

THE CAPABILITY ADVANTAGE:

Redesign To Reskill
For Competitive Edge



Published by



In partnership with



PREFACE

The Institute for Human Resource Professionals (IHRP), in partnership with Singapore Polytechnic (SP), commissioned the fourth edition of the Job Skills Insight (JSI) series to examine how organisations across Singapore are responding to the structural transformation of work. This study, undertaken in January to May 2026, builds on the three preceding editions of the SkillsFuture Singapore JSI series by IHRP. The report is released to commemorate two significant milestones: IHRP's 10th anniversary and Singapore Polytechnic School of Business's 40th anniversary (SB40 × IHRP10), together representing four decades of national commitment to workforce and skills development. In reference to the report, Skills and Workforce Development Agency (SWDA) is a new statutory board formed through the merger of SkillsFuture Singapore (SSG) and Workforce Singapore (WSG), under the Ministry of Manpower (MOM) since 1 July 2026.

The study addresses a question of growing concern to business and human resource leaders alike:

Why, despite sustained investment in learning and development, do organisational capability gaps continue to persist?



Through a national survey of **335 respondents** spanning human resource professionals, business leaders and members of the workforce across more than 40 industry sectors, the research examines the structural conditions under which skills investment translates — or fails to translate — into organisational capability and competitive advantage.

The findings presented in this report are anchored on the survey evidence and are supplemented by three case studies of Singapore organisations that have navigated this transformation in practice. The cases are drawn from the IHRP Workforce Agility Playbook and the Singapore Polytechnic Business Innovation Centre. Together, the survey and the case evidence support a single proposition that runs through the report: the next phase of workforce competitiveness will be defined by the deliberate redesign of work itself, paired with reskilling and upskilling, and led by business leadership with human resources repositioned as the system architect.

The report is intended for chief executives, business leaders, HR practitioners, Tripartite partners and policymakers responsible for workforce strategy. It is organised across seven substantive sections and a supporting appendix, designed to be read as a whole or referenced section by section as the practical priorities of each audience may require.

This report is published by IHRP under the Skills Development Partner Programme supported by Skills and Workforce Development Agency.

Report at a Glance

Survey base

335 valid responses

Sectors represented

More than 40 industries

Respondent groups

HR Professionals (n=157)
Early Career (n=79)
Mid/Late Career (n=61)
Business Leaders (n=38)

Organisation types

MNCs, LLEs, SMEs,
Public Sector, Non-Profit,
Micro Enterprises

Publication date

July 2026

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How to Read

Each substantive section presents the relevant survey evidence, situates the finding within the broader landscape of workforce transformation, and concludes with practical implications for the three audiences served by this report: business leaders, human resource practitioners, and the workforce.

Items in this report are measured on five-point Likert scales (1 = Strong Disagree or Not Important; 5 = Strong Agree or Highly Important). All Likert findings are reported as mean scores out of five. Where Top-2-Box (T2B) agreement percentages are provided, they represent the combined share of Agree and Strongly Agree responses, or equivalent on the importance scale.

The references to percentage-point (pp) gaps are therefore derived from Top-2-Box (T2B) percentages or endorsement versus implementation rates, whereas the mean-point (mp) gap refers to differences in mean scores, and is not intended to be compared directly against percentage measures.

You may download the latest e-report to unlock the actionable resources, featuring direct links to essential industry tools and exclusive services.

FOREWORD

Across industries, organisations are investing heavily in skills development to prepare their workforces for a future shaped by technological disruption, demographic shifts and changing business models. Yet the impact of skills is more strongly realized only when they translate into better decisions, stronger performance and meaningful outcomes at work.

This year's Job-Skills Insights report explores a question that is becoming increasingly important for organisations: how do we move beyond developing skills to enabling capability?

At the Institute for Human Resource Professionals (IHRP), we see competence and capability as more than the demonstration of knowledge. Capability is demonstrated when individuals can apply what they have learned effectively in real work environments. As organisations seek to redesign work and build future-ready workforces, assessments and certification can play an important role in providing confidence that skills have not only been acquired, but can be applied effectively in practice. A structured assessment approach provides organisations and individuals with a clearer understanding of existing strengths, capability gaps and readiness for transformed roles, while helping to ensure that investments in upskilling translate into workplace application.

The report also reflects the shared commitment between IHRP and Singapore Polytechnic (SP) to strengthen workforce and organisational capability. By combining SP's expertise in applied learning with IHRP's focus on defining professional standards and uplifting HR capability development, the partnership brings together complementary perspectives on how organisations can prepare for a rapidly changing world of work.

Ultimately, workforce transformation is not simply about acquiring new skills. It is about creating the conditions that allow those skills to be applied, recognised and continuously developed.

Organisations that can successfully align work, skills and capability will be better positioned to strengthen productivity, enhance workforce agility and sustain competitive advantage in an increasingly complex environment.



Ms Karina Kuok

Director, Assessments & Insights
Institute for Human Resource Professionals (IHRP)

FOREWORD

As Singapore navigates rapid technological, economic and workforce change, this report contributes to an important national conversation affecting workers, organisations and the future competitiveness of our economy. Its findings remind us that workforce transformation must be addressed structurally. Skills development remains essential, but skills create value only when workers can apply them through redesigned roles and workflows, supportive managers and clear progression pathways.

At Singapore Polytechnic (SP), we see this as central to our shared social compact on work, employability and lifelong learning. Individuals have a responsibility to continue learning, adapting and staying relevant, and the report suggests that many are already doing so. However, this responsibility cannot rest on individuals alone. Organisations must also design systems around jobs, structures, practices and opportunities so that newly acquired capabilities translate into productive, higher-value work.

The impact of AI, automation and new business models must therefore be understood with care. The issue is not only whether jobs will be displaced or tasks automated, but whether organisations can redesign work to preserve human value and create roles that draw on judgement, creativity, collaboration and problem-solving. When job redesign and reskilling move together, workers remain valued, organisations strengthen productivity and resilience, and Singapore is better positioned to compete through higher-valued capability.

In such context, the partnership between the Institute for Human Resource Professionals (IHRP) and SP is especially meaningful. IHRP provides clear frameworks, insights and guidance to help organisations understand and respond to workforce shifts. SP complements this by working alongside enterprises to translate insights into practice through customised training, workshops, coaching, workplace projects and on-the-job capability building.

I hope this report encourages business leaders and HR professionals to view workforce transformation as both an economic imperative and a collective responsibility.

Together, we can ensure that Singapore's workforce uplift is matched by stronger alignment between skills, jobs and organisational needs — enabling workers to contribute meaningfully, and organisations to unlock productivity and build sustainable competitive advantage.



Mr Lucas Immanuel Tok

Deputy Senior Director
Business & The Creatives Cluster
Singapore Polytechnic



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

THE SKILLS APPLICATION GAP

Organisations across Singapore have spent more than a decade investing in workforce learning and development. The programmes are in place, the platforms are mature, and the strategic intent is rarely in question. And yet, capability gaps continue to persist. Work has continued to change faster than the structures within which it is performed, and the skills built through training too often fail to find their way into the roles, workflows and pathways where they would generate organisational value.

The survey evidence presented in this report — drawn from 335 respondents including human resource professionals, business leaders and workforce members spanning more than 40 sectors — points to a single, unifying diagnosis.

The persistent capability gap in Singapore organisations is not primarily a skills deficit, but an application deficit.

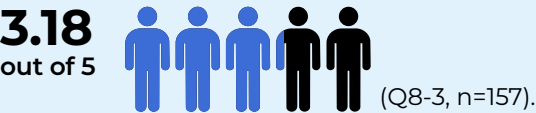
Organisations are building capability faster than they are redesigning the work in which that capability would be deployed. The result is what this report terms **capability debt**: the accumulating cost of work changing faster than the systems that organise it.

This central diagnosis is supported by three principal findings that warrant disproportionate leadership attention. Each is grounded in directly comparable survey evidence and carries actionable implications for governance, investment and execution. Table 1 summarises the findings, supporting evidence, and the strategic implication of each.

Table 1
Principal Findings of the Capability Advantage Survey

 PRINCIPAL FINDING 1
Manager enablement is the weakest link in workforce transformation execution.

Among HR professionals, the statement "Managers are able to support skills-based development" receives the lowest score of all six delivery items at



► **Strategic Implication**
Strategy stalls at the operating layer. When managers are not equipped to convert learning into applied capability, upstream investment in skills and systems consistently underperforms.

 PRINCIPAL FINDING 2
A material perception gap separates the strategic and operating views of organisational capability

Business leaders rate organisational delivery between



than HR professionals on each of six items tested (Q8). The average gap is 0.44 points on a five-point scale.

► **Strategic Implication**
Transformation strategy is being calibrated against an overstated baseline. Closing the perception gap is a matter of governance, not a communications exercise.

 PRINCIPAL FINDING 3
The endorsement of transformation has run materially ahead of its execution

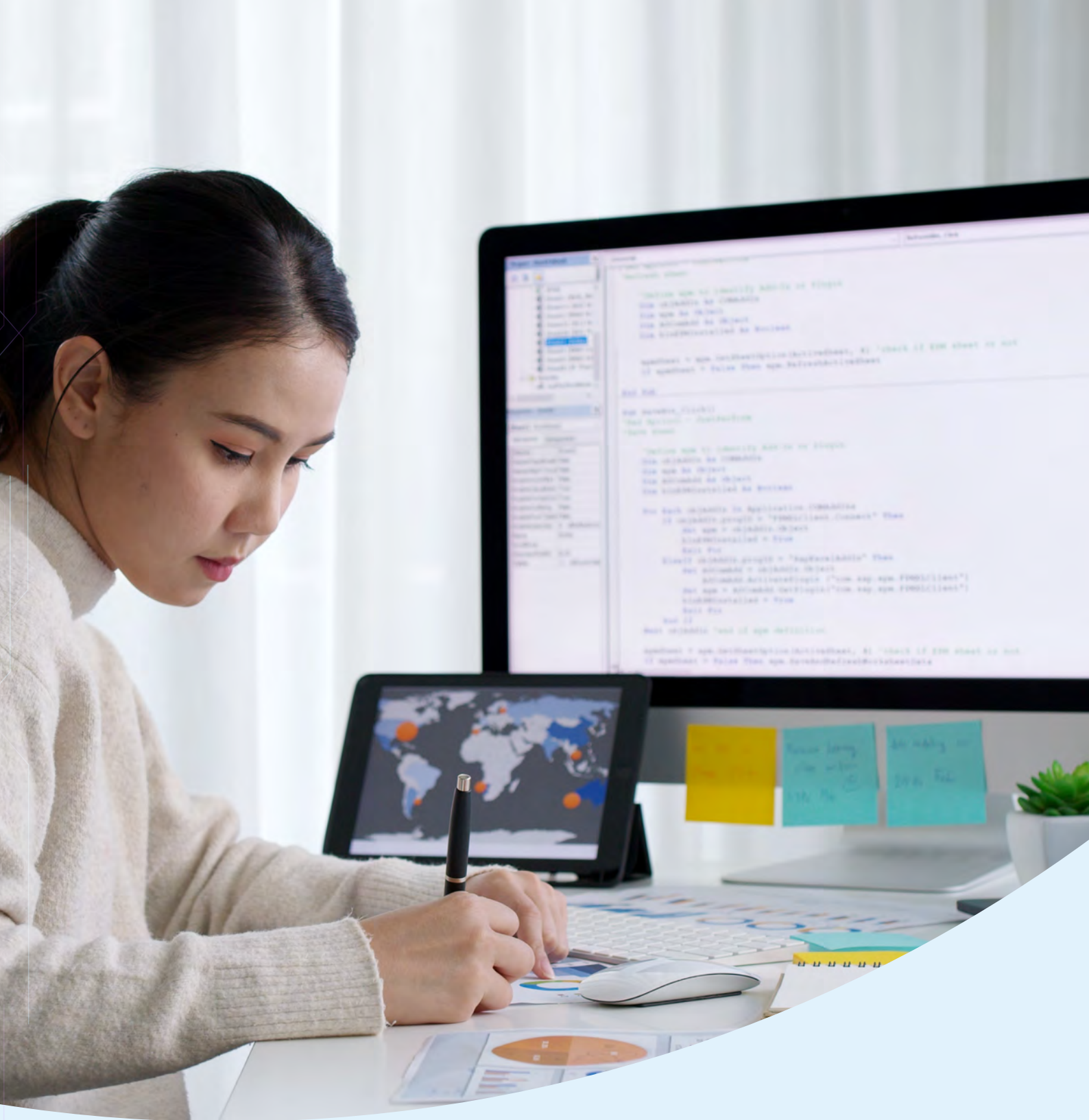


92.1% of business leaders endorse business-led redesign in principle (Q10-2, mean 4.39, the highest item in the survey),

yet only **56.8%** of business leaders agree that workforce transformation is being effectively implemented in their organisation today (Q10-5, mean 3.55).

A 35.3 percentage-point gap separates intent from implementation.

► **Strategic Implication**
The strategic direction is set; the accountability infrastructure is not. Endorsement without governance produces capability debt.



The implication for chief executives, boards and senior HR leadership is direct.

The next phase of workforce competitiveness will not be won by another training programme. It will be won by the deliberate redesign of work itself, paired with reskilling, and led by business leadership with human resources repositioned as the system architect of capability.



THE DISRUPTED LANDSCAPE

A RECOGNISED SHIFT WITHOUT A STRUCTURAL RESPONSE

The disruption story underpinning this report is not speculative. It is already evident in how respondents across Singapore describe the work environment they operate in today. Across the full sample of 335 respondents, agreement on the direction of change is high and remarkably consistent across cohorts.

83%

agree that data-driven decision-making is now a mainstream expectation at work.

82%

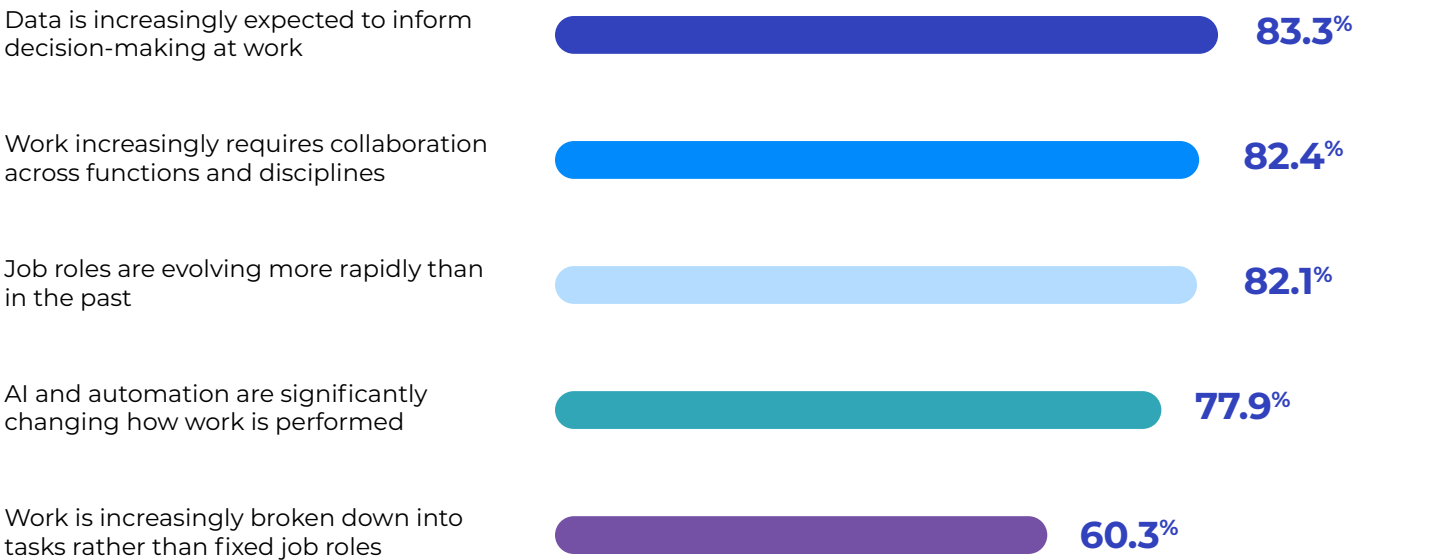
say cross-functional collaboration increasingly defines how work gets done, and the same proportion confirms that job roles are evolving faster than before.

Awareness of disruption is no longer the issue, but whether organisations are responding to that disruption structurally.

The Disruption Signals Are Now Unambiguous

Five statements on the future of work were tested with all respondents. The pattern of agreement, summarised in Table 2, underscores that the disruption is broadly recognised across the workforce, with the strongest agreement describing the most immediate and tangible changes to how work is done. Table 2 shows the extent to which respondents recognise key disruptions shaping the future of work.

Table 2
Workforce Recognition of Disruption (Q3)



Source: Capability Advantage Survey 2026, Q3, N=335.

The figure that warrants the closest attention is the lowest of the five, where only 60.3% of respondents agree that work is being broken down and redesigned at the task level — a full 23 percentage points below the leading recognition score. The implication is significant. That lag in recognition is where capability debt begins to accumulate. The work is changing, but the underlying architecture of roles, workflows and accountability has not yet been reorganised to reflect it.

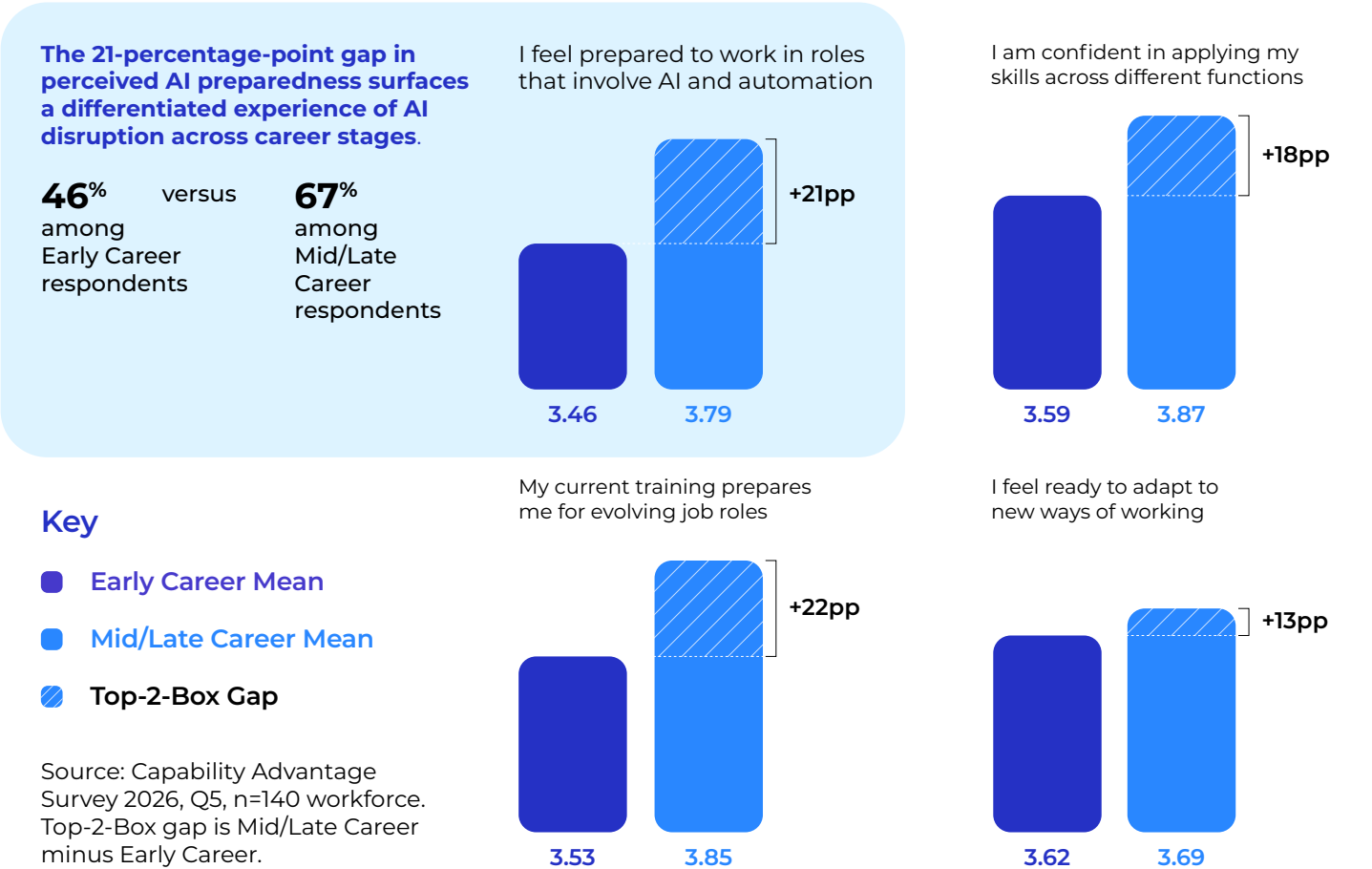
This pattern of high recognition of change, coupled with a lagging structural response, recurs throughout the survey. Recognition of change is high; the structural response is lagging. The sections that follow examine why the lag is most consequential, where it is most consequent, and what is required of business leaders, HR practitioners and the workforce to close the gap.



Workforce Readiness Lags Workforce Recognition

A second pattern emerges when the workforce's recognition of disruption vis-à-vis the workforce's confidence in navigating it as shown in Table 3. Workforce respondents (n=140, comprising 79 Early Career and 61 Mid/Late Career) report materially lower readiness scores than the recognition data alone in Table 2 would suggest. The gap is particularly pronounced for early-career professionals.

Table 3
Workforce Readiness for the Future of Work by Career Stage (Q5)



Early Career respondents, who are still establishing their professional foothold, appear more exposed to the pace of change and less certain about how their evolving roles will absorb AI and automation. While Mid/Late Career respondents report higher confidence, this may reflect established job scopes, accumulated experience or clearer role identity.

For organisations, the implication is that AI transitions need to be designed for career-stage differences, not delivered as a uniform intervention.

"Singapore must be prepared that AI's impact on jobs will be greater as its adoption gains pace and scale."

— Dr. Tan See Leng, Singapore Manpower Minister, as reported by [CNA](#) (May 6, 2026)

How The Workforce Describes the Future of Work

Respondents were also asked to select the descriptors that best characterise the future of work as they expect to experience it (Q15). The pattern of responses reinforces the structural gaps.



58.5%

AI-augmented



39.7%

Data-driven



39.1%

Fast-changing



27.8%

Cross-Functional

The technology theme is dominant, but so is the work-system theme: respondents describe a future characterised not only by intelligent tools but also by faster decision cycles, integrated workflows and shared accountabilities. **The disruption, in their own words, is a work-system story as much as a technology story.**

The Structural Reframe

Taken together, the data in this section establishes the core proposition of the report.



Disruption is not solely technological — it is organisational and structural.



Jobs are no longer stable containers of work; skills decay faster than hiring cycles can replenish.



Workforce planning anchored on roles and headcount has become misaligned with how value is created.

The operating system of work has changed, but the operating system of human resources and management has not yet caught up.

The remaining sections of this report examine where the structural response is most overdue, where the highest-leverage interventions sit, and what business leaders, HR practitioners and the workforce can do — individually and collectively — to close the gap before capability debt compounds further.

Skills-First Working Papers — IAL Centre for Skills-First Practices (CSFP)

A strategic partner of IHRP, the Institute for Adult Learning's Centre for Skills-First Practices (CSFP) publishes a series of working papers examining how skills-first approaches translate into organisational practice. These papers provide research evidence underpinning the JR-REVAMP framework and the redesign-to-reskill methodology. More information on the publications can also be found on IHRP's [Career Health](#) page

Access the series:

<https://www.ial.edu.sg/resources/publications/skills-first-publications/skills-first-papers/>



THE SKILLS MISMATCH REALITY

WHERE INVESTMENTS FAILS TO REACH PERFORMANCE

Singapore organisations are not ignorant of the importance of skills-based practices. Awareness of future competitiveness has channelled the ambition to skill, resulting in investments from both the Government and organisations. What organisations have is an application problem where skills are being built but failing to find their way into the roles, workflows and pathways where they would create value. The cause, the evidence indicates, is structural rather than motivational.

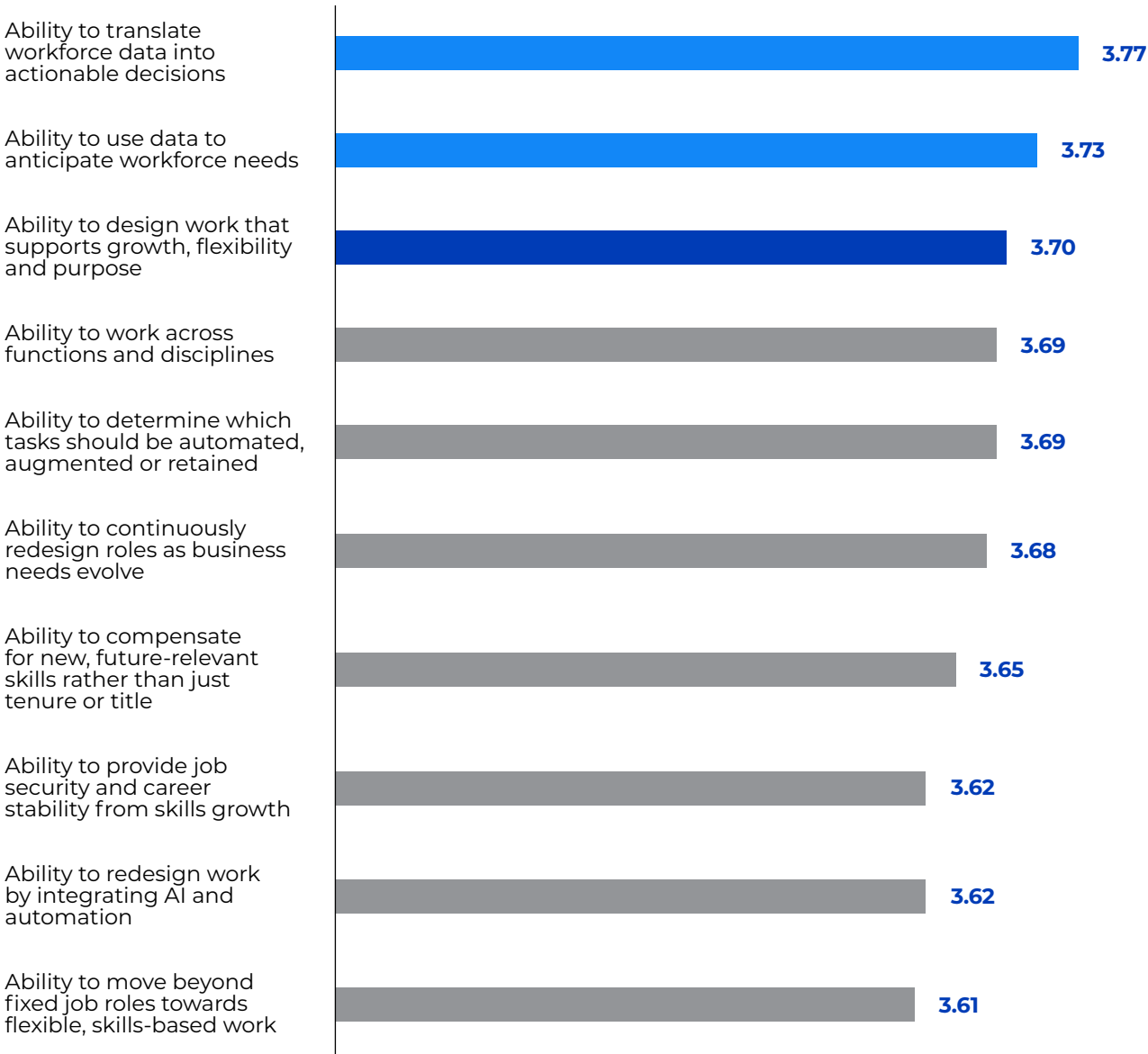
This section presents the evidence in three parts. The first establishes that the demand signal for future capabilities is unambiguous. The second documents how delivery materially trails this demand, and surfaces a consistent perception gap between business leaders and HR practitioners. The third shows that the most-cited barriers across every respondent segment are structural in nature, confirming the diagnosis.

The Demand For Future Capabilities Is Unambiguous

All ten capability items assessed in Q4 of Table 4, spanning workforce data, AI integration, role redesign, cross-functional collaboration, skills-based mobility, and reward, are consistently rated as important across all four respondent cohorts. Mean importance scores are tightly distributed between 3.61 and 3.77 on a five-point scale, with no item falling below this range.

This consistency signals strong alignment on priorities: organisations have a clear, shared understanding of the capabilities required to support transformation.

Table 4
Critical Capabilities for Competitiveness Over the Next Two to Three Years (Q4)



Source: Capability Advantage Survey 2026, Q4, N=335. Means ordered descending.



Two themes emerge clearly from the data.

Data leadership stands out as a defining capability.

The two highest-rated areas are both related to workforce data, indicating that

organisations increasingly view data-driven workforce planning as a foundational source of competitive advantage.

The design of work for growth, flexibility and purpose is also highly prioritised,

reflecting a recognition that

transformation must address human needs—not solely operational efficiency.

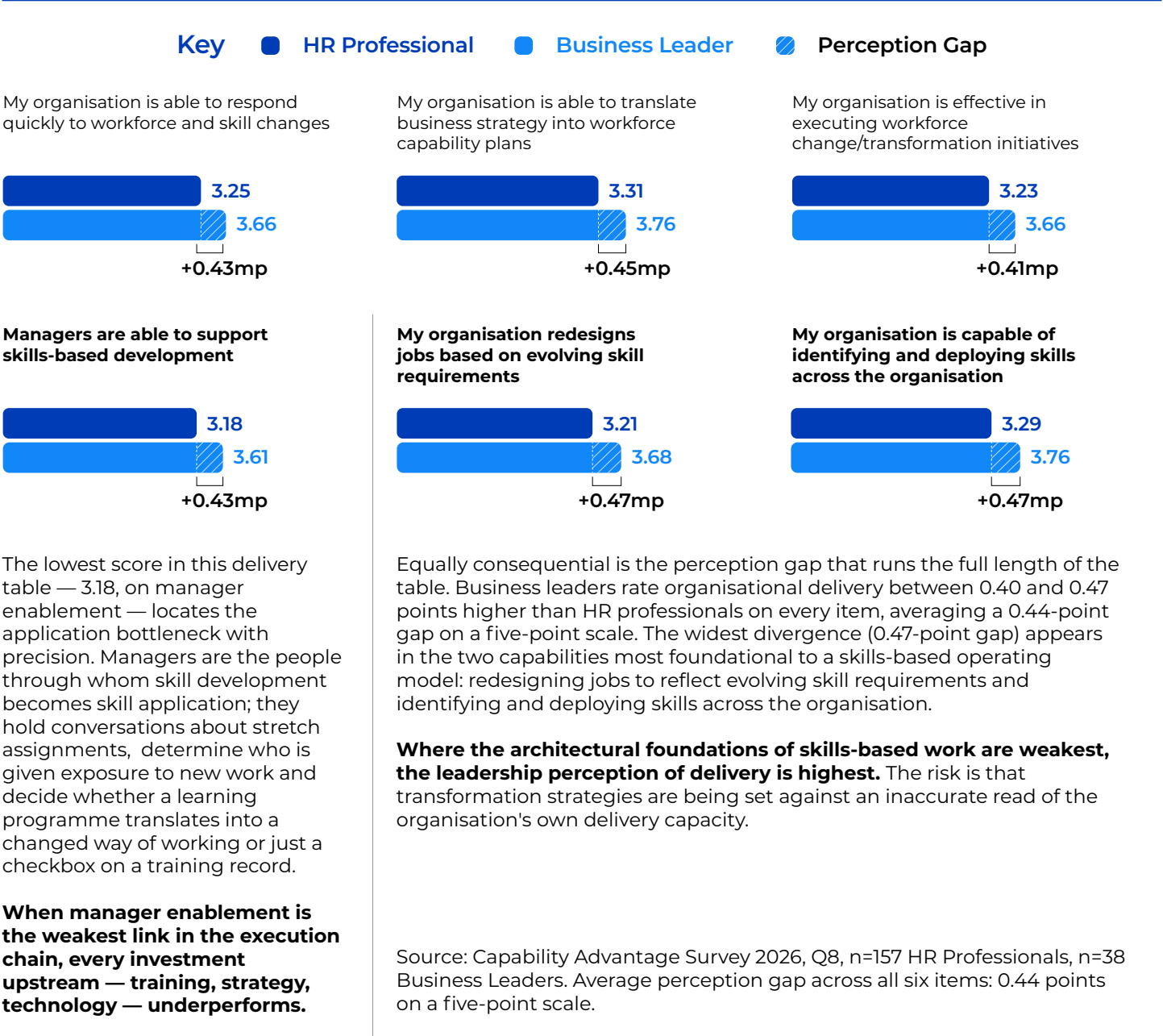
However, the challenge does not lie in the level of ambition. Rather, it lies in execution.



The Delivery Capability Falls Materially Short

When HR professionals are asked to rate their organisation's ability to deliver on six core workforce transformation capabilities, the mean ratings fall to a band of 3.18 to 3.31 — well below the importance scores documented above. The same questions, posed to business leaders, returned mean ratings of between 3.61 and 3.76. The pattern is consistent, and the perception gap is material. Table 5 presents the full comparison.

Table 5
Organisational Delivery on Workforce Transformation:
HR Professional and Business Leader Ratings (Q8)



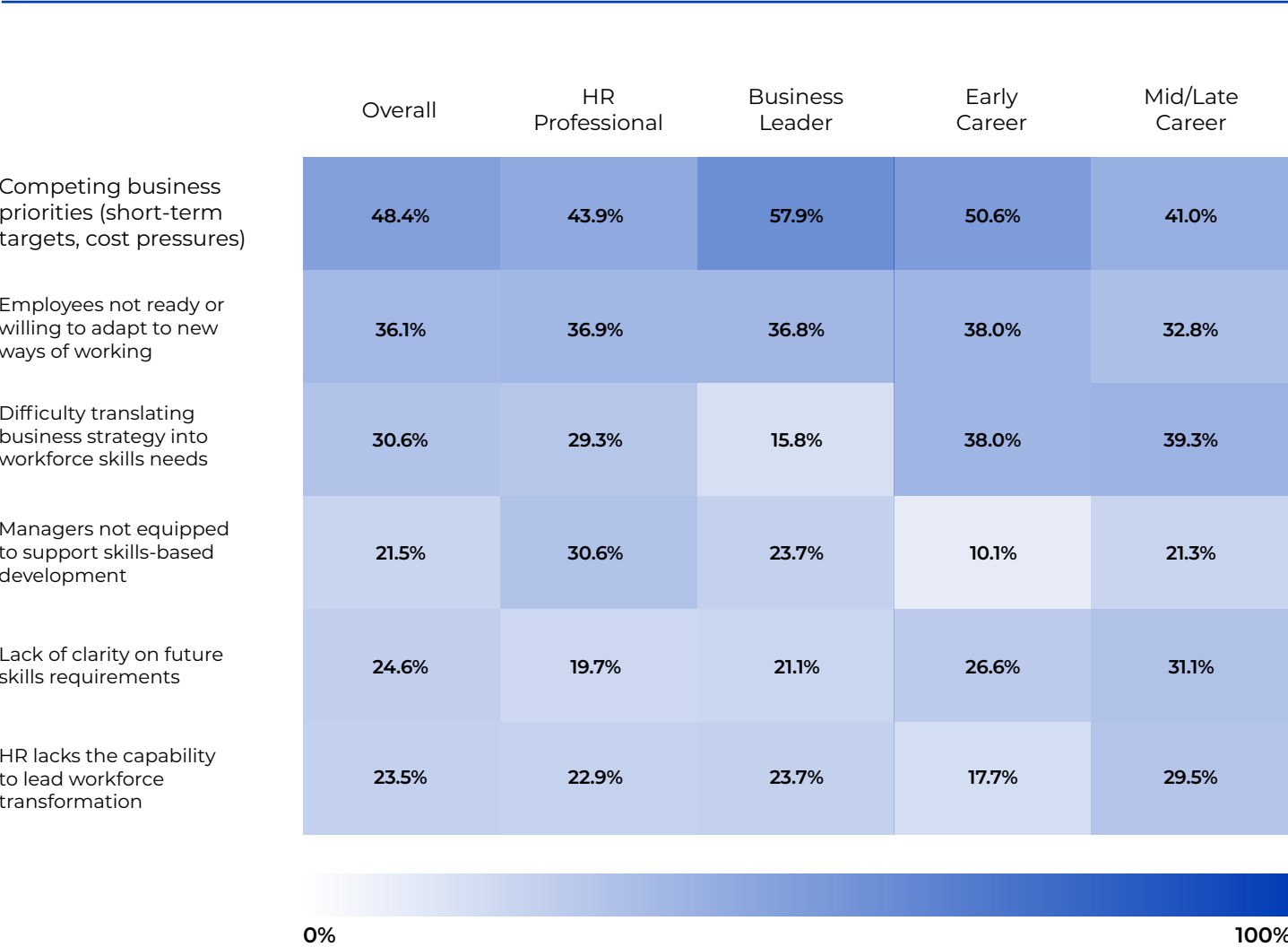
SP RESOURCE Responsible People Manager Training
Developed by Singapore Polytechnic in partnership with IHRP, the Responsible People Manager Role Badge (R-PMRB) equips HR professionals and first-line managers with practical capabilities in performance management, workforce transitions, workplace fairness and inclusive people practices. Through two applied courses, participants gain the confidence to make responsible people decisions, build workplace trust, and lead their teams effectively through change.

Access resources: Responsible People Leader - [Performance and Transition Management](#) & [Workplace Fairness and Inclusivity](#)

Barriers Confirm The Diagnosis is Structural

When respondents are asked to identify the principal barriers to adopting a skills-first approach (Q13), the pattern of responses confirms that the cause of the application problem is structural rather than motivational. The most-cited barriers across all cohorts relate to competing business priorities, difficulty of translating strategy into skills design, and an underdeveloped manager capability layer — all conditions that sit within organisational control rather than employee willingness.

Table 6
Most-Cited Barriers to Adopting a Skills-First Approach by Respondent Segment (Q13)



Source: Capability Advantage Survey 2026, Q13 (multi-coded, up to three selections). Percentages indicate share of segment selecting the barrier.



Two findings from Table 6 warrant the below emphasis.

For business leaders

The leading barrier — competing business priorities, cited by 57.9% — sits within their own authority to resolve. It is not a resource constraint imposed from outside the organisation but **a prioritisation decision that the executive leadership can make.**

That 57.9% of business leaders identify this as a barrier while 92.1% of the same group endorse business-led redesign in principle (Q10-2) is a signal worth examining. It reveals a typical pattern underpinning any transformation: **the disjoint between endorsing a direction and clearing the path for it are different acts**, and the data suggest that the second has not consistently followed the first.

For HR professionals

The barrier pattern reveals a broken execution chain. The first break occurs at translation — 29.3% of HR professionals cite difficulty converting business strategy into actionable skills design. The second break occurs at execution — 30.6% identify managers as not equipped to support skills-based development.

Even where direction is clear at the top, **it does not consistently translate to operationalisation;**

and even where it does operationalise, it does not reliably reach the workforce. The cumulative effect is the application gap documented in this section.

The strategic consequence of this pattern is significant. If business leaders are setting transformation ambitions and investment levels based on a delivery confidence that is meaningfully higher than the reality experienced by HR professionals and the workforce, the transformation plans will consistently outpace the execution capacity. Capability debt will grow not because intent is absent, but because it is calibrated against an overstated baseline.

If left unaddressed, perception gaps can result in transformation plans being designed around assumptions that differ significantly from operational realities.

"Organisational values only become real through everyday decisions and actions. HR can set the direction, but with shared responsibilities, people managers can apply fairness, empathy and consistency in practice. Without support in clarity and capability, well-intended policies may not translate into employee trust or a positive workplace culture."

— FDAWU Trainee, R-PMRB SP Programme
Amelia Goh, Assistant Manager | Human Resource Department, Quality Meat Pte Ltd



REDESIGN TO RESKILL

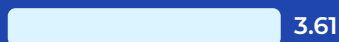
THE IHRP REVAMP METHODOLOGY

The argument of this section is direct. Reskilling without redesign limits application. Redesign without reskilling creates roles that people are not yet equipped to perform. Organisations that treat reskilling and redesigning as separate agendas will achieve neither outcome at the pace they need. These two agendas must move together, in a deliberate, sequenced and governed manner.

This section first examines where current HR practice falls short on the structural intervention most needed; then sets out the redesign-to-reskill sequence anchored in the IHRP REVAMP framework; and closes with the compound benefits available to organisations that succeed in pairing the two.

Where Current HR Practice Falls Short

- 1** Cross-functional collaboration is embedded in workforce planning.



- 2** Work is designed to align with employee growth and flexibility expectations.



...

- 6** Jobs are being redesigned into flexible, skills-based roles.



Q7 asks HR professionals to assess the importance of six HR practice domains in their organisations. The rankings are revealing. HR professionals rate cross-functional collaboration as the most advanced of their current work-design practices. Work designed to align with employee growth and flexibility expectations ranks second. Yet the practice that makes everything else consequential — redesigning jobs into flexible, skills-based roles— ranks lowest at 3.48.

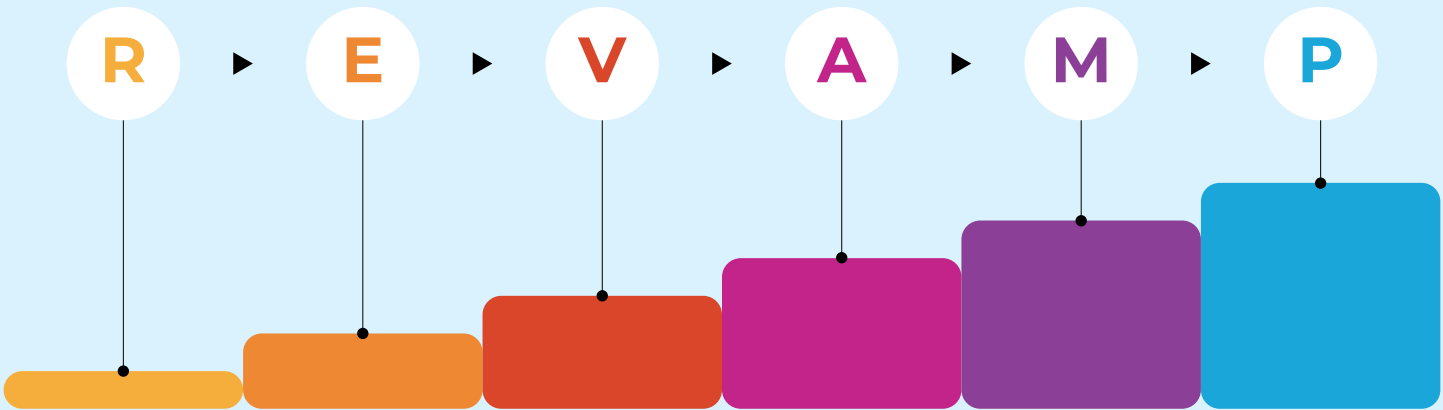
That ordering is significant. Organisations are investing in the softer architecture of workforce planning — the collaboration mechanisms, the talent frameworks, the development conversations — while the structural intervention that allows those investments to pay off lags behind. In an analogy, it is equivalent to investing in a strong logistics network without redesigning the warehouses it is intended to serve. Without role-level redesign, learning has nowhere to land, cross-functional collaboration runs into role-bounded resistance, and skills-based mobility cannot scale.

The Redesign-to-Reskill Sequence Anchored in the REVAMP Framework

The connection that organisations need to make is not complicated to describe, though it requires governance discipline to execute. It runs as a deliberate six-stage sequence — most fully articulated in the IHRP Job Redesign REVAMP framework, the methodology underpinning the Job Redesign Evaluation Tool (JRET) co-developed with Skills and Workforce Development Agency.

The REVAMP framework structures the journey into six analytically distinct but operationally connected stages: Review JR Opportunities; Examine and Redesign; Validate and Prioritise; Action Plan; Mobilise; and Post-Implementation Review. In Table 7, each stage has been mapped directly to a specific redesign-to-reskill action, and each stage connects a specific analytical and design decision to the next.

REDESIGN-TO-RESKILL ACTION



Review JR Opportunities	►	Opportunity Assessment Assess roles and business challenges to identify where redesign opportunities exist and establish the case for change
Examine and Redesign	►	Task Unbundling & Capability Identification Decompose roles into their component tasks to identify what is being automated, augmented or newly created, and map the skills and capabilities required for future-state work.
Validate and Prioritise	►	Role Redesign Restructure roles to reflect the capability requirements identified, removing automated tasks and adding those that require human judgement
Action Plan	►	Reskilling Integration Build learning pathways that directly address the capability requirements of redesigned roles rather than generic skill catalogues
Mobilise	►	Opportunity Pathways Make internal mobility routes visible, credible and accessible, connecting redesigned roles to career progression
Post-Implementation Review	►	Review and Refine Establish governance and measurement routines that allow the cycle to adapt as work continues to evolve

Source: IHRP REVAMP framework and Job Redesign Evaluation Tool (JRET), available at <https://ihrp.sg/job-redesign-evaluation-tool/>

The cumulative effect is a sequenced operating model that prevents the two failure patterns most commonly observed in workforce transformation efforts — redesign without a reskilling pathway, and reskilling without a redesigned application.

Opportunity assessment establishes the case for redesign; task unbundling and capability identification define how work and skill requirements are evolving; role redesign translates these requirements into future-state jobs; redesigned jobs create the demand signal for targeted reskilling; visible opportunity pathways enable workforce mobility and increase the return on reskilling investments; and post-implementation review ensures continuous adaptation as work continues to evolve.

The Job Redesign Evaluation Tool supports organisations across all six stages of this journey through a structured five-step diagnostic that helps establish a business case for redesign, baseline current job value, set redesign goals, and track outcomes.

IHRP RESOURCE IHRP Job Redesign Evaluation Tool (JRET)

Co-developed with Skills and Workforce Development Agency (SWDA), **JRET** is a structured diagnostic tool that enables organisations to assess their readiness for job redesign and prioritise roles for transformation. Designed as a self-service, five-step tool anchored against the REVAMP framework, JRET supports organisations across the redesign journey—from identifying readiness and building a business case for leadership buy-in, to establishing a baseline of current job value, setting redesign goals, and tracking outcomes.

Access resource: <https://ihp.sg/job-redesign-evaluation-tool/?tab=overview>

Why Integrating Matters : The Compound Benefit

When redesign and reskilling move together, three benefits compound.

- 1 Productivity improves**
New capability is applied to redesigned work rather than parked in unchanged roles.
- 2 Agility improves**
The organisation develops the muscle to redesign continuously, rather than treating transformation as a one-off event.
- 3 Retention improves**
Employees experience meaningful career progression.

This is the substance of what this report terms a new economic moat: a proprietary combination of technology, talent and redesigned workflows that competitors cannot easily replicate. Unlike technology, it cannot be purchased. Unlike talent acquired at scale, it does not erode when individuals leave. It is built deliberately — role by role, manager by manager, and cycle by cycle — and it compounds over time. The organisations that begin the work earliest will achieve the competitive advantage.





LESSONS FROM THE FIELD

EVIDENCE FROM PRACTICE

The argument advanced in the preceding sections is made most powerfully not in the survey data, but in the organisations that have already navigated the path it describes. This section presents three Singapore case studies — drawn from the IHRP Workforce Agility Playbook and the Singapore Polytechnic Business Innovation Centre — that illustrate the same redesign-to-reskill sequence from very different starting points.

Each organisation approached the challenge differently. What they share is a commitment to treating redesign and reskilling as a single, governance-backed agenda, and to leadership that owns the transformation rather than delegates it. Each case is presented in a consistent four-part structure: Context, Challenge, Action Taken, and Outcome.

CASE STUDY 1:

United World College of South East Asia (UWCSEA)



Mr Kevin Chua,
Chief Human Resources
Officer

Context

United World College of South East Asia (UWCSEA) is a leading international school operating a highly specialised, regulated workforce of educators and school-based professionals. The organisation manages strict certification and qualification requirements alongside a need for agility, digital capability development, and **strong career pathways for both teaching and non-teaching staff.**

Challenge

UWCSEA embarked on a new HRIS implementation to address **three key business and workforce challenges**

1

Manual, fragmented HR processes limiting efficiency and reliability

2

Elevate HR compliance while transitioning from legacy systems

3

Mismatch between existing job designs and a system enabled operating model

What they did

UWCSEA implemented a **structured capability and career pathway programme** that embedded cross-functional development opportunities alongside formal learning. **Leadership was positioned as the primary driver of change** — managers were re-equipped with structured conversation frameworks, and internal mobility pathways were made explicitly visible to staff regardless of certification boundary. The organisation used workforce data to sequence which capability areas to prioritise first.

Outcome

The workforce gained **scalable, adaptable skill sets** oriented toward long-term career growth rather than role-specific technical compliance. Internal mobility increased by 10%, manager confidence in career and change conversations improved, and the organisation reported stronger staff readiness to engage with new systems and AI-integrated workflows. Cross-functional exposure, structured career conversations and visible mobility pathways gave employees clearer avenues to apply skills and stretch beyond credentialled boundaries. Managers were equipped not only to supervise, but to develop. The case shows that **job redesign, paired with deliberate capability development, builds a workforce that is adaptable, mobile and future-ready.**

CASE STUDY 2:

Alexandra Hospital



Ms Huay Ean,
Chief Human
Resource Officer

Margeret Lee,
Chief Executive
Officer

Context

Alexandra Hospital embarked on an Integrated General Hospital (IGH) transformation — a complex, multi-year programme to **redesign how care, workforce and enabling functions operate together in a more integrated and future-ready configuration**. The transformation required the hospital to rethink how HR functioned as a strategic partner, not only an operational support.

Challenge

Three challenges became central i.e.

- 1 **Significant variability in how departments were supported and partnered by enabling functions, including HR**
- 2 **Differences in pace and readiness across departments that created uneven progress toward shared transformation goals**
- 3 **Workforce readiness gaps for more integrated, transdisciplinary and digitally enabled models of care**

What they did

HR repositioned itself as a **strategic, cross-functional enabler** rather than a programme deliverer. A structured culture, structure and alignment programme was implemented to scale transformation across departments — **using data to identify where pace and readiness** varied most, and deploying targeted HR partnerships to close those gaps. Continuous alignment mechanisms were introduced to **maintain momentum and course-correct across the multi-year programme**.

Outcome

The hospital developed a **more adaptive, cross-skilled and future-ready workforce**. HR's repositioning as a strategic enabler improved the consistency of transformation support across departments, and the structured alignment approach reduced pace variability that had previously led to uneven progress. Departments also gained clearer visibility of the skills required to operate within a more integrated, transdisciplinary and digitally enabled care model, enabling targeted capability-building through applied learning, cross-departmental exposure and manager coaching. The case shows that **transformation succeeds not only through structural redesign, but when capability development is embedded, in turn creating a workforce that can continuously adapt and grow**.

CASE STUDY 3:

DP Architects (DPA)



Mr Wong Hao Jan,
Head, Building Information
Modelling (BIM)

Context

DP Architects (DPA) is a **Singapore-based multidisciplinary design consultancy** founded in 1967, with a strong global presence and a portfolio spanning landmark developments across sectors. As the Built Environment sector moves towards more integrated digital delivery, the firm has continued to invest in **digital innovation, workforce transformation and stronger internal digital capabilities** to remain competitive in a changing industry landscape.

Challenge

With the introduction of the integrated digital submission platform, DPA faced increasing **complexity in managing submissions across architecture, engineering and related disciplines**. Existing submission workflows relied heavily on individual consultants preparing inputs independently, creating challenges in data consistency, system integration, regulatory coordination and submission validation. The organisation also needed to scale its internal capability to meet growing submission demands while ensuring that roles were aligned to new digital workflow governance, cross-disciplinary coordination and regulatory compliance. The identified prioritised roles therefore **needed to evolve beyond discipline-specific execution into higher-value roles supporting integration, data governance and digital submission readiness**.

What they did

The organisation focused on **redesigning two critical roles**. Through job analysis, workflow review and stakeholder engagement, the project team clarified how these roles needed to support the adoption of the new submission portal, the digital workflow implementation, and multidisciplinary coordination. The redesigned roles were formalised through updated Job Descriptions and Job Details Templates. Capability development was also embedded through training and knowledge sharing, helping employees understand the skills, behaviours and responsibilities required to perform the redesigned roles effectively. **In-house learning arm DP Academy supported adoption efforts through regular sharing sessions to keep employees updated on developments and implementation requirements. It also delivered hands-on training sessions for targeted employees involved in project submissions, building confidence and capability in using CORENET X as part of the new digital submission workflow.**

Outcome

Improved role clarity, job value and accountability within its identified function. Responsibilities were made more explicit, giving employees clearer visibility of how their roles contribute to compliance, project coordination and digital transformation. The redesigned roles also established a stronger foundation for more integrated and consistent workflows across disciplines. The organisation improved coordination clarity, strengthened digital workflow governance, and created clearer development pathways for employees taking on expanded responsibilities. The case demonstrates that job redesign is not solely about efficiency or technology adoption. It is equally about **creating clearer pathways for capability development and workforce growth**.

Three patterns across very different organisations

Despite their significant differences in size, sector, workforce profile and starting point, these organisations share three characteristics that support the survey data:

1

Leadership led, and HR enabled.

In each case, the accountability for the transformation was owned by senior leadership and not delegated to an HR team. HR designed and operationalised the enabling structures.

2

Redesign came before or alongside reskilling.

Each organisation changed the purpose and scope of roles before — or in parallel with — investing in upskilling.

3

Confidence and clarity were treated as outcomes instead of byproducts.

All three recognised that workforce readiness is not purely a skills question. It is also a confidence question and a clarity question.

Together, these cases demonstrate that workforce transformation succeeds when redesign, reskilling and leadership ownership are treated as a single connected agenda rather than separate initiatives

SWDA RESOURCE Talent Track +

Skills and Workforce Development Agency (SWDA) has introduced **TalentTrack+** to provide employers with a deeper employee-level view of their respective employees' skills readiness and progression opportunities. It can address skills gaps with targeted training recommendations and identify employees who are ready for new roles.

Access resource: [GoBusiness](#)



PROPOSED ACTIONS BY SEGMENTS

IMPLICATIONS FOR BUSINESS LEADERS, HUMAN RESOURCE AND THE WORKFORCE

The implications of the survey evidence and the case studies cannot be discharged at a single layer of the organisation.

They must be acted on by business leaders, human resource practitioners, and the workforce — in coordinated rather than sequenced ways. This section sets out the implications for each audience that warrant disproportionate attention.



PRIORITY ACTION 1

Own work redesign as a business priority

What to Do

Allocate executive time,
assign accountability,
embed governance cadence

Guiding Questions

- Which business outcomes are best driven by AI, data or cross-functional work?
- Which roles or workflows are creating the greatest operational friction?
- What redesign decision can leadership make now without waiting for a formal programme?
- Who is accountable for each priority redesign initiative?



PRIORITY ACTION 2

Recalibrate strategic baseline

What to Do

Jointly review HR vs business
perception gaps at ExCo level

Guiding Questions

- Does leadership confidence reflect what employees are actually experiencing?
- Which capability assumptions are overstated relative to workforce reality?
- What evidence is used today to validate the performance of transformation?



PRIORITY ACTION 3

Fund manager capability as a core investment

What to Do

Redesign manager roles, metrics,
and development pathways

Guiding Questions

- Which pathway(s) currently prevent managers from applying skills-based development?
- Which required behaviour(s) are managers measured and rewarded today?
- How are capability translations broken down — at role design, workload, or skills level?



PRIORITY ACTION 1

Shift to capability architect

What to Do

Redesign metrics to track skill application, mobility, and manager enablement

Guiding Questions

- Do employees and managers share a practical understanding of key terms (e.g. “AI-augmented”, “skills-based”)?
- Where do workforce and leadership views diverge most on transformation readiness?
- What evidence should be surfaced to close perception gaps?
- How is success measured beyond training completion (i.e. application, mobility, outcomes)?



PRIORITY ACTION 2

Link reskilling to job redesign

What to Do

Pair training investments with role/workflow redesign

Guiding Questions

- Which roles are changing fastest?
- What tasks in this role are being redesigned or automated?
- When should redesign be prioritised instead of additional training?
- Which roles require clearer alignment between skills and actual deployment?



PRIORITY ACTION 3

Make manager capability the flagship programme

What to Do

Redesign mandate, time, tools, and performance systems

Guiding Questions

- Which pathway, manager practice or structural constraint prevents skills from being applied?
- When are managers expected to drive capability without sufficient time or tools?
- What must managers stop doing to prioritise capability development?



PRIORITY ACTION 1

Develop mobility as a core skill

What to Do

Build cross-functional exposure and document transferable skills

Guiding Questions

- Beyond current function(s), which skill(s) could create impact(s) in other areas of the organisation?
- What evidence(s) can you demonstrate your contribution(s) to cross-functional outcomes?
- Which skill(s) is required for the opportunities you want to move into?



PRIORITY ACTION 2

Hold system accountable for clarity

What to Do

Demand transparency in pathways and opportunity access

Guiding Questions

- Where are the structural barrier(s) limiting your ability to apply your skills?
- Where do you need clearer pathways on progression and mobility?
- How can you make possible frictions visible to HR and leadership?
- Where are skills recognised informally but not translated into formal opportunities?





CALL TO ACTION

THE ARCHITECTURE OF CAPABILITY ADVANTAGE

Most of what organisations across Singapore have done in the learning and development space over the past decade has been done in good faith, with genuine investment and real commitment. The call to action of this report is not a reversal of that work. It is a structural reframe of how the next decade of capability building should be approached — and the organisations that make the shift first will build an advantage that compounds over time.

The shift is structural, not aspirational

Competitive advantage in capability is not built through training programmes. It is built through the architecture of work itself:

How roles are structured	How managers are equipped and measured
How skills are connected to opportunity	How the whole system adapts as work continues to evolve

The organisations that build this architecture deliberately will be able to develop and apply capabilities faster than those that do not. Speed of capability conversion — from learning to applied performance — is the advantage of the next decade.

The survey is specific about where the architecture is currently under-supported.

Manager-led, skills-based development, rated at

3.18 out of 5, 

is the single most important place to intervene, as it is the point at which all upstream investment either translates into capability use or does not.



Internal pathway visibility

Is the second priority, because skills that cannot be applied to visible and accessible opportunities will not produce the retention and motivation outcomes that capability investment is intended to generate.

These two priorities cannot be addressed by programme adjustments alone. They require a broader repositioning of how organisations think about HR, business leadership, and the role of learning itself. These structural shifts set out in Table 8, define the operating conditions under which the manager layer and internal pathway visibility can finally do the work capability investment is meant to enable.

Table 8
Three Structural Shifts for the Next Decade of Capability Investment

HR as programme owner	▶ HR as capability architect Connecting data, skills, jobs, managers and mobility into a coherent operating system that the business owns and HR enables.
Business leader endorsement	▶ Business leader ownership With a named accountability structure, a governance cadence, and transformation milestones that are reported at the top of the organisation.
Training as the supporting intervention	▶ Redesign as the enabling condition Making reskilling investment usable by changing the roles, workflows, manager mandates and opportunity pathways that surround it.

Synthesised from survey evidence (N=335) and case studies, Capability Advantage Survey 2026.

Sequenced Action Priorities

Not every action can be undertaken at once, and trying to do so is one of the patterns the data cautions against. The action priorities that follow are deliberately sequenced, starting with the intervention that will produce the fastest change in capability architecture and building toward the governance and measurement foundations that sustain it. Each priority is anchored to specific survey evidence.

Table 9
Sequenced Action Priorities Anchored in Survey Evidence

1 Manager mandate first Redesign the manager's role to make skills-based team development a core responsibility, rather than an optional extra. Change the measurement before the training.	Q8-3 Mean of 3.18 The lowest execution item in the survey
2 Close the perception gap Surface the HR–Business Leader rating gap to the executive team. Frame it as a risk calibration problem.	Q8 Average gap of 0.44 points across all six items
3 Sequence redesign and reskilling deliberately For roles most exposed to change, embed job redesign into the reskilling cycle so that training is targeted at the specific capability gaps the redesign identifies.	Q7-3 Mean of 3.48 The least-progressed HR work-design practice
4 Make pathways visible Map where skills built through training or cross-functional work can actually be applied. Remove one structural barrier to internal mobility in the next six months.	Q12-2 Ranges 3.28 to 3.57 across workforce respondents
5 Name the governance Appoint a named transformation owner and establish a minimum viable governance structure with a quarterly review cadence.	Q10 35.3 percentage-point gap between endorsement (92.1%) and effective implementation (56.8%)

Synthesised from survey evidence (N=335) and case studies, Capability Advantage Survey 2026.



The Decade Ahead

Competitive advantage will belong to organisations that can redesign work and build capabilities faster than others. That advantage does not come from more information or more learning content. It comes from faster conversion of skill into performance. This is the practical meaning of a skills-first model.

The organisations that thrive in the years ahead will not simply be those that invest in more learning. They will be those that can **continuously redesign work, apply new capabilities and adapt faster than change itself**. The challenge is no longer whether organisations recognise disruption.

The challenge is whether they can redesign for it.

APPENDICES

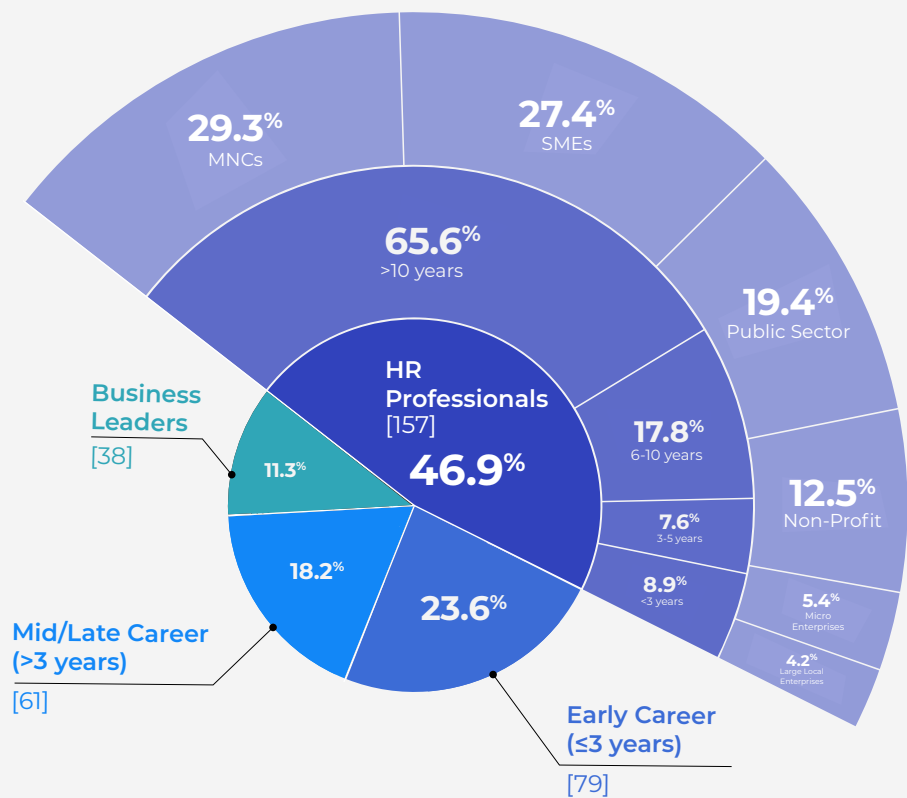
APPENDIX A Methodology and Respondent Profile

The Capability Advantage survey was administered in May 2026, to **335 respondents** across the Singapore workforce. The instrument was developed in collaboration between the Institute for Human Resource Professionals and Singapore Polytechnic, and was reviewed by the Singapore Poly Institutional Review Board (SP IRB) prior to deployment.

The respondent base was composed as follows.

Key

- Years of experience
- Organisation type



The largest single industry representations were Human Resource (33.4%), Training and Adult Education (5.4%), Financial Services (4.5%), Infocomm Technology (4.2%), and Healthcare (3.9%).

APPENDIX B Data Conventions and Comparability Notes

Items in this report are measured on five-point Likert scales (1 = Strong Disagree or Not Important; 5 = Strong Agree or Highly Important). All Likert findings are reported as mean scores out of five. Where Top-2-Box (T2B) agreement percentages are provided, they represent the combined share of Agree and Strongly Agree responses, or equivalent on the importance scale.

Percentages are used as the principal unit of measurement only for demographic composition and for multi-coded survey items (Q13 barriers, Q14 concerns, Q15 views of the future of work), where respondents could select multiple options.

Cohort comparisons reported in this report — Business Leader versus HR Professional ratings on Q8, and Early Career versus Mid/Late Career ratings on Q5, Q9, Q11 and Q12 — reflect identical questions posed to different respondent groups and are therefore directly comparable. The Q7 importance set and the Q8 delivery set are reported in parallel as designed by the survey instrument; item-by-item Q7-X to Q8-X gaps are not claimed in this report because the individual items, while thematically related, are not identically worded.

Capability debt	The accumulation of skill and performance gaps that results from investing in learning without redesigning the roles, workflows and manager practices that allow those skills to be applied.
Task unbundling	The process of decomposing a job role into its constituent tasks to identify which are being automated, which are being augmented by AI, and which are newly created by changing work conditions.
Redesign-to-reskill	An integrated approach that treats job redesign and capability development as a single, connected agenda rather than sequential or separate programmes.
Skills-first approach	An operating philosophy that prioritises the identification, development and deployment of skills as the primary unit of workforce planning, rather than relying solely on role-based or credential-based frameworks.
Internal mobility	The structured movement of employees across roles, functions or projects within an organisation, based on skills and capability match rather than only hierarchical progression.
Capability architect	The repositioned role of human resources as designer of the operating system in which capability is built, applied, governed and rewarded — rather than the owner of discrete learning programmes.
REVAMP	The IHRP Job Redesign methodology comprising six stages: Review JR Opportunities; Examine and Redesign; Validate and Prioritise; Action Plan; Mobilise; and Post-Implementation Review.

Q3. On a scale of 1 to 5, rate how much do you agree with the following statements on the future of work.

Base

N=335

1. Work is increasingly broken down into tasks rather than fixed job roles.
2. AI and automation are significantly changing how work is performed.
3. Job roles are evolving more rapidly than in the past.
4. Work increasingly requires collaboration across different functions and disciplines.
5. Data is increasingly expected to inform decision-making at work.

Q4. On a scale of 1 to 5, indicate how critical are the following capabilities for your organisation to remain competitive in the next 2 – 3 years?

N=335

1. Ability to redesign work by integrating AI and automation.
2. Ability to determine which tasks should be automated, augmented, or retained.
3. Ability to use data to anticipate workforce needs (e.g. skills gaps, attrition)
4. Ability to translate workforce data into actionable decisions.
5. Ability to move beyond fixed job roles towards flexible, skills-based work.
6. Ability to continuously redesign roles as business needs evolve.
7. Ability to work across functions and disciplines.
8. Ability to design work that supports growth, flexibility, and purpose.
9. Ability to provide job security and career stability from skills growth.
10. Ability to compensate for new, future-relevant skills rather than just tenure/title based.

Q7. On a scale of 1 to 5, indicate the extent to which the following capabilities are important within your organisation's HR practices and workforce strategies. 1. Integrating AI and automation into work design is actively pursued. 2. Workforce decisions are guided by data and predictive analytics. 3. Jobs are being redesigned into flexible, skills-based roles. 4. Cross-functional collaboration is embedded in workforce planning. 5. Work is designed to align with employee growth and flexibility expectations. 6. Talent practices (hiring, promotion and training) are progressively and seamlessly integrated to support workforce transformation.	Base N=157 HR
Q8. Compared to the importance of the following capabilities, to what extent is your organisation able to deliver the following? 1. My organisation redesigns jobs based on evolving skill requirements. 2. My organisation is capable of Identifying and deploying skills across the organisation. 3. Managers are able to support skills-based development. 4. My organisation is able to translate business strategy into workforce capability plans. 5. My organisation is able to respond quickly to workforce and skill changes. 6. My organisation is effective in executing workforce change/transformation initiatives.	N=157 HR N=38 BL
Q10. Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements regarding how organisations should approach workforce transformation in a skills-first economy 1. HR in my organisation should proactively keep pace with changing workforce and skills demands by anticipating and planning for future workforce capability needs. 2. Work and job redesign should be led by the business, with HR enabling and supporting implementation. 3. Workforce decisions should be driven by data and insights, with HR supporting the translation of data into actionable strategies. 4. Organisations should enable internal talent mobility based on skills, with HR facilitating systems and processes to support this. 5. In my organisation, workforce transformation initiatives are effectively implemented today.	N=38 BL
Q12. To what extent do you agree with the following statements about opportunity in your organisation 1. I have fair access to opportunities based on my skills (not just experience or credentials) 2. I can see clear pathways to move into better roles 3. Opportunities are transparently communicated 4. My organisation recognises and uses my skills effectively 5. Opportunities in my organisation are based on skills rather than tenure, relationships, or credentials. 6. I believe I can progress in my organisation within the next 2–3 years	N=140 Workforce
Q13. What are the biggest barriers preventing organisations from adopting a skills-first approach? 1. Competing business priorities (e.g. short-term targets, cost pressures) 2. Difficulty translating business strategy into workforce skills needs 3. Employees are not ready or willing to adapt to new ways of working 4. HR lacks the capability to lead workforce transformation 5. Lack of clarity on future skills requirements 6. Lack of workforce data or analytics capability 7. Lack of structural and timely rewards/incentives / misaligned KPIs 8. Leadership do not own/support transformation process 9. Limited tools or systems to track and deploy skills 10. Business managers are not equipped to support skills-based development 11. Resistance to change within the organisation 12. Rigid job structures (role-based instead of skills-based)	N=335

Q14. What are your biggest concerns about the future of work in your organisation or industry?

Base

N=140
Workforce

1. Unclear transition pathways into roles created by/redesigned due to AI and/or automation
2. Difficulty moving across roles or functions based on skills
3. Difficulty keeping up with rapidly changing skill requirements
4. Increased competition from more highly skilled talent
5. Increasing expectations without sufficient support or resources
6. Job instability or reduced job security
7. Lack of clear career pathways or progression
8. Limited opportunities to develop new skills within the organisation
9. Limited support from managers or organisation in adapting to change
10. Not having the right skills to meet future job demands
11. Uncertainty about how AI and automation will challenge my core technical skills/change my role

Q15. Which of the following best describe your view of the future of work?

N=335

1. AI-augmented
2. Cross-functional
3. Data-driven
4. Fast-changing
5. Flexible
6. More demanding
7. More meaningful
8. Skills-based
9. Technology-driven
10. Uncertain
11. Others

APPENDIX E

References and further reading

- IHRP Job Redesign Evaluation Tool (JRET). Institute for Human Resource Professionals.
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Your Opinion Matters!

We appreciate you taking the time to read this report. Please share your feedback by scanning the QR or clicking the form [link](#) provided.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This report was developed through the collaborative efforts of the Institute for Human Resource Professionals (IHRP) and Singapore Polytechnic (School of Business), with the support and contributions of partners across the Tripartite ecosystem, the Skills Advisory Panel, and industry voices from the three case study organisations.

IHRP gratefully acknowledges the contributions of the authors, contributors and validators who shaped this report, the industry partners who shared their workforce transformation journeys, and the 335 survey respondents whose insights formed the empirical foundation of the findings presented.



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This report was conceptualized and drafted by the Lead Author (LA), with significant contributions and co-authorship from the Report Co-Lead (RCL), and collaborative efforts of our contributors, and validators, whose expertise and insights shaped its content. We leveraged AI-assisted tools, including Microsoft Copilot, for drafting support and language refinement. All findings, interpretations, and recommendations were rigorously reviewed and validated by our expert team to ensure accuracy and authenticity.