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# HOW TO BRIDGE THE STRATEGIC WORKFORCE PLANNING GAP AND UNITE YOUR TALENT STRATEGY

**Aptitude Research 2024**

# A WAKE-UP CALL FOR WORKFORCE PLANNING: IT'S TIME TO BRIDGE THE GAP



In today's shifting economic landscape, businesses face ongoing uncertainty, changing markets, and rapid technological disruption. HR's role has never been more vital. Once a support function, HR is now on the front lines, tasked with building resilience and adapting to constant change. It's no longer just about managing talent; it's about strategically aligning talent to support long-term business goals.

Enter Strategic Workforce Planning (SWP). Too often, workforce planning has been limited to basic budgeting and headcount forecasting—reactive tasks that focus only on immediate needs. The past few years have shown us that these outdated methods no longer suffice. Companies relying on short-term, reactive planning risk falling behind. What's needed is a shift to proactive, integrated SWP that shapes a future-ready workforce.

This white paper is a wake-up call. It dives deep into the current state of SWP and outlines a clear path to bridging the critical gaps identified in our research.

Here's a quick snapshot of the biggest findings from each section:

**1. The State of SWP: Wake-Up Call to Action:** The main takeaway? There's a clear gap between confidence and capability in workforce planning. Many companies are stuck in reactive, headcount-driven approaches, lacking true strategic alignment.

**2. Bridging the Talent Gap:** Fixing the Disconnect in TA's Role

A major roadblock surfaced: Talent Acquisition (TA) is often involved too late, viewed as purely executional rather than strategic. This misalignment leads to talent strategies that don't meet business needs, resulting in costly gaps.

**3. The Tools to Transform SWP:** Leveraging Data, AI, and Integrated Systems

Technology can drive transformation, but it's not a cure-all. Success comes when companies use AI and predictive analytics within an integrated, cross-functional framework. Without this, even the best tools will fall short.

The stakes are high, and the need for change is urgent. Anticipating talent needs, building agility, and aligning workforce planning with business goals are key differentiators. This white paper offers insights, data, and practical steps to help you master this shift.

It's time to move beyond headcount forecasting and basic budgeting. It's time to evolve your SWP strategy, bridge the gaps, and future-proof your talent planning.

**Let's get started.**

[Kyle Lagunas](#), Principal Analyst & Head of Strategy at Aptitude Research

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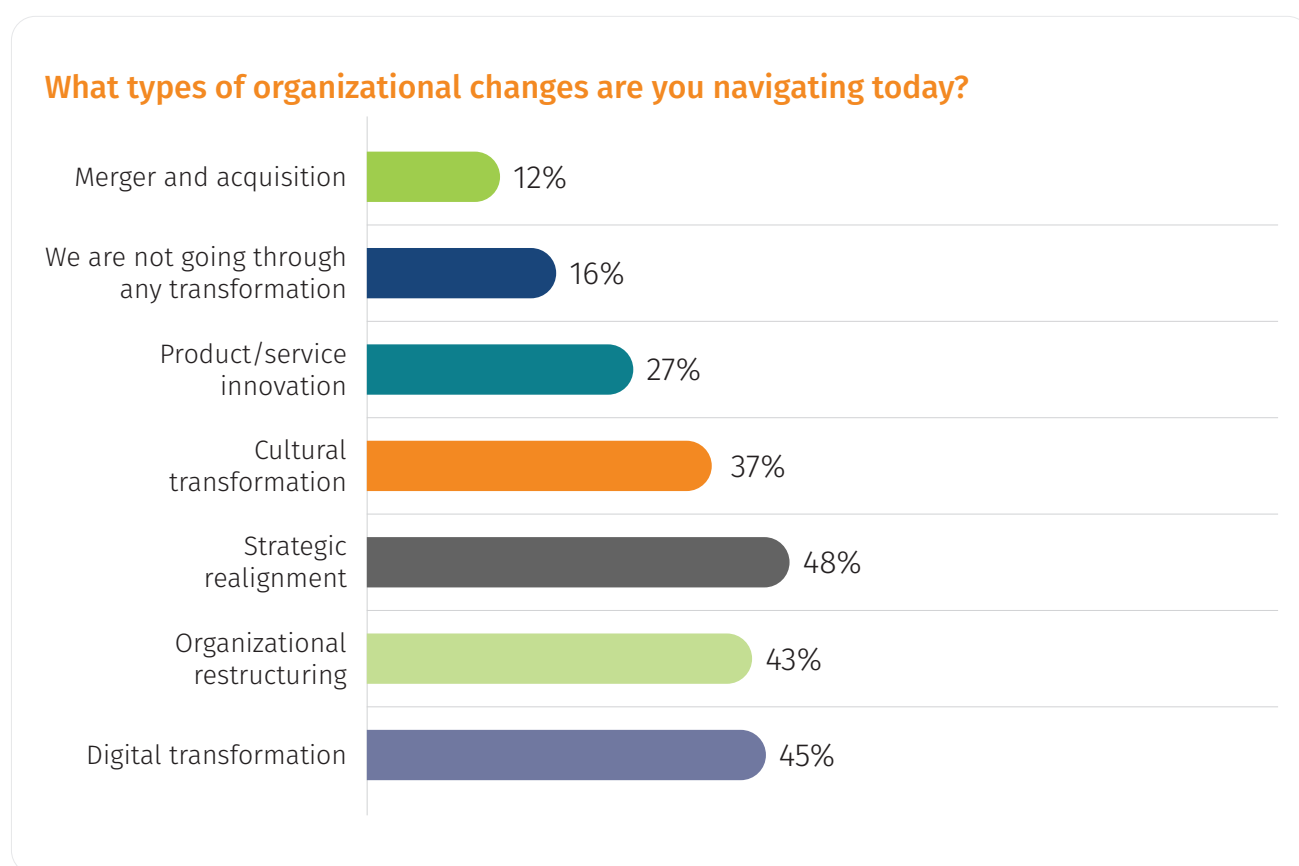
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## INTRODUCTION: THE CURRENT STATE OF STRATEGIC WORKFORCE PLANNING

The post-pandemic economic landscape has amplified the need for extensive change in how businesses are staffed and structured. According to a recent survey by Aptitude Research of HR and talent leaders in North America, transformation is widespread—and multi-faceted. Figure 1 below shows that 45% are reportedly undergoing digital transformations, 43% are navigating organizational restructuring, 38% are undergoing strategic realignments, and 37% are navigating cultural transformations.

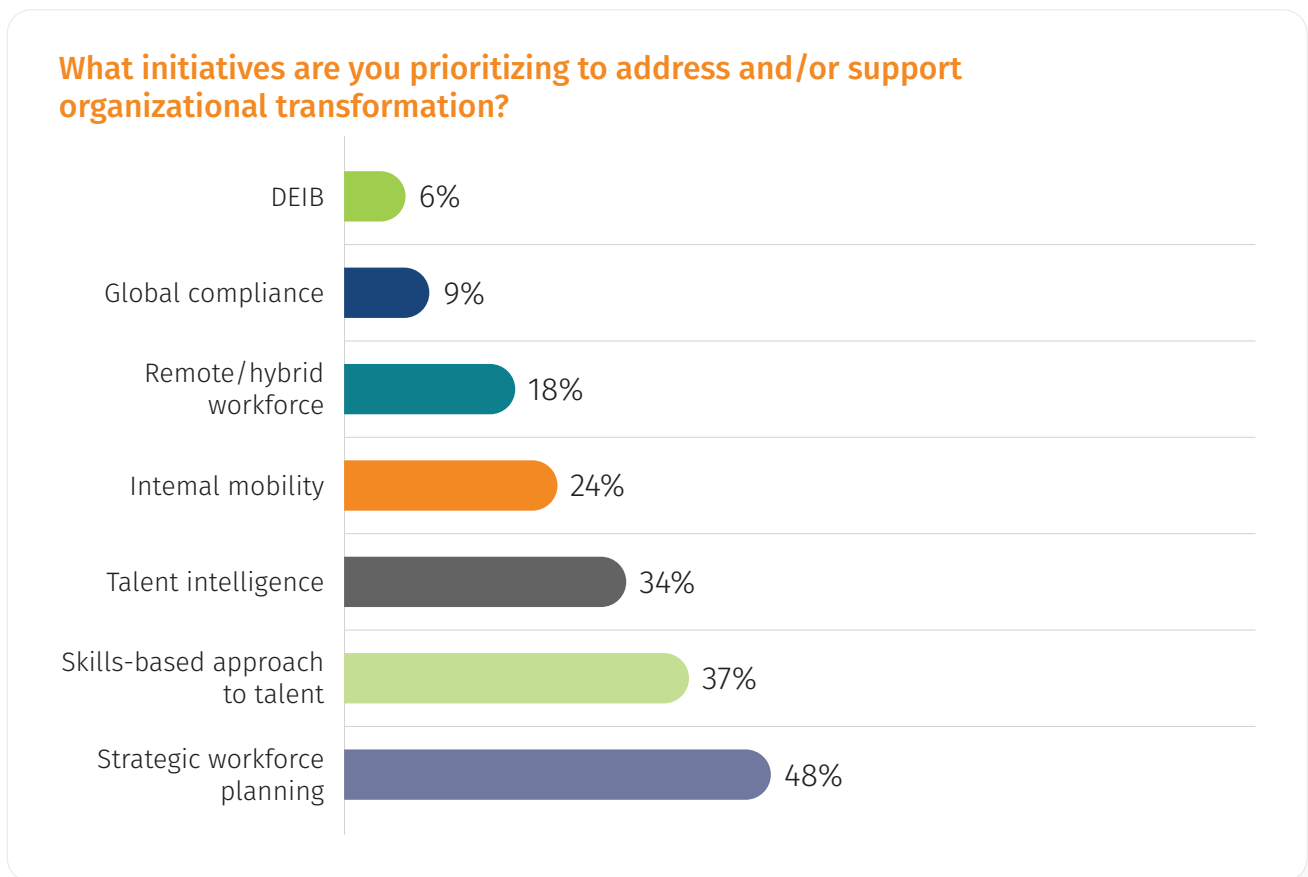
**Figure 1. The Scope of Transformation Impacting HR**



The future of work is here, and organizations are proactively preparing today to mitigate the risk of being left behind tomorrow. In an era defined by rapid change and unpredictability, Strategic Workforce Planning (SWP) has emerged as a critical capability for businesses determined to thrive. By elevating workforce strategies beyond simple headcount budgeting, SWP empowers organizations to align talent with both near- and long-term business objectives, ensuring they have the right people with the right skills at the right time.

Figure 2 below shows that SWP is the primary initiative HR organizations are tackling as they address the new needs of transforming businesses.

**Figure 2. HR Initiatives Having the Greatest Impact on Transformation**



With near-daily disruptions impacting the world of work, companies must be agile, forward-thinking, and prepared to act—not just react.

SWP goes beyond traditional hiring and staffing. It equips companies to design a workforce that can drive innovation, adapt to shifting market demands, and seize new opportunities. In a world shaped by emerging technologies, fluctuating global markets, and ongoing aftershocks from the pandemic, organizations that master SWP are the ones leading the charge into the future.



**“Strategic Workforce Planning isn’t just about reacting to today’s needs. It’s about building a workforce that can drive long-term business success and adapt to whatever comes next. Organizations that understand this will have a significant competitive edge,”**

*says Neil Davies, Senior Partner, Talent Acquisition Advisory at Korn Ferry.*

Despite SWP's growing importance, many companies remain stuck in reactive, short-term planning models. They focus on filling immediate hiring needs, overlooking the opportunity to develop agile and adaptable strategies. In these environments, Talent Acquisition (TA) teams are often involved too late, after critical workforce decisions have already been made. This reactive approach leads to talent misalignment, increased costs, and missed opportunities to build a resilient and future-ready workforce.

However, SWP is not solely an HR responsibility. True success requires a cross-functional approach that brings together HR, TA, Finance, Operations, and the Executive Leadership Team (ELT). By aligning talent strategies with business priorities and fostering seamless collaboration, organizations can better anticipate and respond to market shifts.



**"In today's rapidly changing world, you can't afford to rely on outdated, reactive workforce planning. The companies that succeed use data and forward-thinking strategies to anticipate and prepare for future talent needs,"**

*says Bartek Sibiliski, **Head of Workforce Planning and Organizational Design at JLL.***

Drawing on survey data, expert interviews, and insights from industry leaders, this white paper explores the current state of SWP and offers practical guidance for organizations ready to elevate their approach. You'll learn how to overcome common obstacles, implement cutting-edge technology, and establish clear accountability frameworks that drive results.

## Big Themes to Expect



### **SWP as a Competitive Advantage:**

Companies that align their workforce strategy with business goals and market demands will outperform those that don't.



### **Cross-Functional Collaboration:**

Successful SWP requires coordination across HR, TA, Finance, and Leadership, embedding talent planning within the organization's strategic framework.



### **Technology as a Game-Changer:**

From AI to predictive analytics, advanced tools are revolutionizing workforce planning, enabling data-driven and forward-looking decisions.



### **Skills-Based Planning:**

Emphasizing skills over static roles is essential for workforce flexibility and future-readiness. Organizations must prioritize internal mobility, upskilling, and dynamic talent strategies.

SWP isn't about reacting to change—it's about proactively shaping the future. This white paper will guide you in transforming workforce planning from a reactive exercise to a strategic enabler, ensuring your organization is ready to lead in an era defined by constant evolution.

# 01 SECTION



## The Current State of SWP: Obstacles & Opportunities Abound

The role of HR, TA, and workforce management is evolving rapidly, driven by the pressures of digital transformation, shifting market dynamics, and the need for greater organizational agility and resilience. Yet, many companies remain stuck in traditional, short-term workforce planning processes that are no longer sufficient. Understanding the gaps in current practices—and the opportunities for advancement—is essential for organizations to build future-ready workforce strategies.

### The Digital, Post-Pandemic Transformation

The pandemic has fundamentally altered how businesses manage talent. As previously noted,

45% | of organizations are undergoing digital transformations and

37% | are navigating cultural transformations

—both accelerated by the pandemic’s impact on business models and workforce structures. The shift to hybrid work, the rapid adoption of new technologies, and changing market demands have created an urgent need for more agile and proactive workforce planning.



**SWP as a Driver of Change:** Nearly half of surveyed organizations (48%) cite SWP as a key driver of their transformation efforts. Modern SWP is not just about filling roles but ensuring the organization has the skills and capabilities to thrive in a dynamic environment. It has become the backbone of forward-thinking talent strategies.



**Evolving Workforce Needs:** Pre-pandemic workforce planning often centered on demand-based, short-term hiring. Today, companies must anticipate future talent requirements to support both immediate operations and long-term strategic goals. The hybrid and remote work models have also increased the focus on deploying talent across geographies and retaining critical skills.



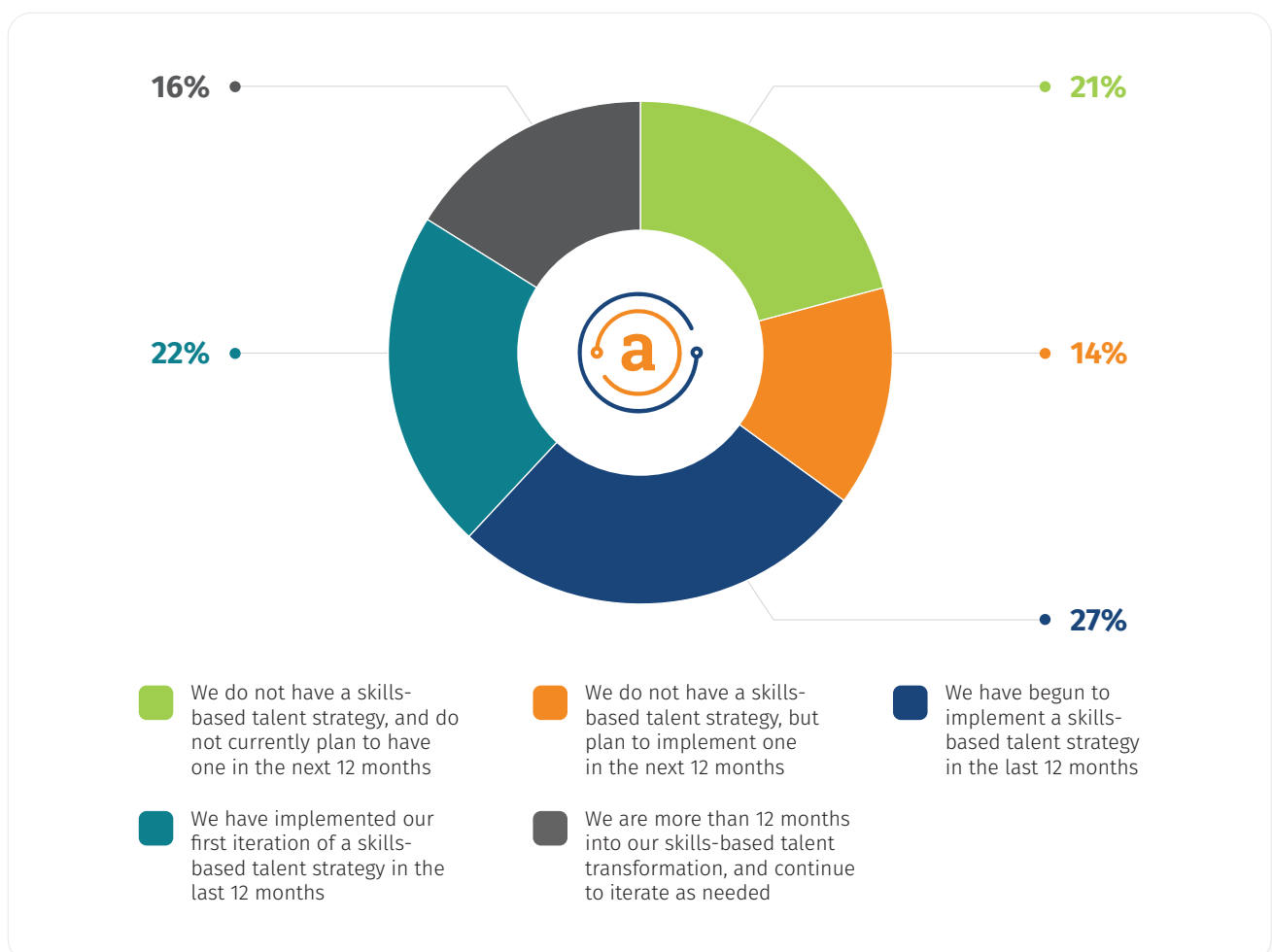
**“The pandemic has fundamentally changed how we think about workforce planning. Companies can no longer afford to be reactive; SWP has become a necessity to navigate the complexities of hybrid work, digital transformation, and global talent demands,”**  
*explains Christina Coyle Senior Vice President & Client Director, at AMS.*

## Skills-Based Talent Strategies: The New Currency of Work

A significant trend reshaping workforce planning is the rise of Skills-Based Talent Strategies (SBTS). In a study published earlier this year, we found that the majority of companies are moving away from traditional role-based hiring. **66% of HR organization have already adopted a skills-based approach to talent and another 14% plan to implement SBTS in the next 12 months.**

**Why Focus on Skills?** Roles are evolving faster than ever, making a skills-based approach essential for flexibility and adaptability. By focusing on skills rather than job titles, companies can more effectively deploy talent, respond quickly to market shifts, and develop internal capabilities aligned with future needs. This approach shifts workforce planning from reactive hiring to strategic talent development.

**Figure 3. The current state of Skills-Based talent strategies in North America**





**Maturity Levels Vary:** Despite increasing interest in SBTS, maturity levels are inconsistent. Only 16% of companies report having programs in place for more than 12 months, whereas 43% have programs that are still very new (less than 12 months mature). And another 14% are still in the planning stages for their first SBTS use cases. This gap highlights significant room for improvement and underscores the risk for companies that fail to adapt.



**“Focusing on skills rather than roles is a game-changer. It enables organizations to be more agile and effective in deploying talent where it’s needed most, especially in a world where business needs are constantly evolving.”**

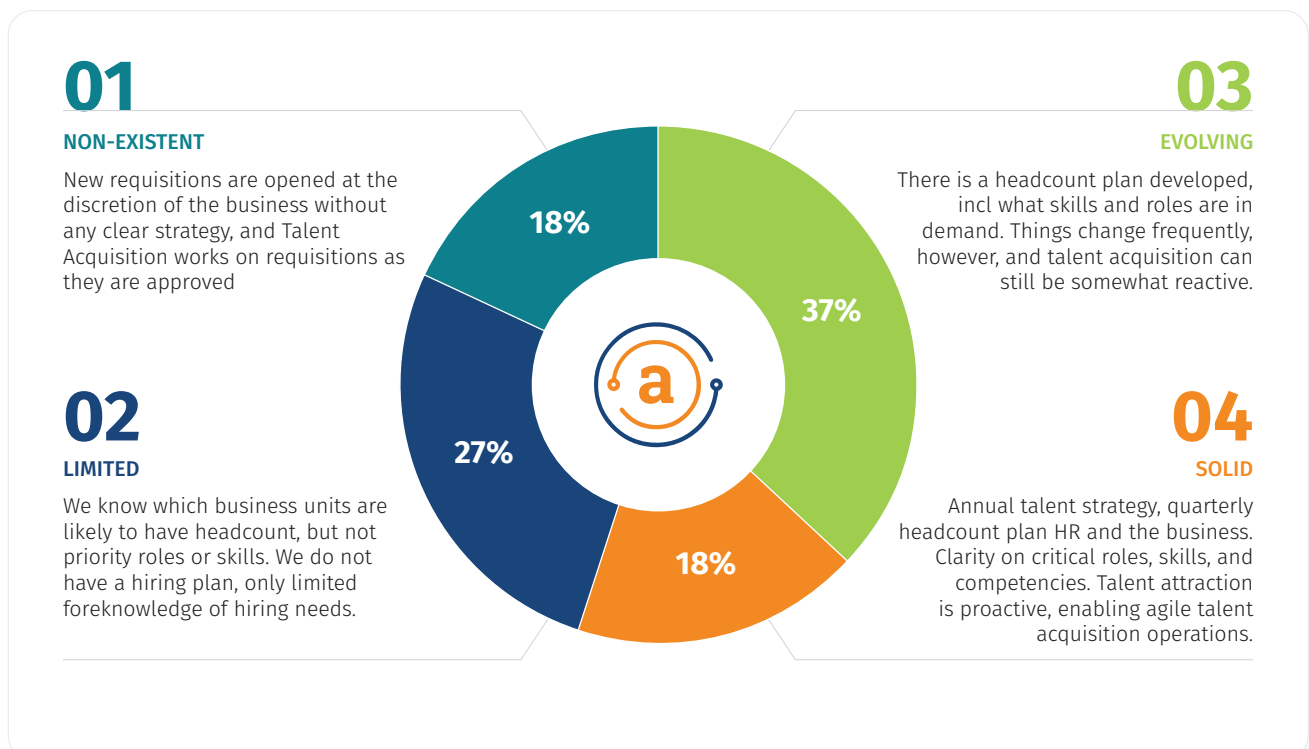
*says Becky McCullough Vice President, Talent Acquisition & Mobility at HubSpot.*

## The SWP Maturity Model: An Uneven Landscape

Organizations fall into different stages of SWP maturity, ranging from purely reactive to fully strategic. Our research identifies four levels of maturity:

1. **Non-Existent:** No formal SWP processes; workforce needs are met through reactive, short-term hiring.
2. **Limited:** Early-stage strategies with fragmented and poorly aligned efforts.
3. **Evolving:** Moving toward proactive planning with integration into broader business strategies.
4. **Solid:** Leaders in SWP maturity, characterized by well-established, data-driven processes and strong cross-functional alignment.

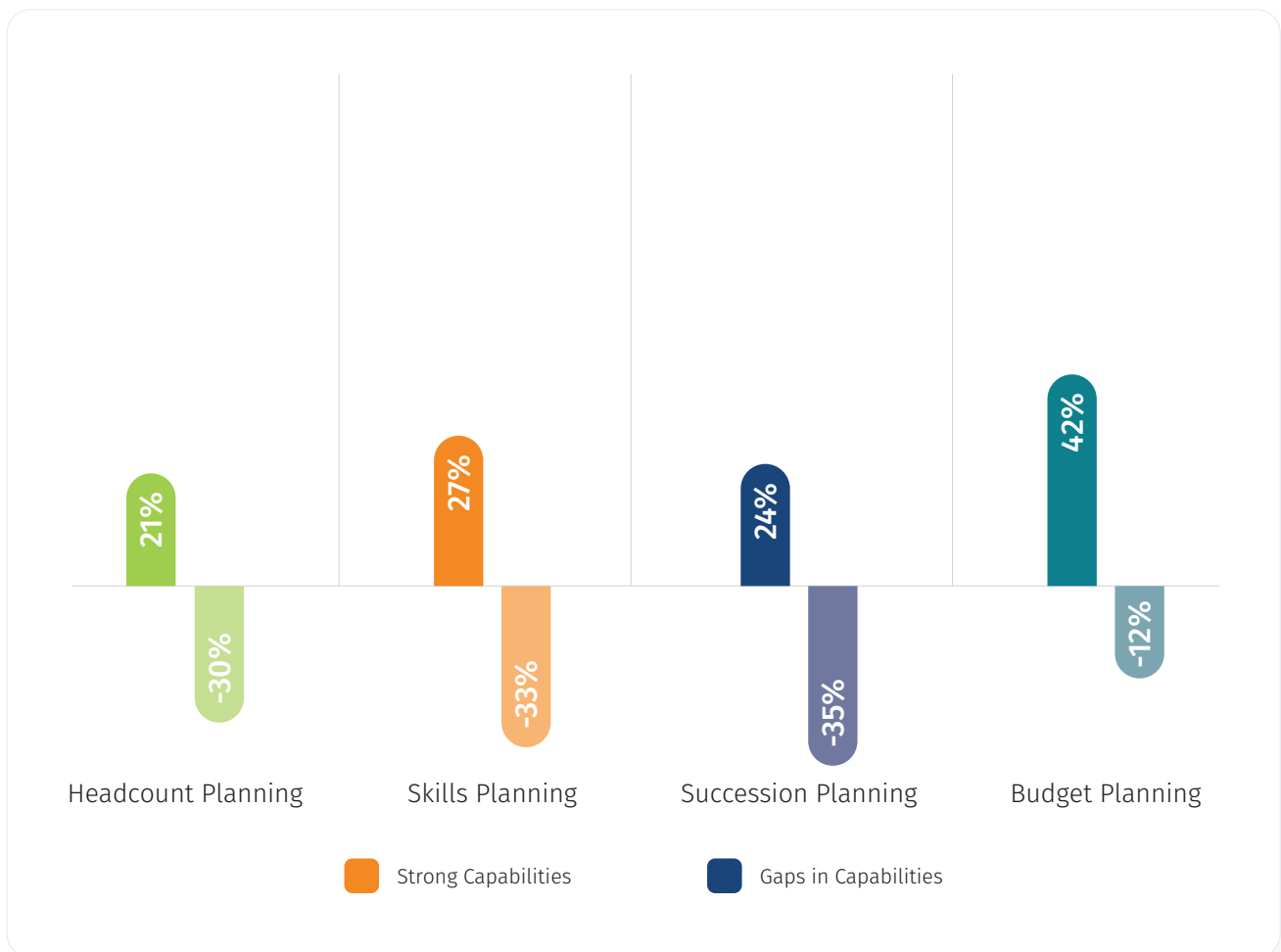
**Figure 4. The Current State of Strategic Workforce Planning**



Despite the optimism in reported maturity levels—55% of companies rate their SWP as Solid or Evolving—experts suggest this confidence may be misplaced. Neil Davies from Korn Ferry warns, “Many organizations are still in the early stages, relying on reactive, short-term planning. The real value comes from evolving to a proactive model, where workforce planning is seamlessly integrated with business strategy.”

Looking more closely at the current workforce planning capabilities gives us a better understanding of what Davies is referring to by reactive, short-term planning. Figure 5 shows that there are significant gaps in key areas: 35% of companies reported gaps in Succession Planning, 33% reported gaps in Skills Planning, and 30% reported gaps in Headcount Planning.

**Figure 5. Key Capabilities in Strategic Workforce Planning: Strengths vs. Gaps**



Bartek Sibiliski from JLL echoes this, emphasizing the need for cultural and operational shifts: “The journey from reactive to proactive SWP isn’t easy, but it’s essential. It requires a cultural shift, technology investment, and cross-functional collaboration, but the payoff is a more resilient and adaptable workforce.”

## Obstacles to Effective SWP

While the benefits of SWP are clear, many organizations face significant hurdles in implementing effective strategies.

**Figure 6. Obstacles to Effective Strategic Workforce Planning**



### Key obstacles include:



**External Disruptions:** Economic shifts, regulatory changes, and global events make long-term planning difficult. SWP must be flexible enough to adapt to these uncertainties.



**Lack of Clear Ownership:** Without a defined owner, SWP efforts can become fragmented. HR, TA, Finance, and Operations may all be involved, but the absence of a central driver often leads to poor execution.



**Technology Integration Challenges:** Many organizations struggle to integrate SWP tools with existing systems, creating data silos that hinder informed decision-making.



**Collaboration Gaps:** SWP requires robust cross-functional collaboration, but siloed departments often prevent alignment and effective execution.

## Gaps in Ownership & Collaboration

The absence of clear ownership and cross-functional collaboration is a recurring challenge. Elin Thomasian, SVP of Workforce Strategy and Consulting at TalentNeuron highlights this: “One of the biggest barriers to effective SWP is the lack of clear ownership. Too often, no single function takes full responsibility, leading to fragmented efforts and missed opportunities.”

Siloed thinking exacerbates these issues. Jordan Jarjoura, Global Head of Talent Solutions MESH D explains, “Breaking down silos is crucial for SWP success. The best results come from cross-functional collaboration, where HR, TA, Finance, and Operations work together to create a cohesive workforce strategy.”

## TA’s Role: Often Late and Reactive

Our research underscores the importance of involving TA early in the SWP process. Too often, TA is treated as a last-minute resource, limiting its ability to provide strategic value. Neil Davies from Korn Ferry notes, “SWP should be about long-term alignment, but too often, TA is an afterthought. That approach leads to talent gaps and missed opportunities.”

Bringing TA in early can provide insights into market trends, talent availability, and emerging skills. However, this requires a shift in how TA is perceived—from a transactional function to a strategic partner. Jordan Jarjoura from MESH D emphasizes, “TA often isn’t taken seriously as a strategic partner, and that has to change if we want to get SWP right.”

Bartek Sibiliski from JLL highlights the disconnect between planning and execution: “Planning teams sometimes set workforce targets without fully understanding market realities, leading to unrealistic goals and tension between business leaders and TA.”

## Key Takeaways:

01

### **SWP Maturity is Often Overstated:**

While 55% of companies rate their SWP capabilities as “Solid” or “Evolving,” expert perspectives reveal that many organizations remain stuck in reactive, short-term planning rather than embracing truly strategic workforce planning.

02

### **Skills-Based Strategies Are Crucial but Unevenly Implemented:**

Although there is growing momentum toward Skills-Based Talent Strategies (SBTS) for greater workforce agility, a significant number of organizations still lack structured, mature programs, leaving room for advancement.

03

### **TA’s Late Involvement is a Major Obstacle:**

With 71% of HR and talent leaders identifying inefficiencies in TA as a critical barrier, it’s clear that TA must be involved earlier in workforce planning and must develop the strategic insight necessary to influence long-term talent strategies effectively.

04

### **Breaking Down Silos is Essential:**

Successful SWP requires robust cross-functional collaboration, yet many organizations are hindered by siloed departments. Aligning HR, TA, Finance, and Operations is crucial to developing cohesive and actionable workforce strategies.



# 02 SECTION



## Rethinking HR & TA's Roles in Workforce Planning: Strategic Realignment is Required

Building on our analysis of the current state of SWP, it is clear that the roles of TA and HR need a strategic overhaul. Both functions must evolve from being reactive and execution-focused to becoming strategic partners embedded within the business. This section examines the essential shifts required and highlights real-world insights on how to achieve true alignment with long-term business goals.

### First Things First: Evolving from Tactical to Transformative

For SWP to deliver real impact, HR and TA must transition from short-term, transactional roles to proactive contributors to business strategy. However, the reality today is that these functions often get bogged down in immediate needs, sacrificing long-term planning for short-term fixes.

Christina Coyle from AMS puts it succinctly: "Too often, HR and TA teams are focused on managing hiring cycles or responding to urgent requests without understanding how those needs fit into the overall business plan. The conversation needs to shift from tactical hiring to strategic alignment."

This reactive focus limits HR and TA's ability to influence strategic outcomes. Instead, both functions need to drive conversations that connect talent decisions to overarching business objectives, ensuring that workforce planning isn't just about filling roles but about building a workforce capable of achieving long-term success.

## The Role of HR: Facilitating Cross-Functional Alignment

HR has a critical role in orchestrating SWP, but its responsibilities extend beyond traditional headcount management and employee development. To add strategic value, HR must facilitate cross-functional collaboration, break down silos, and ensure that workforce plans are aligned with the company's long-term goals.

Steve Hunt, Founder of i3 Talent LLC and former Chief Expert of Technology & Work at SAP emphasizes this point: "HR should be working with delivery functions to inform and align on workforce planning, not just focusing on short-term hiring metrics. The goal should be to connect talent strategy with the broader business objectives."

By building partnerships with Finance, Operations, and other key departments, HR can act as the glue that binds strategic workforce planning efforts across the organization. This requires a shift from being a support function to becoming a strategic enabler, using data and insights to guide decisions that have a lasting impact on business outcomes.



## The Role of TA: Early Involvement and Business Acumen

For TA, the biggest opportunity lies in getting involved earlier in the SWP process. All too often, TA is brought in only when urgent hiring needs arise, missing the chance to shape workforce strategies from the start.



*Becky McCullough from HubSpot underscores the importance of early engagement: "SWP is about long-term alignment, and that requires TA to be part of the conversation from the start. We need to ask: What skills do we need to drive business outcomes? How can we use data to inform those decisions?"*

TA's early involvement can provide valuable market insights, such as talent availability, emerging skill sets, and competitive dynamics. By being proactive and data-driven, TA can help shape a more effective and aligned workforce strategy.

However, this shift also requires TA leadership to build a deeper understanding of the business. Neil Davies from Korn Ferry points out that this is a shared responsibility: "TA leadership itself is just as responsible for not being a part of SWP conversations as HR and the business. Building business acumen and focusing on strategic alignment is crucial—delivery-oriented TA leaders are already a step behind."

TA leaders must invest in understanding the company's financial, operational, and strategic drivers. This means moving beyond a narrow focus on recruitment metrics to thinking about how talent strategies can drive broader business success. When TA functions strategically, they can preemptively address talent challenges and contribute to building a resilient, future-ready workforce.

## Proactive Practices for Realignment

Organizations that have successfully realigned HR and TA to support strategic workforce planning share several best practices:

### Probing and Validating Workforce Needs

High-performing organizations use data to validate and challenge workforce assumptions, ensuring alignment with business priorities. Becky McCullough from HubSpot describes this process: “We ask the tough questions: What skills are really needed to drive this product launch? Do we need permanent hires, or would contingent workers fill the gap?” This approach shifts workforce planning from reactive hiring to strategic talent management.

### Building Trust Across Functions

Cross-functional collaboration is essential. By creating Centers of Excellence (COEs) that bring together HR, TA, Finance, and Operations, organizations can drive alignment and strategic execution. Steve Hunt from i3 Talent shares, “When Finance, TA, and Operations work together, it’s not just about filling roles—it’s about executing the

business strategy through talent. We’ve built trust by continuously delivering value, whether that’s through market insights or predictive analytics on workforce trends.” These COEs facilitate communication and ensure that workforce plans are not siloed.

### Focusing on Business Outcomes

Moving away from metrics like time-to-fill or headcount targets, leading organizations prioritize how talent strategies drive key business outcomes. The Build, Buy, Borrow, Bot framework enables companies to meet talent needs flexibly. Neil Davies from Korn Ferry explains, “This model gives us flexibility—it’s not just about hiring, but about creating the right talent ecosystem to support our strategy.” By considering internal development, external hiring, contingent staffing, and automation, companies can align talent strategies with long-term goals.

# SECTION



## Embracing Tactics & Tools to Transform SWP: The Role of a RACI & Technology

Evolving SWP programs and practices is a significant undertaking, requiring changes to foundational planning processes, strategic cross-functional realignment, and new and integrated technologies.

A good place to start is by addressing one of the most critical factors for the success of SWP: clear ownership and accountability. While SWP is a cross-functional effort, it can easily become fragmented if roles and responsibilities are not well-defined. Without clarity, workforce planning can devolve into a series of disconnected tasks handled by different departments, leading to misalignment, delays, and a lack of accountability.

To overcome these challenges, many organizations are turning to the RACI model to establish a clear framework for who is Responsible, Accountable, Consulted, and Informed at each stage of the SWP process. This section outlines the roles of each key function—HR, TA, Finance, Operations, and the ELT—in ensuring the successful execution of SWP.

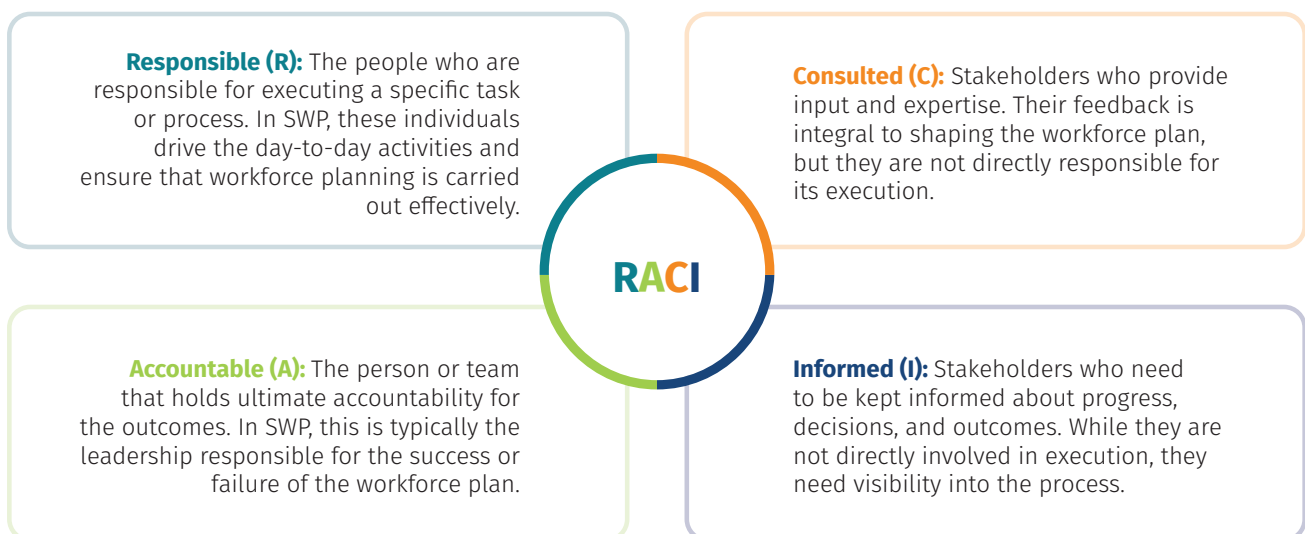






## Understanding the RACI Model

The RACI model provides a structured approach to defining responsibilities and ensuring that the right stakeholders are engaged at the right time. Each function within the organization plays a distinct role in SWP, and the RACI model helps ensure that these roles are clearly delineated.



In the context of SWP, ensuring that the right teams are involved at the right level is key to avoiding silos, bottlenecks, and miscommunication. Below is a breakdown of the RACI roles for each of the key stakeholders in SWP.

| Function           | HR   | Talent Acquisition  | Business Operations   | Finance  | Executive Leadership Team  |
|--------------------|--|---|---|--|--|
| <b>Role</b>        | The Strategic Orchestrator   | The Advisory & Execution Operation  | The Chief Customer  | The Budget Guardian  | The Visionary Leaders  |
| <b>Responsible</b> | “Aligning SWP with organizational culture and employee development. Owning the integration of SWP into broader HR functions, such as talent management and retention strategies. Coordinating with other departments (TA, Finance, Operations) to ensure the workforce plan supports overall business objectives.” | “TA is responsible for executing the workforce plan, which includes ensuring that the right talent is sourced and hired based on the long-term business strategy. TA provides critical market insights on talent availability, hiring trends, and skill shortages that shape workforce planning decisions.” | Business Operations is responsible for providing input on operational needs and capacity. This includes ensuring that workforce plans align with the day-to-day realities of the business and that teams have the right resources in place to deliver on operational goals. | Finance is responsible for allocating and forecasting the budget required for SWP initiatives. This includes managing the costs associated with hiring, training, and redeploying employees.           | The ELT is responsible for ensuring that the workforce plan aligns with the company’s strategic vision and long-term growth objectives.  |
| <b>Accountable</b> | HR is accountable for the successful execution of the overall workforce strategy. They ensure that SWP aligns with organizational goals and that plans are adjusted as needed to reflect changes in the business environment.  | TA is accountable for delivering talent that aligns with the strategic goals of the business. This includes filling key roles, ensuring cultural fit, and hiring in alignment with the skills-based strategies identified in the SWP.   | Operations is accountable for ensuring that the workforce plan supports operational efficiency and output, ensuring that the right talent is deployed in the right areas to meet business targets.  | Finance is accountable for ensuring that the workforce plan stays within budget and that it aligns with the company’s overall financial objectives.  | The ELT is accountable for the overall success of the SWP, ensuring that the workforce strategy is not just reactive but proactively supports the company’s future direction.                    |
| <b>Consulted</b>   | HR consults with other functions—such as Finance and Operations—on how workforce needs will impact different areas of the business.  | TA is consulted in the early stages of SWP to provide valuable insights into external talent markets, ensuring that workforce plans are realistic and achievable based on talent supply and demand.   | Operations is consulted on workforce feasibility, particularly when workforce plans may impact production, delivery timelines, or resource allocation.  | Finance is consulted throughout the SWP process, particularly when workforce decisions have financial implications, such as the cost of hiring, the impact on payroll, and long-term budget forecasts. | The ELT is consulted during the key planning stages to provide guidance on long-term business goals and organizational priorities, ensuring that SWP aligns with the company’s strategic vision. |
| <b>Informed</b>    | HR keeps the Executive Leadership Team informed on the progress of SWP initiatives, workforce risks, and talent pipeline health.   | TA keeps other functions informed on hiring progress and adjustments to recruiting timelines, especially when changes in the talent market impact the SWP.  | Operations is informed about adjustments to workforce plans that could affect operational capacity or output, such as delays in hiring or shifts in workforce availability.   | Finance is informed about key talent decisions that may affect financial forecasts, such as hiring for critical roles or investments in employee development.  | The ELT is regularly informed about SWP progress, challenges, and outcomes to ensure that workforce decisions are in line with the broader business strategy.                                    |

## The Importance of Cross-Functional Collaboration

The success of SWP hinges on effective cross-functional collaboration. Without clarity in roles and responsibilities, workforce planning can become a disjointed process, with various teams working in isolation.

“SWP can’t just be an HR function. It has to be embraced across the business, and that means changing how departments communicate and work together,” says Elin Thomasian from TalentNeuron. An established RACI model goes a long way towards removing ambiguity and ensuring that all stakeholders are working toward the same objectives in two key ways:

- **Breaking Down Silos:** The RACI model fosters better communication between departments, ensuring that HR, TA, Finance, Operations, and Executive Leadership are working together. By making it clear who is responsible for what, organizations can eliminate miscommunication and prevent workforce planning from becoming a fragmented process.
- **Accountability at Every Level:** Clear accountability is key to ensuring that SWP remains a strategic priority and that workforce plans are executed successfully. With the RACI model, every function knows their role in the process, and this shared responsibility helps drive results.

By implementing a clear RACI structure, organizations can streamline their workforce planning efforts, foster cross-functional collaboration, and ensure that SWP is aligned with the broader business strategy.

## The Role of Technology in SWP

In today’s fast-paced business environment, technology has become the heartbeat of effective SWP. It’s no longer enough to rely on gut feelings or outdated spreadsheets—companies need the power of AI, predictive analytics, and integrated platforms to stay ahead of their talent needs. With the right tools, organizations can shift from reactive guesswork to proactive, precision-driven workforce planning, making data-backed decisions that align with business goals and the fast-evolving world of work.

However, adopting technology alone isn’t enough. For businesses to fully reap the rewards, they must seamlessly integrate these tools into their broader workforce strategies, while overcoming hurdles that often come with new systems. This section dives into how technology is transforming SWP, the powerful advantages it offers, and the challenges organizations need to overcome to unleash its full potential.



## The Benefits of SWP Technology

For companies looking to build a future-ready workforce, SWP technology is an essential accelerator. Here's how:



### ***Accurate, Real-Time Forecasting***

Gone are the days of workforce plans built on outdated data. Advanced SWP tools provide real-time insights and predictive analytics, allowing organizations to forecast talent needs with precision. Whether it's anticipating skill gaps or modeling various workforce scenarios, businesses can plan with confidence, knowing they're ready for whatever comes next.

**Korn Ferry uses AI-driven platforms to boost their forecasting accuracy. "We're no longer just reacting—we're planning smarter, faster," says Neil Davies.**



### ***Agility in a Fast-Changing World***

In today's volatile business environment, being able to pivot quickly is critical. SWP technology allows organizations to adapt on the fly, whether that means redeploying employees, adjusting hiring strategies, or responding to sudden shifts in the market.

During the pandemic, companies using integrated SWP platforms were able to quickly redeploy staff or upskill employees to meet new demands without missing a beat.



### ***Internal Mobility and Talent Growth***

SWP technology enables businesses to focus on internal talent development, ensuring that the right people are placed in the right roles. By leveraging skills taxonomy and talent-matching systems, organizations can promote internal mobility, reduce hiring costs, and retain top performers.

For example, HubSpot saw a significant increase in internal promotions after implementing talent-matching tools, reducing reliance on external hiring and boosting employee engagement. **"We're able to develop the talent we already have, which not only saves time and money but also builds a stronger, more loyal workforce,"** Becky McCullough said.

## SWP Technology: The Current State

Advanced SWP tools are no longer fringe innovations—they're becoming standard for businesses that want to get serious about forecasting, planning, and executing talent strategies. New providers and longtime solution providers alike are building new capabilities offering real-time data, delivering predictive insights, and supporting a comprehensive approach to identifying and managing current and future talent needs.

While the ecosystem of solutions is diverse, there are three core buckets of capability to consider:

01

### ***Workforce Analytics and AI: The Power of Predictive Planning***

With AI and predictive analytics, SWP is no longer about looking in the rearview mirror—it's about predicting what's around the corner. These tools enable businesses to model future talent needs based on real-time market trends, internal data, and potential business scenarios. Organizations can now plan for what's next, whether it's ramping up for growth or pivoting in response to industry shifts.

According to Bartek Sibiliski at JLL, the integration of AI-driven workforce planning tools has enabled their organization to anticipate skills shortages before they become critical, allowing them to develop talent pipelines and make better hiring decisions ahead of time. "We're no longer guessing where the gaps are," Sibiliski explained. "The data shows us exactly what we need to prepare for."

02

### ***Skills Taxonomy and Talent Matching***

Gone are the days when planning was based on static job titles. Today's SWP tech uses sophisticated skills taxonomies to pinpoint the exact capabilities a business needs. This approach allows companies to map employee skills to current and future roles, fostering internal mobility and targeted upskilling instead of defaulting to external hiring.

03

### ***Integrated Platforms for Holistic Planning***

The real power of SWP technology lies in its ability to integrate with existing systems—from HRMS to finance to performance management. Leaders offer end-to-end workforce analytics, pulling data from across the organization to provide a comprehensive view of talent, performance, and financials in one place. The result? More informed, strategic decisions that cut across departments.

Technology is no longer an optional component of workforce planning—it's a necessity for companies that want to stay competitive in a fast-evolving market. By investing in the right tools and ensuring they are integrated into a broader workforce strategy, businesses can move from reactive planning to strategic workforce optimization, positioning themselves to succeed both now and in the future.

## Key Takeaways:

01

**RACI for Clarity and Accountability:** Implementing a RACI model ensures clear ownership of tasks and roles, aligning cross-functional teams like HR, TA, Finance, Operations, and Executive Leadership for more effective workforce planning.

02

**Technology as a Game-Changer:** Advanced SWP tools, including AI and predictive analytics, enable precise, proactive planning, anticipating future talent needs, and making data-driven decisions.

03

**Integrated Platforms for a Holistic View:** Solutions that unify data across HR, Finance, and Operations provide comprehensive insights, streamlining workforce planning and ensuring alignment with business strategy.

04

**Addressing Barriers to Adoption:** To unlock the full potential of SWP technology, organizations must overcome hurdles like cost, complexity, and resistance to change, emphasizing ROI and effective change management.



# SECTION 4

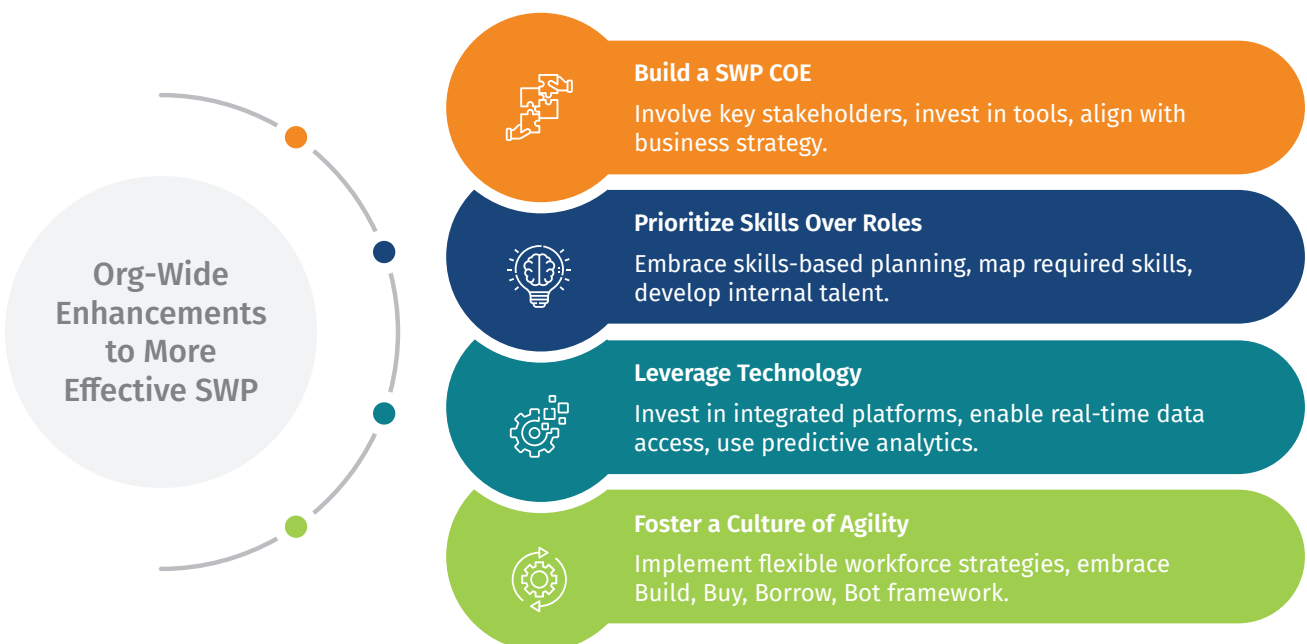


## Building Better Practices: Recommendations for Evolving SWP

As organizations navigate the complexities of SWP, clear, actionable strategies are essential for bridging the gap between theory and execution. Based on research, interviews, and best practices from leading companies, this section offers key recommendations for organizations, HR and TA leaders, and technology providers to drive effective SWP and set the stage for long-term workforce success.

### First Start at the Organizational Level: Build a Cross-Functional SWP Engine

To make SWP truly impactful, organizations must shift their mindset from workforce planning as a static HR task to a dynamic, cross-functional process. This means involving key stakeholders early, investing in the right tools, and ensuring that workforce plans are fully aligned with business strategy.





## Invest in a Cross-Functional Center of Excellence (COE)

The most effective organizations treat SWP as a collaborative effort that spans departments. Building a COE that includes representatives from HR, TA, Finance, and Operations ensures that workforce plans are created with multiple perspectives and data points. This COE should be responsible for aligning SWP with long-term business priorities, breaking down silos, and facilitating ongoing communication across the organization.

- **Key Action:** Create a cross-functional SWP team that meets regularly to review workforce needs, assess talent gaps, and align on long-term strategies. Ensure this group is empowered to make decisions that impact all functions.



## Prioritize Skills Over Roles

Organizations must embrace skills-based workforce planning to stay agile in today's rapidly changing environment. Instead of focusing on filling predefined roles, companies should map out the skills required for future success and align their talent strategy accordingly. This approach provides greater flexibility in redeploying talent, upskilling employees, and addressing emerging business needs.

- **Key Action:** Conduct a skills inventory to identify current capabilities within the workforce and determine which skills will be needed for future growth. Focus on developing internal talent and promoting mobility to close skill gaps.



## Leverage Technology to Drive Efficiency and Insights

Investing in the right technology is critical to enabling real-time data access and predictive analytics that drive smarter workforce planning. Integrated platforms that combine AI, workforce analytics, and HRMS allow for a holistic view of talent, operational capacity, and future needs. Organizations that fully embrace these technologies will see increased agility, more accurate forecasts, and improved decision-making.

- **Key Action:** Identify gaps in your current tech stack and prioritize tools that offer seamless integration with existing systems. Ensure the platform includes predictive analytics to forecast future workforce demands and the ability to model different scenarios.



## Foster a Culture of Workforce Agility

To succeed in SWP, organizations need to adopt a culture of agility and flexibility. This means moving away from rigid hiring practices and embracing the Build, Buy, Borrow, Bot framework, which encourages a combination of internal development, external hiring, contingent workforce utilization, and automation. This approach ensures that the organization remains responsive to both immediate and long-term workforce needs.

- **Key Action:** Implement flexible workforce strategies that allow for the quick redeployment of talent, whether through internal mobility or hiring contingent workers. Embed these practices into the culture to ensure workforce planning is an ongoing, adaptable process.



## Simultaneously Reach New Heights in HR: Lead with Data and Business Acumen

For HR and TA leaders, the shift from transactional hiring to strategic workforce planning requires a change in mindset. HR and TA teams need to position themselves as strategic partners, driving workforce initiatives that align directly with the organization's business goals and long-term strategy.

### Strategic Workforce Planning Journey





## Develop Business Acumen

To have a seat at the strategic table, HR and TA leaders need to speak the language of the business. Understanding the financial, operational, and strategic drivers that impact workforce needs will allow them to align talent strategies with broader business objectives.

- **Key Action:** HR and TA teams have to build business literacy by working closely with other departments, attending business strategy sessions, and leveraging data to understand how talent impacts business outcomes.



## Use Data to Drive Decision-Making

The days of relying on intuition or simple headcount forecasts are over. HR and TA leaders need to use data-driven insights to shape workforce strategies, from identifying talent gaps to predicting future needs. By leveraging AI and predictive analytics, HR and TA can provide more accurate, actionable insights to the business, improving decision-making and workforce alignment.

- **Key Action:** Ensure HR and TA teams are equipped with the right tools to gather and analyze workforce data, and train teams on how to use data insights to drive proactive planning and execution.



## Engage Early in the Planning Process

For TA to drive impact, they need to be proactive participants from the very beginning of workforce planning discussions. Waiting until hiring needs are urgent puts TA in a reactive role, missing the opportunity to shape strategic decisions with valuable market insights and talent data.

- **Key Action:** Proactively request a seat at the table during initial workforce planning discussions and bring data on talent availability, skills gaps, and market trends to inform strategic alignment early on.

## Key Takeaways:

- **For Organizations:** Build a cross-functional COE, prioritize skills over roles, invest in technology, and foster a culture of workforce agility.
- **For HR and TA Leaders:** Focus on developing business acumen, using data-driven insights, and engaging early in the workforce planning process.

The future of SWP is about more than just filling roles—it's about strategic alignment, agility, and foresight. By adopting these recommendations, organizations can not only improve their workforce planning capabilities but also position themselves to thrive in an increasingly competitive and unpredictable world.

## CONCLUSION: THE FUTURE OF SWP— FROM REACTIVE TO REVOLUTIONARY

In today's fast-moving world, businesses that succeed aren't just reacting to change—they're anticipating it and shaping the future. SWP is no longer an elite capability reserved for the most advanced talent teams in the world; it's a mission-critical capability that aligns any organizations' talent strategy with long-term business goals, no matter how unpredictable the market becomes.

Talent and workforce strategies today aren't just about filling roles or managing headcount. SWP is about building a future-ready workforce, capable of adapting to challenges, seizing opportunities, and driving growth. By harnessing the power of data, technology, and cross-functional collaboration, you can shift from reactive, short-term workforce management to proactive, dynamic planning that prepares your organization for the future.

The organizations that master SWP will be the ones who lead—not just survive—in an era defined by constant disruption and innovation.



### Major Takeaways:

- **SWP is your competitive edge:** Companies that treat workforce planning as a strategic imperative will outperform those that don't. SWP ensures that you're not just reacting to talent gaps but building a resilient workforce that fuels long-term business success.
- **Cross-functional collaboration is essential:** SWP works best when HR, TA, Finance, Operations, and Leadership are in sync. Break down the silos and create a unified strategy where talent planning is fully aligned with business objectives.
- **Technology is your game-changer:** The future of SWP is powered by technology. From AI-driven analytics to integrated platforms, the right tools enable real-time insights, predictive forecasting, and agility. Organizations that invest in SWP technology will have the upper hand in talent decisions and market responsiveness.
- **Skills over roles:** The shift toward skills-based planning is essential for staying flexible in a changing world. It's not just about filling vacancies—it's about identifying and cultivating the skills that will drive your business forward. Internal mobility, upskilling, and dynamic talent strategies are key to future-proofing your workforce.
- **SWP isn't just reactive—it's revolutionary:** Moving from reactive hiring to proactive planning transforms how your business thinks about talent. SWP isn't just about today—it's about strategically positioning your workforce to tackle tomorrow's challenges and opportunities.

The journey from reactive workforce management to revolutionary workforce planning begins with a bold commitment to foresight, agility, and strategic alignment. Businesses that embrace this shift will become the workforce pioneers of the future, leading with insight and innovation while others struggle to keep up.

Now is the time to take action. SWP is more than a process—it's the strategic tool that will define your success in an uncertain world. Leverage the full power of SWP to build the workforce of tomorrow, today.

## ABOUT SEEKOUT

SeekOut's Talent Intelligence Platform helps thousands of organizations of all sizes and industries hire, grow, and retain great talent. Founded in 2017 by a team of enterprise software veterans, SeekOut is backed by leading investors at Tiger Global Management, Madrona Venture Group, Mayfield, and Founders Circle Capital. SeekOut has two primary product offerings: Recruit, for identifying new talent, and Grow, for maximizing a company's existing internal talent. Leading companies, including Peraton, Experian, and Northrup Grumman, rely on SeekOut to unify their talent acquisition, talent management, and talent analytics in a single people-first platform. Learn more at [www.seekout.com](http://www.seekout.com).

## ABOUT APTITUDE

Aptitude Research is a leading human capital management (HCM) research and advisory firm based in Boston.

Our in-depth research and vendor assessments help HR leaders develop a deep understanding of the HCM technology landscape, including talent acquisition and engagement, to ultimately make better purchase decisions. [www.aptituderesearch.com](http://www.aptituderesearch.com)