

# Welcome to the Post-Industrial Age

the  
**joshbersin**  
company

# Overview

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Business leaders face a world of opportunity and change. We've come out of the pandemic with a strong economy but an unprecedented pace of disruption. Industries are merging, technology is changing business models,<sup>1</sup> and nearly every company we talk with is focused on software, services, recurring revenue, and new opportunities unleashed by AI. And as this transformation takes place, employees seem to have more power, agency, and freedom than ever.

Witness the latest unemployment numbers: U.S. unemployment is at a 54-year low,<sup>2</sup> wages are increasing by nearly 5% (yet still below inflation),<sup>3</sup> and more than 40% of posted jobs cite "hybrid work" as an option.<sup>4</sup> Whether CEOs like it or not, surveys show employees prefer a hybrid work arrangement. We're not going back to the days of "full time in office" ever again.<sup>5</sup>

Despite the challenges of employee burnout, mental health issues, and demands to keep pay up with inflation,<sup>6</sup> CEOs are focused on the productivity, retention, and sustainability of their workforce. Nearly every company we talk with is worried about a shortage of workers, skills, and leaders.

## A Secular Shortage of Talent

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We've entered an era where the scarcity of talent is one of the biggest problems companies face.

Economists would have us believe this is a temporary condition. They believe that once we get inflation under control and interest rates rise appropriately, employment will go back to "normal," and we'll find it easy to hire and locate skills again. But is this true?

Our research shows something different. The shortage of workers, obsolescence of skills, and new level of employee agency is not a temporary thing. Rather, it is a symptom of a new economic era, one we title the "Post-Industrial Age."

This new age, coming in the era of AI, is one of continuous worker shortages, a scarcity of talent, and a highly flexible, hybrid, and gig-oriented workforce. People are hired based on skills, not just credentials; we engage and develop people as investments, not as expenses. And as AI becomes more prevalent, real workforce productivity (revenue per employee, GDP per economic worker), is going up, not down. So, our companies are becoming more lean, more performative, and more agile.

Our research shows that most companies are not ready for this transition.<sup>7</sup> This paper explains these economics, gives you a historical perspective, and shows you the roadmap to succeed in the new era ahead.

## A Brief Economic History of How We Got Here

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Going back several hundred years, the global economy has gone through four major phases (see Figure 1). In the 1500s through the 1800s, we had a largely agrarian and merchant economy. People made a living through craftsmanship, mercantilism, and farming, typically employing their family or others to help.

In order to make more money, businesses grew by hiring. Farms, shippers, merchants, and other tradespeople hired employees as apprentices. As they learned the trade, their value went up, and the business grew by hiring more staff.

People lived into their 40s and 50s, so the lifecycle of a business was generational, and many of these pioneering organizations remained small. Some leaders built large teams of staff (slave owners, for example), and they resorted to hierarchical management—but their economic productivity was limited by their ability to hire and train staff. And as unskilled labor was abundant, there were always new people to hire, train, or acquire.

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1 "[The Global Workforce Intelligence \(GWI\) Project](#)," Josh Bersin/joshbersin.com, 2023.

2 "[News: Unemployment is at its Lowest Level in 54 Years](#)," Bureau of Labor Statistics, February 3, 2023.

3 "[Difference between the inflation rate and growth of wages in the United States from January 2020 to August 2023](#)," Statista, September, 2023.

4 "[Remote and hybrid jobs are making a comeback—businesses have a 'requirement to be flexible,' says expert](#)," Jennifer Liu/CNBC.com, July 17, 2023.

5 [State of the Global Workplace: 2023 Report](#), Gallup, 2023.

6 "[HR's Perception of Mental Health at Work](#)," Jeremie Brecheisen/Gallup, August 3, 2023.

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7 [The Seven Winning Strategies of Pacesetter Organizations](#), Josh Bersin, Kathi Enderes, PhD, and Stella Ioannidou/The Josh Bersin Company, 2023.

Figure 1: How We Arrived at a Post-Industrial Economy

Agrarian Age	Industrial Age	Information Age	Intelligence Age
1850s	1920s	1970s	2020s
BUSINESS MODELS			
Farms, merchants, oil companies, shipping firms	Auto companies, aircraft builders, manufacturers	Telecommunications, computer companies, media companies	Tech companies, e-commerce, Fintech, AI-based economy
Farms, merchants, craftsmen	Standard Oil, GM, Ford	IBM, Disney, AT&T	Google, Microsoft, Nvidia
TALENT MODELS			
People died in their 40s Companies lasted 100+ years	People died in their 50s Companies lasted 50+ years	People died in their 70s Companies lasted 20 to 30 years	People live into their 90s Companies last 10 to 15 years
<i>Talent is abundant Labor is replaceable</i>	<i>Talent to be trained CEO succession</i>	<i>War for skills Leadership pipeline</i>	<i>Epic shortages of skills and workers</i>
CFO		CIO	CHRO

Source: The Josh Bersin Company, 2023

In the late 1800s and into the early 1900s, we started to build machines. The steam engine, followed by electricity, motors, autos, and other machines, enabled leaders to build organizations based on industrial scale. Once a company used a machine to automate a factory or a farm, the business could grow without a linear hiring curve, so output per worker went up.

Figure 2 shows that prior to the 1800s, the overall GDP per capita (per worker) was almost flat, but suddenly, in the early 1900s, it climbed. In this first era of industrialization, the GDP per worker took approximately 60 years to triple.

This felt revolutionary at the time. Large companies like Standard Oil, Ford, General Motors, General Electric, and hundreds of others became massive businesses by automating manufacturing, distribution, refining, and other businesses. Their talent model was hierarchical, segmenting workers into two types: management and labor. Management arranged and organized the work, and labor did the work. Many of our current HR practices, like cascading goals, performance management, succession management, and leadership development, are built around this hierarchical model.

This industrial model scaled well. The more product you sold, the more machines you could buy, driving down the cost per unit and enabling the company to squeeze cost out of the supply chain. So, investors poured money into these companies and the industrial model grew dominant.

These industrial companies were hard to disrupt. Once a business reached a large size, it created barriers to entry (manufacturing efficiencies, supply chains, channel domination, organizational strength), so many became monopolies, duopolies, and conglomerates (GE, ITT, Ling-Temco-Vought, Westinghouse). Workers, seeing these organizations as lifelong career opportunities, flocked to these companies. And CEOs and HR leaders responded by creating “prehire to retire” career models to train, develop, and support people throughout their careers.<sup>8</sup>

Despite the financial success, human capital problems emerged. Labor, considered a “replaceable part” in the machine, was often mistreated. This resulted in things we still worry about today:

- Low or unfair wages
- Insufficient training

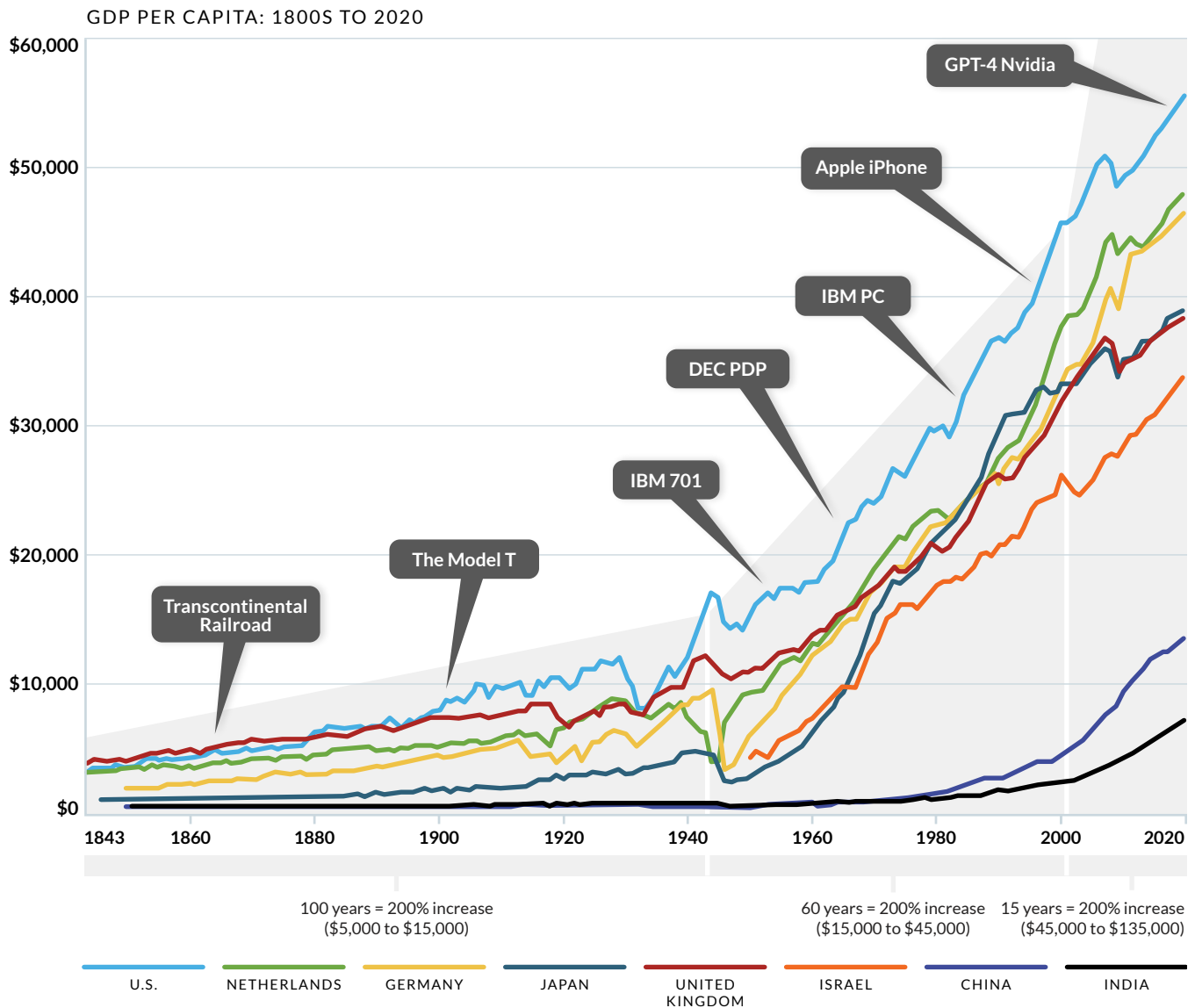
<sup>8</sup> [The Vanishing Corporation: Navigating the Hazards of a New Economy](#), Gerald F. Davis/Berrett-Koehler Publishers, May 2, 2016.

- Long hours
- Workplace accidents, overwork
- Layoffs during slowdowns

In response, labor unions, social security, and other economic support were created, all in an effort to “tame the beast” of industrial capitalism. (In 2022 only 10.1% of workers are unionized, the lowest on record.<sup>9</sup>)

And as the hierarchical talent model grew, another problem emerged. We needed a stream of “managers” to replace those who left, retired, or died. So, we institutionalized the “leadership pipeline” (not to be confused with the labor and hourly worker career), and many companies differentiated themselves on their management teams, management process, and leadership models. This gave birth to the growth of business schools, the MBA, and leaders disciplined in the rules of “scientific management.”<sup>10</sup>

Figure 2: Productivity Journey from Railroads to AI



Source: The Josh Bersin Company, 2023

9 “Union Members—2022,” BLS, January 19, 2023.

10 “Scientific management” was pioneered by Fredrick Taylor in the early 1900s and resulted in the growth of industrial engineering, organization design, and time and motion studies.

# Enter the Information Age

Suddenly, in the 1960s, information technology changed the game. Computers, information processing, and the growth of the IT department took us into a new business era. The first IBM mainframes were invented in the 1950s, and they started to automate the information side of organizations. Companies realized they could differentiate themselves through data processing and online systems, leading to a massive investment in computers, databases, online systems, and analytics. These systems gave birth to ERP (enterprise resource planning) financial systems, supply chain optimization, and later, customer relationship management, business analytics, and customer segmentation.

These new IT systems gave companies and employees more information, and many companies (ADP, IBM, and others) started to make money through their data processing. IT professionals were now in great demand, and similarly, the importance of white-collar roles like sales, marketing, customer service, and finance expanded. These professional roles, which were more specialized and value-add than industrial workers, required college degrees and more high-level skills, so they became hard to fill. And we entered the “war for talent.”<sup>11</sup>

As the demand for IT systems grew, companies could not find enough information workers, so they started to build internal universities, IT career programs, and more focus on digital and technical skills in hiring. Many large IT training institutions were born, and we lived through the transition from mainframe systems to mini-computers, PCs, and ever more ubiquitous technology. Organizations realized they had to “build skills” not just “buy skills,” so they invested in technology-based training, and later advanced headhunting tools to find and attract technical talent in the market.

## The Internet

But things never stand still, and as the internet emerged (around 1997), another disruption took place: employees could look for jobs online. Within a few years, platforms like CareerBuilder, Monster.com, and LinkedIn were born, enabling

any worker to apply for a new job in seconds. People started to get ahead by “job hopping;” i.e., moving around from one company to another. This newfound power in the hands of workers eliminated the “prehire to retire” employment model, and companies started to worry about employee engagement, benefits, and retention.

Productivity shot up (GDP per worker doubled in only 30 years), but something even more disruptive took place. Employees who changed companies took their intellectual property with them, so industrial barriers to entry fell away. If your staff spent 30 years at GE learning how to design and manufacture appliances and then just quit, moving to Westinghouse, their ideas and innovations went along with them. “Industrial scale” business models were shattered.

While scale was still important, “time to market” started to take over. Now companies had to differentiate themselves on product innovation, speed, customer intimacy, and intelligent supply chain/global distribution. Your good idea could be swiftly copied by a competitor, so you had to build a company that leveraged information and scale in an innovative and agile way. Ideas like the Agile Manifesto, small teams, skunk works<sup>12</sup>, “acquihires<sup>13</sup>,” and other new management innovations took hold.

What happened to the old industrial management practices? Well, they kind of didn’t work. Rather than set up highly structured cascading goal systems we started to look at OKRs (objectives and key results), agile career models, growth mindsets, capability academies, reverse mentoring, and many other HR innovations. Human resources became the home of discussions about culture, engagement, inclusion, and innovation: not just a place to find candidates and slot people into jobs.

We also entered an era where people were living longer, so their careers spanned multiple companies or product lifecycles. Traditional prehire to retire talent management started to fall away and gig work, contract work, and even alumni hiring started to take hold. And of course, we needed even more ways to keep people engaged, trained, and aligned with our changing

11 McKinsey is credited with coining the term “[war for talent](#)” in 1997.

12 “Skunk works” or “skunkworks” are fairly common terms in the business world, describing a group within an organization given a high degree of autonomy and not hindered by bureaucracy.

13 “Acqui-hiring” or “acq-hiring” describes the process of acquiring a company primarily for employee recruitment, rather than to gain control of any products or services.

mission. This is when we started talking about hybrid work, pay equity, and now the four-day workweek.

In many ways the pandemic accelerated this trend. Driven by the need to work from home and isolate ourselves from others, the era from 2019 to 2023 has marked a rapid acceleration in collaborative technologies, remote work, gig and contract employment (more than one-third of U.S. workers) and the redefinition of companies as global networks of connected people.

## Today: The Post-Industrial Age

*And all that leads us to where we are today.*

Today, we enter a fourth era we call the “intelligence economy,” a time when skills, employee creativity, information, and AI define our companies. While AI is still new, our research shows every industry is redefining itself in a new way. Tech companies have moved to cloud services. Auto manufacturers are becoming software and data companies. Oil companies

are moving to solar, batteries, and other new energy sources. Pharma companies are reinventing themselves around biotech. And retailers are delivering healthcare (see Figure 3).

As these industries converge and business models shift to intellectual property, services, and a new family of science, we face a new and different issue: *a global shortage of workers*.

For many reasons, our family lives have changed. Young people, who expect to live into their 100s, are postponing marriage. Family formation has slowed, marriage rates are falling, and the birth rate has plummeted (see Figure 4 on the next page). In fact, every major developed country is expected to see a decline in the working population over the next 20 years, and countries like Japan, China, the U.K., and Germany are already experiencing long term GDP stagnation.

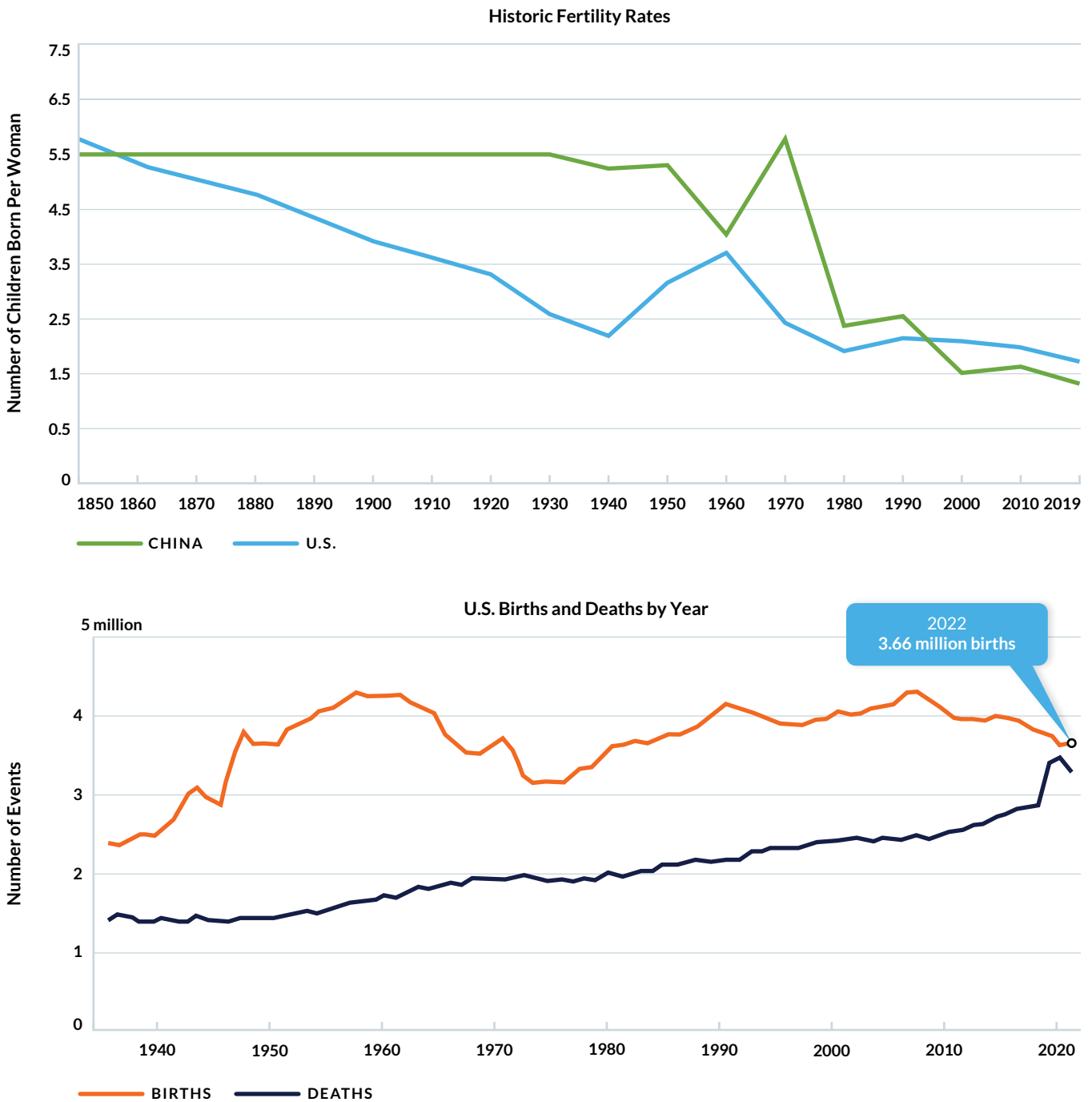
This shortage of workers means economic growth will be limited by productivity growth, which forces us to grow our businesses with fewer people. Those who are available will be older, more mobile, and more demanding.

Figure 3: Transformation to Reinvention per Industry

Retail	Healthcare	Banking	Telco	Media	Autos	Energy
Stores Logistics Food Service Deli Pharmacy Promotions Membership	Care Nursing Physician Facilities Emergency Research Insurance	Branches Products Sales Mortgage Risk Analytics Service	Infrastructure Network Management Service Technology Call Center Design	Talent Creators Production Movies Social media Subscription Publishing	Design Manufacture Source Supply chain Engineering Service Dealers Safety	Sourcing Exploration Production Refining Distribution Environment Safety Research
Last mile distribution	Informatics	FinTech	Media	Social platforms	EVs	Batteries, hydrogen
Pharmacy healthcare	Telemedicine	Crypto	Publishing	Creator economy	Software engineering	Solar, electric
Financial services	IT cybersecurity	Insurance	5G	Metaverse	Semiconductors	Energy systems
Omni channel	Business operations	Product management	Consulting	Distribution	Data services	Mining

Source: The Josh Bersin Company, 2023

Figure 4: Worker Shortages Will Get Worse



Source: UN Population Division, World Bank, 2022, and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2022

This new world, defined by talent scarcity, has forced the unemployment rate to a 54-year low. And despite the economic principle that unemployment is inversely correlated

with interest rates, inflation and high interest rates have not created slack in the labor market.

## What Should Leaders Do?

While executives are aware of these issues, many leaders still operate in the industrial mindset. They push for productivity and innovation, but they're not sure how to get there. And they still believe that hiring is the most important way to grow.

New research shows that leaders are out of sync with workers. A large study conducted in late 2022 found that 87% of employees believe they are highly productive, yet only 12% of leaders agree.<sup>14</sup> This tells us that leaders still do not understand the issue, often believing that “replacing the underperformers” will help.

After studying these issues for several years, we see three strategies for success:

### 1. Rethink the Organization: Dynamic vs. Static

The first and most important issue organizations must face is the need to change their internal operating model. Rather than relying on a jobs-centric hierarchy, companies have to shift to what we call “the dynamic organization.”

The industrial model of business, designed around scale, was organized into functional silos. New products and services were often isolated in the R&D organization, skunk works, or a product design team. We separated “execution” from “innovation.” That no longer works.

Dynamic organizations, those thriving in this new age, innovate everywhere, all the time. They empower people to suggest new ideas, work on multiple projects, and transform on a continuous basis. Product managers live and operate in tandem with sales, manufacturing, and marketing groups. Line staff come up with new ideas and innovate locally. And we

move the protected “R&D” groups closer to customers, line employees, and front-office issues.

How do we implement this? Dynamic organizations break down barriers and move people around from team to team and project to project based on skills, ambitions, and business needs. They build culture, reward systems, training, and management support for growth and new ideas. And their talent model is defined around empowerment, internal mobility, and personal development.

Our new research<sup>15</sup> shows a wide range of new programs and strategies:

- Work-centric organization design, with project leaders who are not necessarily functional owners, and job architectures that are flatter and less functional in nature
- Project transparency, team-to-team transparency, and sharing of ideas, innovations, and inventions
- High levels of inclusion and diversity, enabling leaders to operate in a “skills meritocracy,” rather than hiring the “most-liked,” most educated, or politically popular individual
- Talent mobility among leaders and staff, enabling individuals to try new things, move around the company, and develop “full stack” skills through experience
- Continuous investment in skills development, training, and professional development at all levels of the company

While the hierarchy worked well for scale and management control, dynamic organizations use these organizational innovations to innovate and change in a continuous way, building what we call “change agility” as opposed to “change management.”

(Read our new research *The Definitive Guide to Building a Dynamic Organization* and Josh Bersin's book *Irresistible: The Seven Secrets of the World's Most Enduring, Employee-Focused Organizations*<sup>16</sup> for more details.)

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14 [“Microsoft unveils new Work Trend Index research and technology that helps reconnecting leaders and employees,”](#) CEE Multi-Country News Center/Microsoft, September 28, 2022.

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

16 *Irresistible: The Seven Secrets of the World's Most Enduring, Employee-Focused Organizations*, Josh Bersin/IdeaPress, 2022.



## 2. Rethink Management with Human-Centered Leadership

The second key is leadership. Rather than focusing on “execution first” management tools and traditional leadership models, post-industrial leaders practice what we call “human-centered leadership.” In the Industrial Age, we relied on management science, directed leadership, and top-down execution to thrive. In this new era, we need leaders who understand the people issues in their organizations, creating execution through inspiration, mission, purpose, collaboration, learning, and of course accountability.

These leaders understand the Post-Industrial world has changed business models. Instead of people being a “means of production,” people “are the product.” Whether you are developing software, delivering healthcare, or producing food or drugs for sale, the entire customer experience is dependent on people. Every company, in a sense, is now in the people business.

This forces management to think about every business challenge as a people problem. If you cannot attract, retain, and organize people for success, they will simply leave. Our Irresistible Leadership research shows that the old model of leadership has inverted.<sup>17</sup> In the Industrial Age, we focused on execution first, people second. Now we must understand that only through the people strategies can our execution possibly occur.

Think about how companies like Amazon have disrupted retail, e-commerce, and healthcare. Amazon’s “two-pizza rule”<sup>18</sup> and accountability model, for example, lets the company move people around, reskill and redeploy people quickly, yet still hold them accountable to productivity measures.

Other pacesetter companies have reinvented their leadership to create employee energy, growth, and continuous improvement through human-centered leadership:

- Mastercard in the payments industry
- Microsoft in the IT industry

- Providence, NewYork Presbyterian, and Cleveland Clinic in the healthcare industry
- Mars and Colgate in the consumer goods industry
- MetLife and Liberty Mutual in the insurance industry
- Fidelity and Bank of America in the banking industry.

(Read our upcoming *The Definitive Guide to Leadership Development: Irresistible Leadership*<sup>19</sup> research for more details.)

## 3. Rethink HR: The Systemic Model

The third mandate is to build a new operating model for HR.

In the Post-Industrial age HR doesn’t just “hire and train” people—it operates as a consulting and product organization, bringing innovative programs and platforms to help the company and people adapt. HR professionals are cross-trained, work together, and are highly skilled. We call this “systemic HR,” and it represents a major shift away from “service-delivery” HR models focused on cost reduction.

In the Industrial Age, we could grow a company through hiring. Managers were trained that “if we just hire more salespeople, we’ll sell more stuff” or “if we grow the size of engineering, we’ll develop more and better products.”

In the Post-Industrial Economy, that equation no longer works. If each new hire does not improve productivity, we steadily erode our margins. As tech companies have learned in 2023, we often over hire during good times and then quickly let people go during downturns. This creates a loss of internal expertise, damage to employment brand, and a general malaise among workers who remain. We need to run our companies as irresistible organizations<sup>20</sup>, designing HR programs to help every person do more, grow, and maintain their level of energy and commitment.

HR itself is no longer an expense center, but rather a function like R&D that must build and invest. Since employees are no longer considered “replaceable parts,” we need novel, new ideas to build skills, create alignment, motivate performance, and maintain fairness and inclusion. This means HR is now, in a

<sup>17</sup> *The Definitive Guide to Leadership Development: Irresistible Leadership*, Josh Bersin and Janet Mertens/The Josh Bersin Company, 2023.

<sup>18</sup> “How Jeff Bezos Used the 2-Pizza Rule to Put an End to Useless Meetings at Amazon,” Nick Sonnenberg/Inc, October 26, 2022.

<sup>19</sup> *The Definitive Guide to Leadership Development: Irresistible Leadership*, Josh Bersin and Janet Mertens/The Josh Bersin Company, 2023.

<sup>20</sup> *Irresistible: The Seven Secrets of the World’s Most Enduring, Employee-Focused Organizations*, Josh Bersin/IdeaPress, 2022.

sense, a design and delivery function, building “products” and offerings that help the company and its employees grow.

Traditionally, HR was not designed in this way. We held recruiting teams in one department, training teams in another. Employee experience programs were coming out of compensation or analytics and job design in the business. Our newest innovation, the Four R Framework (see Figure 5), shows how systemic HR can transform how a company grows.

Imagine a business that’s growing in one area and shrinking in another. Rather than hire in one group and lay off in the other, we should be looking at the Four Rs in concert, making decisions internally about whom to move, whom to retrain, and how to redesign work to make the underperforming operation grow and the growing organization scale.

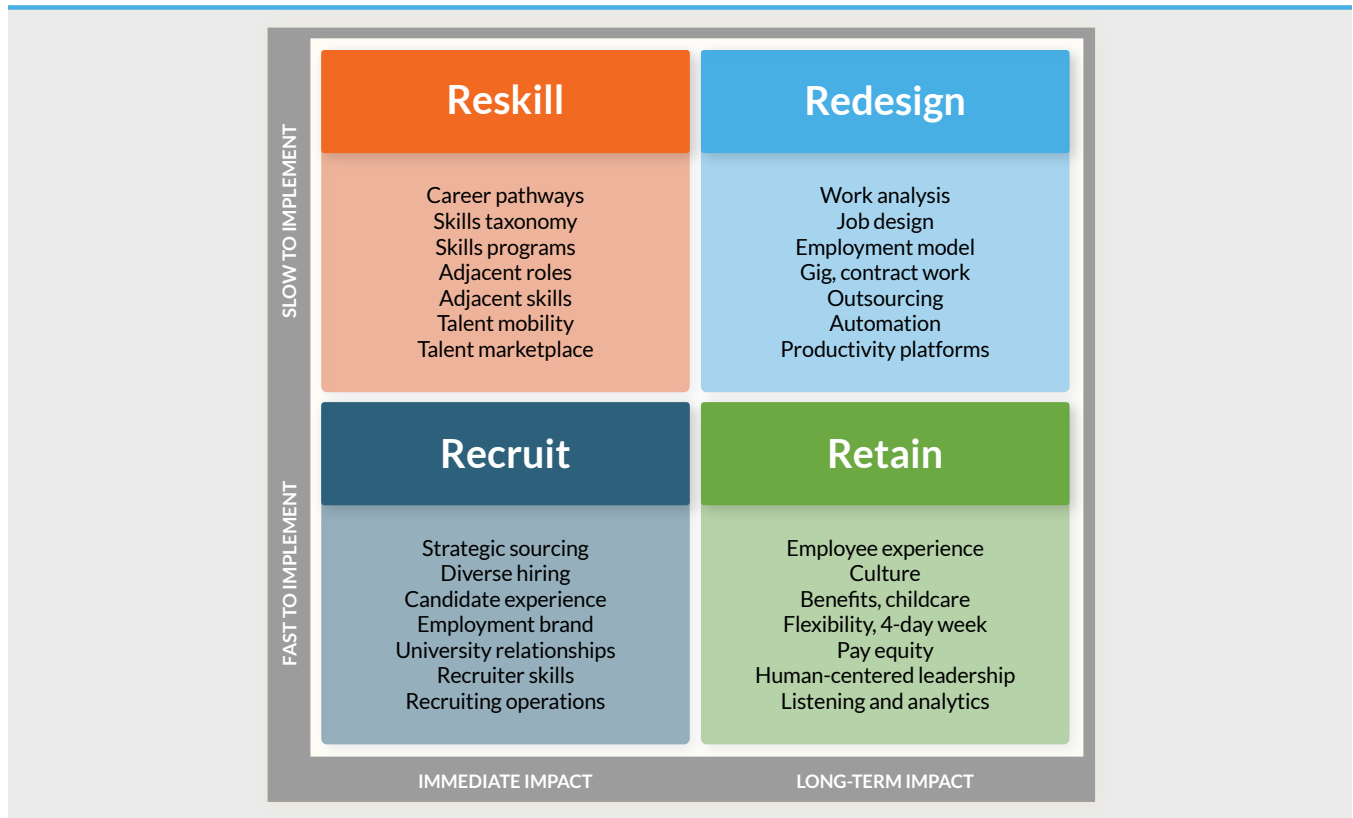
(Read our upcoming report *The Definitive Guide to Human Resources: The Journey to Systemic HR*<sup>21</sup>, for more details.)

## Shifting to a New Model for Work

As these concepts evolve, a new idea is taking hold—the idea that “jobs” as currently defined, are getting in the way. Rather than design a company around jobs and functional areas, we organize the company around people and skills, optimizing output through projects, initiatives, and services.

Consider Figure 6 on the next page. In the Industrial Age, the job description, level, title, and competencies were fixed, designed by a specialist, and expected to outlast the worker.

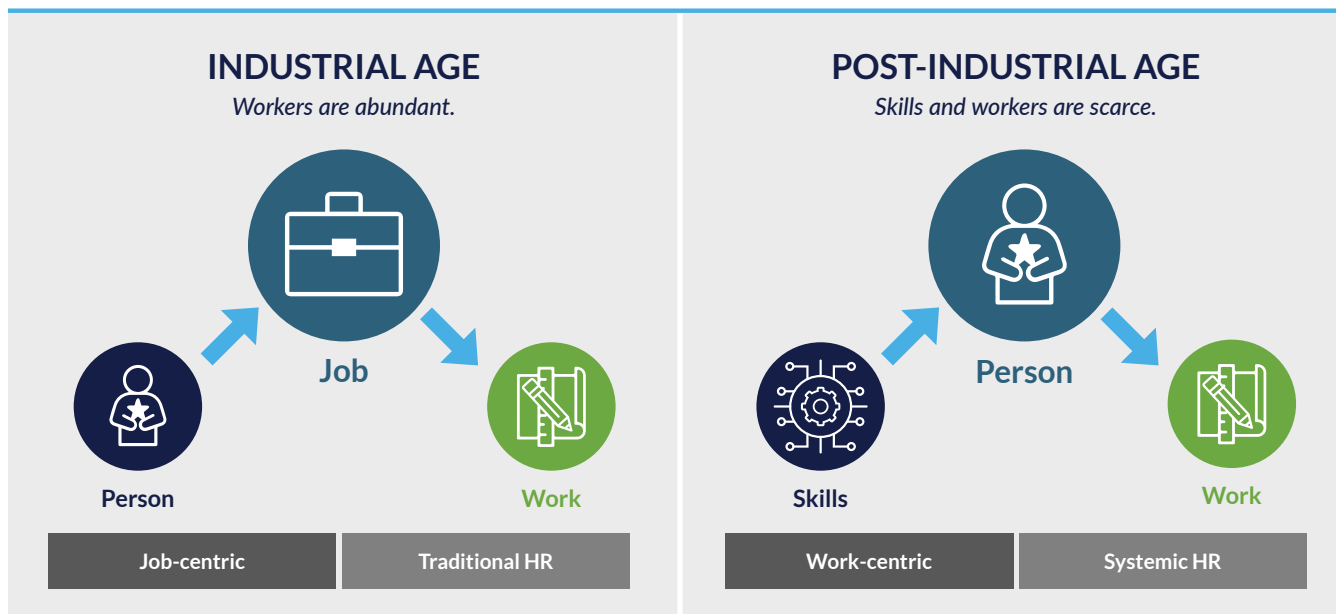
Figure 5: A Systemic Model for HR—The Four R Framework



Source: *The Josh Bersin Company, 2023*

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

Figure 6: The Big Shift



Source: The Josh Bersin Company, 2023

Today, we need to redesign our companies around the person, and let people work on teams, collaborate, and develop skills in support of a project, team, and other necessary work.

Healthcare companies are good examples of organizations advancing through this shift. Dealing with a massive shortage of nurses and clinical professionals, these organizations are automating administrative work, using AI to schedule shifts and direct nursing workflows, enabling lower-skilled workers to unburden nurses, and giving patients more personal advice through software. The doctor, nurse, or diagnostician is now a specialist, expected to work at the “top of their license<sup>22</sup>.” Top healthcare providers have found that 40% to 50% of their productivity growth comes from automation and job redesign and only 10% to 15% from hiring.<sup>23</sup>

Innovations like team-centric work, agile work practices, talent marketplaces, and separation of roles between “work manager” and “career manager” are part of this shift. For HR, all of this is a new world, with lots of new tools, processes, and reward systems to build.

22 “Challenging Paradigms: Practicing at the Top of Your License,” Dr. Alan Spiro, MD/HealthManagement, 2017.

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

## Where Does AI Fit?

AI will play a major role in this transformation, bringing together information and giving people faster insights.

Consider the GDP per worker data. AI is expected to triple economic productivity within 10 years, giving companies the opportunity to grow despite a shortage of labor. And while the AI market is still young, companies are already starting to see its ability to drive scale without hiring people at a linear rate.

The key is not just using AI, but redesigning our companies, our products, and our services around it. This has many requirements:

- A hard look at organization design
- Training people for new roles
- Moving them around in the organization
- A new leadership model
- New, systemic HR practices
- Continuously rethinking how work gets done

These HR and management practices will be essential as AI continues to pick up speed.<sup>24</sup>

24 *Understanding AI in HR-A Deep Dive*, Josh Bersin/The Josh Bersin Company, 2023.

## We Must Accelerate the Journey

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The time to act is now: the era of talent shortages, industry convergence, and worker agency has arrived.

Consider these three issues:

First, is your organization dynamic? Are you able to adapt, reorganize, and mobilize at speed?

Second, is your leadership ready? Do they understand the people issues and are they willing to lead with a human-centered approach?

Third, is your HR organization taking the lead? Are they able to help you enable, train, and facilitate your move into the future?

We know these issues are complex, and every company moves at its own pace. We hope this research helps you understand the urgency of these issues, and we look forward to helping you along the way.

**A new idea is taking hold—the idea that “jobs” as currently defined, are getting in the way.**

# Appendix

## Management Shifts in the Post-Industrial Age

As companies transform faster than ever, management and leadership must come to grips with these new economic forces (see Figure 7).

Figure 7: Industrial vs. Post-Industrial Practices

Industrial Age Practices	Post-Industrial Age Practices
Hire more people to grow.	Grow productivity to grow the business.
Invest in technology to automate and streamline.	Invest in technology to improve skills, productivity, and employee experience.
Practice transformation as an episodic event every few years or more.	Build change agility into the company for continuous experimentation and transformation.
Deliver training and development to high-potentials and management leaders.	Deliver training and development to every employee and in the flow of work.
Create skills models that define our industry and how it works.	Create dynamic skills models that define how our people work and always accommodate new tools and technologies.
Focus on jobs and job architectures, levels, and hierarchy for control and efficiency.	Design the company around work, teams, projects, and the skills and abilities of individuals.
Keep people in place to drive tenure, depth of experience, and loyalty.	Let people move around to develop new skills, take advantage of new opportunities, and build organizational resilience.
Hold the cost of labor fixed, and continuously look at HR and people costs as expenses to be minimized.	Look at labor costs, training, and HR as investments, and strive to increase quality and productivity at orders of magnitude through people programs.
Promote people through linear careers up a job ladder and into leadership.	Promote career pathways in many directions, accommodating gig work, hybrid work, and contract work.
Leaders focus on execution first, people second.	Leaders focus on people first, execution second.
Leaders are highly skilled on the business, industry, financials, and their functional domain.	Leaders are skilled on culture, growth, development, change, rewards, and empathy.
Consider HR a cost function that must deliver excellent service at the lowest total spending.	Consider HR a consulting, advisory, and product organization that continuously delivers value through coaching, design, employee experience, and scalable programs.
HR keeps recruiting, training, and productivity projects in different service centers.	HR brings the Four Rs together and lets every hiring manager consider all four elements at once.
Position HR people as specialists, lower-level roles with specialized skills, supporting leaders.	HR professionals are “full stack” professionals with a wide range of skills and change-enabling capabilities.

Source: *The Josh Bersin Company, 2023*

## About the Author



### Josh Bersin

Josh founded Bersin & Associates in 2001 to provide research and advisory services focused on corporate learning. He expanded the company's coverage to encompass HR, talent management, talent acquisition, and leadership and became a recognized expert in the talent market. Josh sold the company to Deloitte in 2012 and was a partner in Bersin by Deloitte up until 2018.

In 2019, Josh founded the Josh Bersin Academy, a professional development academy that has become the “home for HR.” In 2020, he put together a team of analysts and advisors who are now working with him to support and guide HR organizations from around the world under the umbrella of The Josh Bersin Company. He is frequently featured in publications such as *Forbes*, *Harvard Business Review*, *HR Executive*, *The Wall Street Journal*, and *CLO Magazine*. He is a popular blogger and has more than 800,000 followers on LinkedIn.

## The Josh Bersin Company Membership

The Josh Bersin Company provides a wide range of research and advisory services to help HR leaders and professionals tackle the ever-evolving challenges and needs of today's workforce. We cover all topics in HR, talent, and L&D. The Josh Bersin Academy—built on our research and powered by Nomadic Learning—helps HR practitioners grow key foundational skills. Our corporate membership program provides HR teams and senior leaders with the skills, strategies, and insights to build cutting-edge HR and people strategies through a combination of research, assessments, professional development, exclusive events, and community. In 2022, The Josh Bersin Company introduced the Global Workforce Intelligence (GWI) Project to guide market-leading businesses and their leaders through the challenges of industry convergence while remaining future-focused.

For more details, contact us at [info@bersinpartners.com](mailto:info@bersinpartners.com).