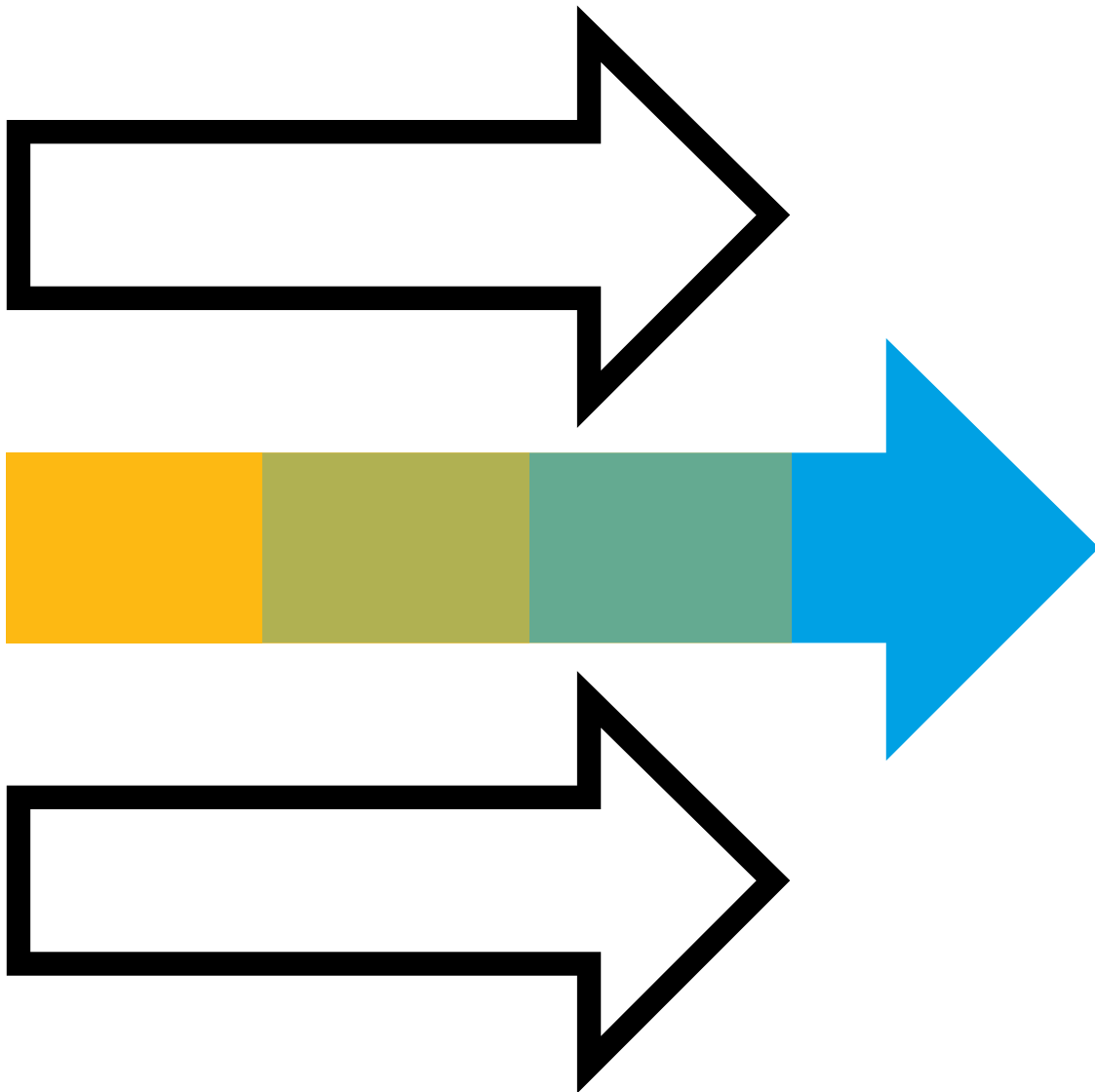


## Creating an **Agile Organization**

Three Simple but Transformational Human Capital Management Methods to Help Your Business Adapt to Change



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## About the Author

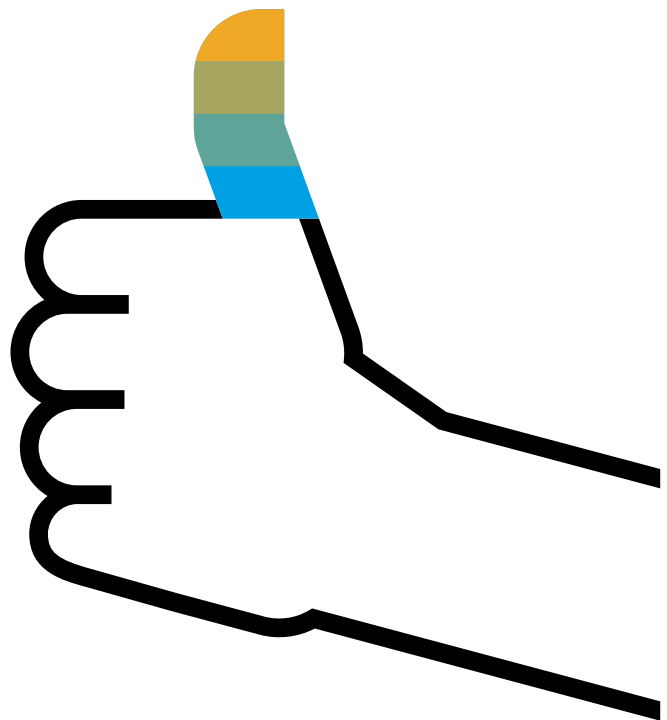
Dr. Steven Hunt is the senior vice president of human capital management (HCM) research at SAP and has more than 25 years of experience designing systems for a variety of HCM applications. A recognized expert on strategic HR, he has played a pivotal role in implementing systems to improve the productivity and engagement of millions of employees at hundreds of companies around the world.

Dr. Hunt has written two widely respected books on HR process design and implementation: *Common-sense Talent Management: Using Strategic Human Resources to Increase Company Performance* (Wiley Press, 2014) and *Hiring Success: The Art and Science of Staffing Assessment and Employee Selection* (Wiley Press, 2007).

**We live in a world of ever-accelerating change. Whatever your company's strategies and tactics this year, you will undoubtedly see them change within the next three years. These changes could be minor or massive. But change can come very quickly – and you may not know its scale until it happens. To succeed in this world of change, your company does not have to be the biggest or the most well funded. It must be the **most agile and adaptive.****

# Executive Summary

To profit from change – rather than be crushed by it – requires a highly responsive workforce. This paper discusses three methods you can use to tap in to people’s innate, but often underutilized, capability for learning and adapting to changing environments. None of these methods are new, but prior to the development of modern, cloud-based social and mobile human capital management (HCM) technology systems, they were extremely difficult to implement in large companies. While the focus here is not on HCM technology itself, the intention is to demonstrate how it can help your company and your workforce effectively adapt to changing environments. It should be noted that, for the sake of illustration, we are using examples of SAP® software technology. But SAP is not the only company offering solutions to the HR challenges outlined here. It is important that you review all your technology options to find the solutions that fit your organization’s needs.



Innovations in HCM technology let you manage a large workforce with the same flexibility as small, highly agile entrepreneurial companies.

# People Are Your Company's Best Resource When Facing Change

Before addressing the three methods for increasing workforce agility, it is important to clarify the critical role people play in helping companies adapt to change.

**People are the only constant resources companies have in a rapidly changing world.** We may not know what companies will look like in the coming years, but we can be certain they will employ people in one fashion or another. Furthermore, the factors that influence human learning, motivation, and performance are relatively well understood and stable over time. Though the world may change quickly, people do not evolve that fast.<sup>1</sup> We know a lot about creating working conditions that maximize human creativity, learning, and innovation.<sup>2</sup> The problem is that many of our traditional HCM methods are rooted in outdated concepts and ineffective processes.

**People have an amazing capacity for dealing with change.** The competitive niche of humans as a species is our ability to adapt to changing environments and to change environments to adapt to us.<sup>3</sup> We deal with significant change all the time. Think about how many major changes you have made in your own life: moving to another city, starting a different job, developing skills,

forming teams, going on trips, and so forth. We constantly do things that require learning new things, navigating new surroundings, and forming new relationships. These changes may not always be pleasant, but in most cases, we eventually figure out how to adapt to new environments and realities.

**People enjoy change in the right conditions.** Contrary to popular belief, people do not fear change. What people fear is the risk that change will lead to negative outcomes. But change in the right conditions is rewarding, exhilarating, and rejuvenating. Think about times in your career when you felt fully engaged and energized about work. Chances are, these times involved considerable change where you had to accomplish something you had never done before, work in a new culture, or engage with new people. Change like this is often stressful, but in the right conditions it creates “positive stress.” This is the stress that comes from learning to do new things and achieving challenging goals. Not only is change often good for us, lack of change can be bad for us.<sup>4</sup> It can be unhealthy – not to mention boring – for people to do the same things over and over, year after year.

1. Costanza, D.P., Finkelstein, L.M., *Generationally Based Differences in the Workplace: Is There a There There?*, *Industrial and Organizational Psychology: Perspectives on Science and Practice*, 8, 308–323, 2015, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/iop.2015.15> (registration required).
2. Zedeck, S., *APA Handbook of Industrial and Organizational Psychology*, American Psychological Association, Washington DC, 2011.
3. Massey, N., *Humans May Be the Most Adaptive Species: Constant Climate Change May Have Given Homo Sapiens Their Flexibility*, *Scientific American*, 2013, [www.scientificamerican.com/article/humans-may-be-most-adaptive-species](http://www.scientificamerican.com/article/humans-may-be-most-adaptive-species).
4. Then, FS, Luck, T, Luppa, M, Konig, H, Angermeyer, M, Riedel-Heller, SG, *Differential Effects of Enriched Environment at Work on Cognitive Decline in Old Age*, *Neurology*, 84, 2169–2176, 2015.

People are good at dealing with change, but not all change is good for people. For people to thrive in a changing world, they must work in an environment that maximizes their innate human capacity for learning and innovation. This environment must give people confidence that change will lead to positive outcomes. They must understand the reasons for the change, trust their leaders, feel supported by their peers, and be equipped with the tools and knowledge necessary to be successful. Otherwise, people may succumb to fear, uncertainty, and doubt in their ability to successfully adapt to changing job demands. Creating this sort of environment is the challenge companies face if they wish to build a responsive workforce and profit from the opportunities created by change while also managing its inherent risks.



For people to thrive in a changing world, they must work in an environment that **maximizes their innate human capacity for learning and innovation.**

# Three Methods for Creating a Highly Responsive Workforce

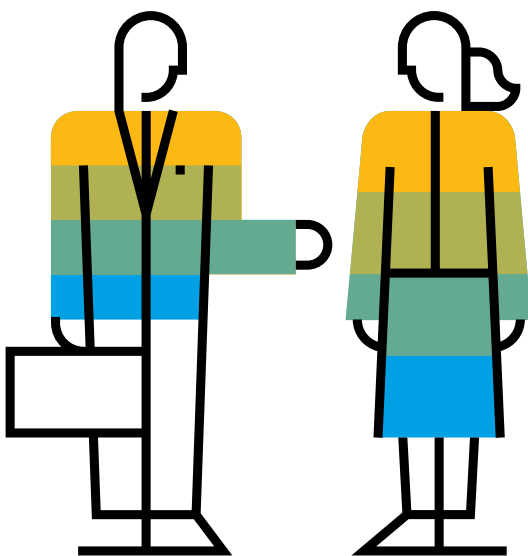
There are many things companies can do to build environments that help people thrive and grow through change. The following three HCM methods are particularly impactful for creating a responsive workforce for which change becomes an opportunity and not a threat. These are conceptually simple in nature, but they become operationally transformational in practice when successfully implemented.

**Get to know your people.** To truly take advantage of what your people can offer, you need to go beyond headcount numbers and job titles. Learn about the unique capabilities, interests, and potential of every person in your company.

**Actively engage employees in an ongoing dialogue about business goals.** Employee surveys and annual goal-setting processes are not enough. Managers and leaders responsible for setting strategic direction must engage in regular discussions with the employees responsible for executing those strategies.

**Enable and encourage employees to learn from each other.** Employees have a wealth of experience and insight about how to adapt to change and successfully achieve work goals. Tap in to that knowledge and use it to your company's advantage.

These three methods are not new. They are commonly used in small entrepreneurial companies where having a highly responsive workforce is critical to survival. Many startup companies live in a world where they either rapidly adapt to changes affecting their business or they cease to exist. Smaller companies cannot survive multiple quarters of poor results – they either run out of funding or get acquired. What enables these companies to be highly agile is their size. Everyone knows each other by name, most people work in the same office, and there is a shared sense of commitment to the organization's success. When this type of company encounters a major change, it can literally get everyone together in the same room to talk about how best to respond. Then, everyone in the company actively collaborates to execute the new strategy.



To truly know your employees, you must learn about them. This requires going deeper than staffing and headcount reports.

The challenge is how to implement these methods in large companies where employees cannot possibly know all their coworkers. How can you use these methods in a company where “getting everyone together in the same room” would require extensive airline travel and renting a sports stadium? Until recently, it was impossible to effectively sustain these methods in companies with thousands of employees working in multiple locations. But innovations in HCM technology have now made it possible.

#### **GET TO KNOW YOUR PEOPLE AND THEIR UNIQUE INTERESTS AND CAPABILITIES**

A company cannot effectively respond to change if its leaders do not know what their employees are willing and able to do. It would be like trying to decide how to respond to a flat tire without knowing whether you had a spare tire and jack in the trunk or just an old set of jumper cables. A company’s ability to respond to change is enabled and constrained by the capabilities of its existing workforce. The more company leaders under-

stand these capabilities, the more swift and intelligent their response to change will be. But many companies do not truly know who works for them. They may have headcount statistics on the number of people employed in different jobs. If they are more advanced, they may also have accurate information on how many temporary contract employees they have in addition to full-time employees. But they do not know the actual talents, capabilities, and interests that make each employee unique.

Truly knowing your workforce requires getting beyond staffing and headcount reports. Meaningful talent conversations are needed to understand the unique capabilities of individual employees. This requires two things. First, you must establish a method to learn about employee talents, skills, and interests at a deep level. Second, you need to establish methods that enable you to make decisions with the unique interests, capabilities, and potential of individual employees in mind.



The more company leaders understand the capabilities of their employees, the more **swift and intelligent their response to change.**



The best way to learn about your employees is to spend time talking with them and about them. This starts with engaging employees about their career interests, skills, and capabilities. Modern HCM technology provides a wealth of tools to help employees identify their qualifications and interests and share them with their organization in the form of online profiles and similar tools.

Figure 1 provides an example of how technology can help gather information on employee interests and skills. Employees can enter information about their interests and capabilities in a searchable profile so other people in the organization can learn more about them and their career goals.

**Figure 1: Data from an Employee Profile (SAP® SuccessFactors® Employee Central Solution)**

The screenshot displays the SAP SuccessFactors Employee Profile for Brenda Davis. The profile includes personal information such as her title (VP - Marketing and Production), location (New Brunswick), and contact details. A bio states her passion for hiking. A 'Skill Profile' overlay is shown, listing various skills with 'Meeting Management' selected. The 'Meeting Management' skill details include a description and proficiency levels from 1 to 4. Personal information at the bottom includes her person ID (bdavis), date of birth (Jan 19, 1981), and birth name (Brenda).

Skill Profile		Employee	
Skill		Employee	
Meeting Management		● ● ● ● ●	
Sales Management Tools			
Negotiating			
Sales Planning			
Coaching			
Team Management			
Sales Management			
Find people with these skills			
<b>Meeting Management</b> <b>Description</b> Knowledge of Meeting Management, the ability and experience of setting up, administering and managing meetings and events.			
<b>Proficiencies</b> Level 1 Has light experience, training, direct exposure, or past experience with Meeting Management. Has established purpose, agenda and timeframes for basic meetings within the department. Level 2 Level 3 Level 4			
Person Id	bdavis	Region Of Birth	Chicago
Date Of Birth	Jan 19, 1981	Birth Name	Brenda
Country Of Birth	United States		

Asking employees to tell you about their capabilities is fundamental to getting to know your talent. However, this will only get you so far. People may be able to tell you what they want to do and what they have done. But people struggle when it comes to evaluating what they can do or how good they are at doing it.<sup>5</sup> In addition to engaging employees directly, you need other methods to gain insight and awareness among organizational leaders of the capabilities of different employees. The most direct and accurate way to do this is to have company leaders constructively talk about employees. This is done through regular talent review sessions focused on discussing employee impact, performance, and potential.<sup>6</sup> During these sessions leaders discuss what different employees bring to the organization and how employee talents, interests, and qualifications align with challenges facing the business.

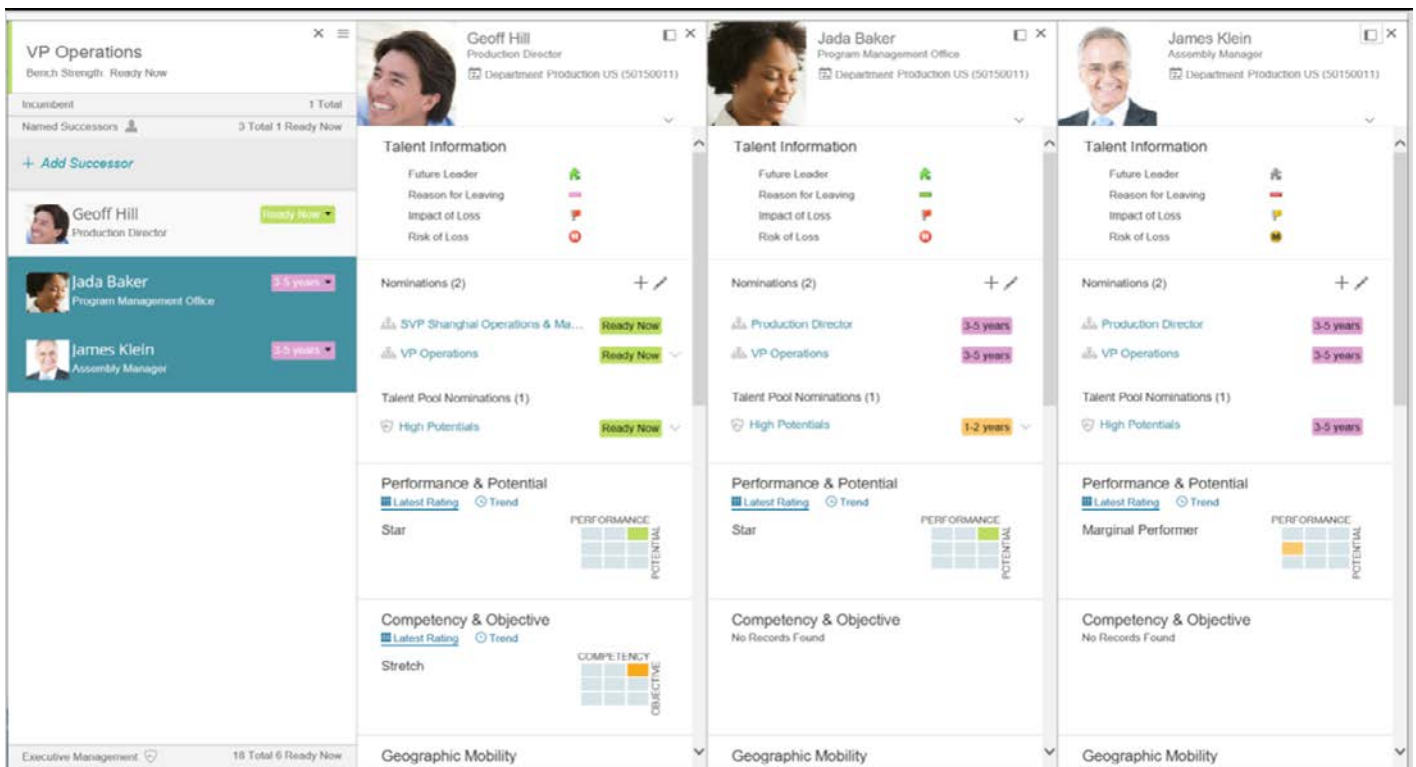
Historically, talent review sessions were difficult to conduct because of the effort required to collect and track data about employee goals, interests, accomplishments, and skills. Modern HCM technology radically reduces the time required to prepare for talent reviews by automating the processes used to gather and display employee information. This enables companies to hold more frequent, efficient, and productive conversations about employees' capabilities and potential using up-to-date, accurate data.

**Figure 2** provides an example of how technology can enable more effective use of talent review sessions by providing a way to quickly assemble and review a range of information about employees in a group setting. Information or decisions made about employees during talent review sessions is then entered in talent management systems in real time, where it can be accessed in the future.

5. Kruger, J., Dunning, D., *Unskilled and Unaware of It: How Difficulties in Recognizing One's Own Incompetence Lead to Inflated Self-Assessments*, *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 77, 1121-1134, 1999, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.77.6.1121> (registration required).

6. Pytel, L., Hunt, S.T., *Total Workforce Performance Management*, SAP® SuccessFactors® Web site, 2017, [www.successfactors.com/en\\_us/download.html?a=/content/dam/successfactors/en\\_us/resources/white-papers/wp-calibration-best-practices.pdf](http://www.successfactors.com/en_us/download.html?a=/content/dam/successfactors/en_us/resources/white-papers/wp-calibration-best-practices.pdf).

Figure 2: Comparing Employee Information (SAP® SuccessFactors® Succession & Development Solution)



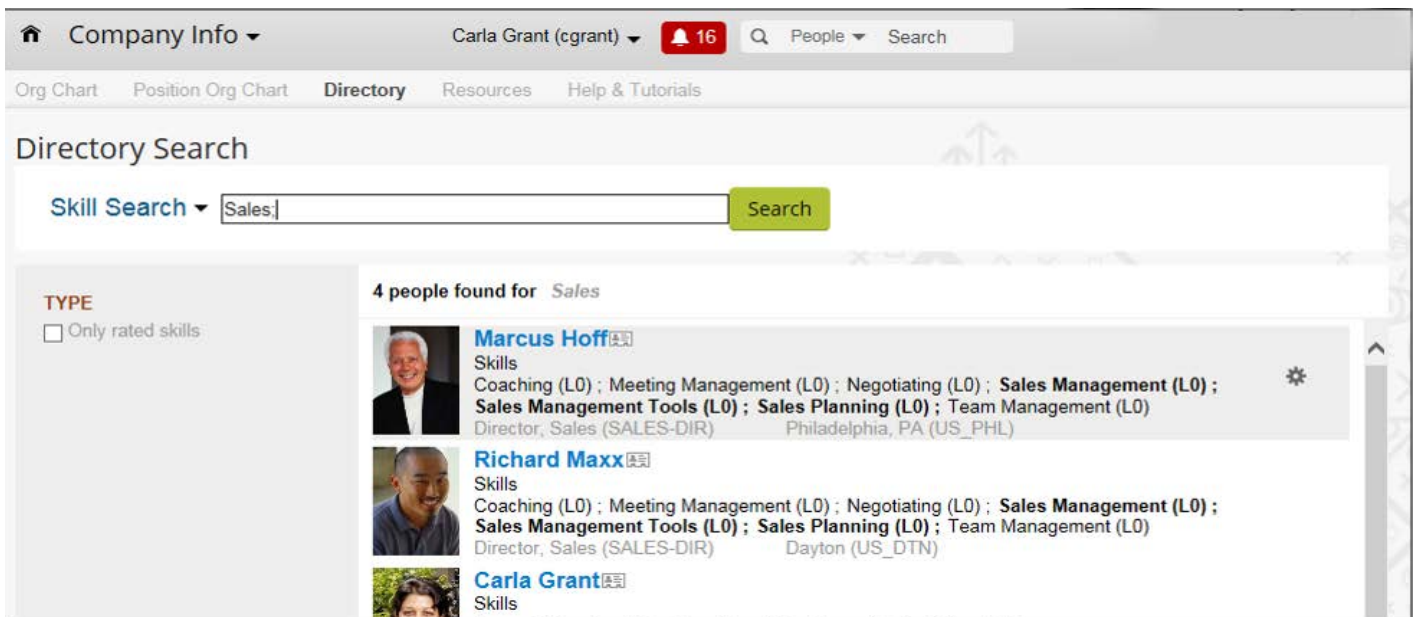
The first step to truly knowing and leveraging your employees involves learning about them. The second step is using this information to make intelligent talent decisions. Change happens quickly. To respond effectively, companies must rapidly match business demands with internal talent resources across organizations. In a large company, this cannot be done solely by relying on word of mouth and face-to-face discussions. Fortunately, companies now have access to technology that allows searching across the entire employee population in real time. This

makes it possible to find specific individuals whose unique skills and interests match the opportunities and demands created by a changing world. These tools enable efficient location and movement of people from old roles to new ones in response to changing business demands. They also make it possible to determine if the current workforce includes people with the capabilities needed to adapt to new changes, if these capabilities must be developed through training, or if people need to be brought in through external talent acquisition.

Figure 3 provides an example of how technology can enable companies to quickly search for and identify employees across the entire workforce who possess specific skills, interests, and capabilities. This technology can also be used to create reports showing the number of employees who possess different qualifications and compare this to future workforce needs.

Truly knowing your employees allows you to quickly and efficiently get the right people in the right roles to respond to business changes. Once you have done that, you can move on to ensuring people are focused on tasks that help capitalize on the opportunities created by that change while also managing the risks that could result.

**Figure 3: Identifying Employees with Specific Skills (SAP® SuccessFactors® Workforce Analytics Solution)**



## ACTIVELY COMMUNICATE WITH EMPLOYEES ABOUT BUSINESS GOALS

Providing employees with meaningful, challenging, yet achievable goals is fundamental to creating a high-performing organization.<sup>7</sup> It is not very engaging to show up to work and not know what you are supposed to do or why it matters. Goals give employees a sense of purpose, clarity, and strategic direction. The problem facing companies is how to provide employees with effective goals in a world of constantly shifting priorities.

Agile organizations must excel at rapidly aligning employees around shifting business strategies. This requires quickly creating connections between the high-level strategic goals of the company and the specific tactical work goals of employees. To do this, companies traditionally used “goal cascading.” This often required top executive teams to spend days or weeks building out a master strategic plan. This plan was then com-

municated to senior leaders, focusing on what was required of each group. Senior leaders then broke the plan into smaller components and objectives that they communicated to their directors and managers. The directors and managers then used this to assign even more specific tactical goals to their employees.

But downward goal cascading only works when goals and responsibilities remain relatively stable over the course of a year. This is no longer true. Shifting goals and job priorities are the new normal in many organizations. In addition, many companies have replaced hierarchical management structures with complex, matrixed, and constantly evolving reporting relationships. The traditional method of goal cascading was not designed to work in this modern world of highly flexible, non-hierarchical job structures.

Agile organizations must rapidly align employees around shifting business strategies by **connecting company goals and the specific goals of employees.**



7. Locke, Edwin A. (Ed), Latham, Gary P. (Ed), *New Developments in Goal Setting and Task Performance*, New York, New York, Routledge/Taylor & Francis Group, 2013.

In the world of HCM, traditional goal cascading methods are being replaced by ongoing goal dialogue to create organizational alignment. Figure 4 illustrates the difference between the two methods. In the traditional approach, goal setting is performed using structured and formal processes to set, align, and document goal plans. This process may take several months, as goals are cascaded down through different levels of the company. Goal plans are often viewed as a “contract” between employees and the company, the primary purpose of which is to guide future compensation decisions rather than facilitate ongoing alignment between company strategies and employee actions. People may spend considerable

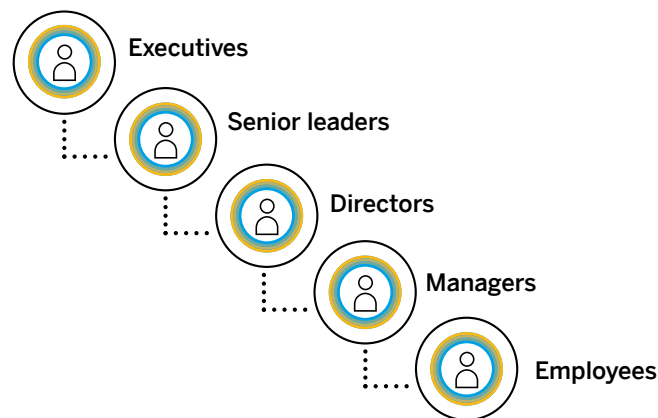
time creating lengthy goal plans with detailed descriptions of annual objectives. Goal setting is typically viewed as a quarterly or annual event. Then, once goals are set, they are rarely changed. In many companies, employees are unable to see the goals set by people higher up in the organization or by their colleagues. Goal plans are something you have but are not something you actively discuss.

When taking an ongoing goal dialogue approach, goals are constantly discussed, revisited, and modified. Strategic goals are not communicated once or twice a year through long, drawn-out processes. Instead, goals are communicated,

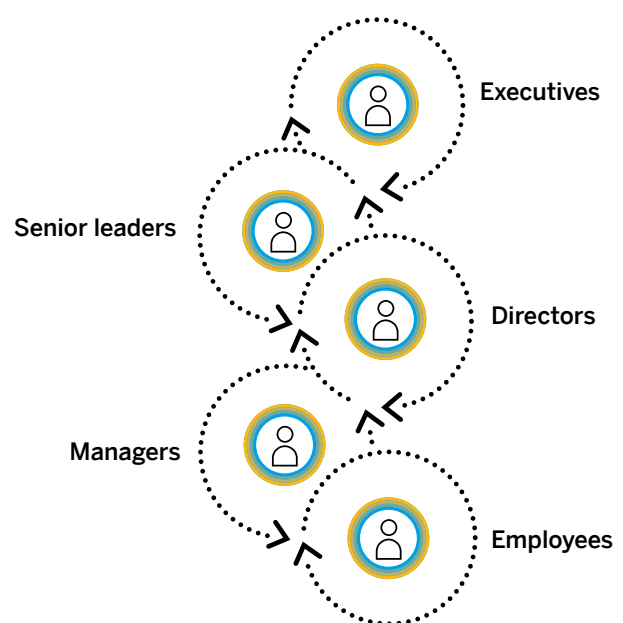
**Figure 4: Juxtaposition of Traditional Goal Cascading and Ongoing Goal Dialogue**

**Methods for creating alignment**

**Downward goal cascading**



**Ongoing goal dialogue**



clarified, and updated using short but frequent discussions between managers, employees, and teams at all levels. Goal plans are brief and only describe the major commitments, outcomes, and deliverables that must be achieved. Goal details are not placed in the goal plan. Instead, they are addressed and defined through ongoing conversation. Leaders, managers, and employees have regular discussions about what needs to happen, why it needs to happen, what is required to make it happen, and whether it is happening. Mobile technology enables employees and managers to use the information from these conversations to update goal plans, identify challenges, and track progress throughout the year. These technology systems also create high levels of goal transparency so people can see how others are interpreting their goals relative to the overall strategy of the company.

Ongoing goal dialogue addresses three major problems that occur in a world of ever-accelerating change – becoming fixated, becoming distracted, and becoming disconnected. The first two problems occur on the front lines. The third occurs at the leadership level.

**Fixated** – Front-line employees can often become fixated on goals that are no longer critical or relevant to the company's overall business strategy. Senior leaders often recognize the need to change before employees at lower levels in the company see it. Senior leaders may communicate this need for change, but employees further down in the company may not recognize what it means for their role. The result is the company changes its strategic direction at the top of the house; but, on the front lines employees continue doing what they were always doing.

**Distracted** – Front-line employees and line managers can often react to changes in a way that detracts focus from what matters to the company. An example would be overreacting to a new competitor or technology instead of staying focused on the priorities that are most important to the business. This can be a side effect of companies encouraging employees to be more agile. Instead of being more responsive to change, employees can become overly reactive and distracted from what's most important.

**Ongoing goal dialogue** emphasizes active discussion and two-way information flow up and down the leadership chain.



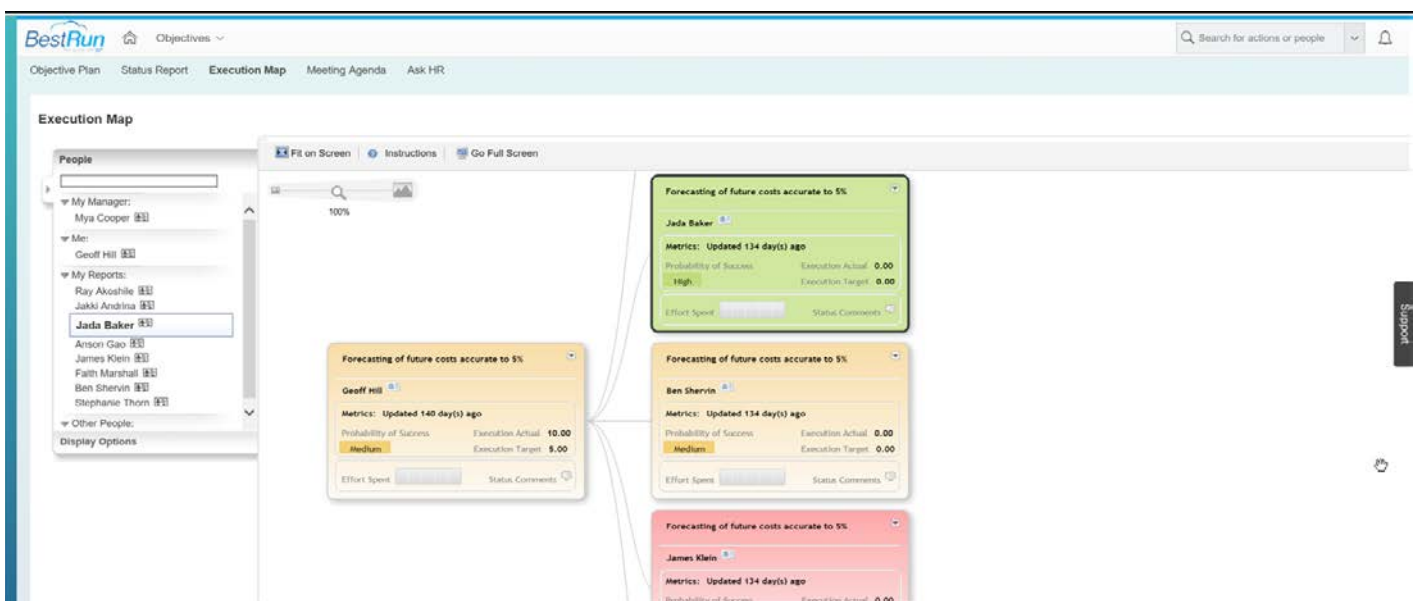


**Disconnected** – Companies often see a disconnect in employee goals and business goals when senior leaders fail to recognize challenges and changes that impact employees on the front line. Changes in the business or market may significantly limit the ability of employees to execute on their objectives. Many companies lack the processes and culture needed to communicate these challenges back up the chain of command. Leaders may not become aware of these challenges until the company starts to miss key strategic objectives. Even then, leaders may not fully appreciate the challenges impacting employees. When this happens, leaders often blame a failure in strategy execution on poor employee performance, when the real issue was that the strategy was based on flawed assumptions about the market or capabilities of the company.

Ongoing goal dialogue reduces the risk of becoming fixated, distracted, or disconnected by emphasizing active discussion and two-way information flow up and down the leadership chain. Rather than using traditional goal cascading, alignment should be built through regular discussions about goals. Ongoing dialogue drives strategic alignment by creating a transparent culture that leverages real-time feedback and communication upward, downward, and across the organization. Emphasis is placed on ensuring employees understand why different goals are important, as opposed to simply telling employees what to do. This allows employees to make intelligent decisions about the value associated with different actions.

Figure 5 demonstrates how technology can support goal clarity and alignment. It can allow companies to create goal transparency across the organization.

**Figure 5: Aligning and Managing Employee Goals (SAP® SuccessFactors® Performance & Goals Solution)**



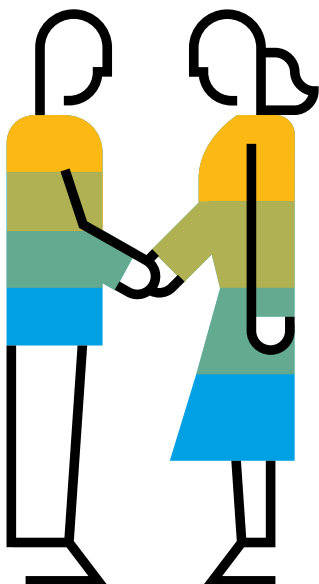


Employees can see how their goals relate to the goals of their manager, peers, and senior leaders. Senior leaders, in turn, gain visibility into what actions are being taken by different groups to execute the company strategy.

At the heart of ongoing goal dialogue are continuous performance discussions between employees and their managers at all levels.<sup>8</sup> Companies must invest in facilitating conversations where people constructively explore how to balance what the company needs to do, what employees want to do, and what employees can do given their capabilities and resources. This requires training managers and employees on how to have candid, constructive, and continuous performance management discussions around role expectations, challenges, and accomplishments. It also involves establishing and reinforcing

expectations to ensure these discussions occur on an ongoing basis.

Ongoing goal dialogue also lets employees more effectively provide upward feedback if they do not understand what they are being asked to do, do not feel it is possible, or believe there is a better way to do it. Leaders and managers are encouraged to assume a collaborative approach to goal conversations and avoid being overly directive unless it is truly necessary. Everyone is reminded that goals may change over time. While there are often financial targets and operational commitments that cannot be changed, the tactical goals employees pursue to fulfill these commitments are likely to shift in response to a changing world. Goal updates are made in a thoughtful and highly visible manner that achieves alignment through clarity.

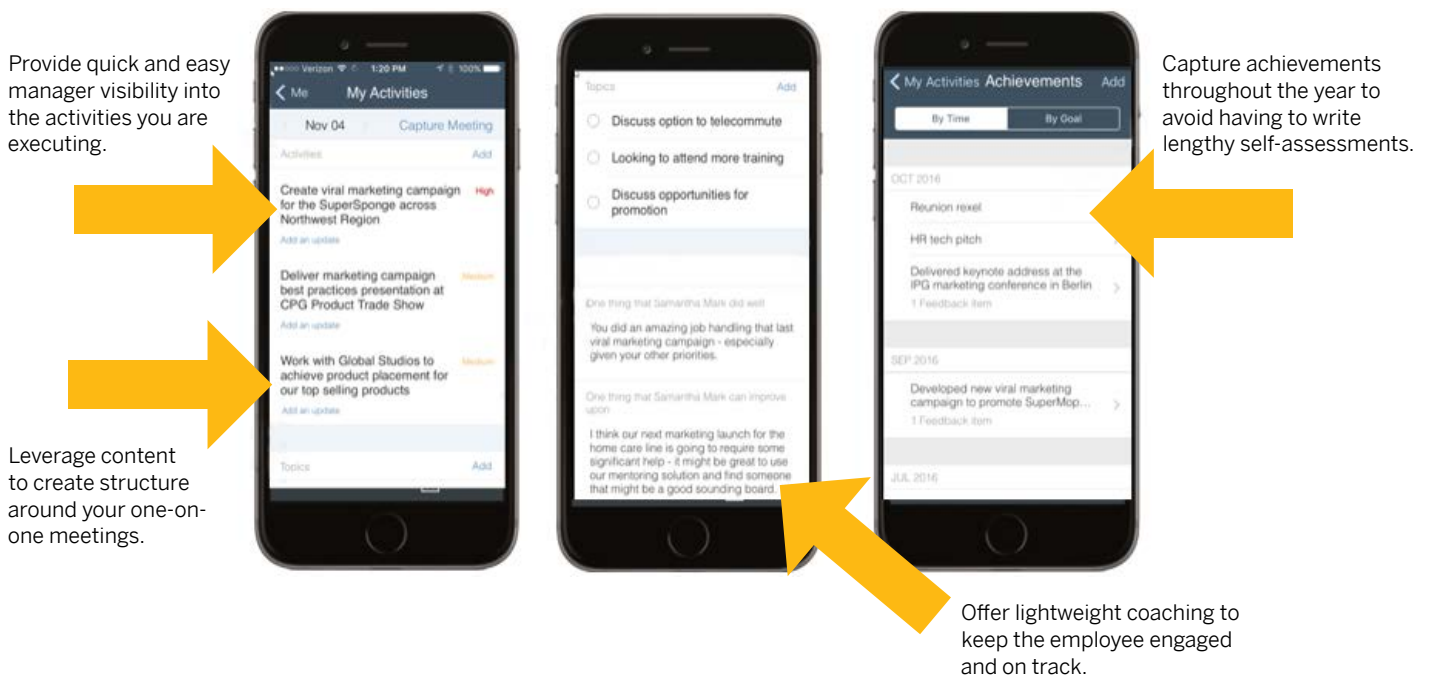


Companies must invest in conversations where people constructively explore how to balance what the company needs to do, what employees want to do, and what employees can do.

8. Sherwood, J., Hunt, S.T., *Getting People to Talk: Creating a Culture of Continuous Performance Management*, SAP SuccessFactors Web site, 2017, [www.successfactors.com/en\\_us/download.html?a=/content/dam/successfactors/en\\_us/resources/white-papers/wp-creating-a-culture-of-continuous.pdf](http://www.successfactors.com/en_us/download.html?a=/content/dam/successfactors/en_us/resources/white-papers/wp-creating-a-culture-of-continuous.pdf).

As demonstrated in Figure 6, mobile technology is playing a significant role in promoting ongoing goal dialogue between managers and employees. These solutions remind managers and employees to have regular discussions, keep track of previous discussions, and create a link between company strategies, ongoing goal dialogue, and talent review conversations.

**Figure 6: Promoting Ongoing Dialogue with Mobile Technology**



## **ENABLE AND ENCOURAGE EMPLOYEES TO LEARN FROM EACH OTHER**

Organizational agility comes through people doing things in the future that are often quite different from what they did in the past. This starts with truly knowing your employees and quickly getting the right people in the right roles, then using ongoing goal dialogue to focus people's motivation and attention on what matters. But there is a third, equally important function: making sure people have access to the knowledge and skills needed to perform in their new roles.

Companies traditionally educate employees on how to perform new tasks by creating training programs. Training programs are effective for situations where learning objectives can be clearly defined and tied to long-term job roles and responsibilities. But training programs are less effective for rapid, informal, on-the-fly learning that characterizes highly agile workplaces with rapidly changing work environments. In these

work environments people are frequently learning how to do the job while they do it. In many cases, the jobs they are doing may not even have existed before they started doing them. Fortunately, there is another type of learning that is highly effective for these sorts of environments – social learning.

Social learning focuses on employees learning from each other. Instead of creating formal training programs, employees are empowered to share ideas, lessons, and experiences with one another directly. Technology has become a powerful enabler of social learning. The ability to record videos using mobile phones, post them in online communities along with other self-created job guides and documents, and comment on these materials in chat rooms has revolutionized how employees learn. Employees now regularly share ideas and innovations in near-real time with colleagues that may work in totally different parts of the organization.

## **THE POWER OF SOCIAL LEARNING**

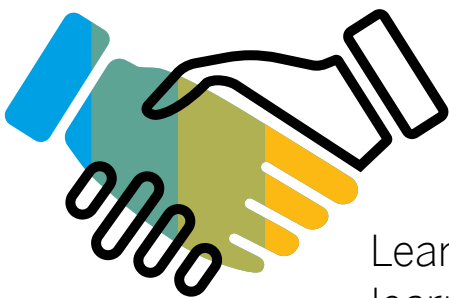
To illustrate the power of social learning, consider the following story told to me by a person who worked for a grocery company. In 2013 a trend emerged in the United States around a type of pastry that is a cross between a croissant and a donut. People loved these new pastries, but many of the grocery store bakers did not know how to make them. As the story goes, an innovative baker at one grocery store figured out how to make them using the equipment and materials available in the chain's in-store bakeries. The baker recorded a video showing how to make the pastries and posted it in an online learning community accessible to all the employees working in the company's stores. The video went viral among employees, and soon all the stores could meet the growing customer demand. All of this was done at a fraction of the time and expense that would have gone in to creating and deploying a more formal training program on how to bake the new pastries.

There are two primary methods for enabling social learning – establishing online learning communities and creating learning partnerships. Learning communities use online social platforms that allow employees with similar backgrounds, goals, or jobs to share knowledge and discuss common challenges and interests. Learning communities can be created around a variety of themes including:

- **Job type:** Employees with similar roles or performing similar types of work share experiences, questions, and tools related to performing their jobs. Examples could include communities for call center managers, mechanical engineers, and so on.
- **Projects:** Employees working on the same or similar projects discuss ideas related to common goals and tasks, such as postmerger integration, process improvement, and others.

- **Work environment:** Employees working in the same or similar environments gather to discuss their experiences and the challenges they face, and to offer support and a sense of community. Examples could include expatriate assignments, regional offices, or geographic locations
- **Cultural or demographic backgrounds:** Employees sharing similar characteristics such as gender, ethnicity, or family status can come together to talk about work issues that are particularly relevant to people with similar backgrounds.

Social technology enables the creation of learning communities for employees who may never actually meet in person. These communities promote learning and increase employees' sense of connection to the organization by making it easy for them to develop relationships with other employees who share common interests and face similar work challenges.



Learning communities promote learning and increase an employee's **sense of connection** to the organization.

Figure 7 demonstrates how technology can enable employees from around the organization and around the world to share ideas, discuss questions, post videos, and share other resources relevant to their jobs, work environments, and careers.

**Figure 7: Sharing Information in a Learning Community (SAP® SuccessFactors® Succession & Development Solution)**

The screenshot displays a user interface for a 'Leadership Development Program Group'. On the left is a navigation sidebar with options: Overview, Featured Learning, Feed Updates (highlighted), Recommendations, Content, Forums, Events, Tasks, Trash, My Group Settings, and Email Notifications. The main content area shows a group wall with a header 'Leadership Development Program Group' and a text input field 'Share an update with everyone in this group...'. Below this are several posts:

- Mike Summers** wrote on the group wall 8 days ago: 'Many of you have had to confront rough waters in your career. Share your story! 1. What were the circumstances? 2. What was your plan? 3. What did you accomplish? #challenge'. Includes 'Reply - Like - Share - More' options.
- Mike Summers** wrote on the group wall 8 days ago: '@@notify As leaders we are often required to wade through some rough waters. Share your tips and tricks for overcoming these moments and achieving the results you are after. #challenge'. Includes 'Reply - Like - Share - More' options.
- Tessa Walker** wrote on the group wall 8 days ago: 'What are 10 daily micro-actions to develop a leadership mindset? #challenge'. Includes 'Reply - Like - Share - More' options.
- James Klein**: 'In my view leadership is more about asking the right questions than providing all the answers. Are you asking enough questions?' (8 days ago) - Like.
- Mya Cooper**: 'Don't put off making decisions.' (8 days ago) - Like.
- Wilma Sown**: 'Keep people informed on what is happening internally.' (less than a minute ago) - Edit - Like - Delete.

On the right side, there are two panels: 'Common Actions' with options like Ask a Question, Add an Idea, Add a Discussion, Upload a File, Record a Video, Create an Event, Add a Blog, Add a Wiki, Add a Task, Add a Playlist, and Invite someone to this group; and 'Suggested People' listing Mike Summers (6 contributions), Mya Cooper (2 contributions), and Tessa Walker (1 contribution), each with a 'Follow' button and a 'Show More' link at the bottom.

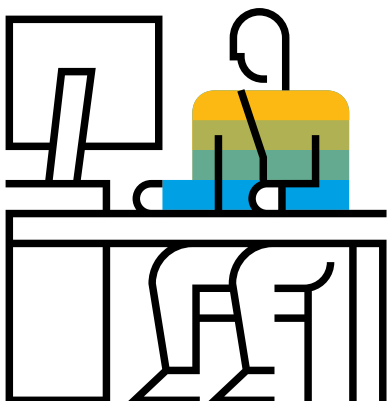
Learning partnerships involve pairing two individuals with the goal of helping one or both develop new skills, gain learning insights, or accomplish career goals. The most traditional learning partnership involves matching a more experienced employee or “mentor” with a less experienced one. But that is just one of many types of learning partnerships.<sup>9</sup> Learning partnerships can be used to support cross-generational understanding, career advancement of people in historically underrepresented groups such as women or minorities, achievement of employee health and wellness goals such as dieting or exercise, or any number of other development objectives.

Historically, a challenge to creating learning partnerships was matching different partners together. This was particularly true in large organizations where employees often struggled to identify appropriate learning partners out of pools of thousands of employees. Technology now allows employees to quickly find appropriate learning partners based on automatic matching of interests,

skills, and capabilities. For example, an early-career female employee interested in pursuing a sales career in a traditionally male dominated sales environment can search to find an experienced, successful female salesperson who wants to help other women succeed in the same field. These solutions also help manage learning partnerships by providing tools for setting learning objectives and scheduling and tracking meetings. By doing this, they make learning partnerships far easier to establish and maintain.

**Figure 8** demonstrates how technology can help employees quickly find other employees to form learning partnerships with based on interests, goals, or expertise.

Social learning is often more effective, efficient, and engaging than traditional learning. It is more effective because employees are learning from peers who work with the same tools in similar environments facing similar challenges and constraints. It is more efficient because it avoids



**Creating transformation** is not about what technology does, but about how people use it.

9. Sherwood, J., Pytel, L., & Hunt, S.T., *Learning Partnerships in Organizations*. SAP SuccessFactors Web site, 2017, [www.successfactors.com/en\\_us/download.html?a=/content/dam/successfactors/en\\_us/resources/white-papers/learning-partnerships-in-organizations.pdf](http://www.successfactors.com/en_us/download.html?a=/content/dam/successfactors/en_us/resources/white-papers/learning-partnerships-in-organizations.pdf).

many of the operational costs associated with traditional training methods, such as scheduling training courses or contracting professional instructors and course designers. It can be more engaging because employees enjoy learning from their peers and being recognized for their knowledge and expertise. This does not mean that social

learning is always better than formal training. It is not. There are many cases where formal training is more effective and appropriate. But companies that fail to make use of social learning methods and technology are foregoing a powerful method for increasing organizational agility.

Figure 8: Engaging in Mentoring Programs (SAP® SuccessFactors® Succession & Development Solution)

The screenshot displays the SAP SuccessFactors Succession & Development Solution interface. At the top, the SAP logo is on the left, followed by a 'Development' dropdown menu, a search icon, and a user profile for 'Joyce Meyers'. The main heading is 'Mentor Registration Form'. Below this, a section titled 'Here are some of the recommendations you may be interested in' contains 'Mentee Recommendations (5)'. Three cards are shown, each for a person seeking mentoring: James R (Senior Sales Manager), George David (Sales Manager), and Shambu E (Sales Deputy). Each card lists skills: Leadership, Management, Sales Planning, and New Technologies, and includes an 'Add as Prospect' button. Below the mentee recommendations is a section for 'Learning Recommendations (3)'. Three cards are shown: 'Preparing for Mentorship', 'Benefits of Mentoring', and 'Mentoring the Right Way'. Each card is a 2-hour e-learning module that 214 people have taken, and each includes an 'Add to learning' button. At the bottom right of the interface are 'Skip' and 'OK' buttons.



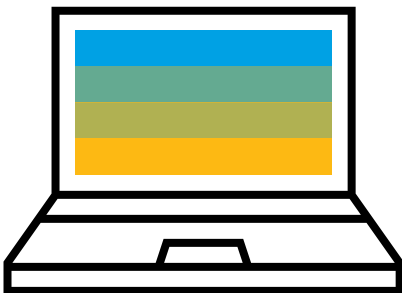
# An Agile Organization Requires a Responsive Workforce

We live in a world of constant change. Yet, companies continue using HCM methods built during a bygone era when people's goals and responsibilities remained relatively stable over the course of a year. Frequently shifting goals, organizational structures, and job priorities are the new normal. Your business must adopt new HCM methods that reflect this new reality. It is time to rethink HCM so your people do not see change as a threat or burden, but embrace it as an opportunity for growth and learning.

The talent management processes described in this paper are not revolutionary. Knowing who works for you, talking with people about their work, and sharing ideas with coworkers all seem like common-sense concepts. But these simple, naturally human inclinations get lost as companies become larger and more complex. Recent innovations in HCM technology now make it

possible to manage large workforces using the same sort of methods used by small, highly agile entrepreneurial companies. This technology helps companies truly understand the capabilities of their employees, create ongoing dialogue around business goals, and enable social learning. When used effectively, this technology can help large companies achieve a level of workforce responsiveness and agility that historically was found only in small organizations.

Technology enables companies to transform into much more agile and responsive organizations, but does not drive that transformation. Creating transformation is not about what technology does but about how people use it. Ultimately, the only way a company can make its workforce more responsive to change is to change how the company manages its workforce.



## LEARN MORE

To find out more about how you can use SAP SuccessFactors® solutions to make your organization and people more agile, visit [www.successfactors.com](http://www.successfactors.com).



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