

## Upskilling your employees: Everything you need to know

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### What Is Upskilling?

According to Ramdstad (2021), upskilling is the process of teaching employees new skills that will aid them in their work. Technology has sped up the need for upskilling. There is a sense of urgency to continually provide training and development to your employees. As technology evolves, new skills are required and job requirements change. Upskilling fills this skill gap through ongoing training. Workforce upskilling helps your employees stay on top of new business best practices and ensures your company is competitive.

Upskilling is vital for businesses to stay relevant. A [2017 Productivity Commission report](#) points to “the combined effect of an aging workforce and technological change” as the driving factor behind the growing [skills gap](#) in the workforce. Not only do companies need to hire digitally-savvy employees to stay competitive, but they also need to invest in ongoing training to retain talent.

When people feel like they have stopped learning or adding to their professional development they tend to look elsewhere (Tonali 2021). The turnover comes at a high cost: According to [Gallup](#) (2020), the cost of replacing an individual employee can range from one-half to two times the employee's annual salary. This means a 100-person organization that provides an average salary of \$50,000 could have turnover and replacement costs of approximately \$660,000 to \$2.6 million per year. Upskilling, or reskilling, is a smaller investment than hiring and training a new worker. As you reskill your employees, you create a more well-rounded, cross-trained workforce, and increase your team's effectiveness.

### Benefits of Upskilling Employees

#### 1. Attracts new talent.

According to [SHRM's skills gap research](#) (2019), 83% of HR professionals are having recruiting difficulty and of those HR professionals, 75% say there is a shortage of skills in candidates for job openings. Of course, when business is successful, chances are you will need new talent to add to your experienced, upskilled workforce. When employees feel a sense of purpose with their company and clients are happy with their work, they become stronger brand advocates. That means they are more likely to recommend your organization to their network of friends, past colleagues, and family members. Suddenly you have a wide pool of diverse talent to choose from when it comes time to expand your team.

#### 2. Boosts morale.

The study conducted by Kandavel (2016) showed that there is a strong optimistic relationship between training and employee morale. It was evident from the above that employees who receive training programs are more confident to handle higher responsibilities and new technologies in the organizations. Reskilling your workforce helps them see the path to career advancement in front of them, and gets them excited about what could be next. Knowing they are working toward something that will better their lives creates a deeper sense of purpose.

### **3. Increases customer satisfaction.**

Happy employees lead to happy customers. When workers are happier with their company and believe in what they are working toward, they do better work. Plus, upskilling keeps your workforce up to date on industry trends, allowing them to offer the best recommendations and insights to clients and prospects. Clients are willing to pay more to work with a more knowledgeable, proactive team. And when clients are happy with the work you do, they become stronger brand advocates for you.

## **Guide to Upskilling Your Employees**

### **Step 1: Determine the knowledge gaps in your organization**

Every company is different. You have knowledge strengths and weaknesses. The first step for successful upskilling is to identify your organizational skill shortcomings. Ensure your upskilling efforts to align with your workforce needs. Employees will look for opportunities to advance internally based on what they learn.

### **Step 2: Build training programs that make sense for your organization**

There is no specific way you have to approach workforce upskilling. The key is to set up your training and development in a way that makes the most sense for your organization. Where are volume training programs needed vs. one-on-one training? Can you do training with internal teams, or do you partner with external educational institutions? What type of learning opportunities make the most sense – mentoring, virtual learning, post-secondary courses, training sessions?

### **Step 3: Understand each employee's goals and tailor a plan for each individual**

Upskilling is about addressing specific skills gaps. There is no one-size-fits-all solution. An employee's upskilling needs will depend on their current skills, role within the organization, how the role is changing, and technology requirements to do the job successfully. Get managers on board and have frequent open conversations with individual employees.

### **Step 5: Make Learning Material Bite-sized.**

Large workloads and packed schedules impose a barrier to formal training. Thinking small, however, can be the key to meeting employees where they are. [Bite-sized education](#), called microlearning, comprises short lessons—roughly three to six minutes long—designed to meet a narrow learning objective. Unlike [other](#) online training, microlearning can help increase retention rates and employee buy-in.

Moving toward a bite-sized learning model is especially relevant if your team includes workers. [Axonify's 2018 report](#) found a high level of microlearning adoption in retail (27%), manufacturing and logistics (25%), and finance and insurance (22%). Bite-sized modules are far easier to host online and share. This further increases accessibility for remote workers. Businesses can easily migrate learning content onto a cloud-based [learning management system](#) (LMS) that can be accessed anywhere.

In conclusion, it is important to note that upskilling through employee training and development has a positive return on your investment. Yes, it will cost more money, but it also can boost performance, and more importantly, it reduces the need to spend money to find and hire outside workers with the skills you need. Invest in upskilling, improve employee capabilities, and reduce the need to recruit to fill skill gaps in your organization.

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