

A black and white portrait of a middle-aged man with short hair, smiling slightly. He is wearing a dark suit jacket over a light-colored collared shirt. The background is dark and out of focus.

LHH

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How to launch a successful executive portfolio career

Lee Godown wasn't interested in retirement. He wanted to step back, figure out what was most important to him and then decide what he was going to do next—taking him on a life-changing journey.

Lee Hecht Harrison



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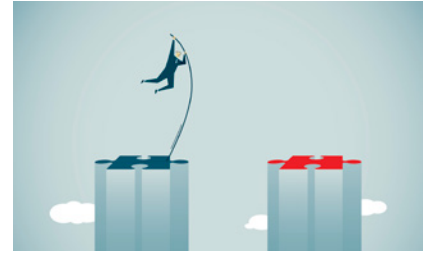
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The Future of the Office: Where Do We Go from Here?

Ranjit de Sousa, President, LHH

One week, three conversations, all on the same topic.

The future of the office.

My first call was with a senior leader in financial services who made it clear that while he wasn't entirely sure what to do when pandemic conditions allowed us to return to normal, he did not like the idea of the "hybrid office," where employees would get to spend time at home and time in the head office.

Then, I spoke to an academic at one of the world's most prestigious business schools who told me about research he was involved in that seemed to show that working from home was creating a very high level of stress for mid-level, front-line managers who really didn't know how to do their jobs with remote teams.

Finally, I talked with an executive from a professional services firm who was almost giddy about the prospect of shuttering all the corporate offices so that his entire company could work from home on a permanent basis. Not only would this save money, he argued, but there were new productivity tools available that could help his company monitor his employees' every keystroke within every minute of every working day.

After talking with all three, the only conclusion I could reach is that the "office" as we knew it before the arrival of COVID-19 is facing an existential crisis.

When it comes to WFH, be careful what you wish for

Most business organizations were not given a choice when the pandemic hit. The novel coronavirus was so contagious and so potentially dangerous, many governments simply ordered everyone who could work from home to abandon their offices.

At first blush, few people were concerned about abandoning the corporate office. For so long, so many people around the world were clamoring for the opportunity to work remotely. Why not give them what they wanted?

Although we didn't have a choice in the matter, none of us really knew what impact it was going to have on companies and the people we employ. Some of the early, viable data is showing that working from home has affected us in many unforeseen—and even alarming—ways.

Effects on productivity

The first thing we've proven is that even with all the distractions that come with a

"As we began to fully embrace the reality of full-time remote work, we also began to realize that the future will likely be one characterized by hybrid working arrangements."

home office, we can be as productive, if not more so, when working from home. But that's not only because we squeeze more work out of each hour; it's also because many of us are simply working longer.

Research [published](#) in the Harvard Business Review analyzed time-use diaries from 1,300 knowledge workers through the summers of 2019 and 2020. The study found that the subject workers saved about 41 minutes a day by not needing to commute.

However, while non-managers were able to reallocate that time to non-work activities, the workday for managers simply increased by 56 minutes. If the managers worked at bigger firms, they spent 22 minutes more in meetings and 16 minutes more responding to emails.

Ah yes, the video meeting

A NYU professor made [headlines](#) around the world last fall when he taught a class by dialing into Zoom from his phone while stuck in a malfunctioning elevator. It would turn out to be a pretty ironic tale.

The term "Zoom Fatigue" is now permanently embedded in the lexicon of the pandemic. The relative ease and low-cost of video-conferencing solutions sparked a global binge on Zoom and Teams meetings. [Several research studies](#) have confirmed we now attend more meetings than ever before, although each meeting is slightly shorter than the old, in-person ones.

A research team at Stanford University [defined](#) the causes of Zoom Fatigue thus: excessive amounts of close-up eye gaze; cognitive overload; increased self-evaluation from having to watch a video of yourself; and the sheer physical constraint of being forced to sit at your desk for hours on end as people try to find the mute button on their computers.

In the end, the Stanford researchers suggested that too many Zoom calls was likely worse, from a psychological perspective, than being trapped in an elevator.

Since we're talking about psychological safety

Working from home, combined with the stress of the pandemic, has been bad for our overall psychological and physical safety. A [survey](#) last fall by multiple researchers at USC found two-thirds of respondents reported one or more physical ailments related to working from home, and three-quarters reported one new mental health issue.

And if you thought that social distancing was an antidote for toxic work environments, think again. Psychologists that study workplace environments [report](#) that toxicity can and is being cultivated through video conferencing.

Bottom line: the future includes an office and a home office

As we began to fully embrace the reality of full-time remote work, we also began to realize that the future will likely be one characterized by hybrid working arrangements.

[Surveys](#) of workers impacted by the pandemic clearly show that, notwithstanding Zoom fatigue and other psychological consequences, a strong majority want to work at home at

least some of the time. And that means we're going to have to fundamentally re-think why we need an office and what kind of office we need.

I like to break things down into what I call the three Cs of future workplace planning: culture, collaboration and communication. These are the key elements we need to consider when deciding who comes back to the office, what the approach looks like, and what kind of office they come back to.

- **Culture.** One of my main responsibilities is to build a positive, productive and caring culture. I'm not saying that's impossible to do over a video call, but I know it is possible when I get to look my people in the eyes and find out what's going on in their lives. This is particularly important when it comes to building a coaching culture among leaders. This is a culture where people work together to find solutions, and where everyone's opinion and input matters. Although not impossible to do through videoconferencing, a coaching culture is very difficult to build when you don't have opportunities for face-to-face interaction and the accumulation of social capital which goes with that. The culture I'm trying to build is profoundly informed by those interactions.
- **Collaboration.** Ours is a company, and an industry, that lives or dies by its ability to work together to generate new ideas and build new solutions. Again, you can do that via Zoom, but it is much easier and productive to do that in an office setting. I can't tell you how many great ideas I have seen grow from a conversation involving someone who just "ducked their head" into someone else's office. The sense of community we have in our office sparks collaboration, which is the lifeblood of creativity. And even more so in a world where collaboration is required not just with our colleagues, but also with our customers and partners—co-creation and breakthrough innovation is super-charged by proximity, by working together in an office.
- **Communication.** Many of us in the business world know psychologist Albert Mehrabian's 7-38-55 rule: only seven percent of what we absorb through communication comes from the spoken words, with 38 percent coming through tone and 55 percent through body language. And while Mehrabian's theory likely did not consider the ramifications brought about by the Zoom revolution, there is no doubt that communication is impaired when we can only talk to each other through our computer screens. If we can imagine that the future involves at least some return-to-the-office scenarios, leaders are going to have to renew and refine their communication skills. Over the past year, you can be sure that a lot of what you were trying to say got lost in the Zoom translation.

I think the office environment will return; but I'm not sure any of us know exactly what it will look like. Everyone from landlords, to human resource professionals, to designers of office layouts and furniture, are working steadily to create an office that is fit for the future.

What I do know is that the future will be brighter for me when I get to see at least some of my team in person.



Three Steps to Building Your Professional Online Brand

Transformation Insights

It did not take long before Alexi McCammond's social media past came back to haunt her.

In early March 2021, Teen Vogue announced with some fanfare that McCammond – a top political reporter of some renown – was being hired as editor-in-chief. It appeared at first blush to be quite a coup for the magazine; the 27-year-old McCammond had been named the emerging journalist of the year in 2019 by the Association of Black Journalists.

But just a few days after her hiring was announced, various online sources began to highlight Tweets and Facebook posts she had written a decade earlier

that included racist and homophobic comments. That prompted nearly two dozen staff members at Teen Vogue to protest the hiring. McCammond posted a very complete and very public apology for her language, but her fate was sealed; on March 18 she resigned from her post in disgrace.

McCammond is not the first notable person to lose their job for unsavory social media content, and she likely won't be the last. But she is a recent reminder that your social media footprint can have a devastating impact on your career aspirations.

“What may have started as something that was deeply personal and unrelated to business or career has now become a foundational element in your professional brand.”

CareerBuilder, a global search and recruitment firm, reported back in 2018 that 70 percent of employers use social media to research job candidates during the hiring process, and about half do regular checks of the social media profiles of existing employees.

And what happens if they find objectionable content? More than half of respondent employers said they found content that convinced them not to hire someone, and 34 percent have reprimanded or fired an employee because of online content.

In case you were wondering, employer interest in your social media activities has only increased since that survey was conducted.

A [similar poll](#) conducted by business news site The Manifest in April 2020 found that 98 percent of employers do online background research on job candidates, and that 79 percent have rejected a candidate based on social media content.

Now, before you go out and expunge all your accounts, you should know that employers are just as concerned if you have no social media presence: the CareerBuilder poll found 47 percent of employers said they were less likely to offer someone an interview if they had no online presence.

That may seem like a bit of a Catch-22; damned if you do post on social media and damned if you don't. The obvious solution is to harness the enormous power and potential of social media but do it in a way that helps build your personal brand rather than stain it.

But where to start?

The Mini Audit. Go to Google, search yourself, and see where you show up. Check each result that comes up with your name to find out what someone else has said about you, or what you have said about something or someone else. If some embarrassing or dated results come up, consider ways in which you might be able to delete or mitigate their prominence.

Raise your profile. As the survey results show, having very little social media profile is almost as bad as having a negative profile. At the very least, make sure that the accounts you have complete control over – your personal Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and particularly LinkedIn – have no objectionable content but do have lots of valuable information about who you are and what you've done in your career.

Don't go dark. A sudden cessation of activity in social media accounts can definitely send the wrong

message. It's okay to be concerned about saying or retweeting the wrong thing, but social media accounts that are not current, and seem to have been put into hibernation at the same time make you look like someone who has something to hide. Be purposeful when selecting content to post to be sure it tells the right story to prospective employers.

The marriage between the business world and social media is likely to become closer and more complex as time goes on. What may have started as something that was deeply personal and unrelated to business or career has now become a foundational element in your professional brand.

Be active. Be positive and be aware of what you might have said or shared in the past. Your career may depend upon it.

Read more about how to build a powerful digital profile that will put you front and center with hiring managers and prospective employers. Download [Build Your Personal Online Brand](#).





How to Launch a Successful Executive Portfolio Career

Reuben Cohen, U.S. Managing Director, LHH Leadership Transition Practice, International Center for Executive Options (ICEO)

Over 40 years, Lee Godown had built a career that – by any standard – was hugely successful. From the hallowed halls of the U.S. Capitol to the executive suites of several Fortune 100 corporations, he had earned a reputation for ingenuity, diplomacy, and resilience in the face of crises.

He was known on a first-name basis by Washington D.C. lawmakers and power brokers. He chatted intimately with presidents and provided counsel to global C-suite executives.

But after four decades of public policy work inside and outside of government, he decided it was time to shuffle the cards in the deck.

“I thought to myself, ‘should I let life happen to me, or chart the course myself?’”

There were challenges. Lee was 60 years old, and he was not interested in simply retiring. It also didn’t help that, by his own admission, he did not do well with change. “Whenever I have Chinese food, I always order Kung Pao Chicken. Always.”

Lee approached LHH’s International Center for Executive Options (ICEO), a career transition advisory practice designed specifically for C-Suite executives exactly like himself. Working with ICEO, Lee started to take stock of his professional experience and aspirations.

It was, Lee admitted, a “pretty steep learning curve.”

“Through all of this I learned so much about myself and my decision-making process. I make stronger decisions now in my professional life. The guidance I received in my transition was invaluable. It really was a life-changing experience.”

Lee Godown,
President, Alpex International LLC

“My default thinking was that I was going to just keep doing what I was doing.” He thought to himself: “Sure, this guy has a lot of experience, but maybe in this age of Millennial flavors of the month, does that matter anymore? Sadly, I heard my inner voice say ‘OK Boomer ...’”

After talking with his ICEO Advisor, Lee began to weigh other issues such as the need to spend more time with his family. Did he really want to get a job working in a downtown consulting firm which would require him to do a long commute every day back and forth from his Northern Virginia home?

And then, the possibility of a “portfolio career” entered the discussion. Although Lee had never heard of a portfolio career, as he learned more about it he realized it could be the best of all worlds: the chance to offer his network and skills as an independent consultant, while also giving him time for family and his many other interests.

It sounded great, but Lee was unsure where to begin.

“I love to write, but I learned from the ICEO experts on my team that there’s a specific kind of writing you need to master for branding documents such as a resume, bio, board profile and LinkedIn profile. I also learned that I needed to slow down when I was talking and always have an elevator pitch with focus. Be able to articulate the why behind things, not just the nuts and bolts, making sure the foundation was there.”

Lee said he had never really considered opening his own shop, but especially after assessing the breadth of his network, he realized it really could be the best of

all worlds for him. He became more committed and confident, and he jumped in to make it a reality. “It was just one of those amazing life experiences.”

The result today is Alpex International LLC, a boutique firm that specializes in crisis management, business advocacy and global government relations. “When a client comes knocking, wanting some background on me, I now have an immediate ability to respond. I don’t have to worry about these kinds of things, leaving me able to focus on the creative parts of landing the client.”

The portfolio career also created more time for teaching and philanthropy, two of his great passions outside work, and to pursue various hobbies with greater enthusiasm.

“I teach at George Mason University and at the University of Maryland, and I sometimes speak at conferences. I’m on the boards of some non-profits, stay in touch with politics and even garden a little. I’m learning to play the piano. I have more time for a favorite hobby I’ve developed over the years, racing cars at local road tracks. But most importantly, I have more time for my family. I now sometimes turn business away from my consultancy because I’m so busy.”

“Through all of this I learned so much about myself and my decision-making process. I make stronger decisions now in my professional life. The guidance I received in my transition was invaluable. It really was a life-changing experience.”



Reskilling the C-Suite: Leading into the Future

Ranjit de Sousa, President, LHH

I have always considered myself digitally literate.

I'm comfortable using all my tech devices and know my way around social media. In my position at LHH, I have regular and informed conversations with other senior leaders about things like artificial intelligence, machine learning and the blockchain.

So, when I agreed to take a digital literacy self-assessment a couple of years ago, I wasn't all that worried about the outcome.

Turns out I should have been at least a little concerned.

The self-assessment is part of a [foundational digital literacy course](#) for executives offered by General Assembly, a sister enterprise to LHH in the Adecco Group. To my great surprise, I found out that there were several areas of digital knowledge where I just didn't know as much as I should have.

That's a tough realization for any executive leader. How could I be lacking in skills and knowledge that are so essential for success in the current business environment? That question strikes deep at the heart of a much bigger issue: the collective failure of executive leaders to engage their organization in reskilling and upskilling.

Unless you have starved yourself of all business news, you'll know that the world is facing an enormous skills mismatch that could possibly leave tens of millions of working people around the world out of a job. Too many people are trained to fill jobs that are quickly disappearing; too few have the training and skills to fill the jobs of the future.

None of us can say we haven't been warned.

From Oxford University and MIT, to the World Economic Forum to McKinsey, Gartner and PwC, the world's leading strategic business thinkers, consultants and researchers have been warning us for years now that technology and the demands of macro forces like climate change are going to make many jobs completely disappear. Without

urgent and focused investment on reskilling, there are going to be millions of people unable to earn a basic living.

And yet, in our client conversations and through all the available data we see at LHH, it's quite clear that we're not taking the action needed to address this urgent problem.

A recent survey by LHH of more than 2,000 hiring decision-makers from around the world found that less than half (47 percent) believe their organizations are trying to identify their employees' transferrable skills so that they can be reskilled to fill future job openings. And only one-third are confident in their organization's ability to deliver reskilling and upskilling programs.

No matter how you cut it, those responses prove that we are just not meeting this challenge head-on.

So, why are the senior-most leaders failing in the face of the greatest human capital challenge in many generations? After considering all the possibilities and talking at length with leaders all over the world, I've come to believe that business executives fail to provide reskilling for their people because many of them are in desperate need of reskilling.

Many years ago, earning money as a student, I worked on an IT help desk that, on many occasions, required me to attend to the offices of C-level executives to help them with computer problems. Although some of these problems involved legitimate failures of hardware or software, in many other instances it was a case of executives not possessing even the most elementary knowledge of how to operate and utilize their technology devices.

Given that technology has a much larger role in all our lives today, the problem is just as bad, or maybe even worse now than back then.

A [recent article](#) in the Harvard Business Review noted that while [survey data](#) is showing that the pandemic has accelerated the pace of digital transformation at most

“Show the people you lead that continuous improvement through learning is baked into the culture of the organization at the highest levels.”



large companies, C-suite executives were not being asked to personally match the demands that were being placed on other levels of the leadership hierarchy.

The authors of that article analyzed job postings for C-suite positions across a broad swath of Fortune 1000 companies. The study found that while digital skills were very much table stakes for chief information and marketing officers, only 60 percent of postings for CEOs and 40 percent of advertised jobs for presidents included digital skill requirements.

This data is a pretty graphic example of the disconnect many executives have to the reskilling equation. We all understand reskilling is a key to transitioning people out of redundant jobs into more sustainable jobs in the digital economy. But many of us just don't know how to make that happen because our own skillsets are lacking and the people around us are loath to tell us how far behind we've fallen.

Fortunately, there are solutions we can employ. In short, it's time for executive leaders to start changing the way we approach our jobs. It's not just the pressing need to acquire more and better digital skills; we need to start building cultures where the people around us can provide us with honest feedback, so we know where we need to do better.

When you're at the very top of an organization, it's unlikely that someone else is going to tell you that you need to up your game. You must find the motivation within yourself to identify those areas where you need to upskill or even reskill. There are some very basic things you can do to ensure you are transforming yourself at the same pace and magnitude as you are trying to change your organizations.

Get out of the echo chamber. One of the biggest problems that C-Suite leaders have is that if they get any feedback – and many do not – it's not honest or frank. The hierarchies in many companies ensure that the senior-most leaders are never in a position where their performance is being critiqued. As C-suite leaders, we should seek that kind of feedback and be willing to act on what we hear.

Get a coach. I remind C-suite leaders who eschew coaching that all the best elite athletes in the world, both in team and individual sports, rely on coaches to help them perfect

their technique and fortify their mindset. Coaching helps us confront and reflect on our shortcomings and focus on corrective courses.

Use a coaching mindset when leading others. One of the greatest parts of having a relationship with a coach is that it will teach you how to use a coaching mindset to get more out of the people you lead. A coaching mindset ensures that you do as much listening as talking, and that you inspire others by showing your confidence in them. A coaching mindset, or a reverse-mentoring approach to leadership, not only helps you embrace your own skill deficit, but it will help you start conversations with other members of the executive team who might suffer from the same problem.

Future-proof your own skills to help guide your organization. Even though you've reached the C-suite, you still have a lot to learn. If you want to build an organization that embraces change and welcomes reskilling, demonstrate that you embrace it in your own job. Take a digital literacy course, register for some Harvard short courses, make sure you are constantly reading books and news to keep up on what's going on in the world. Show the people you lead that continuous improvement through learning is baked into the culture of the organization at the highest levels.

There is no escaping the pressing need to reskill and upskill to meet the future of work head on. Change is coming. And business leaders must demonstrate that they are adapting to the seismic transformations that are unfolding today and those that are unknown to us now but which we will face soon.

If you want your organization to follow you fearlessly into that future, you need to not only tell them what they need to do, you need to show them you can take your own advice. Only then will you be able to find yourself on the right side of the upskilling challenge.

This article originally appeared in [C-Level Magazine](#) on May 13, 2021.





Is a Scarcity Mindset Derailing You as a Leader?

Frank Congiu, SVP, Key Accounts, LHH

“Why in the world do you need all of that shampoo and conditioner?”

I was unpacking from a week on the road after staying in four different hotels in four nights when my wife noticed me unloading my toiletry pack with four mini shampoo bottles and four mini conditioner bottles. She stared at me with a puzzled look. In my bathroom closet was a bin full of similar bottles that was growing out of control. And while I never really needed any of it, I knew why I had hoarded it.

As I have noted in earlier blogs, I grew up in a pretty poor family and to this day, I know what it is like to not have enough of the basic necessities in life. It is this experience that I think conditioned me to have a

scarcity mindset – a fear that if I don’t get something I want or need, there might not be enough of it later.

Author and businessman Steven Covey first coined the terms “scarcity” and “abundance” mindset in his best-selling 1989 book [The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People](#). Covey said that people with a scarcity mindset “think there is only so much in the world to go around. It’s as if they see life as a pie. When another person gets a big piece, they get less. Such people are always trying to get even, to pull others down to their level so they can get an equal or even bigger piece of the pie.”

Okay, so perhaps my toiletry addiction is a mild example of what Covey is talking

“As a business leader, you need to focus on creating a psychologically safe environment for your teams, where people can embrace a fail-fast approach to problem solving and learn from their mistakes.”

about. But I still understand that feeling that comes when scarcity mindset takes hold and can recognize it in others.

Do you remember the toilet paper hoarding that greeted the earliest days of the global pandemic? That is a perfect example of people taking aggressive – if not irrational – action to get something for themselves with the knowledge that in doing so, others would go without.

I've also worked for leaders who were dominated by a scarcity mindset. These are the leaders who hoard the credit for business successes and aren't willing to accept any blame or accountability when things go wrong. These leaders analyze every task and challenge in terms of what they can get out of it for themselves, without any consideration for what that mindset will do to others.

What are some other obvious signs of a leader with a scarcity mindset?

- **The leaders who project anxiety.** Remember the 1984 Pulitzer Prize-winning play *Glengarry Glen Ross* by David Mamet? It's about a group of increasingly desperate Chicago real estate agents who are willing to sacrifice their morals and ethics – and each other – in exchange for keeping their jobs. The characters' desperation is driven by a manager who makes it clear that those who make sales will be rewarded and those that don't will lose their jobs. This is a perfect example of what Covey was talking about – a leader who makes it clear that you must produce or your head is going to be on the chopping block.
- **The leaders who absolve themselves of failure and hoard success.** One of the most maddening experiences any of us will have at work is toiling for a leader who never takes any blame for failure. If a contract doesn't get renewed, or a lead on a new client evaporates, the scarcity mindset leader will quickly point a finger at someone else. When there is success, however, this leader will try to take sole credit. This is the antithesis of a productive team culture.
- **The leaders who hoard talent and resources.** Leaders with a scarcity mindset tend to hoard top talent that makes them look good to the higher ups. It's not unusual for these leaders to discourage their best people from seeking assignments in other parts of the same company or block them from promotions or transfers. These leaders know that if they lose their top producers, the performance of the team may suffer and that will look bad for them.

How can leaders escape the scarcity mindset and develop more of an abundance mindset?

There's no secret recipe for defusing a scarcity mindset. As a business leader, you need to focus on creating a psychologically safe environment for your teams, where people can embrace a fail-fast approach to problem solving and learn from their mistakes. One where everyone carries the burden of failure and shares in success.

A whole bunch of people have tried to define the characteristics of an abundance mindset in business leadership. Here is a list of what I think distinguishes the abundance leaders from the scarcity leaders:

- A relaxed and calm demeanor, even in the face of a crisis
- Overwhelmingly positive with minimal emphasis on the negative
- Clarity of communication
- The ability to truly listen to the people you lead
- Flexible and able to roll with the punches
- Non-judgemental
- A leader who welcomes change
- Always willing to learn and admit when you don't know something

Above all, you need to develop and support your people to be the best they can be, and then help them pursue other career opportunities. In essence, you need to give people the kind of support you would want to have from a leader.

I'm happy to say that I've stopped hoarding toiletries from hotels. I still feel tempted, but for the most part I have managed to keep my scarcity tendencies in check. And if I can do it, I feel as if there is hope for all of us.

Welcome to
the new ROI:

A Return on Individuals

Now more than ever, every business is a people business. And companies are thinking about the talent they have in a whole new way. With this shift comes a new definition of ROI: A Return on Individuals. LHH teams with organizations to help reimagine what their own people are capable of.

There is opportunity within every company and every person. And we're helping both deliver on it.

Welcome to Opportunity, Delivered.



From Green to gHReen: Putting a Human Face on Sustainability

Murielle Antille, SVP, Government and Industry Affairs, LHH

Everyone is looking for the fastest and most effective way to green our economies. Companies, governments and public institutions are all devoting increasing amounts of financial and human resources to meeting the climate targets set both by the Paris Agreement, and by individual nations.

And as is almost always the case, the smaller players in this global race are watching the bigger players to help mark the best route.

At the end of 2019, the European Commission unveiled its [Green Deal](#)—an ambitious plan to achieve climate neutrality by 2050 through innovation, incentives and mitigation of its social impact.

Great expectations are also building around United States President Joe Biden's \$2-trillion plan to transform the economy by creating millions of new jobs connected to clean energy, energy efficiency and, in particular, the growing electric vehicle (EV) industry.

However, not everyone sees the logic or the potential in these initiatives.

All over the world, we're seeing skepticism, alarm and even hostility about the whole idea of taking people from traditional industries into new jobs with new skills and a lower carbon footprint.

A [recent story](#) in *The New York Times* graphically demonstrates the magnitude of the skepticism.

The New York Times interviewed Shawn Steffee, one of the leaders of the Boilermakers Local 154 in Pittsburgh, PA, who quite passionately argues it is not possible to reskill and redeploy well-paid union workers who have been involved in traditional manufacturing and resource industries into greener, cleaner industries like solar or wind power generation.

"They keep saying, 'We're going to transition you into solar jobs,'" Steffee said. "That's not how it works. We build power plants, petrochemical plants and maintain steel mills."

Steffee's comments speak volumes about the poor job that employers and governments have done in explaining the pressing global need to transition workers into more sustainable jobs.

The UK government recently caused an uproar with an advertisement for a jobs reskilling campaign that featured a ballet dancer and suggested her next job could be in cyber security. Not surprisingly, many people in the cultural industries cried foul over the ad and the suggestion that theirs was not sustainable work.

The human face of the transition

These examples highlight the deep need for all green transitions to treat human beings as people and not commodities that can be moved arbitrarily from one job to another. The only thing that everyone should agree upon is that many of today's jobs will soon be obsolete, either because of climate concerns or their incompatibility with the leading edge of technology.

According to [McKinsey](#), the United States oil industry alone lost more than 100,000 jobs in 2020 due to the OPEC price war and the COVID-19 pandemic. The automotive industry's aggressive move to electrify its fleets will no doubt continue to force the oil and gas industry to shed even more jobs.

The Adecco Group, in their recent ["Skills for the Green Economy"](#) publication, further points out that "without skills development, it is estimated that the global economy could shed as many as 71 million jobs in its move towards becoming circular. On the other hand, smart policies and investment in reskilling could reverse

"Notwithstanding the big-ticket initiatives in Europe and the United States, most of the world's leading green technology initiatives don't do a good job connecting environmental targets with human capital targets."



this prospect, so much so that the energy sector alone could produce a net growth of 18 million jobs.”

Undeniably, there is an urgent need to unleash a new generation of re-/upskilling initiatives to enable as many people as possible, as quickly as possible, to prepare for the jobs of the future.

Towards a people-centered transition

To ensure that the green transition can be a success, we need to pay more attention to the role human capital and skills play in delivering a sustainable change.

Notwithstanding the big-ticket initiatives in Europe and the United States, most of the world’s leading green technology initiatives don’t do a good job connecting environmental targets with human capital targets.

[The Just Transition Fund](#), a major component of the European Union’s Green Deal, will provide up to €150 billion over the next 10 years in funds for reskilling and loans or loan guarantees for employers that want to shift to green technology.

China has also [made progress](#) in this area, retraining workers to take on new jobs in the clean energy sector. Continuing efforts to wean the country off coal-fired electricity generation, China already accounts for nearly 40 percent of all the jobs worldwide devoted to renewable energy.

However, even with all this attention, there is still an enormous amount of disconnect between climate goals and the needs of workers.

Biden’s “American Jobs Plan” [proposes](#) US \$100 billion for workforce training programs and to double the number of

registered apprenticeships. However, the details of exactly what kind of training and support programs have not been made public. And although it does often reference things like “skills development opportunities for workers of all kinds,” a White House fact sheet on the jobs plan does not include a single reference to reskilling or upskilling.

Biden’s plan is not alone when it comes to this disconnect. The International Labour Organization [noted](#) that among the 183 countries that have committed to the Paris Agreement’s targets, less than 40 percent include “any plans for skills training (or retraining to support their implementation) and (...) more than one in five have no plans for any training or capacity development measures at all.”

Opportunities for businesses

This lack of connection between climate policies and workforce goals represents an opportunity for employers to be proactive for their own competitive brand advantage. From our work supporting organizations and their workers globally as they transition, there are two clear strategies that can help us bring environmental and workforce goals into alignment.

Facilitate work transitions in small increments

Even though the issues are global, the solutions need to be local and individual. While there is no silver bullet, the solutions can be found when all parties involved sit down and find the most logical path from unsustainable industries to fit-for-future industries and jobs.

That is essentially what happened with Spanish energy company Enel-Endesa when it closed the Litoral thermal

electricity generating plant. To mitigate the social impact on the region, it collaborated with LHH, public authorities and other partners to look for new opportunities for the infrastructure and the workers. Ultimately, the company launched [20 new renewable energy projects](#) throughout the province to replace the electricity being generated by the decommissioned thermal plant, which in turn created more than 300 jobs for former plant workers.

Put a “people” spin on your Environmental, Social and Corporate Goals strategy

Environmental sustainability goals are no longer in conflict with job creation goals. Look for partners who enable you to elevate the dialogue around environmental, social and corporate goals to your workforce strategy and consider your workforce as renewable power and not as a replaceable asset.

This is what the [German automotive supplier ZF](#) Friedrichshafen has recognized. Instead of proceeding with their original plan to lay off several thousands of employees, they have implemented a transformation plan to reskill and redeploy the affected people into entirely new jobs. In recognizing the potential in their own employees to transition, this company was able to offer sustainable employment while speeding up the transformation towards e-mobility.

The green transition will never accomplish its climate goals unless it can fully align with the human needs of workers. While this is no easy challenge, smart green policies can and will lead to a faster and more inclusive transition.

Together, we can make the green transition into a gHReen transition.





Outplacement: It's Not Just for the Big Guys

Greg Simpson and Justin Gibbon

In classic journalese, BuzzFeed buried the lede.

In early March, BuzzFeed convened a video town hall for all the employees of HuffPost, a competing online news site that had been acquired just a few weeks earlier. The employees were not told what the town hall meeting was about, but there was a very strong hint that it was something good.

The password to access the video feed was “spr!ngisH3r3,” a mildly encrypted version on “spring is here.”

Unfortunately, when Huffpost staff signed into the video town hall, they quickly found out that there were [layoffs afoot](#) at the news site's U.S. and Canadian offices. That was bad enough, but then staffers were told they had to wait until 1PM to find out if they had lost their jobs. If they got an email before that time, they were out; otherwise, they were safe.

The gallows humor contained in the password, and the added torment of making employees wait hours before getting final word on whether they were affected by the layoffs, combined to make this a particularly awkward downsizing. BuzzFeed executives would later [tell](#) The New York Times that they “regretted the password's tone.”

As awkward as this entire episode was, and as high profile, it is hardly unique for companies of this size.

Even though they boast 50 million unique readers each month, BuzzFeed easily qualifies as a mid-market organization. And for a variety of reasons, companies of this size (or smaller) rarely seek out professional help when it comes time for layoffs. These organizations inadvertently add insult to the injury of getting laid off simply because they don't know there's a better way.

The benefits of professional career transition are relevant for organizations of any size

Outplacement is a service offered to employees who have lost or will be losing their jobs, to help them find new employment as quickly as possible. This can include a new role in the same or a different industry, retraining, retiring, or starting a business. Outplacement services include career coaching, resume writing, interview preparation, skill development, referrals to hiring managers, and targeted job leads.

The service is paid for by employers but carried out by independent providers who work directly and confidentially with employees.

“Career transition today involves a lot more than resume writing courses and directing someone to an online job board. The leading-edge outplacement providers are also experts in talent development. This allows them to not only support someone dealing with the trauma of a layoff, but to work actively to help them identify transferrable skills, and reskilling or upskilling opportunities.”

Many larger companies are more likely to offer and understand the value of professional career transition, having used outplacement partners in the past. In these organizations, when downsizing becomes necessary, there are simply too many people involved for internal human resource personnel to handle the process. And while that all makes sense, it has created the impression that career transition is only for bigger companies.

Smaller companies tend to keep HR events like this in the family. And there is some logic to that approach; smaller companies in general have less churn and experience with mass downsizing. And even if they are forced to let some people go, it may only involve a handful of employees.

However, regardless of the size of a company or the number of people affected, layoffs can be a very difficult task that can benefit from the guidance of an experienced, professional career transition firm.

Properly designed and deployed career transition has a number of inherent advantages – to the employer, the employee and to the economy on the whole – that are available regardless of the size of company involved.

- **Better for the individual.** Everyone involved in a downsizing shares a common goal: ensuring the people affected are able to smoothly transition to a new or even better job as quickly as possible. The emotional stress and strain of having to navigate from a layoff to new employment should never be underestimated; laid-off workers have described the experience as emotionally comparable to getting divorced or suffering a death in the family. Outplacement services not only provide the greatest amount of support while in transition, it is also unquestionably the best way of shortening the time between a layoff and a new job.
- **Better for the organization.** A botched downsizing can inflict irreparable damage on an employer's brand. Particularly in the age of social media, with industry-specific posting boards, aggrieved employees involved in botched layoffs have many options to vent their frustration and pain. Companies that work with a career

transition partner benefit from expert counselling on how to share the news of layoffs, a benefit to both the employees who are directly impacted, but also those who remain with the company. And finally, by shortening the runway from layoff to new job, companies can ensure that there is less psychological toll on the individuals involved, and thus less need to lash out at their former employers for not treating them fairly.

- **Better for society.** The pandemic has provided a powerful example of how unavoidable mass layoffs complicate the job of rebuilding economies. When public health orders required entire industries to be shut down, layoffs were inevitable. But in situations like this, it's incumbent on all downsizing organizations to do whatever they can to help their people find new jobs, if only to relieve some of the pressure on the economy overall. And even in these disrupted economic times, there are jobs to be found if you know where to look for them. Career transition firms know where to look.



How mid-market companies can find a career transition partner

For many mid-market companies, finding a career transition partner can seem like an insurmountable task. There are a lot of firms in the career transition marketplace that make all kinds of promises and employ significantly different approaches. How are you supposed to find the firm that will be the best fit for your organization?

The following checklist can help you find the career transition firm that is best suited for your particular needs.

- 1. Has your career transition firm been there, done that?** Although every economic downturn has its own unique characteristics, experienced firms – those that have been through at least three past recessionary events – are best positioned to find solutions because they've helped client organizations and their displaced workers through similar economic predicaments.
- 2. Has the firm only recently branched out into career transition?** When recessions hit, you can bet that all kinds of human capital companies will rush to get in on the career transition gold rush. But to be frank, many of these companies

have no proven track records helping displaced workers find new jobs. They are flocking to career transition because they see it as an opportunity for growth. Be wary of pitches from these firms and make any prospective partner prove that they've done this kind of work before.

- 3. Does the career transition firm do more than career transition?** Career transition today involves a lot more than resume writing courses and directing someone to an online job board. The leading-edge providers are also experts in talent development. This allows them to not only support someone dealing with the trauma of a layoff, but to work actively to help them identify transferrable skills, and reskilling or upskilling opportunities. You also want a firm that can connect your people directly with hiring managers given that many of the best open jobs never get posted online.

- 4. Is the career transition firm guided by data and analytics?** A lot of imposter firms, and those that rely solely on virtual solutions, lean heavily on cookie-cutter programs that treat all laid-off employees that same. The reality is that every displaced person has individual needs. The best career transition firms understand the value of assessments to identify interests and skills and match that information with market data and analytics to interpret labor market trends and identify new and emerging jobs. Analytics helps connect the dots between displaced workers and opportunities they may not have known even existed.

Larger organizations that have worked with trusted career transition partners have gone through a version of this checklist to ensure they are working with the right people for the right moment in their evolution.

But smaller, mid-market companies often don't have that experience, and throwing themselves on the open market can be a daunting and dizzying experience.

However, it is possible to find the right career transition partner through a thoughtful and deliberate vetting process. Once you start asking the right questions, it won't take you long to find a firm that can support your employees through a tough transition and ensure that, as an employer, your brand is synonymous with doing the right thing for your people in trying times.





It's Time to Throw a Lifeline to Hourly Employees Impacted by Layoffs

Greg Simpson

They go by many names: hourly employees, non-exempt personnel, entry-level workers. And while they might perform significantly different duties at work, they all share a common problem:

They get less formal career transition support than employees at higher levels of an organization's hierarchy.

Neglecting to provide hourly or entry-level employees outplacement support is problematic for several reasons, not least of which they are generally the most in need of career guidance, upskilling and reskilling. The World Economic Forum [reported](#) recently that an estimated 85 million workers globally will see their jobs displaced by the

adoption of new technologies, particularly AI-driven automation. You can add tens of millions more who have been displaced by the pandemic.

Who are these workers?

The WEF, utilizing data from the International Labour Organization, believes that workers in industries that rely heavily on hourly workers—arts and entertainment, recreation, hospitality and food services, and retail—are among those most at risk of being pushed out of existing jobs and into a labor market that is putting increasing emphasis on future-proof skills that they may not have had an opportunity to acquire.

“Research has clearly shown that the workers who are at the greatest risk of displacement are least likely to get comprehensive outplacement support.”

However, research has clearly shown that the workers who are at the greatest risk of displacement are least likely to get comprehensive outplacement support.

The LHH [2020 Severance & Separation Benefits report](#) found that 57 percent of respondent organizations typically limit comprehensive outplacement that includes one-on-one coaching and technology tools to senior management, C-suite leaders other than CEO, VP-level and managing directors.

As you move down the hierarchy, outplacement becomes less prevalent. The survey showed that 60 percent of hourly and non-exempt employees were not offered any kind of outplacement support; only 20 percent were offered the same level of support as those at the top of the organizational chart.

It is not an exaggeration to say that at a time when the most vulnerable workers need outplacement support more than ever before, we are still limiting it for more senior, professional employees.

What kind of support, exactly? Hourly or non-exempt employees may not need the same kind of support as someone in the C-suite. In fact, the challenges faced by people of different levels of responsibility tend to vary enough that tailored solutions are required for the bottom, middle and top end of an organization's hierarchy.

That said, there are some foundational elements that must be present in an outplacement program if the people most vulnerable to disruption are to be given the best chance at using a layoff as an opportunity for finding a new and even better job. Any outplacement partner you choose to work with will have to be able to check all these boxes.

1. Virtual or onsite workshops: If nothing else, the pandemic has shown that we all have a greater capacity to interact in a virtual environment. The shift to online has been game changing to just about every industry that has been able to deliver an improved customer experience, increasing efficiency and effectiveness. In fact, the outplacement industry was already moving full speed into virtual solutions that provided more choice and a better experience. Industry leaders should be able to demonstrate a technical sophistication and broad library of content that help candidates navigate all aspects of landing a new position. It must also be interactive; people in transition need to be able to ask questions and get immediate feedback.

2. Complete guide to job search skills and strategies: Although the basics of how to find a new job—you still need a great resume—have not changed dramatically, there are still new factors and trends impacting search strategies—like SEO, virtual interviews and emerging jobs and roles—that need to be fully explored. Your outplacement partner should be able to provide the best job search resources that provide all the relevant information, examples, worksheets, and checklists for

each stage of a job search. With many open positions never advertised, it's not immediately evident how and where to find the best jobs. Moreover, the whole area of job titles is undergoing an evolution; the job titles of the future, and the skills that may be associated with those titles, remain somewhat unknown. Transition candidates need help navigating all this uncertainty.

3. Step-by-step instructional videos: On-demand is not just popular when it comes to movies. Job seekers, particularly those preparing to leave a job, are big fans of educational videos that demonstrate key job-seeking skills and explain how and where to find the best new openings. The videos must be able to adapt to varying levels of literacy and technical knowledge, to make the job-search process more seamless.

4. One-on-one coaching: Normally reserved for the top-of-the-house executives, outplacement career coaching is one of the most potent tools you can provide to anyone facing a transition. This is customized, focused support to help candidates envision their preferred future career, identify transferrable skills and opportunities for re-/upskilling and—finally—help in drafting a plan to get from their current position to a future job.

5. Connections to jobs: This is one of those features that separates the truly innovative outplacement partners from the posers. Providing someone with skills to look for a job but then doing nothing to help them identify job openings and find that new job is an outdated approach to outplacement. Candidates must have access to real-time information about job openings through a digital talent exchange that connects workers in transition with hiring managers in need of new people.

Layoffs are never an easy decision to make. But the value proposition for offering outplacement support is the same regardless of what level displaced workers are coming from. When layoffs are unavoidable it's a socially just, financially smart tool that shows the world your organization cares about the people you employ, including those you need to let go.

Consumers and clients will consider how an organization handles a layoff when they make their buying decisions. And it should be remembered the people you lay off today are tomorrow's future customers or influencers. Outplacement protects your brand as an employer and sends a strong signal that you are a caring company that prioritizes fairness above expediency.

Your most vulnerable workers are the people who need outplacement support more than anyone else. They're just waiting for you to do what's right.

TRANSFORMATION Insights

In today's marketplace, organizations are discovering the need to turn their attention inward to find their future talent. At LHH, we help companies see the possibilities in their people. Through assessments, coaching, upskilling and transitioning, companies can realize the untapped potential within their own workforce, resulting in increased productivity, morale, and brand affinity.

A division of The Adecco Group—the world's leading HR solutions partner—LHH's 4,000 coaches and colleagues work with more than 7,000 organizations in over 60 countries around the world. We make a difference to everyone we work with, and we do it on a global scale. We have the local expertise, global infrastructure, and industry-leading technology to manage the complexity of critical workforce initiatives and the challenges of transformation. It's why 60% of the Fortune 500 companies choose to work with us.

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