

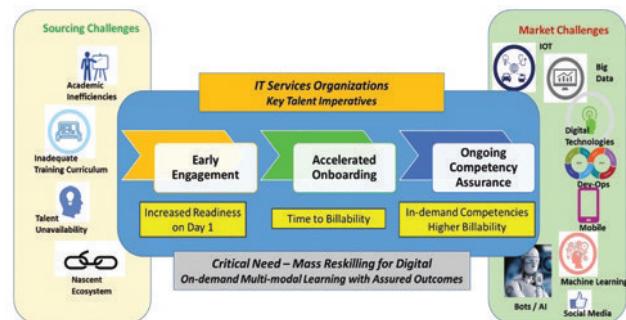
# Delivering Learning Outcomes at Scale: Re-Skilling Imperatives for Creating the Next Generation of Digital Talent

**D**igital technologies and business models are disrupting traditional businesses across the globe. The technology needs of these businesses are undergoing a sea change posing a massive challenge to the IT services organizations building solutions for them. The customer's expectation from IT services organisations is therefore changing from plain project execution and SLA adherence to "Ownership of Value", "Outcome based models" and "Product mindset". This calls for agile teams with knowledge and skills on digital technologies, full technology stacks, user experience design, micro-services based architecture, design thinking, and product engineering.

But, the impact of Digital Transformation is not restricted to the IT workforce alone. In fact, the World Economic Forum terms it the Fourth Industrial Revolution – and it is impacting the global workforce across all sectors. As per its updated "Future of Jobs, 2018" report, it highlights that the "Global average skills stability—the proportion of core skills required to perform a job that will remain the same—is expected to be about 58%, meaning an average shift of 42% in required workforce skills over the 2018–2022 period." Further, the report goes onto estimate that almost 54% of all employees will require significant reskilling and upskilling. The amount of training required will be unprecedented in the annals of history.

It's an imperative that businesses take the lead in supporting their own workforce to reskill & upskill, but it's even more important that working professionals take charge of their own competency development and embrace a culture of lifelong learning. Organizations and governments must invest in creating a 360° learning ecosystem. However, current strategies, as indicated by the WEF report suggest that those most in need of reskilling & upskilling are the least likely to receive such training, as organizations prioritize their immediate needs and short-term goals and objectives.

In fact, our own experience working with many leading organizations in India, also shows that while some immediate needs are being addressed, efforts are falling short of the width & depth of interventions required. Moreover, it is unclear whether the efforts will result in a



**Figure 1: The Digital Transformation Skills Challenge**

sustainable learning eco-system that will keep pace with the rapid changes that will continue to happen in the many technology areas that makeup the digital transformation landscape.

In my view an organization wide talent transformation program has to holistically address the needs of:

- 1) Fresh talent that is being on-boarded at an entry level
- 2) New talent being inducted at a lateral level
- 3) Existing people who are working on projects
- 4) Existing people who are in-between projects

Making a deep and impactful change across the organization is a key imperative for the learning and development teams. But given the scale of operations of leading organizations, 4 key constraints need to be overcome:

- 1. Time:** The disruptive new technologies present a significant learning curve. For example, in key developer roles we estimate an initial effort of 500-800 hours of learning & practice to get up to speed and an additional 250-300 hours annually for the next 2-3 years to remain current. This quantum of learning is way beyond traditional estimates and capacity that most organizations have created. This problem gets accentuated further for the people who are deployed on existing projects and have minimal time available for learning
- 2. Reach:** Across numerous geographies and multiple modes required to address employees in a variety of roles - from client facing team members, to people



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on the bench, to fresh graduates who have just been hired

**3. Experts:** Lack of availability of experts & practitioners, who have the cutting edge skills, for training, coaching, and mentoring. Scarce experts are most in demand for billable client engagements

**4. Costs:** Given the time, reach and expertize constraints to be overcome, the additional costs are significant  
What if there was a way of transforming existing people through a different model?

A model that not only addresses the learning challenges faced by employees, but also addresses the motivational and economic issues to create a win-win solution for the organization as well as the employee. A model that transforms existing employees and ensures they have “Project-ready Digital Skills”.

In anticipation of the demand for digital skills and the industry need for a solution to address the problem of rapid skills development in this area, NIIT launched StackRoute in 2015. StackRoute runs boot camps and workshops that produce exceptional Full Stack Developers and Digital Architects. At StackRoute, participants go through the experience of building and releasing a real technology product. This is done in an immersive environment where participants experience what it takes to visualize, design, build, and release a new product. The transition from believing “I cannot do this” to demonstrating “here is what I have built” changes people. Our Mastery learning model assures, with 90% probability, that our graduates are readily deployable on digital opportunities and projects.

An approach that is showing promise in many organizations that have started their digital re-skilling journey is as follows:

1. Credible assessment & calibration process that assesses the target group of employees and establishes the current baseline of skills and determines the gap that needs to be bridged
2. Differentiated learning plans and investments tailored to individual needs



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3. Expert counselling – To “enroll” participants into the journey of transformation and the effort & discipline that will be required of them. This is an important, but oft neglected step that ensures that participants are not under any false illusions about the effort that will be required on their part
4. Balanced economic model – That equitably addresses the needs of the organization with that of the participants while ensuring that there is no mindset of entitlement
5. Attractive yet credible outcomes that are transparent and indisputable – Clear demonstration of the transformational learning outcomes and the confidence that the gains can be carried forward into live projects  
It is abundantly clear that traditional models of training, which result in sub-optimal outcomes for a majority of the learners, are insufficient. Instead a coherent strategy and an approach that guarantees results, while addressing the constraints highlighted earlier, is needed. Only when Learning Outcomes can be delivered at scale, will Boards and CEOs have the confidence to sign-off on the large re-skilling investments required!

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