

Pacesetters in the Superworker Era

The Six Secrets of High-Performing Organizations

the
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company



Developed as part of the
Global Workforce Intelligence Project



Overview

In every industry, 5% to 10% of companies emerge as clear frontrunners—strengthening their position and accelerating their lead with every strategic move. We call these companies “pacesetters.” Indeed, as we see in our Global Workforce Intelligence (GWI) Project, pacesetters take a distinct approach to problem-solving and prioritize different skills and roles in their organizations.

With AI disrupting every industry and challenging business models and operating approaches, the potential to learn from pacesetters is immense. Advancing at unprecedented speed, AI impacts not just one area of the organization but every part, simultaneously and with greater force than ever before.

What strategies do pacesetters leverage to create “[superworker](#)” organizations? What skills and roles do they prioritize? How do they continuously adjust and stay on top of changing technological capabilities? Where do they focus their energy, not just to lead today but to increase their competitive advantage using a combination of AI and people?

This report delves into the six strategies that set pacesetters apart, offering insights into their success in the age of the superworker.

In This Report

- Meet the Pacesetters: Winning the AI Game
- The Six Secrets of Pacesetters in the Superworker Age
- Next Steps



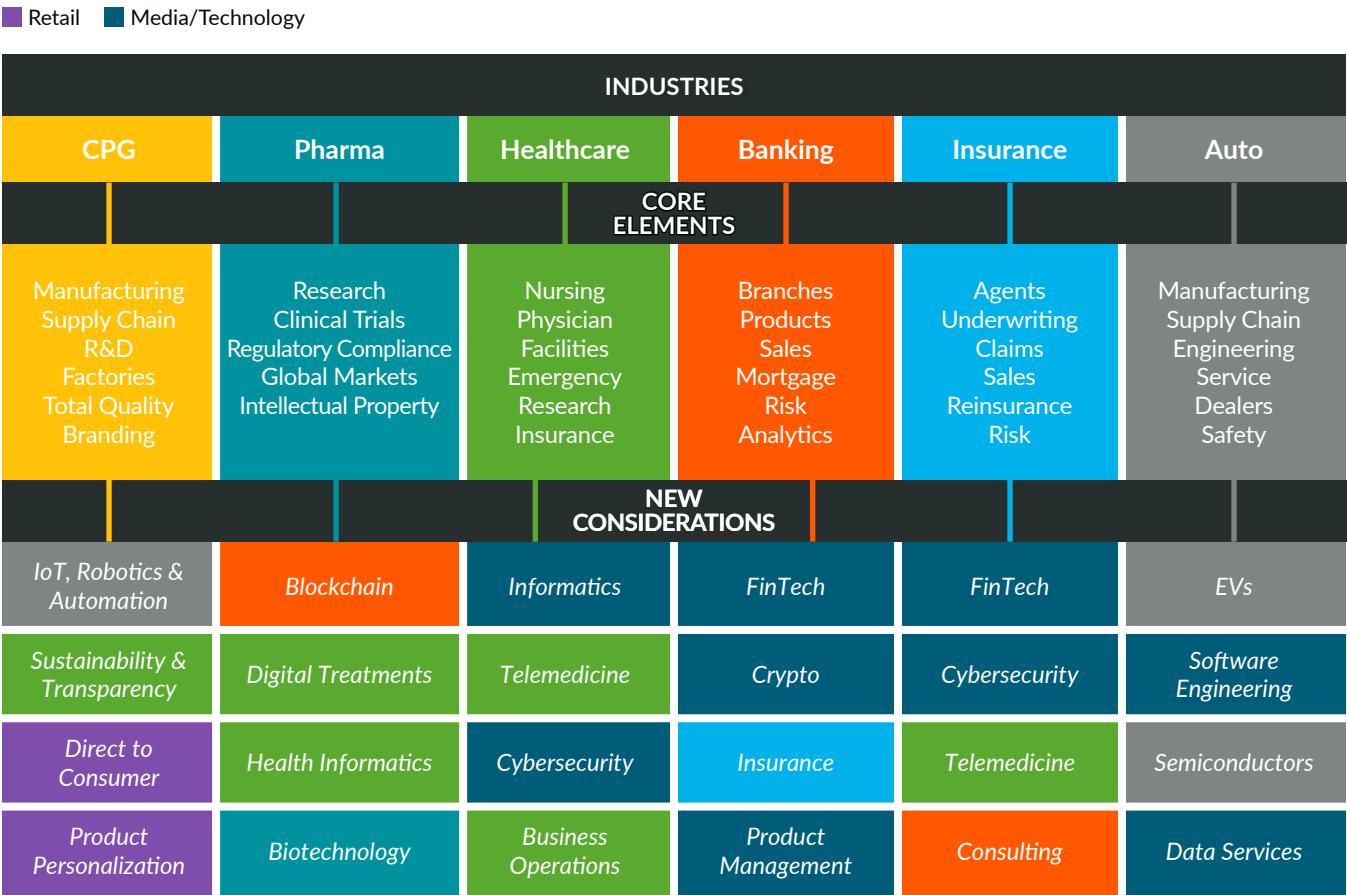
Meet the Pacesetters: Winning the AI Game

AI disruption is reshaping every company, business model, product, service, job, and skill. We’ve moved beyond isolated AI use cases and entered a new age of business transformation powered by AI agents. We’re now heading into a world where humans support AI to perform entire tasks autonomously, ushering in the age of the superworker.

According to the 2025 PwC CEO survey, 92% of CEOs are heavily investing in generative AI—not only to reduce costs but also to drive meaningful, sustained revenue growth. Yet, only 23% believe their organizations can truly adapt, and just 7% are successfully generating new revenue sources.

Meanwhile, industry lines are blurring: 40% of CEOs believe their sector now overlaps with others—a trend we’ve long called “industry convergence” (see Figure 1).¹

Figure 1: Industry Convergence



CPG (Consumer Packaged Goods), EVs (Electric Vehicles), IoT (Internet of Things), R&D (Research and Development)
Source: The Josh Bersin Company, 2024

1 ["PwC's 28th Annual Global CEO Survey: Reinvention on the edge of tomorrow,"](#) PwC, January 20, 2025.

Who Are the Pacesetters?

Launched in 2022, our GWI Project aims to uncover key business issues industry by industry, identify strategic HR and talent solutions to address them, and understand what sets the most successful organizations apart. These pacesetters don't just outperform their peers—they continue to widen the gap.² Their success goes well beyond financial performance (see Figure 2).

Industry Leadership: Solving Problems with Data and Technology

To date, we have completed studies in six different industries—each facing unique challenges that pacesetters address with a systematic and strategic approach, serving as models for others and offering a benchmark for comparison (see Figure 3 on the next page).

While these approaches vary to meet each industry's unique challenges, our deep analysis and comparison of skills, roles, and organizational strategies reveals consistent patterns among pacesetters. Organizations seeking to empower superworkers—employees who leverage AI and advanced technology to significantly elevate their performance, productivity, and impact—can adapt these approaches to guide their own AI transformation journeys.³

By examining the nuanced roles and skills pacesetters prioritize, the strategies they use to solve business problems, and real-world examples, we identified three practical approaches HR and business leaders can adopt to succeed in AI transformation—and ultimately build superworker organizations.

Figure 2: Four Pillars of Pacesetter Methodology/Leadership

1.	Financial Leadership
▪	High financial growth, revenue, profitability, assets, and market value, demonstrated by a Forbes Global 2000 list ranking.
2.	Talent Leadership
▪	Workplace success, showcased by a Forbes World's Best Employers ranking.
▪	High Glassdoor rating, as anonymously reported by employees.
▪	Recipient of one (or more) World's Best Workplaces™ Award(s).
3.	Industry Leadership
▪	Recognition of leadership, innovation, and market share in a particular industry, showcased by distinctions or industry-specific awards.
4.	HR Leadership
▪	Achieving Level 4 (the highest level) maturity in one or more of The Josh Bersin Company's Systemic HR® practices (recruit, retain, reskill, redesign).

Source: The Josh Bersin Company, 2025

2 The Seven Winning Strategies of Pacesetter Organizations, Josh Bersin, Kathi Enderes, PhD, and Stella Ioannidou/The Josh Bersin Company, 2023.

3 The Rise of the Superworker: HR and Leadership Predictions for 2025, Josh Bersin/The Josh Bersin Company, 2025.

Figure 3: Key Business Problems and Pacesetter Approaches across Industries

Industry/Report Title	Key Business Problem	Pacesetter Approach
Automotive Manufacturing <i>Automotive Manufacturing in Turmoil: Navigating the EV Metamorphosis (2024)</i>	Transitioning to EVs and integrating advanced technologies	Emphasizing roles in software engineering and robotics, leveraging automation in manufacturing, and forming strategic partnerships with educational institutions for talent pipelines
Consumer Banking <i>Consumer Banking Under Siege: Addressing the Digital Capability Gap (2023)</i>	Facilitating digital transformation to meet consumer expectations and addressing competition from new market entrants	Adopting agile methodologies, leveraging talent intelligence for strategic hiring, and focusing on enhancing digital customer experiences
CPG <i>A Perfect Storm in Consumer Packaged Goods: The Consumer Delight Imperative (2023)</i>	Meeting evolving consumer preferences and maintaining brand loyalty while dynamically aligning manufacturing	Emphasizing customer experience design, investing in R&D for product innovation, and adopting direct-to-consumer models to enhance consumer engagement
Healthcare <i>Healthcare at a Crossroads: Filling the Urgent Talent Gap in Clinical Care (2022)</i>	Addressing significant talent shortages, particularly in nursing and other clinical roles	Redesigning clinical roles to operate top of license, investing in predictive hiring, and leveraging digital health innovations to enhance efficiency and patient care
Insurance <i>Intelligent Adaptation in Insurance: Predicting the Unpredictable (2025)</i>	Thriving through increasing market uncertainty and responding to changing consumer expectations	Focusing on intelligent adaptation by strengthening three capabilities: financial risk prediction, advanced digital client servicing, and organizational agility
Pharmaceuticals <i>The Changing Face of Pharma: Innovate or Stagnate (2023)</i>	Accelerating drug development and managing regulatory complexities	Investing in AI and digital skills to streamline R&D processes, focusing on biotechnology and drug discovery, and leveraging talent intelligence for strategic hiring

Source: The Josh Bersin Company, 2025

The Six Secrets of Pacesetters in the Superworker Age

As we learned in this research, pacesetter companies don't just deploy different strategies and practices in their AI transformations. They approach business, technology, innovation, and people decisions with a completely different mindset.

We uncovered six secrets that set pacesetter organizations apart from others in their industry:

1. AI Transformation for Growth, Not Cost Control
2. Continuous Innovation at the Core
3. Productivity-Based Work Redesign
4. Talent Density: People Quality over Quantity
5. From Change Management to Change Agility
6. Systemic HR®, Powered by AI

The following sections explore these secrets in detail.



1. AI Transformation for Growth, Not Cost Control

At the heart of pacesetter strategies is the intentional use of AI to drive core business performance through automation, smarter insights, and more intelligent operations. These organizations prioritize advanced technologies that accelerate decision-making, unlock new revenue sources, and support long-term transformation. They use AI to improve forecasting, personalize the employee experience, and significantly boost productivity across the enterprise.

Building Future-Ready Talent: Pacesetters Prioritize AI and Tech Skills

To drive substantial impact and maintain a competitive edge, pacesetters grow forward-looking roles and ensure their talent mix includes the right skills. Our analysis across a variety of industries shows that pacesetter companies have a significantly higher prevalence of advanced skills in technology and AI.

For example, pacesetter automotive companies employ three times more people with rising technology skills than overall automotive companies (see Figure 4). Meanwhile, pacesetter banks couple next-generation technology skills with their existing technology solutions (which may be stable or declining). This enables them to develop and support more cutting-edge experiences while deepening their understanding of customer needs.⁴

Moderna invested over \$100 million in digital technologies to create a digital-first enterprise to accelerate mRNA drug design. The company also led the way in AI upskilling at scale when it opened an AI-focused capability academy in 2021—not just for digital or R&D talent, but for all employees. Two of Moderna's core mindsets, “obsess over learning” and “digitize everywhere possible,” reflect its commitment to continuous innovation and digital integration.⁵

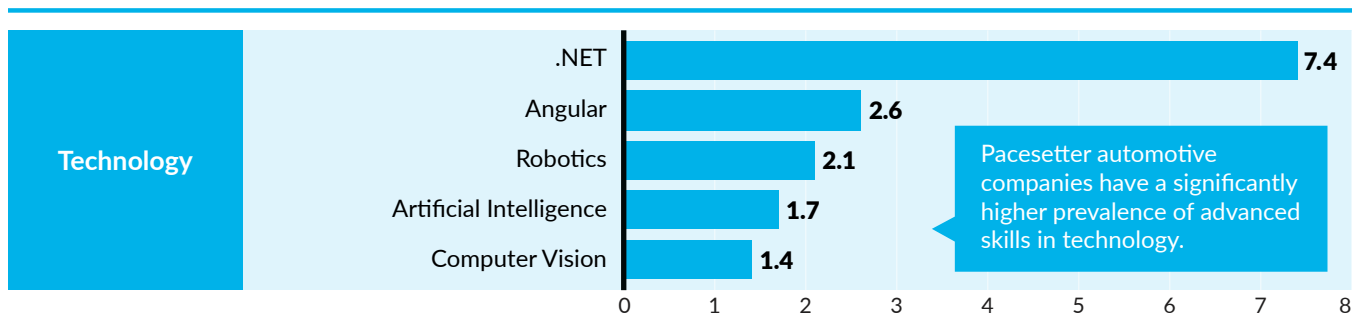
AI for More Meaningful Work

In superworker organizations, AI isn't just a tool for cutting costs—it's a catalyst for unleashing human potential.

Pacesetters use AI to elevate the performance of their workforce, not to displace it. By automating routine work, anticipating future needs, and optimizing the flow of tasks, AI enables employees to focus on the highest-impact activities—often called working at the top of their license.

This fundamental change in how organizations view and apply AI transforms jobs—not by shrinking them, but by enriching them. In doing so, pacesetters redefine what productivity looks like in the AI era: not more people doing more tasks, but smarter systems empowering people to do the right work better and faster.⁶

Figure 4: Technology Skill Prevalence in Pacesetters vs. Overall Automotive Companies



Note: Illustrative sample of skills—X times more prevalent.

Source: Eightfold Talent Intelligence Platform and The Josh Bersin Company, 2024

⁴ *Consumer Banking under Siege: Addressing the Digital Capability Gap*, Josh Bersin and Stella Ioannidou/The Josh Bersin Company, 2022.

⁵ *The Changing Face of Pharma: Innovate or Stagnate*, Josh Bersin and Jordan Schmitting/The Josh Bersin Company, 2023.

⁶ *Maximizing the Impact of AI in the Age of the Superworker*, Kathi Enderes, PhD/The Josh Bersin Company, 2025.



DBS Bank built an internal AI-powered talent marketplace called “iGrow,” integrating AI with workforce planning, learning, and career mobility. Rather than using AI to reduce headcount, DBS uses it to drive internal mobility, with 91% of employees reporting they feel empowered to grow their careers. In 2022, 40% of DBS roles were filled internally.⁷

Going Beyond Automation: New Revenue Streams

Traditional organizations often view AI as an expense-reduction strategy. Pacesetters, by contrast, see AI as a platform for growth, innovation, and differentiation. These organizations understand that long-term advantage comes from value creation—delivering better products, deeper insights, and stronger customer experiences. By embedding AI into the fabric of their business strategy, they unlock new revenue streams, elevate service quality, and turn operational intelligence into a competitive advantage. In the superworker era, this mindset shift—from containment to creation—separates leaders from the rest.

Tesla doesn't simply use AI in vehicle automation. The company uses it to rewire its entire supply chain and operational intelligence. From real-time machine learning in manufacturing to dynamic pricing models and predictive maintenance, Tesla continually widens its lead over competitors by embedding AI deep into its business model.

Zurich Insurance combines automation with engagement. It deploys AI to streamline backend operations while investing in branding, retention, and talent analytics to boost satisfaction and strengthen culture. By aligning AI efficiencies with people-focused strategies, Zurich has built a workforce model that is both lean and resilient.

Employee Experience over Efficiency

While many companies deploy AI primarily to drive efficiency, pacesetters take a different route: they start with people. These organizations focus on creating seamless, personalized, and meaningful experiences for customers and employees—understanding that such experiences fuel loyalty, innovation, and growth.

Focusing on Relationship Management and Design Skills

Putting internal and external customers first starts with developing and maintaining the right relationships. Pacesetter organizations strengthen this capability by prioritizing key relationship-focused skills across their workforce.

For example, pacesetter healthcare organizations have 2.5 times more management consultants, helping them design engaging patient experiences rather than just deliver efficient care.⁸ Similarly, pacesetter CPG companies prioritize customer experience specialists who anticipate and understand consumer needs, translating those insights into smarter production and marketing strategies.⁹

Mercy Health focused intensely on the employee experience through Mercy Works on Demand, an AI-based platform that lets nurses choose their own shifts gig-style. This results in greater flexibility, higher hire rates, and better patient care.¹⁰

AI-Based Personalization for Customers and Employees

Pacesetters know that personalization is no longer a luxury—it's a competitive necessity to drive loyalty, trust, and performance. Whether for customers or employees,

⁷ *DBS Builds a Skills-Driven and AI-Powered Talent Marketplace*, Josh Bersin and Stella Ioannidou/The Josh Bersin Company, 2023.

⁸ *Healthcare at a Crossroads: Solving the Urgent Talent Gap in Clinical Care*, Josh Bersin and Kathi Enderes, PhD/The Josh Bersin Company, 2022.

⁹ *A Perfect Storm in Consumer Packaged Goods: The Consumer Delight Imperative*, Josh Bersin and Stella Ioannidou/The Josh Bersin Company, 2023.

¹⁰ *Mercy “Uberizes” Nursing for the Future of Work*, Josh Bersin and Kathi Enderes, PhD/The Josh Bersin Company, 2022.



personalization signals respect: it reflects an organization's willingness to listen, adapt, and respond to individual needs. For pacesetters, AI enables delightful experiences, resulting in a more engaged workforce, more satisfied customers, and a business that grows by meeting people where they are.

L'Oréal doesn't just digitize beauty—it personalizes it. The company invested in AI-powered diagnostics and digital skin tools that enable personalized product recommendations for millions of customers, improving conversion rates and reinventing the customer experience.¹¹

Emphasizing the Candidate Experience

Pacesetters understand that the candidate experience directly reflects the culture candidates are being invited into. In superworker organizations, talent acquisition is about more than filling roles—it's about building relationships, fostering trust, and generating momentum from day one. That's why pacesetters leverage AI and automation not to depersonalize hiring, but to eliminate friction, enhance responsiveness, and create a smoother, more empowering journey for every candidate.

Nestlé understands the importance of candidate experience and has adopted tools and solutions to streamline and simplify the hiring process. Its chatbot answers candidate questions in real time and automates interview scheduling based on calendar availability. As a result, Nestlé scheduled and completed 18,000 interviews with minimal recruiter involvement, while increasing its candidate net promoter score by five points in just one year.¹²

2. Continuous Innovation at the Core

Many organizations see innovation as something that just happens in an R&D group. Pacesetters work differently, embedding innovation skills, experimentation platforms, and design thinking capabilities across the entire organization. For them, innovation is not episodic—it's continuous, distributed, and deeply connected to the front line.¹³

Building Innovation Skills and Roles

In the age of superworkers, pacesetters don't just innovate—they curate, accelerate, and amplify innovation by tapping into external talent, ideas, and technologies while consistently empowering their internal teams to unlock their full innovative potential. For example, pacesetter pharmaceutical companies prioritize innovation skills, enabling them to outpace competitors for faster drug development (see Figure 5 on the next page). Similarly, pacesetter CPG companies have an astounding 31.1 times more researchers, bolstering their ability to develop the right products.¹⁴

Bayer's Leaps initiative is a dedicated business unit tackling what many still consider science fiction—from reversing autoimmune conditions to regenerating organs and curing genetic disorders. Rather than waiting for breakthroughs to emerge internally, Bayer seeks out and funds ambitious external research to push the boundaries of what's possible.

Roche launched its first-ever physical innovation hub, the Roche Accelerator, in China. Designed as a collaborative space, the hub brings together entrepreneurs in pharma, diagnostics, AI, and digital health. It combines lab and office space with early-stage funding, mentorship, and hands-on support to help startups move from concept to proof, effectively turning Roche into a sponsor and a builder of future health tech ecosystems.¹⁵

Driving Frontline Innovation

In the superworker era, where speed and adaptability define success, pacesetters design their operations to support rapid experimentation, continuous learning, and dynamic collaboration. Whether tapping into contingent talent or mobilizing internal academies, they turn the workforce into a living engine of innovation, proving that the best ideas often emerge closest to the work itself. This mindset—that everyone is an innovator—propels pacesetters forward. Whether through internal marketplaces, hackathons, or crowdsourced design, these companies create the space, tools, and culture to innovate at scale.

11 *A Perfect Storm in Consumer Packaged Goods: The Consumer Delight Imperative*, Josh Bersin and Stella Ioannidou/The Josh Bersin Company, 2023.

12 *A Perfect Storm in Consumer Packaged Goods: The Consumer Delight Imperative*, Josh Bersin and Stella Ioannidou/The Josh Bersin Company, 2023.

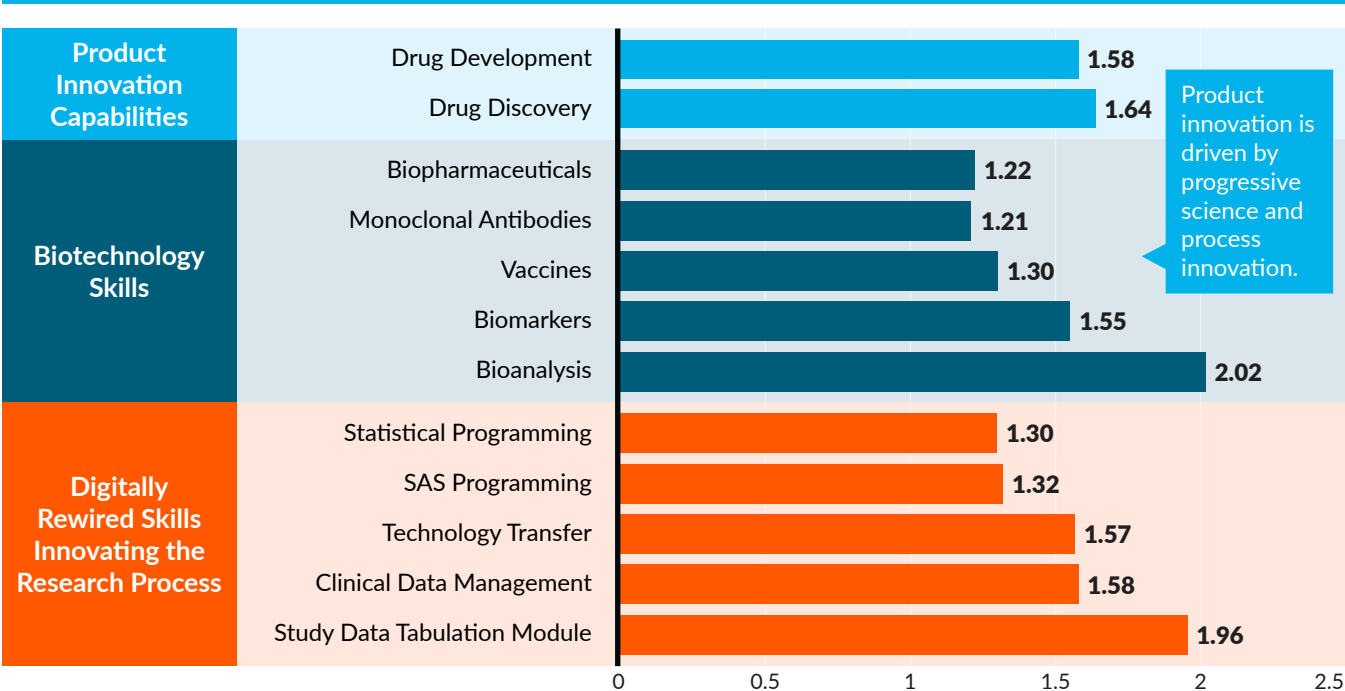
13 *The Definitive Guide to Building a Dynamic Organization*, Josh Bersin and Kathi Enderes, PhD/The Josh Bersin Company, 2023.

14 *A Perfect Storm in Consumer Packaged Goods: The Consumer Delight Imperative*, Josh Bersin and Stella Ioannidou/The Josh Bersin Company, 2023.

15 *The Changing Face of Pharma: Innovate or Stagnate*, Josh Bersin and Jordan Schmitting/The Josh Bersin Company, 2023.



Figure 5: Skill Prevalence in Pacesetters vs. Overall Pharma Companies



Note: Illustrative sample of skills—X times more prevalent.
Source: Eightfold Talent Intelligence Platform and The Josh Bersin Company, 2023

Toyota pioneered the shift toward EVs—not just by building new products, but by reshaping its entire organization to foster faster prototyping, customer feedback loops, and agile product teams. Despite 40% of its workforce being contingent, Toyota continues to operate like a well-oiled machine.¹⁶

AdventHealth's innovation is also workforce-driven. Using skills intelligence to identify critical capability gaps in its clinical workforce, AdventHealth launched internal academies that rapidly train frontline staff for evolving roles. The company treats skill-building as an innovation engine—a way to keep pace with change while investing in its people.¹⁷

16 Automotive Manufacturing in Turmoil: Navigating the EV Metamorphosis, Josh Bersin and Stella Ioannidou/The Josh Bersin Company, 2024.

17 AdventHealth Taps into Caregiver Education to Deliver Whole-Person Care, Josh Bersin and Kathi Enderes, PhD/The Josh Bersin Company, 2022.

3. Productivity-Based Work Redesign

Pacesetters start with a fundamental insight: outdated roles and rigid structures hinder agility. Instead of layering new tools on top of old workflows, they strip out bureaucracy, clarify accountability, and focus on high-value, meaningful work—done at the top of one’s license (see Figure 6).

Amplifying Work Redesign Capabilities

Systemically redesigning work and roles is not a core strength for most organizations. Only 11% use advanced methods to understand how work actually happens. While work design is the most impactful area of organization design, it’s also the least effective in practice (see Figure 7 on the next page).¹⁸

Yet, pacesetters excel in this area. For example, pacesetter healthcare organizations employ 1.7 times more workshop facilitators to deeply understand work processes and drive the critical work redesign that addresses nearly half of the clinical talent shortages.¹⁹

Providence exemplifies this work-redesign approach. Facing acute staffing shortages and high labor costs, it redesigned clinical work using predictive scheduling and AI-based task automation. Rather than burning out highly trained professionals with administrative tasks, Providence enabled clinicians to spend more time on patient care, boosting efficiency, patient care and service, and staff morale.²⁰

Figure 6: The Four Stages of Work Redesign



Source: The Josh Bersin Company, 2025

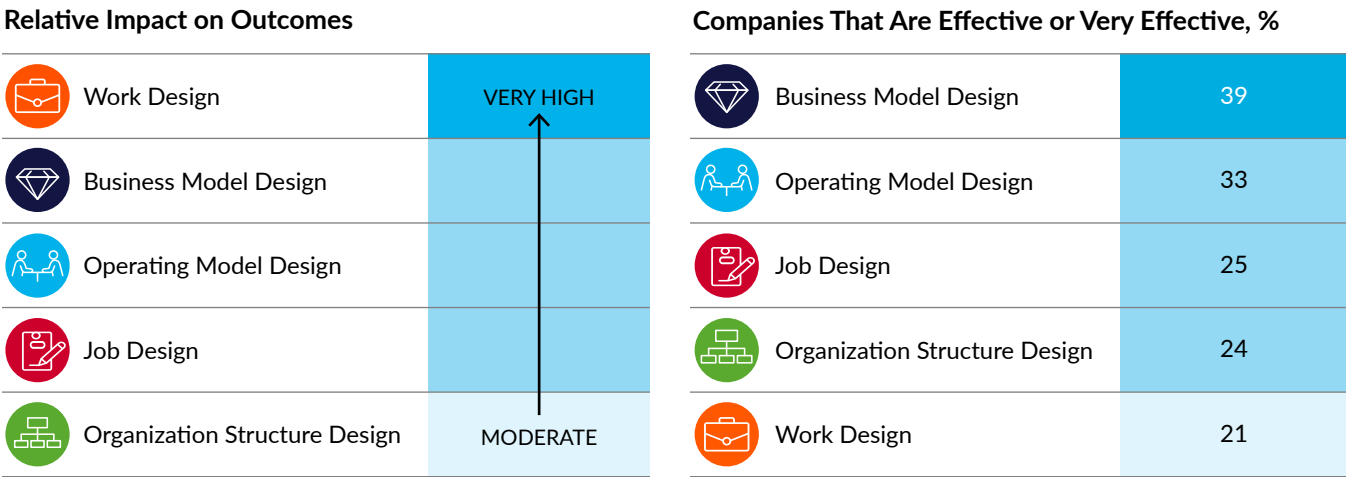
¹⁸ *The Definitive Guide to Organization Design: The Journey to Agile*, Josh Bersin and Kathi Enderes, PhD/The Josh Bersin Company, 2022.

¹⁹ *Healthcare at a Crossroads: Solving the Urgent Talent Gap in Clinical Care*, Josh Bersin and Kathi Enderes, PhD/The Josh Bersin Company, 2022.

²⁰ *Providence Transforms Healthcare for the Future*, Josh Bersin and Kathi Enderes, PhD/The Josh Bersin Company, 2022.



Figure 7: Impact and Effectiveness of Organization Design Elements



Source: The Josh Bersin Company, 2022

Rethinking How Work Is Done

As roles evolve and AI accelerates the pace of change, pacesetter companies don't cling to rigid structures or outdated job descriptions. Instead, they rethink how work flows, who owns it, and how value is created. This isn't just about improving efficiency—it's about enabling adaptability, unlocking talent, and making the organization more responsive at every level.

In the superworker era, the ability to rewire how work gets done keeps companies ahead of the curve—and their people at the center of it. It's not just a process—it's a mindset: work is never finished, and how we organize it must evolve with our strategy.

ING implemented a bold "One Agile Way of Working" approach, replacing traditional hierarchies with cross-functional squads and product teams. Meetings became "rituals," job titles became skills-based roles, and the bank embedded flexibility into every layer of its operating model. This redesign improved productivity, tech talent retention, and wellbeing.²¹

4. Talent Density: People Quality over Quantity

In the age of AI and superworkers, pacesetters know that job titles and roles aren't static—they're dynamic systems. These companies continuously redesign work: removing friction, unlocking capability, and structuring around value rather than legacy.

"Talent density" refers to the ratio of highly skilled, high-performing employees within an organization. It emphasizes maximizing the collective expertise, performance, and impact of a workforce by hiring, developing, and retaining top talent.

Our Talent Density research reveals that companies with high talent density consistently achieve superior business outcomes by maintaining a high-performance culture, where every new hire contributes to team productivity and innovation. Pacesetters prioritize talent density because it enables them to do more with less, driving profitability and efficiency without the need to increase headcount.

21 ING Transforms Its Ways of Working for a Sustainable Future, Josh Bersin and Stella Ioannidou/The Josh Bersin Company, 2022.

Prioritizing Talent Quality over Quantity

Pacesetters are smaller, faster, and denser. They don't chase headcount—they build capability through hiring for skills, not just degrees; using data to predict future needs; and investing in continuous skilling to keep the workforce ready for what's next.

Netflix maintains high talent density to drive superior business outcomes and innovation by fostering continuous feedback and using practices like the “keeper test” to ensure only significant contributors remain. This intentional approach builds systems and cultures that make adaptation inevitable.

Hiring for the Right Skills

In an economy where technologies evolve faster than organizational charts can keep up, and where skills and talent are scarce, pacesetters focus less on résumés and more on the real skills that drive impact. They take a work-centric approach to identify the critical capabilities needed for future growth, then hire with precision,

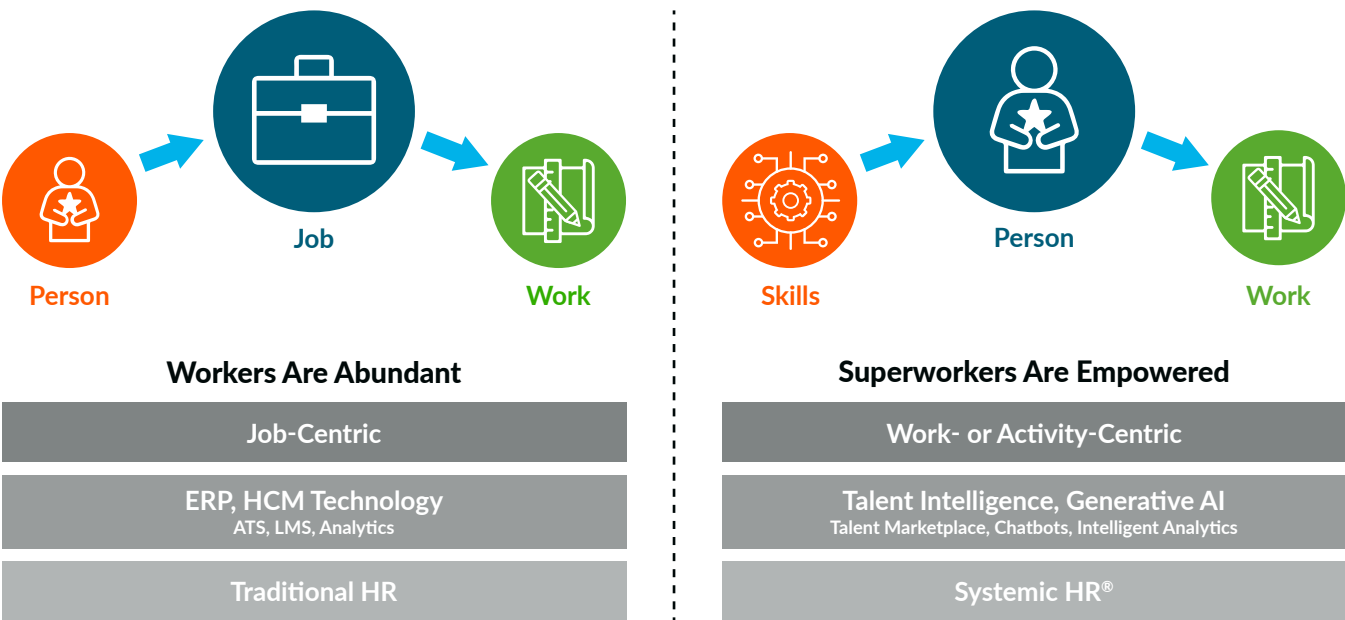
targeting high-leverage workers who bring adaptability, cross-disciplinary fluency, and deep expertise in emerging domains.

In the superworker era, success is not about hiring more people, but about hiring the right people—those who can learn, evolve, and lead through change (see Figure 8).

Moderna strategically hires talent with AI, data science, and platform biology expertise, knowing these roles are foundational to future growth. Rather than scaling via volume, it focuses on high-leverage talent—individuals who bring outsize value and cross-disciplinary agility.

DBS has invested in hiring more technologists to modernize its technology stack, offer better customer-facing digital experiences, and automate low-value backend tasks.²²

Figure 8: A New Talent Model: From Job-Centric to Work-Centric



ATS (Applicant Tracking System), ERP (Enterprise Resource Planning), HCM (Human Capital Management), LMS (Learning Management System)
Source: The Josh Bersin Company, 2025

22 DBS Builds a Skills-Driven and AI-Powered Talent Marketplace, Josh Bersin and Stella Ioannidou/The Josh Bersin Company, 2023.



Scotiabank’s transformation of its campus recruiting program demonstrates another lever: replacing legacy hiring methods with a skills-first approach. This shift expanded access to underrepresented talent pools and built a more future-ready pipeline.²³

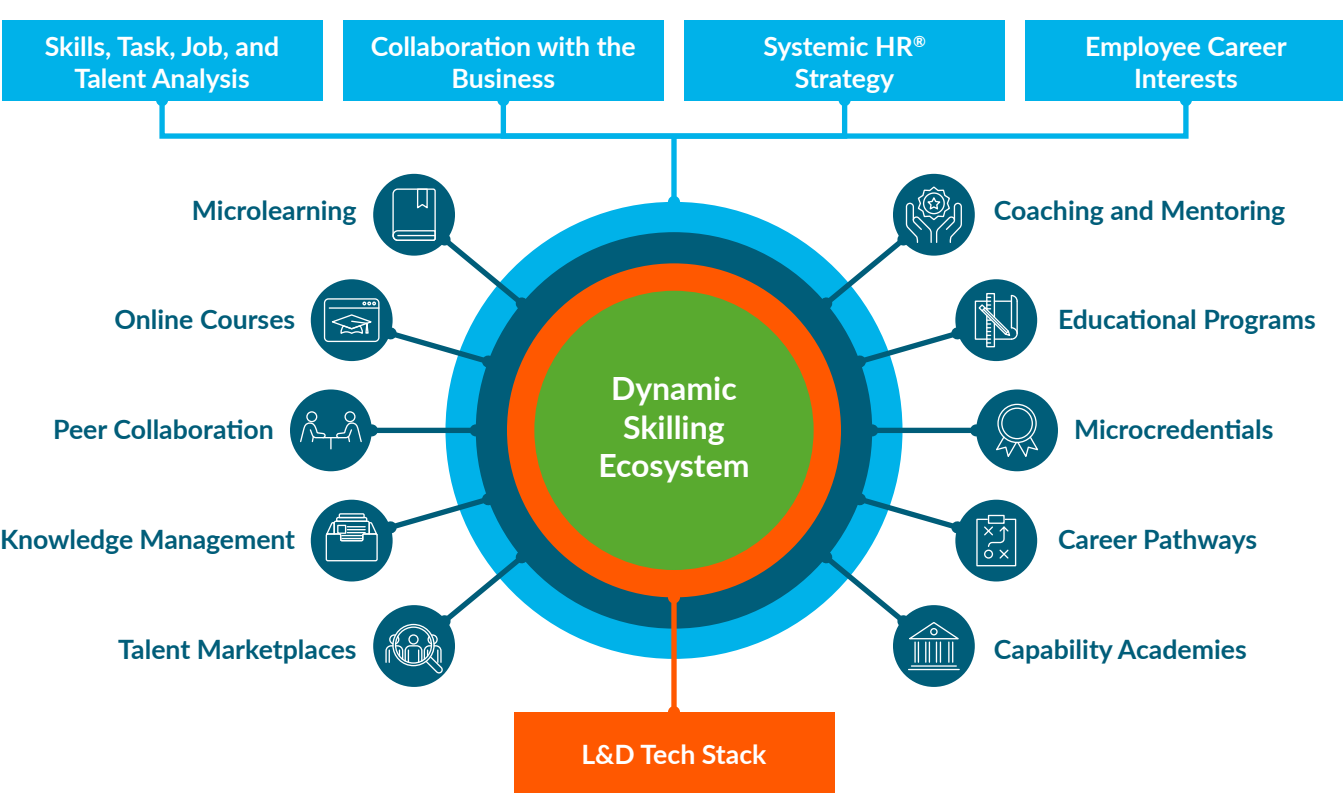
Dynamic Skilling to Anticipate and Mitigate Talent Gaps

Building a dynamic skilling ecosystem is a proactive strategy that continuously aligns workforce skills with evolving business needs through methods like microlearning and talent marketplaces. This is essential for pacesetter organizations, as it enables them to anticipate skills gaps, enhance workforce agility, and maintain competitiveness.

By adopting dynamic skilling, pacesetter organizations build a resilient and innovative workforce that can quickly adapt to new technologies and market conditions, thereby maintaining their leadership position.²⁴ They approach this strategically, designing a dynamic skilling ecosystem and carefully selecting the most effective learning interventions (see Figure 9).

L’Oréal invests over €100 million annually in upskilling, with capability academies covering leadership, sustainability, tech, and more. These internal universities align learning with business strategy, breaking down silos and building a resilient, future-ready workforce.²⁵

Figure 9: Dynamic Skilling Ecosystem



Source: The Josh Bersin Company, 2025

23 Consumer Banking under Siege: Addressing the Digital Capability Gap, Josh Bersin and Stella Ioannidou/The Josh Bersin Company, 2022.

24 Dynamic Skilling: Anticipating and Mitigating Current and Future Skills Gaps, Kathi Enderes, PhD, and Jordan Hammerstad/The Josh Bersin Company, 2025.

25 L’Oreal Leverages Learning Agility to Transform Its Business and the World, Josh Bersin and Stella Ioannidou/The Josh Bersin Company, 2023.

Coca-Cola Europacific Partners takes a similar approach, offering AI-driven learning journeys through internal academies focused on leadership; commercial excellence; supply chain; and environmental, social, and governance (ESG). Its talent intelligence platform serves as a “career copilot,” matching development opportunities to each employee’s needs and aspirations.²⁶

Revamping Internal Mobility

Pacesetters understand that the talent they need tomorrow may already be inside the organization today. Rather than defaulting to external hiring, these companies invest in building upward and lateral mobility, especially for employees in lower-wage or nondegreed roles, creating “[career pathways](#)” and deploying “[talent marketplaces](#)” to unlock hidden potential, closing skill gaps, and driving equitable growth. In the superworker era, internal mobility becomes a force multiplier, helping employees grow while ensuring the business has the capabilities to adapt, evolve, and lead.

Bon Secours Mercy Health has developed comprehensive career pathways and internal mobility programs to support employee growth and address evolving workforce needs. These programs have become a significant factor in attracting new hires, with 52% citing them as a reason for joining the company. The pathways are designed to help employees transition from entry-level roles—such as environmental services or reception—into higher-skilled positions like nursing or imaging/radiology.²⁷

5. From Change Management to Change Agility

To harness AI’s full potential, organizations must become agile in adapting to change. Traditional approaches to change management—those that view change as discrete events to be planned for—no longer work. AI-driven change is continuous, unpredictable, and beyond the scope of being “manageable.”²⁸ As a result, a new approach to change management is needed (see Figure 10 on the next page).

Change agility involves developing the necessary skills and roles, predicting future skill requirements, and leveraging analytics and forecasting to anticipate and

respond to market shifts. Pacesetters excel at identifying and nurturing the skills needed to navigate change, ensuring their workforces are equipped to adapt to new technologies and processes.²⁹

A Focus on Change Skills and Roles

Pacesetters prioritize change skills and roles that enable their workforce to embrace and drive transformation. This includes roles such as change managers, who guide teams through transitions, and data analysts, who use predictive analytics to forecast future trends and inform strategic decisions. Organizations can proactively manage change and minimize disruption by investing in these roles.

For example, pacesetter healthcare organizations have 5.2 times more data mining skills,³⁰ while pacesetter auto manufacturers employ 4.3 times more project specialists,³¹ and pacesetter CPG companies have 1.8 times more change management skills.³²

Sutter Health has implemented predictive analytics to anticipate patient needs and optimize resource allocation. This approach has enabled the organization to enhance patient care while reducing costs, demonstrating the power of change agility in healthcare.

Fostering Change Agility through New Leadership Approaches

Leadership plays a critical role in fostering change agility. Pacesetters embrace dynamic leadership models that emphasize flexibility, collaboration, and innovation. In these organizations, leaders are not just decision-makers—they are enablers who empower their teams to experiment, learn, and adapt. This human-centered approach fosters an environment where—rather than being feared—change is embraced as an opportunity for growth.³³

ING develops leadership models that support AI transformation through agile leadership, empowering teams, and fostering collaboration. These models integrate data-driven decision-making with AI tools, promote cross-functional

²⁶ *Coca-Cola Europacific Partners Addresses Skills Gaps with Enterprise Talent Intelligence*, Josh Bersin and Kathi Enderes, PhD/The Josh Bersin Company, 2024.

²⁷ *The Synergies between Career Pathways and Systemic HR™*, Josh Bersin and Kathi Enderes, PhD/The Josh Bersin Company, 2024.

²⁸ *The Role of the Employee Experience Platform in Enterprise AI Transformation*, Kathi Enderes, PhD/The Josh Bersin Company, 2025.

²⁹ *The Big Reset Playbook: Change Agility*, Josh Bersin, Kathi Enderes, PhD, and Nehal Nangia/The Josh Bersin Company, 2021.

³⁰ *Healthcare at a Crossroads: Solving the Urgent Talent Gap in Clinical Care*, Josh Bersin and Kathi Enderes, PhD/The Josh Bersin Company, 2022.

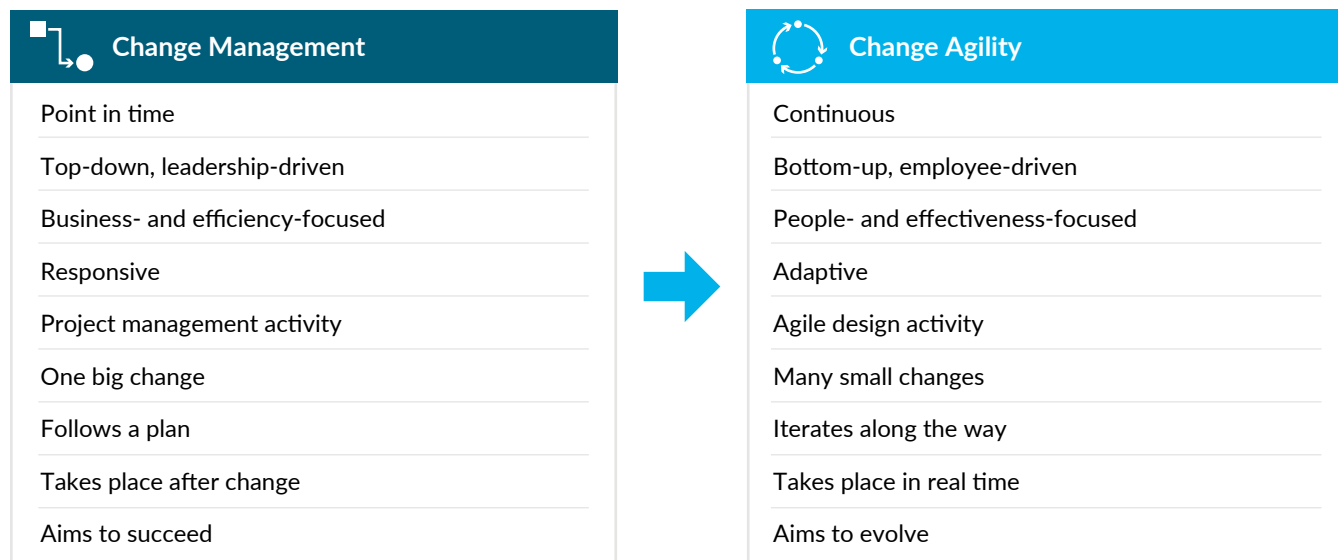
³¹ *Automotive Manufacturing in Turmoil: Navigating the EV Metamorphosis*, Josh Bersin and Stella Ioannidou/The Josh Bersin Company, 2024.

³² *A Perfect Storm in Consumer Packaged Goods: The Consumer Delight Imperative*, Josh Bersin and Stella Ioannidou/The Josh Bersin Company, 2023.

³³ *The Big Reset Playbook: Human-Centered Leadership*, Josh Bersin and Kathi Enderes, PhD/The Josh Bersin Company, 2022.



Figure 10: From Change Management to Change Agility



Source: The Josh Bersin Company, 2021

collaboration, and encourage knowledge-sharing, enabling effective AI adoption and innovation in digital banking.³⁴

Forecasting and Modeling through Systemic Business Analytics

Pacesetters leverage systemic business analytics—integrating people data with core business data—to forecast and model future scenarios.³⁵ This approach uses AI and data analytics to gain insights into market trends, customer behavior, and operational performance, then connects these insights to people data like performance, engagement, staffing ratios, and skills. By integrating these insights into their strategic planning, organizations can make informed decisions and stay ahead of the competition.

Toyota's commitment to continuous improvement and innovation is evident in its use of AI and automation in manufacturing. The company's agile approach to change management has enabled it to maintain its position as a global leader in the automotive industry.

6. Systemic HR®, Powered by AI

In the age of the superworker, organizations are using AI to drive transformation and maintain a competitive advantage. But successful AI integration requires more than just technological investment; it calls for a culture of “[change agility](#).”

As organizations navigate the complexities of AI transformation, the role of the CHRO and the HR function must evolve. Pacesetters are leading the way—reimagining HR through systemic approaches that integrate talent management, workforce planning, and organizational development to drive AI-powered transformation.³⁶

Pacesetters leverage Systemic HR approaches to create a cohesive and strategic framework for managing talent—aligning HR practices with business goals to ensure recruitment, retention, reskilling, and work redesign support the organization's strategic objectives (see Figure 11 on the next page).

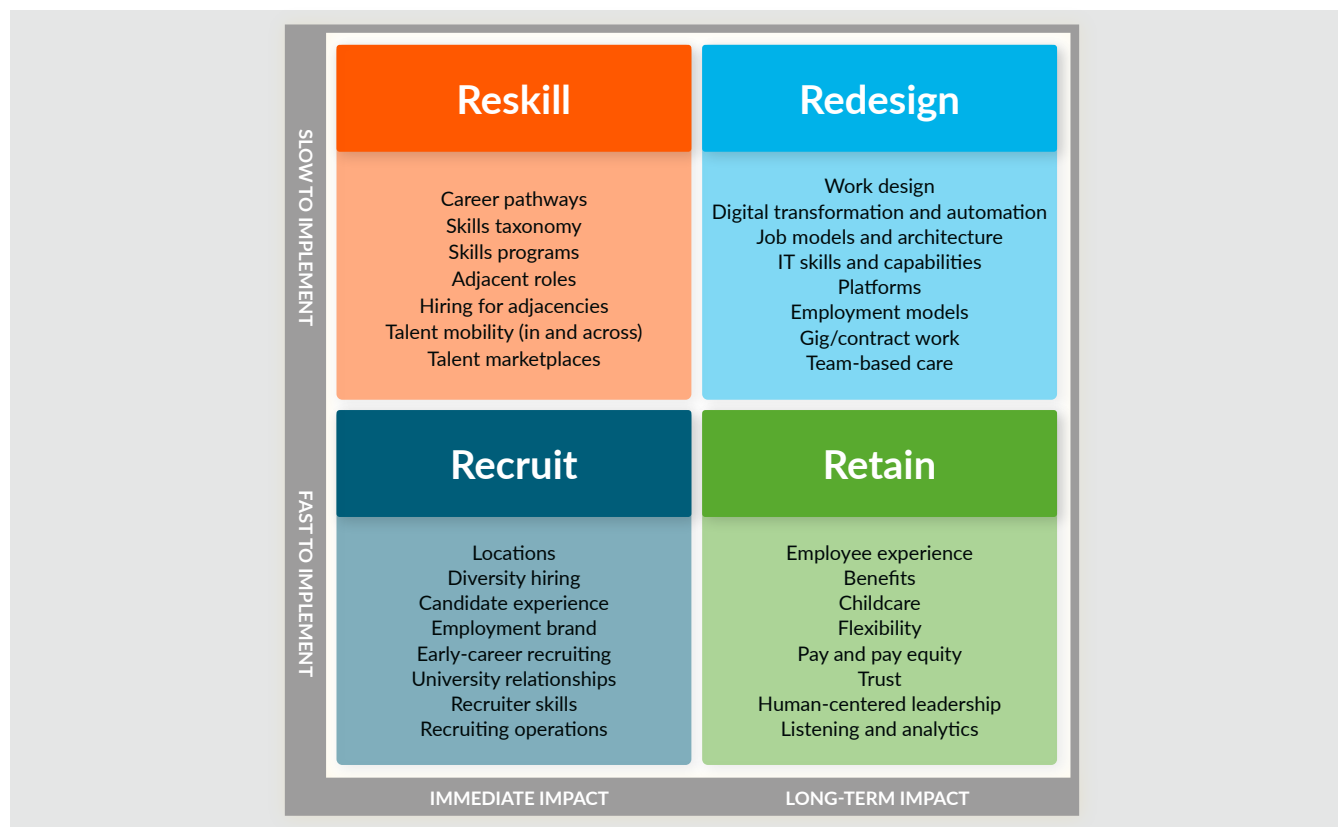
³⁴ ING Transforms Its Ways of Working for a Sustainable Future, Josh Bersin and Stella Ioannidou/The Josh Bersin Company, 2022.

³⁵ The Definitive Guide to People Analytics: Systemic Business Analytics, Josh Bersin, Stella Ioannidou, and Kathi Enderes, PhD/The Josh Bersin Company, 2024.

³⁶ The Definitive Guide to Human Resources: Systemic HR™, Josh Bersin and Kathi Enderes, PhD/The Josh Bersin Company, 2023.



Figure 11: The Four R Framework™



Source: The Josh Bersin Company, 2022

Systemic HR Skills and Roles, Flatter HR Organizations

Pacesetters prioritize Systemic HR skills and roles that enable them to manage talent effectively. This includes roles such as HR business partners (HRBPs), who work closely with business leaders to align HR strategies with organizational goals, and people analytics specialists, who use data to inform workforce planning and decision-making. In healthcare, pacesetters have 2.5 times more HR systems skills,³⁷ and pacesetter insurance companies have 3 times more HRBPs.³⁸

In addition, pacesetter HR organizations are often flatter and more empowered. For example, pacesetter automotive companies have 3.5 times fewer HR managers.³⁹ This is aligned with our Systemic HR study, showing a leaner HR structure in more advanced HR organizations.⁴⁰

Bon Secours Mercy Health has embraced Systemic HR to enhance workforce planning and career development with skills-based career pathways. The organization's strategic approach to HR has improved employee engagement and retention, supporting its mission to provide high-quality healthcare.⁴¹

37 *Healthcare at a Crossroads: Solving the Urgent Talent Gap in Clinical Care*, Josh Bersin and Kathi Enderes, PhD/The Josh Bersin Company, 2022.

38 *Intelligent Adaptation in Insurance: Predicting the Unpredictable*, Stella Ioannidou/The Josh Bersin Company, 2025.

39 *Automotive Manufacturing in Turmoil: Navigating the EV Metamorphosis*, Josh Bersin and Stella Ioannidou/The Josh Bersin Company, 2024.

40 *The Definitive Guide to Human Resources: Systemic HR®*, Josh Bersin and Kathi Enderes, PhD/The Josh Bersin Company, 2023.

41 *The Synergies between Career Pathways and Systemic HR™*, Josh Bersin and Kathi Enderes, PhD/The Josh Bersin Company, 2024.

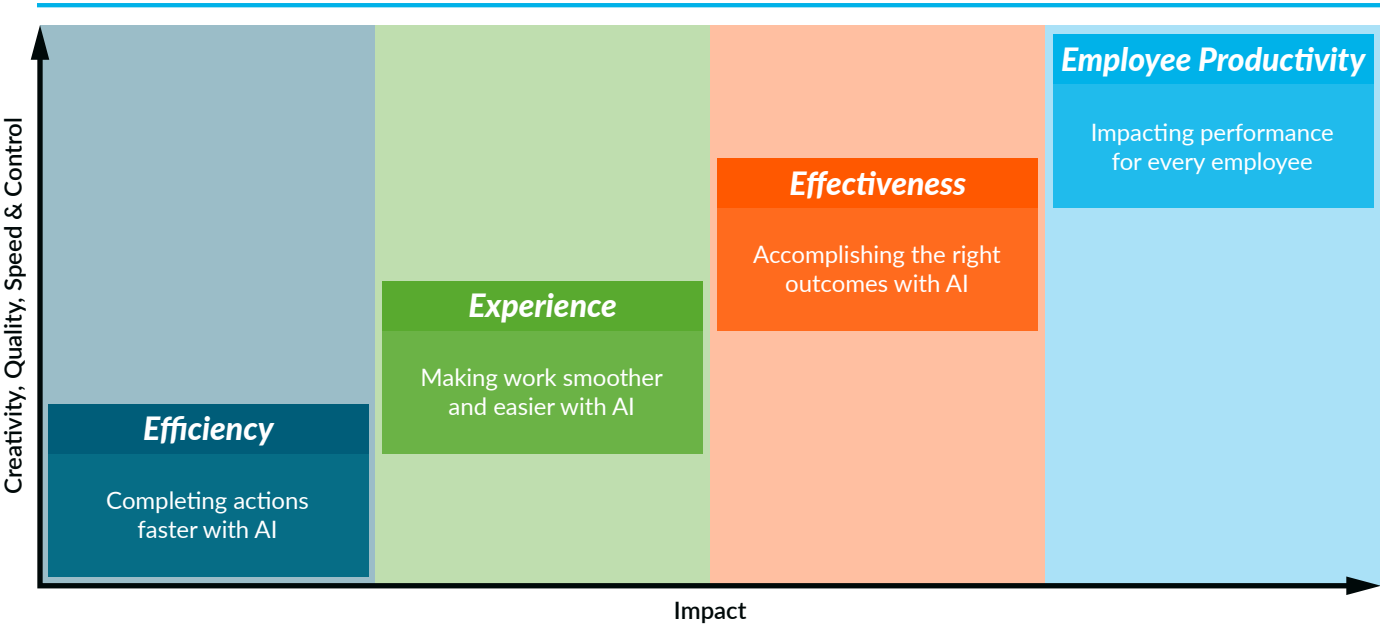


Leveraging AI in HR

Pacesetters use AI as a tool not just to improve efficiency, but to fundamentally reinvent the HR function. AI-powered tools can automate routine HR tasks, such as candidate screening and benefits enrollment, freeing HR professionals to focus on high-impact strategic initiatives. By embracing AI, these organizations enhance operational efficiency, elevate the employee experience, drive better outcomes, and increase workforce productivity (see Figure 12).⁴²

Moderna has completely restructured its HR function for AI transformation—merging it with its digital team to reflect a workforce of human and digital workers. Using AI across the entire business also required reinventing how its L&D team operates, completely changing content development, learning administration, skills identification, and the learner experience.

Figure 12: Four Categories of AI Impact



Source: The Josh Bersin Company, 2025

42 Maximizing the Impact of AI in the Age of the Superworker, Kathi Enderes, PhD/The Josh Bersin Company, 2025.

The CHRO as a Business Executive

The role of the CHRO is expanding beyond traditional HR responsibilities to encompass strategic leadership and organizational development. Pacesetters recognize the CHRO as a key driver of transformation, responsible for shaping the organization's culture, developing talent, and driving change. This evolving role means a different position on the leadership team and requires a new portfolio of skills and experiences (see Figure 13).⁴³

Standard Chartered Bank CHRO Tanuj Kapilashrami holds more than just the highest HR role. She leads corporate strategy, groupwide transformation and corporate functions (brand and marketing, corporate affairs, corporate real estate services, HR, and supply chain management) for the bank. Leading at the intersection of strategy, transformation, people, and brand, she is responsible for how the bank develops, executes, and communicates its strategy.

Figure 13: The Changing Role of the CHRO



Source: The Josh Bersin Company, 2025

⁴³ Understanding the Path to CHRO, Josh Bersin and Kathi Enderes, PhD/The Josh Bersin Company, 2025.



Next Steps

HR and business leaders across industries can review the three core strategies of pacesetter organizations to guide and strengthen their own AI transformations. To get started:

- **Assess current strategies against those of pacesetters to identify alignment, gaps, and opportunities for improvement.** Benchmarking against proven approaches clarifies what's working, what needs rethinking, and where progress can be accelerated—especially in areas like talent development, workforce planning, and operational agility.
- **Incorporate the guiding principles of pacesetters into your AI transformation roadmap.** This includes focusing on human-centered AI, creating dynamic and flexible work models, investing in high-impact skills, and embedding innovation into everyday processes. These principles help ensure that transformation is not just a tech upgrade—but a holistic reinvention of how the organization operates and grows.
- **Continuously reinvent organization and talent strategies to stay ahead in the AI era.** In a landscape defined by constant disruption, static models fall short. Pacesetters thrive by embracing a mindset of ongoing reinvention—redesigning roles, reskilling talent, and evolving leadership approaches to keep pace with technology and business demands.

Key Takeaways

- AI transformation creates massive opportunities for organizations to gain outsize competitive advantage, but the key to success lies in the organizational and individual adoption of AI.
- Pacesetter organizations—those outperforming their peers and widening the gap—are winning the AI game by creating superworker organizations.
- Focusing on human-centered AI and continuous innovation differentiates pacesetters from the rest.
- To create value with AI, pacesetters continuously redesign work, jobs, roles, and skills, boosting talent density.
- Pacesetters cultivate a culture of change agility and leverage Systemic HR to power the AI transformation.



About the Authors



Kathi Enderes, PhD

Kathi is the senior vice president research and global industry analyst at The Josh Bersin Company, supporting clients and the market with evidence-based insights on all areas of HR, learning, talent, and HR technology. Kathi has more than 20 years of global experience from management consulting with IBM, PwC, and EY, and as a talent leader at McKesson and Kaiser Permanente. Most recently, Kathi led talent and workforce research at Deloitte. She is a frequent keynote speaker, author, and thought leader. Her passion is to make work better and more meaningful.

Originally from Austria, Kathi has worked in Vienna, London, San Francisco, and Spain and now lives in Palo Alto, California. Kathi holds a doctoral degree in mathematics and a master's degree in mathematics from the University of Vienna, Austria.



Stella Ioannidou

Stella is the senior director of research and Global Workforce Intelligence Project leader at The Josh Bersin Company. In this role, she conducts empirical research on a variety of topics related to the skills economy, talent intelligence, and HR technology. Stella has almost 20 years of experience across several industries, including banking. Prior to joining The Josh Bersin Company, Stella was the HR transformation leader for Deloitte, where she led large-scale HCM implementations and designed frameworks for talent acquisition and performance management for the public sector. Stella holds master's degrees in engineering, information systems management, business administration, and lifelong learning. Stella lives and works in Greece and is pursuing her PhD in talent intelligence. She is a certified project manager, change management practitioner, lean six sigma green belt, and ICAgile HR professional.

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