

SMART TECH | INDUSTRY SPEAK

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## SHIFT to the New Mode of Learning

Excerpts from StackRoute Whitepaper titled, "SHIFT to the new Normal of Learning"

**E**ven as the global economy redefines the new normal, resilience and innovation will define success for the post-pandemic business world. Business leaders now have a great opportunity to see the opportunities that come with adversities and play a pivotal role in making a difference to help

organisations to not only just cope but to also succeed in the long term.

In this fast changing environment, a talented workforce with the ability to learn quickly is the key for competitive advantage. The focus of any learning has to build the ability to continuously adapt, engage with others while retaining



**SHIFT**  
to the new normal of learning

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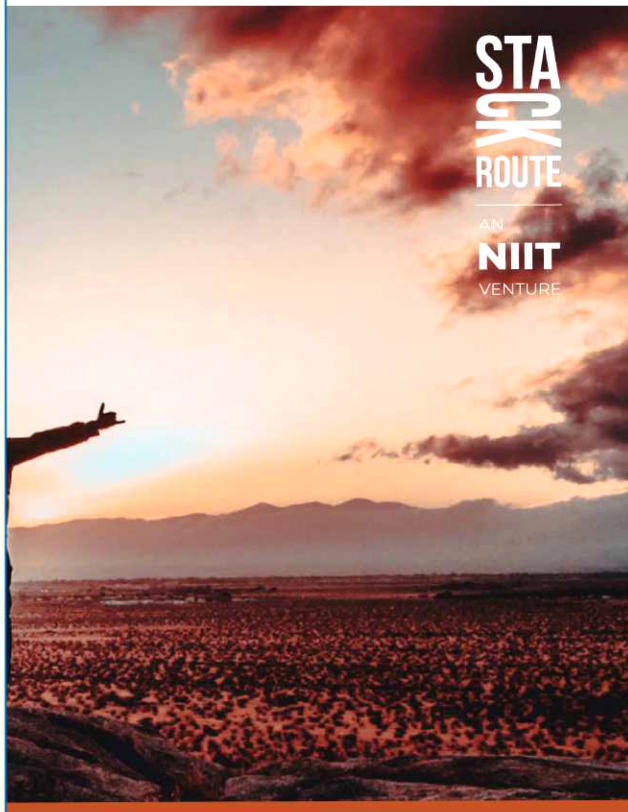
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the core identity and values of oneself. Essentially, this goes beyond just acquiring knowledge. It is about knowing how to learn and help build new ways of thinking.

### Sense the Opportunity

This is the time to re-examine, redefine and reimagine how talent can be revitalised. We need to prepare the workforce for agility, innovation and resilience. An “agile” workforce that discards the old ways of thinking and adapts new ones. An “innovative” workforce that create opportunities from adversities – multiplying them as they are seized. A “resilient” workforce that can stay tough, stay prepared and continues to learn.



### Harness the Possibility

The world’s best organizations are those in which the leadership is able to instil a sense of intrinsic motivation amongst its employees. While extrinsic motivation such as promotions, enhanced job roles, badges and awards have been around to ensure completion of planned initiatives, it is only when learners become self-driven can organizations transform. Organizations need to harness this possibility by designing learning that is self-driven, yet aligned to various possible scenarios of the future.

Harness the possibility to define

- An approach to repurpose the workforce.
- An approach that is designed to build capabilities.
- An approach that helps organizations shape their collective future

### Ideate the Approach

As Albert Einstein said, “We cannot solve our problems with the same thinking we used when we created them.” Most existing competence frameworks and individual competencies seem narrow and non-differentiated across roles. These could be a misfit in the less predictable, and complex environments of today. Organisations require a slightly different set of institutional capabilities and individual competencies to build a workforce that is able to meet the needs of the future.

Organisations need a workforce that has the potential to understand, survive and thrive in the new dynamics of the environment and work - a workforce that can anticipate the short term and the long term impact of decisions, apply knowledge in unknown, new and evolving circumstances, survive in harsh situations, create opportunities in any situation, integrate disciplines, embrace new ideas, welcome opposing arguments, develop perspectives, take a stand, create value and drive change. Such abilities especially critical in the post-pandemic world are referred to as the “Transformative Competencies” (OECD Future of Education and Skills, 2030).

It becomes important to question existing frameworks and common practices to reformulate and redefine existing beliefs, approaches and solutions prior to designing new learning interventions.

Ideation will help to identify the institutional capabilities that are necessary to achieve organisational goals and to help examine if the existing workforce competencies align to the same. It should also include a thorough examination

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of existing strengths and weaknesses to remove any barriers to change.

Ideation can help to configure the following:

- Do existing competence frameworks provide the right fit to develop the capabilities of tomorrow?
- Do the present approaches to learning help the learners learn effectively and kindle their interest to move to the next level?
- Is the organizational environment supportive of a high-performer and continue to provide a challenging environment to learn and grow?

**Foster Focused-Change**

Learning designs have to build the ability to innovate, take larger responsibility, create value, and to make ethical judgement that will help to guide towards a better future. They have to challenge the mental models of learners. They force the learners to connect the learnings to their current work, and also to possible opportunities relevant to the learning. This will help learners reflect on their own true potential.

Learning designs have to allow an environment for learning to be converted to action. An organization that is keen on an agile, resilient and an innovative workforce should provide for application-oriented learning supported by mentorship to help the employee deliver in the world after the crisis.

It is important that any learning intervention is spaced out over time. This helps in long term retention as the new knowledge is given a chance to be rehearsed over a duration and revisited often. Unlearning can happen only if the learning design accommodates for the new learning to “stick” by way of actions that allows it to be reinforced and applied.

When the new learning becomes the new normal, the old practices and the ways of working would disappear gradually. Unlearning is an important skill that allows a learner to shed resistance to new ideas, to be ready to face opposing arguments and to take differences of opinion in professional stride.

A three phased approach that **imparts** knowledge and allows comprehension; **immerses** the learner in an environment conducive to experimenting; and encourages learner to **introspect** on oneself.

This will allow learning interventions to be “learner-centred” and bring a foster-focused change to:

- Provide an exceptional learning experience leaving the learners motivated to pursue further learning towards growth opportunities.
- Help learners to demonstrate a difference in the way they bring value to their work.
- Enable the learners with a learning compass - that gives them the confidence to venture into unknown terrains.

**Transform Learning**

Designing an effective approach to learning is both challenging and complex with varied needs and immediate demands from the business. This requires conscious and deliberate attempts for:

- a SHIFT in focus from *skill building to capability building*
- a SHIFT in mind set from *upskilling to upgrading talent*
- a SHIFT of responsibility from *organization mandated training to employee motivated learning*
- a SHIFT of learning design from *faculty-centred to learner-centred*
- a SHIFT in learning delivery from *passive listening to participatory learning*
- a SHIFT in content from *one size fits all to individualized and differentiated learning*
- a SHIFT in evaluation methods from *assessment of learning to assessment for learning*

Perhaps, the biggest SHIFT has to be in the roles of learning and development professionals. Their role is to go beyond fulfilling the immediate requirements of skill development. They must identify market trends; influence businesses and help build “transformative competencies” (OECD, 2019).

These shifts have the potential to truly transform learning that will:

- Provide an environment that can create seeds of change with the potential to have a transformative impact on each learner
- Encourage new ways of thinking to face and solve problems in uncertain times and ambiguous situations
- Promote the potential of every learner to create impactful solutions to complex problems.

Having an innovative workforce that is agile, resilient, motivated and competent will make the difference between those enterprises that will succeed in the post pandemic world and the ones that do not. Such a workforce will not wait for black swan events or disruptions in the market to come out with new ideas to stay afloat.