**. A strong stakeholder engagement programme will help.

**3) Integration and flexibility of solutions.**

**4) Stakeholder buy-in.**

**5) Employee impact.** Within the life sciences and beyond, there is a growing movement for corporate social responsibility (CSR). Organisations that take their responsibility seriously consider the impact on the roles of colleagues to ensure equilibrium between human roles and those that can be automated.

## 2) Infrastructure: equipping employees with the tools to succeed

The COVID-19 pandemic has forced business leaders to weigh up the short- and long-term impacts of flexible working and improved remote access for their workforce, regardless of whether they want to embrace it or not.

Previous studies into what employees value most — including SRG's annual STEM Survey (produced in association with New Scientist) - already show that flexibility and remote working have long been essential areas for employees. Despite widespread consensus among employees, the actual percentage of employers who were actively addressing this need prior to COVID-19 remained low. But why the reluctance to embrace change on this level?

According to SRG's findings, this reluctance stems from concerns about trust, team morale, data security, wellbeing, and team unity. A lack of trust in the workforce is underpinned by the idea that productivity will nosedive if people are not in the office — a belief that has been rigorously interrogated since the COVID-19 outbreak necessitated remote working.

While a valid concern, one of the counter-arguments to this point is the prevalence of presenteeism (a workforce that is present in the office but highly unproductive due to illness, poor mental wellbeing, stress, or similar factors) in workplaces across the globe. With various studies highlighting the drawbacks of presenteeism and performative leadership, the post-COVID landscape represents the perfect opportunity to move beyond this outdated approach to work.

Indeed, a 2018 report by the CIPD suggested that presenteeism had more than tripled since 2010, while a previous CIPD study revealed that employers who had noticed an increase in presenteeism were nearly twice as likely to report an increase in stress-related absence as those who hadn't [5]. They were also more than twice as likely to report an increase in mental health issues such as anxiety and depression.

It is estimated that presenteeism costs the UK economy £15.1billion every year, costing nearly double that of absenteeism. In a 2019 study, more than 80% of British employees admitted to continue to working while unwell [6]. Young people were the most likely to

continue working while sick, with 92% of 18-to-24-year-olds admitting they still showed up at the office.

Some of the many catalysts for presenteeism include:

- long commutes
- the stress of balancing family needs with absenteeism due to long working hours
- the need to collect children from school or childcare.

To maintain a happy, healthy and engaged workforce, businesses need to implement a robust and accessible remote working policy that addresses these pressing employee concerns.

## Work environment

In the US, an Airtasker survey on productivity and working from home found that workers were more productive when working from home was provided as an option [7].

Similarly, a UK Deloitte report on productivity (based on survey findings from Ipsos MORI) concluded that 55% of respondents believed they were more productive when working from home [8]. Far from being an added perk, the work environment is of central importance to the work itself. Indeed, further studies into what workers want from an office space indicate that open-plan offices have had a negative effect on productivity [9].

Choice and connectivity are of central importance to employees — particularly choice over their place of work and the length and cost of commuting. Engaged and satisfied employees are critical to the success of businesses, so addressing problems with the workplace, commuting times, and technical issues will be a key priority for HR departments.

## Tips for navigating the WFH revolution

A truly blended workforce — one in which employees have the tools to effectively perform their duties, regardless of location — requires careful planning and ongoing maintenance. Here are some tips for making the most out of remote working

### 1. Stay connected

Though it may be an obvious point, remote workers are not immersed in the buzz and unique ambience of the office. Zoom or Microsoft Teams calls, while useful, are no substitute for the personal connections forged around communal areas or during face-to-face meetings. As such, it's important for team members to be reminded they are still working alongside others, albeit from afar. This includes ensuring that managers are on hand to provide support should any issues arise.

The key to staying connected is for line managers to endeavour to digitally "spend time" with their teams via web-based platforms that facilitate group face-to-face meetings. If people already have one-to-ones planned, ensuring they are a regular occurrence will help maintain relationships and address any communication issues as and when they arise.

Video calls enable team members to keep an eye on colleagues and take cues from visual pointers that are impossible to assess over the phone — particularly for identifying potential mental health concerns (evident signs of stress or poor personal grooming, for example). Through video calls, any decline in wellbeing can then be sensitively signposted and addressed by managers or relevant team members.

## 2.    Take real breaks

In the home, time can pass at a different pace to the more regimented office or laboratory environment. Partly because of this factor (as well as anxieties about perceived productivity), many people report working longer hours when working from home. Of course, with fewer distractions it is easier to get fully immersed in tasks, but working longer than is necessary can induce fatigue and burnout.

Managers and team leaders should encourage teams to move away from their computer at regular intervals, including taking a full lunch break to keep physical and mental energy levels high. Regular breaks keep our minds focused and boost creativity. The Pomodoro Technique — in which work is broken down into 25-minute intervals separated by short, 5- or 10-minute breaks — has been shown to effectively help people stay productive, focused, and fully refreshed throughout the workday.

Other techniques to maintain optimal engagement include getting up and walking around the house, stretching every 10 to 15 minutes, and taking time away from the workstation or screen at lunch. A change of scenery — particularly getting some fresh air and stretching the legs — will also help quash feelings of isolation and frustration.

## 3.    Create a work environment that works

Because offices are designed with specific purposes in mind, they contain equipment and breakout areas that are likely absent from the home. Managers should talk to their teams to ensure they have created workspaces that are conducive to a productive workday without impinging on their home lives. Some quick hacks to optimise the home workspace include:

● **Declutter the desk**. A messy workstation can hinder productivity. According to a Forbes report, "office clutter undermines productivity and motivation. Your performance coincides with your workspace. When it's organised and precise, you have the right mindset and motivation to work [10]."

● **Get the temperature right.** Of course, this is all about personal comfort, and will vary for different people. However, according to a month-long study by Cornell

University, the optimal office temperature is somewhere between 20 and 25 degrees Celsius. When the temperature was increased to this threshold, the study found that typing errors fell by 44% while typing output jumped 150% [11].

- **Get the lighting right.** Exposure to natural light is linked to the release of serotonin; a neurotransmitter that helps us regulate sleep, boosts cognitive performance, and keeps our spirits up. In a 2014 study, employees who work near windows were found to enjoy 46 minutes more sleep than those who did not [12].
- **Go green.** Plants not only improve our peace of mind, but they also improve our productivity. In 2013, The University of Exeter (in association with the Indoor Garden Design) carried out a unique experiment at the Chelsea Flower Show. It revealed that office plants can assist in boosting wellbeing by up to 47%, improve creativity by 45%, and increase productivity by 38% [13].

Separating work and private time is also paramount. People should be encouraged to pack their work things away in the evenings and at weekends to maintain a healthy distance between the professional and personal.

### 4.   Balance work and play

Along with not being able to chat in the office, have lunch in the breakout room or have face-to-face meetings, colleagues may feel they are missing out on the social activities that are central to most communal workplaces.

In these testing times, some outside-of-the-box thinking is required. Using video technology, here are some ways people can continue to socialise and unwind with their teams:

- Breakfast clubs
- Virtual "pub quizzes"'
- Friday hangout/happy hour
- Lunchtime hangouts
- After-work book clubs

Though easy to implement, the above can go some way to consolidating a sense of togetherness — particularly for employees who are struggling with isolation.

### 5.   Encouragement, recognition and support

Team members should be reminded that they are not alone. When strong support networks are put in place and staff are made aware of them, more people feel comfortable enough to share how they are coping. This, in turn, fosters a sense of organisational togetherness and actively boosts morale.

Managers should be sure to allocate time for confidential team discussions, making sure that people have space to air their thoughts and feelings — not just how they are coping with workload or the technicalities of working at home. The more commonalities around morale or motivation that arise from these conversations, the more connected teams will feel. These shared feelings and connections will, in turn, enhance productivity, morale and engagement.

Another important activity is to continue to acknowledge hard work, achievement, and productivity. If this activity drops off, remote workers can feel like their efforts and accomplishments go unnoticed or even ignored. Unsurprisingly, employee engagement plummets when praise is minimal or non-existent.

Each organisation should cultivate an open platform for support and feedback. Keeping team meetings and one-one-to-ones on the agenda is vital. When remote, these should take the form of video rather than phone sessions whenever possible. Managers should endeavour to maintain a positive, nurturing attitude and ensure there is a chance for feedback, as well as sharing avenues of support for colleagues who may need it.

Finally, it is important to provide regular updates on the wider company and keep everyone tuned into the bigger picture. Connectivity across any business is fundamental to employee engagement, collaboration and the business bottom line.

### 6. Reinforce core values and provide meaningful updates

Being permanently away from the office or laboratory setting can make employees feel detached from their company — even if they are on close terms with their team. To help keep morale high, it's important to remind employees of how their individual efforts feed into the wider business strategy by providing oversight of the latest developments. Articulating the big-picture "why" can help employees feel like active members of a community — helping to stave off feelings of isolation or detachment.

People should be encouraged to take advantage of any employee platforms (such as Workplace by Facebook) to post regular company updates. Sending out a branded weekly newsletter is also a great way to amplify and reinforce company values. By maintaining regular activity on key employee touchpoints (without bombarding their email inbox, of course), and keeping messaging informative, empowering and meaningful, a company can demonstrate that it cares about its people.

Internal comms should be as transparent as possible but ultimately strive to provide an upbeat, positive message. The more meaningful touchpoints businesses have with their people, the more robust morale will be.

## 3) Progressive business models for a sustainable future

When the "future of work" agenda was in its infancy, the focus primarily revolved around technology and how it would coexist with humans in the workplace. Discussions then centred around globalisation and how technology would answer many of the workplace issues. Despite the exponential growth of integrated workplace technologies, however, it soon became increasingly obvious that productivity was being adversely affected.

According to a recent Deloitte report, by the midpoint of the 2010s, productivity levels were at their lowest since 1970 [14]. Blinded by the initial wave of enthusiasm around technology, many businesses have failed to consider or implement the necessary organisational changes that enable humans to flourish in this new digital world. With the World Health Organisation officially recognising burnout as a major "occupational phenomenon [15]," leaders need to start looking at how jobs and processes can be redesigned to accommodate employees rather than simply introducing technology into existing, outdated systems. In other words, digital transformation should be *people-first, not technology-first*.

However, such widespread organisational change can often be met with resistance. Digital transformation projects frequently fail to be fully implemented because many employees — particularly those from older generational cohorts — are accustomed and attuned to older processes.

This poses a tricky conundrum for business leaders: while most people are averse to sudden, sweeping change, businesses often underestimate the extent to which processes need to adapt and evolve to accommodate increasingly sophisticated tech. To meet these changes effectively, new models are needed.

## Upscaling by delegating

To meet the challenges of increasing complexity and uncertainty, the US Army piloted General Stanley McChrystal's "Team of Teams" approach. For McChrystal, organisations of all sizes must adopt the qualities usually associated with small teams:

- **Agility** — moving quickly and with ease
- **Adaptability** — evolving easily to suit new conditions
- **Resilience** — withstanding and recovering from difficult events

By underscoring these three qualities, McChrystal's approach requires teams to cooperate as a network with a shared consciousness. Every member is empowered to execute, building genuine relationships and trust. People at all levels understand the bigger picture and how their role fits into the overall objective (the organisation's "intent"). Moreover, the constellation of teams aligns around specific goals, allowing individuals to work independently while understanding how they and others contribute to the wider mission.

While most organisations think the key to growth is developing new technologies and products, unlocking the next wave of growth is contingent on embedding these innovations

in a disruptive new business model that invests in the diverse, agile workforce of the future. This ensures customers' experiences will be better (at solving problems), cheaper (expecting more for less) and faster (improving speed of service).

## Strategic partnerships

Most Big Pharma companies have traditionally done everything in-house, from research and development (R&D) through to commercialisation. However, pharma is also facing disruptions to traditional business models (such as direct-to-customer sales and personalised medicine) and new product modalities (for instance, cell and gene therapy). Even the largest pharmaceutical companies will have to collaborate more closely with players inside and outside the sector to be able to respond to the demands from the different stakeholder communities.

To do so, they will have to "profit together" by joining forces with a wide range of organisations, from academic institutions, hospitals and technology providers to companies offering compliance programmes, nutritional advice, stress management, physiotherapy, exercise facilities and health screening. Adopting better ways of working across these functions will be vital to their success.

An encouraging by-product of the COVID-19 disruption is the emergence of collaborative partnerships united by a common goal. As time goes by, more of these strategic partnerships will bring greater health benefits for society. Without a widespread mindset shift among senior leadership, however, such an ecosystem will remain unattainable.

## Patient centricity

Patient centricity — the process of designing a service or solution around the patient — is increasingly a priority for any forward-thinking life sciences organisations.

According to the 2017 KPMG report, 'Pharma Outlook: From evolution to revolution', "two shifts are disturbing the pharmaceutical industry, leading to significant pressure on the traditional business model [16]." These broad shifts are:

- **A power shift across the healthcare value chain towards patients**
- **A funding shift from treatment to diagnostics, prevention and cure**

To stay abreast of these trends, businesses are turning to tactics such as utilising patient journey mapping and design thinking technologies, as well as inferring results from more qualitative assessments. But a true patient-centric approach also requires a strategic shift. The same report suggested executive teams should decide which of the following three 'archetypes' they want their organisation to become:

1. **Active pharmaceutical portfolio company.** These organisations are typically active in several therapeutic areas within their portfolio and are able to acquire and

divest parts of their portfolio in a 'plug-and-play' fashion. They are flexible, agile and modular.

2. **Virtual value chain orchestrator.** These organisations are data-rich pharmaceutical players, offering "virtual value across digital solutions" across numerous healthcare platforms. They also harness data to effortlessly link supply and demand in global healthcare systems. They are asset-light and data-driven.

3. **Pharmaceutical niche specialist.** These organisations focus on a single therapeutic area or disease and look at the entire patient pathway, from prevention to cure. They are focused and offer inch-wide, mile-deep expertise.

Inspiration can be taken from other industries such as retail and service organisations. Broadly speaking, patients are comparable to other consumers in that they have huge access to data — increasing both choice and knowledge. Their journey, pain points, and experience are important aspects that businesses need to address to ensure they remain competitive in increasingly competitive markets.

# 4) Building a company culture that works for all

In an environment where technology and swift changes in skill sets are advancing at breakneck speed, how does the future workplace ensure its culture embraces people's needs while remaining true to company values?

Leaders need to be brave and properly evaluate the business' existing culture to ascertain whether it is robust enough to traverse major changes in technology, business models and skill-set requirements.

## Answering the "why"

Having a robust "why" (i.e. a strong purpose) is key. Leaders who rally behind a strong purpose and communicate this effectively to the business are more likely to succeed than those who thrust change on a workforce with no contextual background.

An organisation that got this right is Merck KGaA, based in the German science hub of Darmstadt. Merck's leadership embedded a "change mindset" in their culture by proclaiming that "science, technology, innovation, and curiosity" are all part of its "DNA... ambition and purpose [17]."

When employees were asked to do something completely novel, such as experiment with a humanoid robot to identify development areas in the workforce, employees were not taken aback or surprised. In the words of one employee, the task simply demonstrated "how we do things around here." By aligning leadership to purpose, Merck has cultivated a culture based around creativity and innovation.

## Diversity & inclusion (D&I)

Diversity and inclusion (D&I) programmes are also a pivotal piece of the cultural jigsaw. Companies that get behind these programmes are more productive and innovative. As SRG's Internal Talent Ambassador, Michelle Clare reported in our recent Diversity and Inclusion Guide:

> *"Companies within the top quartile percent for diversity are 21% more likely to have successful financial returns. To maintain a competitive environment, it is crucial that we hire and retain top talent. Diversity in the workplace is a key driver of creative and innovative thinking and therefore a vital element to include in talent attraction programmes."*

Though the pharma and biotech industries are making headway, there is still a long way to go. In 2019, a global BIO study found that, on average, just 30% of executive team members and 18% of board members were female [18]. Regarding ethnicity, only 15% of executive team members and 14% of board members were people of colour.

## Demographic reporting

In the same BIO study, one of the areas identified to help companies better understand the gulf between where they currently stand and where they want to be is the reporting of workforce demographics. Alarmingly, more than 40% of respondents reported not collecting data on demographics, nor on compensation, promotion and performance rankings — all of which can all help to establish D&I as a priority within a business.

Often, there is a mismatch between a commitment to diversity programmes and public statements communicating diversity goals — with just 10% of respondents stating their business regularly provides publicly available information on this. Setting tangible hiring goals is a good starting point when embarking on creating a more diverse workforce — yet is an area many businesses do not consider.

## Widening the talent pool

The first question to ask is where the business is looking for talent. Organisations that fixate on recruiting from certain specific academic institutions will likely receive the same type of candidate each year (the obvious example is the proliferation of Ivy League and Oxbridge graduates at top firms in the US and UK, respectively).

By sourcing their workforce from a narrow set of institutions or backgrounds, companies simply perpetuate the hiring cycle and miss out on the disruptive talent they need to

properly grow. Simply put, companies that strive for greater diversity will have a larger pool of candidates to choose from.

## Company reputation

Also central to promoting diversity is addressing how the company is perceived by prospective candidates. Is there gender parity at board level? Are management drawn from a range of socioeconomic and ethnic backgrounds? Do non-neurotypical employees have a presence within the business? Is the company culture organic or enforced?

In seeking work, candidates are drawn to companies that mirror their own values, so language and tone of voice used in adverts are critical for attracting the right talent. A job advert that mentions fantasy football leagues as a perk, for instance, carries connotations of a male-centric culture.

Likewise, consideration needs to be given to the website. Is it accessible for candidates with poor vision? Does it offer a clear overview of what the business does and address key pain points for prospective employees? A consistent, values-driven, and, most importantly, accurate portrayal of the company through marketing and sales forms the crux of any successful employer brand.

Businesses should pay close attention to their reputation. Effective marketing and consistent messaging alone are not enough. If any members of the workforce community feel excluded or disenfranchised, there is every chance they could turn to social media or anonymous review sites such as Glassdoor to air their grievances.

Safeguarding the business reputation involves ensuring that every person connected to the business — from employees and partners right through to unsuccessful candidates — have positive interactions with the brand. SRG's guide to creating a diverse and inclusive workforce culture covers how to set up a robust D&I programme and effectively manage brand reputation.

## Hiring bias

Whether we like it or not, bias is an inescapable part of human nature, and our unconscious biases exert a dramatic influence on the recruitment process.

Various studies on hiring bias have shown how changing the gender, name, and nationality on a CV/resume can influence whether a candidate is chosen to go forward [19]. To alleviate this multifaceted problem, businesses need to implement processes that acknowledge and overcome our unconscious preferences.

Adopting "blind" CV/resume policies (which emphasise skills and competencies) and having a more diverse review committee can help a business keep its talent pool as wide

as possible. Drawing on the expertise of recruitment partners with a track record of successful talent sourcing, such as SRG, will also help ensure companies build positive relationships with candidates across several important touchpoints.

Affinity bias is another area to keep tabs on. Despite good intentions, many hiring managers still fall into the trap of hiring people that look like them, sound like them, or have a similar academic or professional background. Being aware of this beforehand and incorporating unconscious bias training into D&I programmes can go some way to reduce discriminatory hiring practices.

The good news? When businesses adopt a clear diversity programme and integrate it with a robust inclusion programme, they not only solve the culture conundrum — they also increase their ROI [20].

## 5) Addressing the skills gap in the life sciences

While almost all companies have strategies in place to deal with industry disruptions, only a few have effectively upscaled solutions. The majority tend to flounder at the pilot stage.

In most cases, the technology and use cases are prioritised — not the talent or the people required to support such strategies. As a new generation of smart technology reshapes the relationships between pharma companies and their traditional customers, building a workforce that can properly harness data is vital.

However, because many companies are not sufficiently structured to cascade data and knowledge down the line, important data sets are not being fully utilised across the organisation. Indeed, the existing skills shortages in the life sciences, are, according to the World Economic Forum, the main barrier preventing the scaling up of technologies [21]. With increasing augmentation between humans and AI signalling the future of work, bridging the widening skills gap is one of the biggest challenges our industry faces.

In the next ten years, demand for social and emotional skills are projected to increase by one third [22]. Frontline workers rank these skills (such as adaptability and continuous learning) as critical for success, alongside other skills such as data analysis, critical thinking, and decision-making. Despite increasing recognition of the skills needed in the future, however, too many businesses continue to fall back on outdated training programmes that do not adequately address the skills gap. The pharmaceutical industry has been particularly slow to redress the balance. While businesses outside of the pharma industry are investing between US$5,000 and US$30,000 per reskilled employee, for example, only one-third of pharma companies have launched reskilling programmes [23].

In SRG's 2020 STEM survey, we asked people to state whether they had been upskilled in the last 12 months. While over 60% responded that they had, 37% did not receive any support or formal training from their employer.

## Embracing the future with reskilling

If automation within pharmaceutical operations reaches projected levels, certain roles within the life sciences industry will become obsolete. Unfortunately, this seems to be an inevitability. However, forward-thinking companies can remain competitive and socially responsible by turning to innovative reskilling programmes.

Where traditional methods are being used, such as hiring or partnering to fill the gaps, companies face stiff competition for talent from larger tech companies and disruptive startups. Given that demand for data analysts, data scientists, and data engineers is expected to be four times higher than supply, hiring can be a less effective strategy than reskilling. Indeed, as early leaders in addressing talent gaps have shown, creating highly tailored, cross-functional "centers of excellence" has proven an effective way to reskill workers [24].

## Adopting a reskilling programme

Frontline employees are motivated by doing their job well and gaining job security. This is useful information for businesses designing better reskilling programmes. Thinking about the different phases of the reskilling process can help companies better identify their own skills gaps:

**1) Discovery.** In this phase, companies should determine critical roles, discover gaps in talent and how to address it, and accurately gauge the readiness of the business to deliver.

**2) Design.** This is the phase where future roles and ways of working are designed. Hiring strategies and reskilling programmes fit within this phase. Change management programmes and stakeholder engagement also play an important role in ensuring buy-in and support.

**3) Deployment.** This is the final stage in which change is implemented and sustained through careful tracking. Reskilling programmes can be expanded and evolved as and when is necessary.

Taking a similarly agile approach to upskilling and continued learning, SRG Synergy — SRG's bespoke insourcing solution — has positioned itself as a leader in helping life sciences organisations overcome their own future challenges. As Richard Acton, Director at SRG Synergy explains:

> *"When we implemented our development programme within Synergy, we became instantly more agile for our clients. Our unique programme cross-pollinates skills across our client embedded teams to ensure continual professional development. This has created additional flexibility for our clients."*

By addressing skills shortages and reskilling employees, businesses can retain a larger chunk of their workforce and empower them to take advantage of the Fourth Industrial

Revolution [25]. In doing so, they can help maintain their competitive advantage and fulfil their corporate social responsibility.

## Futureproof your organisation with SRG

As the life sciences industry responds to COVID-19 disruption and adapts to wider global shifts in technology, funding, workforce planning, and supply chain management, remaining agile and adaptable is vital for any business to upscale successfully in the 2020s.

At SRG, our expertise in global science, clinical and engineering trends can help you anticipate and navigate ongoing technological change and market disruption. By equipping your people for the future and consolidating an empowered and engaged workforce, you can embrace digital transformation and propel your organisation forward.

***Our dedicated consultants are on hand to answer any questions about how to attract and retain the best talent. If you'd like to discuss this guide or how SRG can help you futureproof your business in these uncertain times, please do get in touch: info@srgtalent.com www.srgtalent.com***

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