Missing Link: The Recommendations

An ageing workforce in the digital era: older workers, technology and skills

Workers over 50 make up a significant and growing part of the future workforce, but most are not benefitting from the work opportunities that the digital revolution offers. Employers have an opportunity to challenge assumptions about older workers' ambition and capability, and upskill them *now*, to prevent skills shortages in the future.

- **Make training, development and work opportunities more accessible to older workers** – particularly those in lower skilled and lower paid work. Design and provide a wider range of training options, including a strong focus on continuous learning. Reverse mentoring can be a form of skills transfer between older and younger employees – or early and later stage career employees. Allow extra time for learning, not only are older people trying to learn about the topic but they are also trying to learn how to use the actual fabric of the learning delivery format – particularly if it is digital.

- **Create a company culture of lifelong learning**, making it fun, accessible and inclusive. It may be difficult to predict what skills your organisation will need in the next five years, so employers need to create a culture of learning that is responsive and adaptable, and enables all employees to be adept at learning, with particular support for older workers.

- **Understand your older workers' appetite for learning and development.** If older workers are less likely to take up training opportunities, seek feedback and explore the personal and external barriers that may be in their way. Take action to remove these barriers and actively encourage older employees, or those further into their career, to take up opportunities.

- **Develop targeted training and reskilling support for specific groups** of older workers, such as women, older workers with health conditions or disabilities, and those in lower-skilled manual work. Create programmes for people who have been out of work for some time, focussing on how to learn new skills, apply transferable skills, and prepare for new types of work.

- **Introduce mid-life career reviews** to encourage older employees to think through their options and provide space for broader conversations with managers about plans for the future.

- **Make recruitment more age-inclusive:** open up apprenticeships, internships and development programmes to people of all ages, including those seeking career changes later in life. Include different recruitment channels to attract older workers, such as face to face recruitment in the community. Start with the expectation that all new recruits will need training, not only young people.

- **Broaden the range of career pathways within your organisation**, to introduce more opportunities for career development for older workers. Recognise that older workers may not have the same level of qualifications as younger people, value their experience and transferable skills, and assume they will be equally as capable at learning new skills as younger people.

- **Clearly communicate the impact of automation and technology on the busienss, and demystify key future skills**, particularly technology and digital skills. Better recognise the 'human' skills, particularly customer service, and how they complement digital skills.

- **Use vehicles of communication that all older people feel comfortable with**. Consider various types of delivery, newsletters, posters, the written letter and direct phone calls when communicating to employees about training, learning and development, and the changing nature of work.