

Press release

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Belgian business leaders consider focusing on skills the top priority to unlock their workforce's full potential and remain successful in a constantly evolving environment

Brussels, Belgium – 12 April 2023

Deloitte's 2023 Global Human Capital Trends report, [New fundamentals for a boundaryless world](#), examines how leaders may succeed in a constantly evolving environment. Global, economic, and societal trends are calling into question the very foundations of how, where, and why we work. With no option to return to the past way of doing business, organisations need to set new fundamentals for a boundaryless world.

In the near term, almost 60% of all Belgian executives report reorienting their transformation focus from optimisation to reimagining: building new models and approaches, and leading change. This includes, amongst other, new workforce models and new or different combinations of people and technology. The top 3 critical trends in these transformation steps, according to Belgian executives, are matching skills with organisation priorities (45.12% list this as very important for an organisation's success), leadership capabilities and leadership effectiveness in a disrupted world (44.3%), and harnessing worker agency (40.74%).

Yves Van Durme, Global Organisation Transformation Leader at Deloitte and co-author of the report: "Overall, the Human Capital Trends survey respondents recognise that business realities can change in an instant and there is no option to return to the past way of doing business. The way jobs are defined, where work happens, and who qualifies for specific roles—the traditional rules of work—are falling away. Belgian executives know that organisations need to set new fundamentals for this boundaryless world, but to achieve success, they too will have to evolve."

Focus on skills is key

Work today is still primarily defined by jobs and descriptions of specific tasks, but 86.6% of the Belgian executives surveyed believe that matching worker skills with organisational priorities is important or very important to their organisation's success. The need to start focusing on skills rather than strict job descriptions seems clear: The majority of Belgian executives say that their organisation expects to experience shortages for critical worker skills over the next 2 years (76%), and few believe their organisation is able to use the skills of their workforce to the fullest potential (22.2%).

While on a global level up to 54% of executives list focusing on skills as a key priority, making it the second ranked trend, the readiness gap in Belgium is smaller: Only 21% of global executives report feeling very ready to address this challenge, versus 35% in Belgium.

Technology, next to skills, can unlock the full potential of the workforce

Of Belgian executives, 81% indicate that using technology to improve work outcomes and team performance is important or very important for their organisation's success and a true asset in unlocking their workforce's full potential.

Interestingly, our company leaders do not only see technology as a force to automate work and thereby improving productivity, but it can also enhance human and team performance and make workers better versions of themselves.

According to a study carried out by Agoria, VBO (Federation of Belgian Enterprises), and Deloitte Belgium about *The future of work: Strategies for the digital transition*, digitalisation is one of the main drivers of additional job creation with an expected 45,000 extra digital expert profiles needed between now and 2030 in Belgium. This is not limited to hiring digital experts. It is also a matter of reassessing the skills necessary for the employees who are the users of these digitalising and automating processes. Indeed, some 7,600 will have to deal with data awareness on a process or project basis and will have to perform support tasks for structured data collection and data quality checks. It also means that more than three quarters of the additional digital experts we need will fill a digital role in a company with another core activity.

Successfully unlocking the workforce's full potential touches on many aspects. Analytics will be key to capture insights into current but also potential worker skills. By looking at skills and not only basing hiring and promotion decisions on job title, CV, and degrees, the talent pool can be extended and there is more agility to meet the organisation's priorities. In addition, it's important to take the opportunity to embrace the potential of (intelligent) technology to enable human and team impact.

Embracing rising worker influence: benefits outweigh challenges

Harnessing worker agency is important or very important to the success of their organisation said 79% of our survey respondents, making it one of the top 3 trends among Belgian executives. Yet, only 32.5% said they are very ready to address this challenge.

Workers have more choice and influence over the work they do and most recently we have witnessed this in the context of the return to work. However, worker agency is not only about workplace preferences. The 2022 Deloitte Gen Z and Millennial Survey already indicated that the call for flexibility amongst the youngest generation of workers goes beyond being able to work from home. Only 15% of Belgian executives indicate that technology (i.e., the digital workplace) is a key attribute in designing the workplace of the future.

In reality, worker agency has multiple facets. One is self-determination, where workers want meaningful choice and influence over the work they do, and how, when, and where they work. Another is worker activism, where workers are wanting their organisation's values, strategies, policies and actions to align with their own personal values across a wide range of environmental and social practices.

"The current agency focus has been triggered by the pandemic, with material topics such as location, compensation, and working hours surfacing as top areas. In order to truly harness agency and drive increased value, the focus needs to be on areas such as purpose and work. Our 2022 Gen Z and Millennial Survey shows that especially our youngest generation of workers are eager to use their newfound influence to help shape the agenda of their organisation and demand companies to undertake meaningful action around sustainability, mental wellbeing, etc," added Yves Van Durme.

Evolving in a boundaryless world

Eighty-six percent of respondents believe that leadership capabilities and effectiveness will be important or very important for their organisation's success. But all leadership—both business and HR leadership—in a boundaryless world requires new roles and a new set of skills and mindset. The critical roles for leaders in the coming years are, according to Belgian executives, to access, engage and develop talent (27.6%), to create a resilient workforce (23.6%), and to connect teams/departments/geographies to elevate outcomes (23.6%).

It is interesting to note that executives cite too many changes at once as the biggest barrier to a leader's ability and effectiveness to manage a constantly evolving world (32,9%). While non-executives cite that leaders themselves are resistant to change (38.5%).

"There are new fundamentals to leadership. As the workforce and workplace evolve in a boundaryless world, leaders need to evolve too. First off, they need to think like a researcher. This means being curious, open-minded, and being able to frame the problems and challenges. Second, they must co-create relationships, invest in building relationships with workers to leverage their full knowledge and experience. Lastly, they need to prioritise human outcomes. This means fostering an environment where workers can experiment and learn and where it's standard practice to challenge the traditional ways of working. This is an imperative for all leaders," concluded Yves Van Durme.

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About the 2023 Global Human Capital Trends report

The insights gathered for this report leverage Deloitte's scenario planning methodology and are fuelled by research findings from a combination of social media polling, live survey polling, AI-enabled focus groups, and interviews with business and HR executives across



industries and—for the first-time in the 11-year history of Deloitte's Global Human Capital Trends report—hundreds of workers from all over the world. In Belgium, 414 respondents of which 102 C-level and board member or equivalent from global, regional, national, and local organisations took part in the global survey in the summer and autumn of 2022.

To access the report, please click on the following link: [Human Capital Trends 2023 | Deloitte Belgium](#)

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