



## Back to school: Preparing for the future of learning

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**Prashant Malaviya (Prashant):** The future of work is going to be dependent on the future of learning, which really means that we need to all become lifelong learners.

**Burt Rea (Burt):** Hi there, and welcome to the Capital H Podcast. My name is Burt Rea. I am a managing director in the Human

Capital practice at Deloitte, and I am your host for today's episode of the Capital H podcast. Let's dive in.

The top-rated trend in our 2019 Global Human Capital Trends Research is the need to improve learning and development, including the need to make it a more natural,

fluid process in not only the flow of work, but also the flow of life. Our guest today is Prashant Malaviya, senior associate dean of MBA programs at Georgetown University's McDonough School of Business, which was recently named by *Bloomberg Businessweek* as having the best-trained graduates. He will talk to us about the future of learning and

how Georgetown is rethinking its approach to learning to prepare its students for the future of work. We will also hear from two of my Deloitte colleagues, Amy Titus and Erin Clark, both managing directors in Human Capital who both have deep experience in the learning space.

**Amy Titus (Amy):** Prashant, welcome to the Capital H podcast today on the future of learning. As a brief introduction for our listeners, Prashant Malaviya is the senior associate dean of MBA programs and associate professor of marketing at Georgetown University. He has been widely recognized and commended for his leadership of the MBA programs, as well as his research as a consumer psychologist. He is here today to discuss the future of learning and the role of higher education institutions in helping students cultivate the skills of the future. Prashant, we are so excited to have you here today with us.

**Prashant:** It's a pleasure to be here. Thank you for inviting me to your Capital H podcast. I am really excited to be here today and speaking with you.

**Amy:** Great. Learning was rated the top challenge in Deloitte's 2019 Global Human Capital Trends. When you hear "future of learning," what does that mean to you?

**Prashant:** Well, it means several different things. First of all, it definitely means that all of us, both in education and in business, need to rethink how we do learning, what is the content of learning, and how do we think about what does success in learning mean for all of us. But more specifically, the way I think about it, and the way we are thinking about it at Georgetown McDonough in the Business School, is we have an opportunity to think about learning from three perspectives. The future of learning is going to help us personalize our education journeys for each individual. We do not need to be in

the model where one teacher is educating a mass of students. We can do one-on-one education and learning quite easily, and technology should make it possible, so that's number one, personalization. The second thing I think the future of learning would mean for us in the business school is collaboration, which is the ability to collaborate with experts and leaders and thought leaders all over the world, across geographies, across time zones, something that has been more difficult and challenging and has been a pain point in the learning journey for our students. The third thing I think about when I think about the future of learning is, how do we humanize and make the learning experience more humanistic, where what I mean is we need to think about making education and learning such that it brings out the best human qualities in individuals rather than follow the old model of education, where the emphasis was essentially training humans to do the work of machines. When I think about my own education in India, which is where I grew up, the emphasis on things like rote learning was so high and remains so high. We need to get away from that, and we need to think about how do we make humans more human and learn to be more human. So to me, the future of learning means those three things: personalization, collaboration, and humanization.

**Amy:** So that's fascinating. And one of the findings that we had in our 2019 Global Human Capital Trends was this whole focus on being humanistic at work, bringing the human element back, and so I think that's fascinating that you are talking about that as an integral part of how you approach the curriculum. So it's really curious: How are universities taking these three areas you have just spoken about, looking at their curricula with thinking about the learning needs of the future workforce?

**Prashant:** That's the question that I am asking myself all the time, that my faculty

colleagues are asking each other all the time, and we really need to come up with some strong answers. We at Georgetown are being informed in these discussions by our own heritage and history as an institution. Georgetown is one of the oldest universities in the country. We are the oldest Jesuit and Catholic institution in the country. We pride ourselves in our Jesuit heritage and our Jesuit values, and specifically there is one aspect of Jesuit education and pedagogy that is about the notion of educating the whole person. How do we educate the whole person, all aspects of an individual? There is obviously a spiritual aspect to it, but we try to stay away from that and rather embrace the core of what that means. So our thinking about the curriculum is being informed by the three dimensions that lie at the core of Jesuit education. And there are many other philosophies that would also share these kinds of ideas, but here is how we think about it. The first aspect of education is that we need to make sure students learn what is important. In today's world, and for tomorrow's business, that means we need to embrace technology, we need to infuse technology in everything we teach, in everything we do in the classroom and outside of the classroom. So there is a big push that I am leading where we are going to have technology conversations in all of our classes, whether it is finance or marketing or accounting or strategy, we are going to be talking about AI and the ethics of AI and cloud computing and how does that help us navigate the data management portion of things. So we are going to infuse technology in what we learn. But having learned that, the next step that we need to take is put that into action. So we are big on experiential learning. We want to help our students practice whatever they learn in the class, put it into action, build their muscle for how do we use the theories and the ideas and the concepts that the professors teach, how do we put that into practice. And so for this reason, we are actually working very hard in building relationships and collaborations

with businesses and organizations outside the university to provide these opportunities for our students where they can put their learning into action. That's the second dimension of our pedagogical philosophy. The third one is really what is crucial and I think is the key for the future of learning, and that is reflection. Reflection means taking a step back and asking, "When I put my theory and my learning into action, what did I do, what did it help me achieve, what would I do different if I were to do the same thing next time?" And we believe this reflective piece is really critical to solidify and crystallize learning. So this cycle is what we focus on, and the cycle is "learn, act, reflect," and if the cycle is put into motion, it actually creates a virtuous cycle of learning that ultimately helps people become lifelong learners. So that's really what we focus on at Georgetown and what we try to bring into our curricular offerings and where we are putting more efforts to make that more intentional in what we do in every classroom and outside of the classroom.

**Amy:** You are talking about these aspects of the curricula, the pedagogy. What about the students? What are the traits or characteristics that they need to bring to be successful in the future of work, leading people to be able to function in a work environment that is constantly changing?

**Prashant:** That's a really interesting question, and certainly, if you look at it historically, we have always looked for students who have certain traits that they come into the program with, and they are the traits we believe are going to lead to the best outcomes in terms of learning for professional success in the future. Usually, what we look for what we often call the poet qualities and the quant qualities. The quant qualities are "Are you comfortable with numbers, are you okay with handling big data and working your Excel and so on?" But the poet qualities were "Can you work in a team, are you a collaborative individual, do you have empathy for other cultures and

other ideas and ideologies, are you a curious individual?" And we look for individuals with those kinds of traits as the people and the individuals who will benefit most from our learning and education that we are providing them. Having said that, I feel in the future, given what we know about technology, and given the ability of technology to help personalize education, I feel optimistic that we should be able to help any kind of a student with any kind of a personality trait become a successful learner, because we would be able to personalize their ability to learn and educate and transform themselves. So just take one example: There are several cultures where we experience in our classroom, students are reluctant to speak up in class, debate others. Culturally they feel that this is inappropriate, they feel hesitant, and so they don't bring their knowledge, their wisdom, their expertise into the classroom, they don't vocalize it, and in the process, everybody's learning is diminished. With technology, I should be able to help them make their contributions without appearing that they are being disrespectful to the others by giving them channels and media of communicating and expressing themselves that will help them overcome their social concerns. So I feel that even if students have certain personality traits that, in the past, we would be reluctant and hesitant to consider, now I feel we should be able to help everybody be a great learner and a great student and have a transformative education.

**Amy:** This really raises a lot of provocative questions, because I think sometimes students come, whether it's undergraduate or their MBA program, with certain kinds of expectations, but at the same time, they are bringing all their technology skills, and we know from research that technology moves so quickly. How is that relationship changing between the student and faculty because of these kinds of changes you are talking about and because of the future of learning and the future of work and technology?

**Prashant:** That's a great question, and not surprisingly, as is the case with any institution, our institution is inhabited by our faculty, and many of them are not comfortable with the change that technology is bringing, with the pace of change that technology is bringing. We have got to move slowly and help them along, but I'll give you one example. So one of our professors decided to experiment and ended up using quite a bit of concepts and insights from the gaming industry and used gamification in the course content rollout, which essentially means that a student has to go through a module, demonstrate that they have mastery over the content of that module, win certain games, which is essentially assessments that are now coming across as games, and once you have accumulated certain points through that game, then the next module opens up. So when this course was being developed, we were very nervous. We were not sure if this is going to work, if students are going to think this is trivializing education. It turns out that the students found the experience interesting and exciting, they felt that the professor and the course was not as personal as it is in a one-on-one setting in the classroom, which we are not surprised by, but the most interesting thing was that the learning outcome for the students who took this hybrid online class, when we compared these students to the other students who had taken the normal, regular, typical class, the learning outcome for these students in the hybrid class was better than the students who were in our typical class. So what we see is, professors now see that there is a benefit to using technology in the classroom, because they observe their students are learning better. And so they are now more willing to change and adapt to technology, and in fact embrace it in many cases, to deliver the content that they want to deliver and to achieve learning outcomes for their students.

**Amy:** So in terms of thinking about the role, then, of higher education institutions, I'm hearing you say it has to be experimenting,

embracing new concepts and definitely technology, but do you see that it's going to move to being all technology, or is it going to still remain, in the future, a blended approach with classroom and technology, or is this still something that is evolving?

**Prashant:** It certainly is evolving, but I think where the evolution is leading to is a blended model. We need to actually double down on creating a more humanized learning environment. That is going to be best delivered in a blended model, where we have interactions with students, where students have interactions with each other. I'll give you one example. Last year, we offered all of our MBA students an opportunity to go on a retreat off-site for a day and a half, and we thought that we will reserve a place where about 30–40 students would be interested, and we will reserve hotel rooms for those 30–40 students, and we will be all fine. On the first day, there were almost 80 students who signed up for this retreat. So there is a hunger that I see in our students, in all these graduate students that I come across, of maintaining and almost doubling down on the human aspect of education. They want to embrace technology, and they see the benefits of technology, but if technology were to overtake and replace the human element, I think we would have lost a great deal. So I would like to see a more balanced blended approach as we move forward in our education.

**Amy:** So this sounds like some of the things that are feeding into this recent survey that *Bloomberg Businessweek* did, where it identified Georgetown's McDonough School of Business as having the best-trained graduates. So some of these things you are talking about sound as if they are contributing to it, but what else would you add to that that you are doing differently to have received that kind of recognition?

**Prashant:** I think there are several things that we do. One is that we still believe that ultimately, education is overall a positive in

people's lives. So we don't want to walk away from that. Our curriculum is considered to be rigorous, difficult, it pushes students, makes them uncomfortable, and only when people are going to experience and recognize their limits and reach a zone of discomfort, that they will appreciate and learn what is true and meaningful in their lives. So we don't want to dilute, and have never focused on diluting, our basic academic experience. But in addition to that, I think going back to our Jesuit heritage and our Jesuit philosophy of educating the whole person, I think that is really at the heart of what any student at Georgetown—be it in the Business School or the School of Foreign Studies or the Public Policy School—we all sort of embrace the same philosophy that we need to be doing three things in the educational journey of the student. We need to help them learn what are the most important and relevant topics, we need to help them put into practice to build their muscle memory of how to use and how to act and how to behave, and then we need to help them create space to step back and reflect on what they did and what can they learn for the future. So applying this “learn, act, reflect,” a virtuous cycle, is really what we focus on throughout our curriculum. But the other thing we realized was that while we had the action aspect in our education, a lot of it was in contrived situations. Case studies are great, and we still use case studies, but case studies are contrived, they are looking at the past, there is no skin in the game for the students in terms of whether or not this is going to actually be implemented anywhere. So what we are doing increasingly is to partner with institutions in and around D.C., but also anywhere in the US or the world, to provide real opportunities for our students. So for example, every single student has a required global consulting project, so they have to work on a consulting assignment for some firm somewhere in the world outside of the US. This is a 6-to-10-week-long project, and it forces students to apply and put into action what they have learned, their own past experience. It forces them

to understand different cultures, different industries, and really start to put into action what they have learned. The other thing that we do in terms of action is called the executive challenge. The executive challenge is a day-long hybrid of a case competition and shark tank, where we invite over 100 of our most accomplished MBA alumni to come back to campus and essentially act as role-players for the students to confront various business situations. So the students might be put in a situation where they are facing some litigation because their firm bought a company that has some asbestos exposure, and our alumni will act as if they are the board or they are the legal team or they are the management team and just help the students actually experience and create what that experience looks like and what you are going to feel when you are going through these situations, rather than simply have a debate in a theoretical manner. So we are looking for opportunities to partner and collaborate with all kinds of institutions to provide these real-world experiential opportunities.

**Amy:** I think that's very important, that when people learn something, they apply it. Just reflecting now, to use that word, what advice would you have to someone coming back into higher ed, coming back to get in your executive program or in the MBA? What advice would you have for them coming back to this environment?

**Prashant:** My biggest advice is really words that I borrow from Martin Luther King Jr., and I'm not going to get his quote right exactly, but he said something along the lines of “Every journey starts with the first step; taking the first step is the most difficult thing.” And he says, “Trust me and take the first step; once you take the first step, then the rest of the staircase becomes much more visible and accessible to you.” So to me, that's really the biggest piece of advice. Anybody who is thinking about going back to education, just take a plunge. Nowadays, with technology, you can actually dip your

toe, go online to one of these platforms, take a course on something that you haven't done before or that might be relevant or interesting in your work, take a course on R or Python or data visualization, and once you start to experience what this world of education and learning looks like, then you might be more willing to come back and take a full degree or a full certificate. So my advice really is that you need to start taking small steps, and the first step is difficult, but once you take that first step, the rest will become easy. And by the way, the future of work is going to be dependent on the future of learning, which really means that we need to all become lifelong learners. Learning inherently has to become a mindset and a capability that we develop. If we are not going to become lifelong learners, it is quite easy to see that we might be left behind. So there is also that incentive that we should keep in mind, that learning is going to become a part of the human fabric and human civilization moving forward.

**Amy:** Prashant, that was very eloquent in terms of pulling it together, and I think the image of being on a journey—and it doesn't have to be hard, but continuously learning—and that curiosity is definitely a part of it. But as you said, things are changing, and it really needs to be part of the fabric of our lives, and that's what the future of learning means. I want to thank you. This was fascinating.

**Prashant:** Thank you very much, Amy, and thank you to Capital H podcast for inviting me. I am grateful for this opportunity and look forward to continuing this conversation.

**Burt:** Thank you to Prashant Malaviya, senior associate dean of MBA programs at Georgetown University's McDonough School of Business. I think all of us can appreciate the need to balance technology and humanity and how Georgetown is teaching students to leverage both of these aspects to excel in the future of work. My colleagues Amy Titus and Erin Clark, who are joining us next, undoubtedly have some perspectives

on that as well. Amy and Erin are both managing directors in Human Capital at Deloitte who support clients in rethinking their approach to learning and development. Amy and Erin can help us understand how learning environments are changing and what it means to integrate learning into the flow of everyday life.

Welcome back to Capital H. Joining me today are two of my colleagues, Amy Titus and Erin Clark. Amy is a managing director in Human Capital within Deloitte and leads our Government and Public Services Learning Solutions practice, and Erin is a managing director in our Human Capital practice as well, focused in our Learning and Leadership practice. Welcome, Amy and Erin. Thanks for joining us today.

**Amy:** Thank you, Burt. We are definitely looking forward to this conversation.

**Erin Clark (Erin):** Absolutely.

**Burt:** Wonderful. So our topic today is direction and trends for the future of learning: How is it changing, where are we headed, and what do our listeners need to know? We think about learning in the flow of work, in the flow of life; we think about the implications of the hundred-year life and longer careers; and then this idea of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, and what does that mean, and what special challenges is that presenting to us that perhaps we have never faced before and that learning can help us think through and work through? So I guess, maybe just to start us off, I will offer Amy and Erin a chance for you to each give us a little bit of your point of view, and Amy, let's start with you.

**Amy:** Okay, great. Well, I'm going to answer it in two ways. One is, in the government sector, in the office of each agency where people are working, they're hearing a lot about automation, and they're really wondering, "What does that mean? What does this Fourth Industrial Revolution look

like?" They're hearing that bots are going to come in and RPA and other kinds of things, and really what they need is a picture of what is it that they need to be doing. Some of the people are, of course, self-directed, but others just aren't quite sure. And while there are some resources available, one of the challenges and one of the goals of the government right now is to figure out how they can make more resources available and really crack the nut on the future of work and reskilling. So that's what happens at work, but let me tell you, when these people go home, they are learning in the flow of their lives. They suddenly have to do something at home and have to fix something—we have all heard this story—they go on YouTube, they call an expert. They're just learning all the time, and somehow there is this dichotomy, particularly, I think, in some government environments where people are doing a job that is repetitive. So this is challenge when someone is going to be living a long time and they need to embrace a broader viewpoint and be helped to do that.

**Erin:** Burt, maybe I can offer . . . I think the situation is similar in the private sector, Amy, right? I don't think that kind of reality that you describe is that different, where both from a worker or a learner standpoint, they're sort of looking at all this change, and that change is happening more rapidly, and organizations are talking about automation, and there are all these articles and things written about future of work and AI and all this stuff, so there's that kind of phenomenon. And then there's just the reality that they live, right? I think you put it so perfectly, Amy, that I think there's this difference between the way we've become accustomed to learning in our lives and then the way we're learning at work. And there's this sort of funny thing where somehow, the expectation that those of us who have been in the workforce for a little bit longer, maybe, we don't expect our organization to catch up to where we are in our life and how we learn. We give them a little bit of a path, which is funny. The challenge there for the organization

is, the generations that haven't been in the workforce this long and that are coming don't give that allowance. Their expectation is, when I need to know something, I pick up the thing that is by my side all the time, and I figure it out because information is ubiquitous and I know that content is accessible, and I know I can find the answer at my fingertips, literally. And somehow at work, I need to have that same capability, and when I don't, I become disenchanted, I become frustrated, I develop a level of skepticism about how that organization or "system," whatever my term is, for how I will be supported in that journey. And so I think this challenge is one that we need to look at through the lens of the expectations and the experiences of our people and learners and then through the lens of . . . As organizations, how do we need to be supporting that process in fundamentally different ways than we have been?

**Amy:** I think you are absolutely on point, and I can see, again within the government, of it not being the first choice for some millennials because of that impatience, and then where you look at areas such as data scientists or in the intel space, where it's highly competitive, you see agencies making great strides in terms of bringing in simulations and AR/VR, really trying to make it a very exciting environment, which is highly inviting to some people and, of course, scares some other people as to "Well, how much do I have to get to change? It's uncomfortable, so how is the organization going to help me?" I do think we do need to answer these questions and tackle those questions you're raising, Erin. And what makes it so challenging is that one size does not fit all.

**Erin:** Exactly. This sort of personalization that we've all have come to expect in our lives—honestly, literally the way we consume information is configured for me, even without me knowing it, it's configured for me—that expectation of sort of curated content at a personal level is something we have to think about.

**Burt:** Interesting. What strikes me is how more similar than different this dynamic is playing out in the commercial sector and in the public sector, which in other aspects or other elements of organizational behavior or operations are quite different, but in this learning space, in this "how do we prepare for the future" space, it feels very similar. Maybe a lot to learn from each other.

**Erin:** No doubt.

**Amy:** I think where we are seeing strides, or where there's . . . I think one of the many ways to approach this is for groups to sit down and say, "What is changing, how do I understand it, and how can we all prepare ourselves using the resources available, as well as what we are motivated to do?" Now we all know that everybody is not a self-starter like that, or isn't as open, but I think engaging people around what they need to learn and how that's going to happen, it's not going to happen the same way to all of them, but helping them be involved in the change that's going on. We all know about change management when it's done to you, but when you are involved in it. And then, I think, that skill of learning, and what people call unlearning, which I find very difficult. You are used to doing something one way, and then technology comes in and it's supposedly making it a lot easier, but you've got to unlearn the way that you did it and learn a new way.

**Erin:** Yeah. I was having a conversation with a friend, actually, about our children and this same phenomenon with children who are looking at entering the workforce and are starting to graduate from college and think about what they might want to do and struggling with the question of "is my degree preparing me for . . ." Finding that there is this gap between, "Here's my degree and what I studied in school, and here's the jobs that are out there and available, and it doesn't really match up, and how do I navigate that?" And I think that's going to be increasingly true, and I said this is

the same in my clients at work—it doesn't stop. But the fundamental thing that our children are learning in college right now is less about the specifics of their degree, especially for those that are looking at liberal arts kind of study; it's learning how to learn and unlearn. It's learning how to navigate in complex circumstances. It's learning how to network and socialize and configure with others to accomplish something and that those skill sets are really like . . . As leaders in organizations, we want to find those people, because if I look to recruit you for a specific skill set, which may be data science, and some of the technical things aside, really what I need from you is somebody who can learn, because what I need from you today is not going to be what I need from you in four or five years. And so that notion of learning how to learn and unlearn, which requires a level of openness and a little bit of a shift in our mindset of around . . . Because I think, in many respects, school, at least here in the Western Hemisphere, trains you to this mindset of expertise, and we want people to actually embrace more of a beginner's mindset and be open to new and to learning. And I think, Amy, part of what you said there about engaging and involving people in the process of shaping what they need to be understanding and knowing is . . . Pretty soon we may even not have a choice in the matter. The notion of what we call user-generated content. I don't know enough about what to provide to you, but you probably know more, because you are on the frontlines, and you see what's happening in the organization, and you can help both yourself and your colleagues. And that kind of social element of learning, I think, is also something that's becoming more amplified, and as I look at partnering with organizations to help them think about those things, that's a real shift from pushing out content to actually shaping the infrastructure and the environment wherein learning can occur. It's a really powerful shift and really hard shift to make.



**Amy:** Well, I was in a luncheon with maybe 60 chief learning officers from across the government, and they were talking about what they called self-efficacy. And they meant the confidence to be able to learn. And I thought that was very interesting, that after you've been doing a job for a long time and it's somewhat the same every day, not necessarily in a team, do you believe that you can learn new things?

**Erin:** Right. I love this, because it's making me think of a part of what you asked for in the opening around the Fourth Industrial Revolution and how technology is reshaping this reality for people and what does that mean in terms of capability. It's funny, because it's almost a paradox, because as technology is increased, and maybe even in some respects there is this conversation of . . . Certain jobs go away, we think about the STEM capabilities and those technical things, but at the same time, there is this amplification of those innate human elements that we talked about, because it's more natural for you to develop empathy, *esprit de corps*, when you are walking around each other all the time. You're not just convening with a purpose, but when you are virtual, you don't do a lot of convening without purpose. So it's a meeting, it's a conversation, there's something. And so those informal bonds don't form as readily, and so it requires effort. You have to actually consciously choose to make those things happen, which is where we have to dial those instincts up to do it. And so those elements of capability are going to become increasingly important and increasingly things that we want and need to activate within the organization, because things will be shifting and evolving, and so we will need to plug in these skill sets, yes, or these technologies and things, but people, the need for human beings, may be actually increasing in that face versus decreasing.

**Burt:** That's really fascinating. Talk about that in terms of the ideal future learning environment. How would you describe that with this vocabulary in mind?

**Erin:** Always on and accessible.

**Amy:** And I would say focused on thinking about problems and thinking about them in new ways and being able to not only link with content, but at certain points being able to link with people who are knowledgeable in an area. I hesitate to say "expert" now that we've had this discussion, but certainly someone who has got a different point of view or a different outlook than what you may have.

**Erin:** Yeah. That social concept, but also think about what it means for somebody to ask for help. When we are brought up in a system that . . . I think it's changing, but we are encouraged to brandish our expertise and demonstrate our capability at every turn. We're managed for our performance in that way. All of these systems are configured sort of loosely around this notion of "Performance means demonstrating my capability." And so think about the mindset shift that occurs that's necessary when you have to ask for help or say, "I don't know." And in fact, we want and we need you to do that. And so how do you encourage that and shape that? And to your point, Amy, I think that problem-solving element of the learning environment breeds that, because it helps cultivate the logical safety of asking for help and individually the humility required to say, "I don't know." And then the social connection and the enablement of that, it's really a platform strategy, where you are enabling those who understand and have something to offer to connect to those who may have an issue or challenge that they are trying to solve.

**Burt:** Right. Well, one of my most favorite responses when people—the clients that we work with and internally—and they say, "I need to put some learning in place, I need to develop a training program, I need to . . ." And I'll stop and I'll say, "Learning for what? Tell me the business objective that you are looking to accomplish or an outcome that you are looking to change that learning is a factor." And back up, because sometimes

what we think learning is doing for us may not be exactly what it's doing for us. And sometimes it's a broader culture of curiosity that we want to instill, versus putting 30 people in a classroom.

**Amy:** I think it's valuable to look at all these different aspects that you're bringing out, Burt, and also Erin, in terms of bringing people together, bringing ideas together. It's got to feel somewhat safe, because when you don't know, how do you ask in a way that you think you are still maintaining your integrity, or whatever it is? And I have been having a lot of conversations very recently, and again in a public sector, because there is so much volatility going on, and change is about resilience, and a big aspect of resilience is asking for help and learning how to manage and handle this new situation that you are in, because we always think about technology, but we are just seeing a lot of very fast-moving situations globally taking place, and people have to learn how to learn in this, which requires a lot of new skills or new ways to react to them and manage.

**Erin:** What you mentioned there, Amy, kind of makes me think of the leadership lens, too, because that's a part of this, because that's . . . both as the capability of a leader, being resilient leaders at every level, but if you think about who creates that environment of safety in which you can cultivate that resilience, it's the leaders in an organization that do that, and ultimately, that's how we lead, by creating the environment wherein . . . where our people can thrive. And part of that ability to thrive is to have the resilience to navigate those complex challenges and be able to learn. And given the space and permission to do all of that, which, again, not to be generational here, but for some of us who have grown up in organizations that have had a more hierarchical-based or positional-based concept of leadership, it's a little bit of a pivot to rethink the leader's role as creating an environment that allows for that to happen.

**Burt:** That's really interesting, because I think going back to this idea of "What is the ideal learning environment?" most people, when asked that question, will go to technology tools and talk about platforms and access and the cloud, but what I am hearing is that it is also a leadership mindset that creates that safe space, that creates that sense of curiosity, that culture of asking why and how.

**Erin:** At the end of the day, our ability to not harness, but liberate our human capabilities and that curiosity element is huge, is really what we want to help unlock. That's the source of growth for us.

**Amy:** I think that's really very profound in the sense of that unleashing, and again—I'm going to go back to what we were talking about in the beginning—when a person is at home, or they're taking a hike, or wherever, they aren't feeling bound, or they feel they can go and be curious as much as they want. And so again, it's figuring out what are some of the characteristics in the environment, of that kind of an environment, where it's natural learning around what you want to do, that we could bring to go to the question that you are talking about, Burt, "What is a great learning environment?" And again, I think having relationships and also having a personal feel, personal sense in that at work, even if it's changing all the time or whatever, that you've got a place there, it has meaning to you.

**Burt:** So we've talked about some of the trends that are driving the future of learning. We have talked about what a learning environment might look like, and we really transcended to a learning environment is the environment. What about the skills and capabilities that are going to be important in the future, and are they even skills, are they even capabilities, or is it something bigger?

**Amy:** This is something that we're all talking about a lot, because you do need skills. Reading is a skill. Learning another

language is a skill, and being able to speak in that language and communicate. So skills are there, and there are some that form a foundation. And then there are others that change all the time in three to five years. One year they can be obsolete, and that goes to the learn and unlearn aspect, and then there's the more enduring ones that we have been talking about, but what I am trying to figure out is, let's just say that you use a piece of machinery. You have to calibrate with it, you have to critically fix it, that kind of thing, and fit it into a process. If that piece of machinery goes away, you still have those skills, but I think people aren't thinking like that. I think they are thinking, "Oh, if that piece of my job goes away, I don't have any skills." And that's not true. So, it's up to . . . I think learning has a role in there, as well as the organization, of saying, "Let us be a little bit more open about what you're doing when you're either sorting documents and filing documents—because people and governments spend a lot of time doing that—but what are you doing? You're analyzing. So how do you translate some of those skills that are critical, that are important, like analysis, into something else? Going back to that self-efficacy. So some of these skills can endure, but you have to put them in a new context. Some are just absolutely new.

**Erin:** I think that's absolutely true in the end, and the concept of transferring those skills from one application into another really does behoove us as leaders in organizations who think about this to really be careful about how we think about what somebody is demonstrating in the execution of their job and how to then transfer what they are demonstrating into another application and being able to define it at a level that allows for that to happen, which I think that we're starting to see that happening in how we define capabilities and skills, but what it ends up being is a little bit more of a broad definition, which I think sometimes makes us uncomfortable because we like to plug and play. But it does require us to look at that

through a little bit of a broader lens, but it also requires that we look at people more individually and think about them a little bit more that way, which is, I think, interesting. At the same time that we need to increase our personalization and focus on the individual, the humanity of that person, the answer, I think, to our being able to do that is data and access to data and how we interpret and manage and align that data against decisions that we make about people. And the definitions that we put in place to guide that is where I think the bridge that allows us to get to an outcome that feels what you are talking about, Amy, where somebody whose context has become obsolete, but somehow, whether they have self-efficacy or not, the organization has recognized that . . . "No, it's okay. Come over here. Context is different, we're going to help you, but we know you can do this." Imagine how that'd feel. Wouldn't that be amazing? And I think that's where that the sort of people data element of all of this comes into play. Burt, you said something that I just want to call out. I think when we think about work and how we manage what people come to work to do and then how we help them grow and develop, we have a bias that's very activity-based in terms of . . . We write job descriptions in some respects still, in this way, and we talk about the construct of a job in terms of the activities that need to be executed, whereas I think part of the shift that we need to be making is to view those things through the lens of outcome.

**Burt:** Yeah, it's the classic story of the hardware company that made drills and always trying to make a better drill bit, until somebody pointed out that they weren't in the drill business, they're in the "making a hole" business, and what's a better way to make a hole, not a better way to make the drill. Thank you both. I really appreciate this really intriguing and thought-provoking conversation. Any last words that you would like to share with our audience? And maybe, Erin, I'll start with you.



**Erin:** Thank you, Burt. This has been . . . It's always helpful to have these kinds of conversations where we pause to reflect and think, and I guess maybe that would be my closing remark, too, is to encourage those who are listening and wrestling with challenges within the organization to do more of that, to sit back and pause and look at it. I think there's so much power in doing that. We know that's true because we know that that's necessary for learning to occur as well, but it's so hard with the pace of things in our lives and actually at work. But maybe take those moments. I sometimes advise leaders, when I am doing some leadership coaching, to schedule a time for just thinking, and maybe it's only 15 minutes, but schedule it in and set it aside and see what happens. See what you're able to do just by thinking. So that would be my closing thought.

**Burt:** Wonderful, and the word I love for that is reflection. Take time for reflection. Amy, thoughts?

**Amy:** I think, building on that, we've seen a lot of breakthroughs coming from where people go and put something together that didn't seem to feel similar. So really talking to people maybe who do not do learning and hearing from them, bringing disparate things together to really get a new perspective and thinking about it at the same as you are suggesting, Erin. So it's really taking that new approach. We have known that lots of inventions have come from that, breakthroughs, and I would close with thinking in that new direction as well.

**Burt:** Interesting. I think that's the context for our next conversation. Well, thank you both. Thank you for taking some time to talk with us. I really appreciate it.

Developing a culture of lifelong learning is a key element to the future of work. And this has implications for both educational institutions and organizations. Our thanks to Prashant Malaviya, senior associate dean of MBA programs at Georgetown University's McDonough School of Business, for his perspective on how learning can enable a more human-centric future of work. And thanks to my Deloitte colleagues, Human Capital managing directors Amy Titus and Erin Clark, for their insights into how organizations can bring the future of learning into the here and now to make it part of the flow of everyday life. This is your host, Burt Rea, and I look forward to exploring more topics with you next time as we focus on putting humans at the center of work. Thanks for listening.



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