

Converging Market Trends Make the Business Case for Talent Development Certification



Every business leader recognizes the turbulence and state of constant change that influence today's global business landscape. While these factors alone can keep CEOs up at night, layer in the need for upskilling, reskilling, and future-skilling talent, the sinking rates of employee engagement, high attrition and burnout rates, plus societal factors like rising rates of loneliness and you have a recipe for overwhelm that can paralyze leaders' decision making and vision casting.

And while there are trends and turbulence that rightly give pause, there are strategies and solutions that can help leaders prioritize and harness the potential of their single greatest resource: their people.

Converging Trends

Labor market: "The US labor market is at a critical inflection point," [according to Lightcast](#), a firm that analyzes labor market data. The organization argues that several trends, including demographic imbalances due to the significant rate of baby boomer retirements and smaller incoming workforce numbers, mismatches between the skills and capabilities employers need and those that workers possess, and rapid and constant technological advances are creating an inflection point for significant upheaval.

[The World Economic Forum](#) notes similar trends as drivers of labor market transformation outside the US.

Technology / AI: Generative AI is and will continue to affect the way we work. There are troubling gaps in workforce skilling when it comes to AI. Research from ATD noted that leaders often think their workforce possesses more AI skill than it does. That perception gap needs to close and the only way to do that is through intentional upskilling to enable AI to serve businesses ethically. Beyond generative AI, advances in technology continue to drive a near constant need for reskilling in technical capabilities. McLean Company's 2024 *Future of Work Report* notes that "hard" or technical skills have a shorter shelf life than more durable skills like critical thinking or problem solving.

Skills focus: ATD's multi-year research on the skills gap has shown gaps between the skills leaders say they need and those an organization's employees exhibit. While skills gaps have existed for decades, a recent shift in learning and development may provide some solutions.

More and more the move in talent development is toward a skills-based approach to learning and equipping the workforce. In fact, CTDO Next, an exclusive ATD membership group of learning executives, recently

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released its Skills-Based Talent Development Maturity Model to help organizations and their TD teams move toward this approach to ensuring organizations are right-skilled for today and the future.

Employee disengagement: Research from Gallup and other organizations shows employee engagement at near-record lows. Disengaged employees cost organizations in lost productivity, innovation, efficiency, and effectiveness. A key driver of improving engagement? Opportunities to learn and grow within a company. LinkedIn's *Workplace Learning Report 2025* states, "Learning combined with career development—leadership training, coaching, internal mobility, and more—accelerates the flow of critical skills to keep pace with business needs." The report goes on to observe that "career progress is people's No. 1 motivation to learn."

A lack of opportunity to learn and grow can lead to turnover. In a tight job market that complicates the workforce picture. A [2021 Pew Research Study](#) revealed that 64 percent of respondents said having no advancement opportunities led them to quit their jobs. A more [recent poll](#) by Great Place to Work showed 43 percent of respondents quit their last job because of advancement opportunities.

Talent Development Is a Workforce Enabler

Even with the advances of generative AI, the most valuable differentiator for any organization is the people who do the work of the organization to advance its mission or purpose.

And what do we know about our people? They value opportunities to learn, grow, and advance in their careers. This, combined with the reality that organizations need to be in a constant state of upskilling and reskilling to keep pace with technological changes, makes it clear that the need for the talent development function in organizations has never been more critical.

A rightly skilled talent development function can help organizations address several of the concerning trends facing employers:

- Upskilling
- Reskilling
- Future proofing
- Leadership and management development
- Employee engagement and retention
- Productivity

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How do you ensure your talent development team has what it takes to serve the business as a partner and align efforts so that strategic goals are anticipated, identified, and met?

Make sure they have the knowledge and skills needed to get the job done now and in the future. Invest in their certification as talent development professionals. In the recent article, [Microcredentials And Certifications Are The Future Of Career Readiness](#) by the Forbes Human Resources Council about the value of microcredentials and certifications to individuals and companies states, "...certifications are verified proof of expertise and competency [and] they're a great way to improve workforce agility and market competitiveness."

Competence Fuels Trust

In his book *The Speed of Trust*, Stephen M.R. Covey argues that trust is the key to any team or organization's success. He states that, "Trust is the function of two things: character and competence."

If you think about companies, colleagues, and leaders who you trust, you'll likely see the connection between what you think of their character and their competence.

The same is true for our teams. You want the team responsible for ensuring your people are rightly skilled to be competent in their work. Certified talent development professionals have undergone rigorous training and testing to prove their capabilities.

In fact, TD professionals who have either the Associate Professional in Talent Development (APTD®) or the Certified Professional in Talent Development (CPTD®) have undergone rigorous preparation to be certified by the Association for Talent Development. Not only have they proven their knowledge through testing, they've applied their knowledge in the workplace and have years of practical experience putting their capabilities to the test.

Additionally, the APTD and CPTD certifications are the only talent development certifications tied to the highly researched and globally vetted [Talent Development Capability Model™](#).

Employers looking to drive improvements in culture, performance, productivity, and efficiency are increasingly turning to certified talent development professionals to lead and guide the efforts to ensure their organizations are rightly skilled.

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Positive ROI

A 2022 study conducted by the ROI Institute for the ATD Certification Institute showed that professionals who invested in either the APTD or CPTD certification received a positive return on their investment:

- APTD 255%
- CPTD 178%

Those holding these credentials say their studies and the application of what they learned pursuing certification yielded positive results for their employers:

- 80.6 percent saw improved program effectiveness
- 73.3 percent saw improved productivity

In fact, APTD and CPTD certification holders believe in the transformative power of their certification experience and its benefits so much that nearly 86 percent recommend other TD professionals become certified.

Other Reasons to Support Certification

Organizations like Microsoft have conducted research that demonstrates that employees who have a professional certification are more productive. The best practices “certified employees” learn in pursuit of certification brings leading edge strategies, concepts, and knowledge to their work. When they are on teams, they can improve the quality of their team’s work with:

- ✓ Increased productivity
- ✓ Greater trust in employees’ abilities
- ✓ Rise in employee confidence and knowledge
- ✓ More engaged employees

TD Certification Champions

For 20 years, many organizations have embraced the practice of supporting their team members who are seeking talent development certification. These “certification champions” believe that investment has yielded significant positive outcomes for their organizations.

“Having a talent development organization that has certifications is a selling point, not only to recruit into that department but to recruit into the business, because they are getting trained and developed by those

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—Joe Dusing, Sr. Director, Learning and Development, Paylocity

“Supporting certification on our team helps with our overall engagement level. It shows employees that we value the knowledge and expertise that they come to the organization with and that we are committed to continuing the growth mindset and supporting that for all our team members.”

—Cathy Shaefer, Director, HR Employee Development and Talent Management Systems, MD Anderson Cancer Center.

“Since I got my certification, I’ve noticed that my understanding of the industry as a whole has really broadened. I can bring more [strategic] understanding to the table in conversations with my talent and development colleagues.”

—Christina Elms, Director of Learning and Development

“I don’t necessarily know where I would be in my career today without [my APTD certification]. So, I can say that the time investment is worth it, the financial investment is worth it. It just brings you to an entirely new level of professional growth and development in your career.”

—Sara Pieczarka, Freelance Contractor

Conclusion

The statistics are sobering when it comes to the critical juncture organizations are at related to keeping their employees’ skills up to date—assuming they are keeping their employees in the first place. [Gartner](#) reports that the number of skills needed in a single position is increasing by 10 percent year over year while more than 30 percent of the skills needed three years ago will be irrelevant soon. IDC reports that in 2025, 90 percent of organizations will feel the impact of the skills shortage and 53 percent of businesses will be affected by turnover. [Korn Ferry](#) estimates there will be 85 million unfilled jobs by 2030.

Investment in talent development—right skilling the workforce—is paramount. In times like these the smart choice is to ensure those tasked with the strategic responsibility of developing the workforce are highly qualified—certified—talent development professionals who know how to partner with business leaders to get the job done.

Learn more about options for certifying your talent development team at td.org/enterprise/enterprise-certification.

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