The 2021 Report on Workplace Experience

Your guide to the future of WX and where company leadership is most critical
Welcome to the new frontier of WX.

The year is 2035, and you’re about to enter the workforce—for the fifth time this month.

So predicts Citrix’s Work 2035 report. No longer do you (or anyone else in your industry) spend a few years climbing the management ladder at a single company. Instead, leaders and workers alike now follow an episodic trajectory in which you “swarm” short-term projects with other highly specialized freelancers. Occasionally, you know a few of your fellow managers or some of your direct reports, but you’ve never met face to face, let alone spent the entire day in an office working beside them.

With logistics far too complicated for human minds, the entire process for this expansive gig economy is managed by technology. You’re hired by an algorithm, tasked by AI, and virtually transported to worksites worldwide using VR. At each company, the Chief Artificial Intelligence handles mundane tasks—drafting performance reviews, managing schedules, approving expense reports—nudging you and the sprint team you oversee to be more productive.

However, just as important as learning to live with this technology in 2035 is learning to step away from it. With no concrete barriers between your office and your home, there’s the potential to never disengage. For that reason, you and your fellow managers compete for the best talent with policies that promote humane work-life ratios, smarter upskilling programs, and greater user control over the trove of data employee workflows create.

Instead of having to choose between a world where either you have a job or you’ve been replaced by robots, the future will bring about a complex reimagining of every assumption we have about the Workplace Experience, or as we call it: WX.

Workplace Experience

noun. The application of UX (user experience) thinking applied to today’s workforce—its digital and physical spaces, processes, and cultures.

Executive Summary

As AI transforms the global economy, Citrix and Quartz Creative set out to investigate its impact on Workplace Experience (WX) at every rung of the org chart. Building off findings from Citrix’s recent Work 2035 report, which explores how people and technology will pioneer new ways of working over the next 15 years, and through additional qualitative and quantitative research, we heard recurring themes that leaders across IT, HR, and business should start solving for now.

In the following report, discover five lessons to future-proof your company toward 2035:

△ Identify the essential characteristics of your C-suite
△ Incorporate AI into your people processes
△ Make mental health a business imperative
△ Protect employee data
△ Ensure lifelong learning across every level of your company.
The intel behind our insights

Noise control will be nonnegotiable

EQ will be the C-suite’s new KPI

Data by the people must be for the people

AI will be your greatest talent acquisition asset

We will all be cyborg learners
THE INTEL BEHIND OUR INSIGHTS

Methodology

Understandably, the prospect of fundamentally restructuring our economy is a stressful one, but Citrix, Quartz Creative, and our team of “WXperts” are here to guide you through this massive WX transformation with solutions to start implementing now, all built from a trove of intel.

Together, this evidence and expertise has shaped the five insight in this report and the related action items for executives.

Survey
1,500 C-suite business leaders and workers from companies with at least 250 employees
JAN-MARCH 2020

Query
500 Quartz readers to probe insights revealed in the global survey
AUG-SEPT 2020

Poll
300 more business leaders to gauge sentiment after the spring Covid-19 outbreak
APRIL 2020

Gather
30 executive leaders in HR, IT, and business functions attended breakout sessions tackling practical solutions for future WX scenarios
SEPT 2020

Discuss
3 authorities on cybersecurity, people analytics, and empathetic management for a panel discussion
SEPT 2020

Interview
25 leading minds on how to create WX that can thrive even during whiplash change
SEPT-DEC 2020

Publish
A 5-article guide on Quartz that unpacks four frameworks for the future of work
SEPT-NOV 2020
The fear of automation is real and understandable. According to Citrix’s Work 2035: How people and technology will pioneer new ways of working, 83% of professionals believe that by 2035, technology will automate repetitive and low-value tasks, and 72% believe that within the next 15 years, technology and AI will generate more revenue for their organization than human workers and will absorb more of the annual operating costs. More money for robots and less for humans? It may sound alarming, but it doesn’t have to be.

The same way GPS slashed the mental calculus required for navigation, new AI systems are already automating processes as complex as preparing tax returns, citing legal precedent, and diagnosing cancer.

That means future leaders won’t just need measurable technical skills, but also something uniquely human: emotional intelligence.

The increasing importance of emotional intelligence (EQ) at the highest levels of leadership means that roles will shift, particularly for CEOs. The cliche picture of siloed visionaries running numbers and scenarios as they grind away on the Next Big Thing will give way to something much more collaborative and empathetic. Instead, these executives will refocus their energies to become chief experience officers, for both their customers and their employees. It will be up to them to prioritize, and then for CHROs and other HR leaders to promote, cultures of transparency, accountability, and empathy—all of which are crucial during this transition into a new working world where humans and technology are inextricably intertwined.

This becomes even more critical as organizations and roles get further distributed and fragmented. With fewer rapport-building opportunities to anchor teams and connect executives with their frontline employees—like spontaneous hallway chats and in-office birthday celebrations with way too much chocolate cake—all leaders, working in tandem, will have to be the glue (or perhaps frosting) holding it all together.

Quartz readers agree: In the 2020 WX insight poll, 63% of leaders (those with senior director titles and above) and 45% of workers (those who aren’t in management positions) believe companies will have a higher responsibility for protecting workers, as salaried opportunities evaporate. The C-suite will have to balance their long-held priorities of profit and productivity (the robots will handle that) and instead focus on the long-term well-being of their workforce. And that can only come from a deep skillset grounded in relational intelligence.

“EQ is the foundation for leadership: personal, team, organization, and enterprise. Like any skill, it’s learnable and must be integrated into every C-suite action.”

—Meerah Rajavel, CIO, Citrix
The Digital Disconnect

Leaders and workers don’t always agree when picturing the future.

Will companies have a higher responsibility for protecting workers in the future?

63% of leaders say yes
(those with senior director titles and above)

45% of workers say yes

While a majority of professionals share this viewpoint, leaders feel more moved than workers.

Source: 2020 poll

“CEOs will be even more collaborative than in the past, and a process that enables trust between stakeholders and senior leadership will need to be more visible.”

—Heather Christie-Burns, Board member at Interface Fluidics and the University of Calgary

“Employers will demand intellectual dexterity and technical expertise in equal measure: emotional intelligence and artificial intelligence; ethics and logic; communication and programming. It’s not the ‘Tyranny of the OR,’ as author Jim Collins describes it, but rather the ‘Genius of the AND.’”

—Michelle R. Weise, Author, Long Life Learning: Preparing for Jobs that Don’t Even Exist Yet
IN THE SHORT-TERM, company leaders should prioritize communication, collaborative problem-solving, and empathy education for all workers, particularly managers. Soft-skills trainings improve communication, complex task completion, and overall productivity.

Beyond trainings, managers should integrate empathy and awareness-building exercises into daily work flows. Before a particularly important (or stressful) meeting, you can guide employees through a short breathing exercise and ask them to write down their expectations of the meeting. During, you can ask attendees to rephrase the other side’s points to ensure mutual understanding. And afterward, you can facilitate a journaling session to reflect on whether their expectations were met.

If expectations aren’t met, ask them to identify where the breakdown occurred, how it made them feel, and potential remedies going forward.

This approach—recognizing the emotional impact of conflict but in the framework of brainstorming solutions—will help your employees learn to navigate moments of tension without your prompting.

IN THE LONG TERM, the hiring process for senior leaders will need to be retooled to assess relational intelligence, community-building skills, and an adaptable and transparent management style. One way to do this is in the applicant interview, but beware. Unstructured interactions like these can amplify your own prejudices.

Instead, hiring managers can administer multiple-choice diagnostic tests that quantify the five components of EQ: self-awareness, self-regulation, internal motivation, empathy, and social skills.

Or, they can suss this information out in more subtle ways during the interview process, like The Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania does, asking applicants to submit a letter of recommendation from someone that speaks to their emotional maturity.

And don’t be surprised if a whole new class of empathy-driven C-suiters take a seat at the table. In the next 10 years, teams may report to Chief Learning Officers, Chief Organization Officers, or Chief Behaviorists.

According to WXperts, these are the top traits leaders will need to be successful in the technology-driven future:

1. Adaptability
2. Critical thinking
3. Deep listening
AI will be your greatest talent acquisition asset

Our new robot friends will also become indispensable for one of the most important—and costly—parts of running a business: keeping the employee pipeline filled with incredible candidates.

According to one study, it costs 150-200% of an employee’s salary to replace them, but it only costs 10-20% of their salary to keep them. Still, at some point, you’ll need to make new hires, especially considering the roles that will emerge in the marketplace of the future: an ethics officer for your product team, someone to manage the virtual reality resources for your freelancers, a staff psychologist who helps bridge the gap between human and machine.

In fact, the Covid-19 crisis has made 71% of business leaders believe human workers are more important than technology, according to the Work 2035 report. But, neither technology nor people are going anywhere. The trick is figuring out how to make them fit together in the way that best supports your goals.

For HR, that means that the work doesn’t end when employment contracts are signed. AI and human managers must be in lockstep through the entire employee life-cycle. And, according to the Work 2035 report, that life-cycle could shrink exponentially, as industries move to a freelancer-forward, project-based employment model.

With team needs in a constant state of flux, AI can do what it does best: blitz through HR busywork, sort through mounds of employee engagement surveys, and, when trained correctly, mitigate the unconscious biases that plague hiring and advancement decisions.

In return, human hiring managers are freed to focus on individualized employee development plans, the mental health of their reports, and regular team assessments to determine if their workforce has the necessary skills not just for today but for the change on the horizon.

Together, they ensure HR practices are held accountable with quantifiable goals and unbiased algorithms while still leaving space for human intuition.

“There are a lot of opportunities for AI to augment talent acquisition processes, but a machine cannot replace genuine human-to-human connection, which is critical for workers to feel like they belong.”

—Melissa Ebeling, VP talent acquisition and workplace strategies, Citrix

OUR WXPERTS
Meet the brains behind our breakthroughs:

Carol Cochran VP of people and culture, FlexJobs
Melissa Ebeling VP of talent acquisition and workplace strategies, Citrix
Jan Hartel VP of employee process, CSG
Kit Krugman Head of organization and culture design, Co:collective
Kim Weaver Founder, Resilient Management Consulting and Coaching
Lauren Wegman Director and global head of people analytics, Twitter
The Pandemic Effect

EVEN IF THEY’RE DISPERSED, PEOPLE ARE STILL A CRITICAL RESOURCE

Due to Covid-19, do you believe human workers are more important than technology?

71% OF LEADERS SAY YES

But, neither tech nor people are going anywhere. The trick is figuring out how to make them work together so everyone wins.

“I see this as the major opportunity for people analytics to be the centralized intelligence function informing all major HR decisions.”

—Lauren Wegman, Director and global head of people analytics, Twitter

“We need to be more applicant-centric. How are we going to attract them? What can we offer them? How are we going to value what they have to offer? It’s balancing technology and the human touch and offering a sense of realness and transparency from the jump.”

—Jan Hartel, VP of employee process, CSG

“In interviews, we prioritize problem-solving and decision-making. I’m less concerned about what actually happened in the past but instead I’m looking for insight into how they might resolve or handle future situations.”

—Kim Weaver, Founder, Resilient Management Consulting and Coaching

Source: Work 2035 report
The employee experience lasts way longer than that first free company hoodie and can be improved exponentially by a mix of technology and people—if leaders play to the strengths of both.

Thankfully, humans and robots excel at tasks that are complete opposites. For the latter, you can ask them to do anything that has a clear, immutable pattern, needs dozens (or trillions) of calculations, or requires it to search through data sets. This is precisely what certain aspects of the hiring process require.

PRIORITIZE ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE FOR:

- Automating interview and performance review scheduling
- Scouring the internet for qualified candidates
- Getting in front of qualified candidates by posting precise job descriptions through a programmatic ad marketplace
- Cross-checking compensation levels against other data sources
- Administering and analyzing regular team assessments
- Testing for the necessary hard skills against competitive data

However, AI is only as nimble as its programming. If you can’t write a set of rules to follow for the task at hand, that’s where humans, who are all about exceptions to those rules, are critical. Think about the Captcha security feature: It challenges users to identify which pictures contain, say, a stop sign. This is no sweat for humans, even if the sign is partially hidden, upside down, drawn in crayon. Once humans know what we’re looking for, we can apply that idea to new contexts. This distinct intuition is a must when finding (and retaining) the right candidates.

FOCUS HUMAN INTELLIGENCE ON:

- Leading the behavioral portions of interviewing, including relational skills
- Building ways to measure employees’ decision-making and problem-solving abilities as part of hiring and advancement phases
- Implementing an action plan that comes out of regular team assessments, including retraining existing staff, hiring new full-timers, and commissioning specialized freelancers—the so-called “build, buy, and borrow” strategy—to fill any skills gaps
- Training and maintaining oversight to identify AI biases in the hiring and assessment processes
- Repositioning the HR function horizontally across the org, as opposed to a siloed vertical

“I believe growth within organizations is about supporting the education that happens both inside and outside of work and giving your workforce the time and programs they need to feel truly supported.”

—Kit Krugman, Head of organization and culture design, strategy transformation firm Co:collective

“While there is a great deal of potential for AI to help companies make smarter, data-driven decisions in hiring, we must take care to be sure the ML models are learning from the most diverse and inclusive set of data possible.”

—Carol Cochran, VP, people and culture, remote hiring service FlexJobs
Noise control will be nonnegotiable

Technology makes a good friend but bitter enemy. With all the new screens, pings, and everything in between, leaders will have to protect their workers’ well-being from system overload.

On one hand, technology will free us from the bonds of mundane office work. According to a 2018 survey of 50,000 information economy workers, the average employee “checks in” with communication tools every six minutes. And that’s not even counting the time lost to meetings, administrative tasks, and general life interruptions.

With AI’s help, managers could also focus on the most rewarding parts of our jobs—coming up with new products, implementing new strategies, and mentoring employees. But at some point we all have to charge our own batteries (away from the actual batteries).

According to the Work 2035 report, over two-thirds of professionals (67%) believe that leadership will have to significantly increase investment in worker mental wellbeing programs as a direct response to digital-induced burnout.

One way to accomplish that is to rethink productivity. For example, you could celebrate every time AI lets teams get the weekend started a little earlier.

“Greetings, fellow humans. Our machines have done their work valiantly this week, reducing our average workday by 1 hour and 27 minutes. Now, let us enjoy these refreshments before us.”

Another is giving employees permission to disconnect—or even writing it into their contracts. Mandatory offline time, along with minimum vacation requirements and wellness stipends, can prevent burnout by ensuring that employees aren’t tempted to check their email once or twice or 15 times on a Sunday afternoon. Even the tools teams use must be considered through this lens. Instead of five different software solutions that keep workers bouncing back and forth, streamline down to one or two and use AI to help streamline the rest.

As lines between work and non-work life erode, these measures won’t just be nice-to-haves managers trot out during slow seasons and kick to the curb when work picks up. They will be critical tools for keeping everyone sane and engaged.

Long hours don’t automatically equate to good work. A flood of messages doesn’t always suggest movement on a project. And the sooner leaders can spot and celebrate actual progress, the better.

“All the technologies that have woven their way into the workplace, whether it’s applications, collaboration tools, or chat tools are there for a good purpose. But we’ve reached a tipping point where they’re actually taking away from employees doing their very best work.”

—Tim Minahan, CMO, Citrix

OUR WXPERTS

Farai Chideya
Journalist and author of The Episodic Career

Amy Haworth
HR chief of staff, Citrix

Tim Minahan
CMO, Citrix

Keri K. Stephens
Professor of organizational communication and technology, University of Texas at Austin

Erin Tilley
Human-centered design lead, Tyson
The Mental Health Mandate

LEADERS AND WORKERS AGREE
COMPANIES WILL BE EXPECTED TO
PROTECT AGAINST BURNOUT

Do you believe that leaders will have to up investment in employee wellbeing programs to combat increased digital burnout?

67% OF PROFESSIONALS SAY YES

“Workers need permission to disconnect, or the permission to have space, whether it’s a sabbatical or a futuristic AI application that prioritizes your notifications and only delivers the ones you’ve authorized ahead of time.”

—Erin Tilley, Human-centered design lead, Tyson

“Digital exhaustion robs workers of the headspace to be as creative and productive as possible.”

—Amy Haworth, HR chief of staff, Citrix

Source: 2020 poll
There’s a trope that businesses with unlimited vacation policies end up having workers take even less time off than those with an allotted amount of days. Often, this is because of an “always on” expectation set at the very top of the org chart.

Companies can beef up benefits packages to promote employee wellness all day long, but until intentional mental health practices are modeled at the highest levels of leadership, these tactics will fall flat.

To start, managers can introduce new employee guidelines, which require staff to take time off, and more sophisticated applications of technology.

Managers can go one step further and restrict access to company servers during certain times, meaning any employee who wants to pop off a few spreadsheets on Friday night will be met with a lovingly worded “access denied” message.

To best support employees, it helps to know which ones need it most. Every year, Google randomly selects 4,000 employees to complete two in-depth surveys that measure static traits, like personality, and dynamic traits, like attitudes about culture, work projects, and co-workers. After the first set of surveys, they found that 31% of employees were able to disconnect from work. Huzzah! However, of the remaining (and overwhelming majority of) workers, half wanted to get better at it. So one Google office in Ireland implemented a “Dublin after Dark” event, in which they asked all employees to drop off their devices at the front desk before going home that night.

An extreme measure, but these are extreme times. Leaders must become the loudest, staunchest advocates for their workers’ well-being. One of our WXperts summed up this necessary behavior change best:

“If I’m doing work emails on a Sunday evening, I’ll set a delay delivery for Monday at 8am. I do this because I understand the role that power has, often unintentionally, in putting pressure on others.”

—Keri K. Stephens, Professor of organizational communication and technology, University of Texas at Austin

“Let’s keep real productivity, but get rid of fake productivity. Let’s spend more time with our friends and family. If we can be more focused, more efficient, and more humane towards ourselves and others, that would be a great gift.”

—Farai Chideya, Journalist and author, The Episodic Career
Data by the people must be for the people

By 2035, every minute of the workday will generate terabytes of data. In the morning, analyses of your email frequency to chart your productivity over time; during meetings, scans of your pupil dilation and heart rate to gauge interest; on your vacation, procedures to alert your boss if you’re trying to sneak in some extra work.

Even now, though, when the amount of data is still relatively small, the dynamics of data collection aren’t seen as equitable.

But the days of uninhibited corporate data collection will be over. Soon, every company will have an employee data contract in place.

For leaders, it may feel like a win-win: more personal data toward increased productivity. But, not everyone shares that feeling. According to our 2020 WX insight poll of Quartz readers, 72% of non-managers said they would not be willing to compromise their personal data privacy for enhanced productivity, compared to 43% of leaders.

The tension between these two POVs is clear, so there must be an equal value exchange and above all else: trust. Leaders have to do the work to discern what data they genuinely need and take only that, message to employees why it’s important, let them opt in or out, and then communicate back the positive impact they’ve helped create.

Another key way to foster trust and encourage participation is anonymity. Promising privacy will create higher-quality datasets, plus business decisions should be based on aggregate trends rather than the answers from specific individuals.

Furthermore, using data as a tool to penalize is a quick way to discourage employees from providing reliable metrics in the future. You’ll probably start to hear a lot of “Oops, I didn’t realize I haven’t been wearing my biotracker for the past 14 days,” and “Oh, I marked ‘exceeds expectations’ on every single survey question because I couldn’t be happier working here.”

And finally, data-sharing should also be a two-way street, with workers able to access valuable information about when, where, and how they produce their best work.

“In the consumer world, data collection genuinely improves the individual experience. However, in the workplace, the employee benefits are usually slim in comparison to the benefits for the employer, who gets all the data, and the data that they collect is often perceived as a mechanism to push or punish the employee for lack of performance.”

—Safi Obeidullah, Field CTO, Citrix

OUR WXPERTS
Meet the brains behind our breakthroughs:

Aarti Borkar
VP of security and former head of Watson Talent, IBM

Leighton Cusack
Principal, PoolTogether

Melissa Marsh
Founder and executive director, PLASTARC

Safi Obeidullah
Field CTO, Citrix
The Price of Productivity

THE PERCEIVED BENEFITS OF DATA COLLECTION DEPEND ON THE ORG CHART

Would you be willing to compromise your personal data for enhanced productivity?

72% OF NON-MANAGERS SAY YES

43% OF LEADERS SAY YES

“Consent management needs to be planned. You need to know what your employees are willing to disclose and what they’re not. It is a measure of trust in the organization and a measure of the policies downstream.”

—Aarti Borker, VP of security and former head of Watson Talent, IBM

“In a medical trial, the doctor doesn’t even know which person gets the real pill or the placebo. In the same way, your manager shouldn’t know which specific employee made a mistake to provide feedback for the whole team. There has to be a level of anonymity.”

—Leighton Cusack, Principal, blockchain-powered site PoolTogether

Source: 2020 poll
When developing your company’s data policies, the general approach should be to use data as a means to create mutual wins. One of our WXperts sums it up well:

“You don’t stand on a street corner with your wifi open, advertising your location for just any reason. You stand there with your location on because you’re connecting to an Uber or a Lyft and you’re expecting to get a ride. The best way for organizations to address the question of data consent is just providing better, more awesome services in exchange for that data.”

—Melissa Marsh, Founder and executive director, workplace innovation firm PLASTARC

Drilling into specifics, consider these guiding principles to shape your employee data policy:

1. Ask for employee permission and request only what you need.
2. Use data to support and not punish workers.
3. Be transparent with where and how the data informs management decisions.
4. Turn over employee data when they leave the company.

Employee buy-in is key. If you’re going to implement a new policy or use archival data in a new way, ask for a group of volunteers to serve as beta testers, solicit their feedback, and incorporate it into the final product.

Along those lines, remember that transparency is a year-round activity, not a damage control strategy after a breach. In your company meetings, consider adding a recurring section on how data is being collected, stored, protected, and used. These approaches may be slower at first, but they produce something invaluable: cooperation.

“What if you collected data on how every single employee performed a task and then examined which method of completing the task was fastest, or delivered the most accuracy or quality? What if that best way was then suggested to all employees as a recommendation, much like how streaming services do? An AI nudge to help you deliver a better outcome.”

—Safi Obeidullah, Field CTO, Citrix
WX INSIGHT #5

We will all be cyborg learners

One thing that won’t change over the next 15 years is competition for good jobs and growth opportunities. In fact, 57% of employees surveyed in the Work 2035 report said that they would have a chip implanted under their skin if it would “significantly enhance their performance and remuneration.”

“I like your gumption,” you say to your employees as they place their forearms on your desk, ready to receive their injection of productivity-enhancing nano-robots. “But let’s consider a few other options first.”

The first is working with AI to learn new skills, which, according to 79% of professionals surveyed in Work 2035, will be a significant future factor for upskilling. That means both the soft skills—cross-cultural competency, change management, adaptive thinking—and the hard skills like cybersecurity strategy, 3D modeling, and blockchain technologies. Unlike programs of the past, AI training can be tailored to meet each employee’s needs, highlighting where they need to focus, predict future training their role will require, and aggregate recommended content based on past work.

Not only will AI be an important upskilling tool, by 2035, 75% of those surveyed by Citrix believe that a company’s leadership team will be partially augmented by technology. But, according to a 2019 report from MIT and Boston Consulting Group, 40% of companies don’t see returns on their investment in AI, primarily because employees aren’t able to tap the potential benefits. This is less a technical challenge to overcome and more of an implementation problem. In fact, in order to develop a workforce that’s equipped to use AI, you don’t need the best coders, you need the best learners.

The appetite is there, and the people are ready: In a survey of Quartz readers, 68% of workers and 82% of leaders say they’re excited by the prospect of mastering new skills and technologies.

“Covid-19 will have a lasting impact on how we interact with, train, and grow our employees’ skill sets in the future. If there’s any question this year has posed, it’s ‘how do we make distance learning more effective, as well as more relevant?’”

— Kris Habereder, Senior director of HR, WE Communications
The State of Upskilling

THE LEARNING CURVE FROM TWO POINTS OF VIEW

Are you excited by the prospect of mastering new skills and technologies?

68% OF WORKERS SAY YES

82% OF LEADERS SAY YES

“When it comes to electronic health records, we can do a micro-training on medication compliance. These short sessions let us be timely, reactive, and address specific needs as they arrive.”

—Bruce Cohen, VP, chief strategy and innovation officer, CSG

“We’re all sick of hearing that the future is in technical jobs and that everyone should become a coder—that’s just not true. The future of work will be about mindset skills: strategy, creativity, adaptability, impact, and empathy.”

—Colette Keane, VP of marketing, Nomadic Learning

Source: 2020 poll
The costs of upskilling may seem daunting at first, but it doesn’t have to mean a four-year degree in advanced artificial intelligence. For example, one of our WXperts runs a healthcare services organization, and as challenges arise for his staff, he immediately offers targeted opportunities.

Managers can also take advantage of the talents their employees already have by creating mentorship groups within the company. Traditionally, this has meant pairing a worker with someone higher in the organization. But as we know, the economy of the future requires soft and hard skills. Maybe you connect a back-end developer with someone in marketing or a graphic designer with an HR manager.

Not only will your upskilling curriculum need to focus on learning about AI, it will also need to carve time out for employees to learn how to work with AI. Eighty-two percent of Work 2035 leaders believe that every organization will eventually have a Chief Artificial Intelligence (CAI) that delivers new analytical insights that a human CEO would otherwise overlook. On the flip side, a CEO could run something by the CAI to simulate potential outcomes.

The CAI isn’t there to replace the leadership team, but rather give them a better sense of the impact of their decisions. It isn’t piloting the ship; it’s telling you the odds of making it out of this asteroid belt in one piece.

A single L&D initiative won’t set up your team for success; instead get them up to speed by taking a multi-prong approach:

Make a clear commitment to mentorship by investing in its value. Block off times on participants’ calendars for meetings, set mentorship goals to create accountability, and have pairs present what they learned or achieved at the end of the program to promote wider knowledge sharing.

Supplement longform development strategies with micro-trainings. Help workers stay agile and effective with quick-hit skill-building opportunities that are tailored to their specific roles and knowledge gaps. These could be one-off online classes, short-term courses, or even informal meetings with colleagues already adept at the skill at hand.

When feedback from managers isn’t practical, use AI. Acclimate workers to AI-enabled learning, by starting slow and small. For example, before a big presentation, employees can record their contributions and then have a speech analysis software evaluate their diction, pace, and whether they mentioned key words and phrases.

“The ultimate indicator of success with a company’s L&D programs will be employee engagement. And the ultimate question is “Did we facilitate progress?” Engaged employees are the engine for growth in organizations—and progress fuels engagement.”

—Chris Voce, Customer engagement strategist, Citrix
The path to smarter, better WX is clear. But to get to the Promised Land of productivity and leisure, there are obstacles to overcome: an anxious workforce, digital fatigue, a renewed need for interpersonal skills, reformed data policies, and a whole lot of upskilling.

You’ve taken the first step in making the transition: imagining what the future of WX could look like. Now, you’re armed with the might of Citrix’s research, analysis from Quartz Creative, and insights from a community of WXperts. These five pieces of actionable advice will help you address the inevitable issues head on and create a workplace ready for the future.

This article was produced on behalf of Citrix by Quartz Creative and not by the Quartz editorial staff.