



# USER FRIENDLY

## Creating workforce resilience in tech, media, and telecom

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**Guests:** Ina Gantcheva and Dana Swanson Switzer, Human Capital principals at Deloitte  
Josie Trine, director of Talent and Culture at Dell

**Hanish:**

I'm Hanish Patel and this is User Friendly, the show where we explore emerging trends in tech, media, and telecom, and how they impact business, operations, and the world around you.

Tech, media, and telecom companies today face an ever-evolving skills landscape in which organizations must consider both

the dynamic nature of jobs and the equally dynamic potential of people to reinvent themselves. How can organizations focus on building workers' resilience for both the short- and the long-term, while increasing their own resilience in the face of constant change. Joining me today are Josie Trine, director of Talent and Culture at Dell; Ina Gantcheva and Dana Swanson Switzer, Human Capital principals at Deloitte, to

discuss workforce reskilling and how businesses can invest in resilience for the uncertain future ahead. And with that, Josie, Ina, and Dana, welcome to the pod.

**Dana:**

Good to be here.

**Ina:**

Thank you.

**Josie:**

Pleasure to join you.

**Hanish:**

Great. So, let's get straight into it. And I want to open this one up by saying many organizations find themselves challenged with addressing two forces at odds with each other: humans and technology, particularly as the majority of the workforce is adjusting to balancing what looks like working from home for some time now. And to start with, a question to all of you on that front—how can businesses respond to this dichotomy, and what are technology, media, and telecom companies doing to lead the response?

**Ina:**

Let me get started here, because the topic about humans and technology has been going on for the last few years. And the conversations about the robots are coming. Technology is going to change our world. How are we going to adjust? Can we get up to speed on the skills that technology is changing at such a rapid pace? They all have been topics that we have been talking about, reading about, and experiencing in the workplace, and also in our personal lives. And with COVID, that component of how can we combine technology and work became extremely front and center. And I think we also have started to see the importance of being resilient, as in, we need to learn fast, we need to learn in a very agile way.

We learned about Zoom. We learned about how to be productive on Zoom. We learned how to put screens on Zoom very fast, and this is actually kind of a microcosm of how technology and human experience will start to integrate. We need to think about what it enables, adjust it the fly, and continue it on an ongoing basis to innovate and continue to leverage what technology opens for us. And that's what I think businesses will also experience at a much bigger scale. But I'm curious to hear Dana's perspective, especially how technology companies are looking into that.

**Dana:**

In my work, primarily with tech clients, I'm often speaking on topics of future of work, technology coming into the picture, person plus smart machine becoming the new norm. And I often get questions about engagement, meaning, and community, and particularly from the companies that are delivering this technology, they are advancing this technology. The bigger challenge around, how do you create meaning when more and more of our interactions are with technology, which has only been exacerbated in times during the pandemic.

I think the opportunity that we've seen some companies take advantage of is pushing the boundaries of those moments of interaction and collaboration, and our opportunity to really dial up, pushing meaning, while we're still bringing technology into the picture, and looking at our own usefulness in the community and as part of a broader ecosystem. The companies that we work with, the companies that we work for, in light of technology being pervasive in everything that we do, how do we look at the way that work is designed to create meaning, reduce friction, reduce frustration, and allow individuals to achieve their best purpose and not get bogged down by the amount of technology that's now surrounding them day to day.

**Josie:**

Yep. And, Dana, from my end, and knowing this from working at Dell and other companies for years now, we're experiencing unprecedented changes that impact every aspect of life as a result of the fusion of human work and technology playing an increasingly prominent role in getting work done. And as a technology company at Dell, we've had a front row seat to all these changes, and we've played an instrumental role in helping our workforce become more engaged and more effective. So, Hanish, when you asked the question you asked, I think you posed it: humans and technology, two forces at odds with each other. We like to look at it as technology enabling human potential. So rather than being at odds, it's



more of an enabler. And at Dell, this is a journey we've been on for over 10 years. So even pre-pandemic, this is something that we've focused on.

In fact, we started our connected workplace journey back in 2009. And the thrust of the effort was helping our workforce do their best work on their time and from where they want to work, and using technology to enable that to come to fruition. Even before the pandemic, roughly two-thirds of our employees engaged in some sort of a flexible work arrangement, and about a third are remote or virtual, and this is pre-pandemic. So, in mid-March this year, when the pandemic really hit, especially in the United States, and companies started to make some pretty significant shifts, in the matter of one weekend, 90% of our team members went fully remote.

And we like to think that as a company, we can do that not only for our team members, but also for the businesses that buy from us as well, too. I mean, Dell Technologies is not, dude, you're getting a Dell. It's not that anymore. We help companies virtualize. We help companies work remote. So in our view, we feel a moral obligation, not just a business obligation, to go help our communities, society, and our team members perform and fulfill their potential and live the most personally fulfilling life they can, in addition to living out their professional ambition. I mean, part of working remote and virtual is an advantage. And for us, it helps our EVP. And for us, it helps us also advance the work of the businesses that we support. And as a result, the communities we support too.

**Hanish:**

So, Josie, I want to kind of dig deeper into something you said, particularly around technology enabling what you're saying for the workforce and what you described that really talks to how it's elevating the human experience. So I look at in the past year and certainly the race for upskilling talent has jumped to in the spotlight, one, as a business imperative, but also as a social expectation. So to that end, what is Dell doing to really tackle this?

**Josie:**

Yeah, this is a great question. Upskilling, reskilling, no matter what assortment of consulting reports or benchmarking you read, you see those terms pop up again and again, and they're so incredibly important because technology is always changing quicker. The half-life of skills is always dropping. And I think I read a statistic, 85% of the jobs in 2030 don't even exist yet. So this upskilling notion is a critically important imperative for us as a company to continue to win and for our people to continue to stay relevant.

So I like to look at this and give you a couple examples. One is the Dell Opportunity Marketplace. We are really excited about scaling this concept. We launched the Opportunity Marketplace earlier this year. We've scaled it to our function, HR, and are scaling it also in the finance function. And we'll go across the company over the course of the next year to a year and a half. And what makes the Opportunity Marketplace really special to upscale our talent, help us win, and help them fulfill their potential is the fact that we're matching people up to opportunity, the right talent to the opportunity in fresh ways that we haven't had the ability to do before.

And by that, I mean the experiences. If I'm a team member, I log in to the Marketplace, I update my profile with the skills that I possess and the skills that I want to learn, and then as a company, I have much greater understanding of the talent I have beyond just headcount planning. I can look at skills and capabilities, I can find surpluses, I can find gaps. And then the incentive for those team members to actually log in and do that is that they have the opportunity to an AI-based match between the skills they possess, the skills they want to grow, and the opportunities that exist inside the company. Full-time work, project and gig work, which is a new concept that we're pulling through in Dell right now.

So in a company of over 100,000 team members, you never really know your talent perfectly. You never really know if you're leveraging the skills that you have across

the enterprise. And just imagine this in any company, there are project managers, folks with tremendous data skill sets that exist in every single function, but do we always leverage that skill from function to function or business to business? The Marketplace gives us an opportunity to go match people to opportunity and do that. And any time you launch something like this, it's a change management exercise, certainly. But I would mention that this is starting to become more and more pervasive even outside of Dell. You've got companies that aren't even traditionally considered tech companies, in the CPG space, in the industrial sectors, They're using these Marketplace concepts as well too to get more value out of the workforce and to help the workforce grow.

So I love that as one example. And because, Hanish, you mentioned this part about the social expectation and community impact, I want to mention our Autism Hiring Program. And this one to me is really special. It's one of those ones that it makes you feel warm and fuzzy when you describe it and when you think about it. But three years ago, in partnership with our employee resource group, TrueAbility, the company launched a program in Hopkinton, Massachusetts, it's a small town just outside of Boston, to help access talent that we hadn't been accessing as well as we could have before and that most companies don't access. And that's those on the autism spectrum. So the initiative rethinks the traditional interview experience, especially because we recognize that many on the autism spectrum struggle with social interaction and struggle with engaging in a traditional interview setting.

So this Autism Hiring Program takes an alternate approach where applicants are invited to showcase their skills in action by working on a two-week team project. And depending on the outcome of that, they may be eligible for an internship. And, of course, internships are always feeders to full-time opportunities. So, it's great for us because we access outstanding talent we may not have been able to access before. It's great for the community because we're broadening access to opportunity, and it's great for the new team members who

join Dell. They get to fulfill their potential, which fulfilling human progress is part of our vision as well. So the Autism Hiring Program, I absolutely love that one. I'm excited always and every time I get the opportunity to talk about it. So thank you for asking that question.

**Dana:**

I love that story, Josie, and there's a lot of really good examples of getting creative, tapping into skills that are present in unique communities, maybe untraditional or nontraditional talent pools. So that's really good. And I'd love to jump on to your description of how you're thinking about upskilling and reskilling and tie back the conversation that we were having earlier around this idea that technology and human resilience could be at odds. And we definitely hear feedback that disruptions in the market, technology as a disruptor, can be unsettling. Yet technology also creates this need for people to constantly reinvent themselves. And the idea of building security or certainty into this unsettling time via reskilling is a really interesting take.

And you can think about that at the individual level, which I think, Josie, you were describing really well, both focusing on reskilling and investing in worker resilience and cultivating those, what we call enduring human skills or enduring human capabilities, those things that can't be done by technology. Things like collaboration, influence, sophisticated problem solving. Those are really the skills for companies to wrap their arms around and for individuals to be building as part of the flow of their work, making that part of their everyday.

And at the company level, that looks like building organizational learning. So becoming a learning organization, those companies that have learning built into the flow of work, that's part of the expectation with the job, they're agile. As part of doing business, they're better positioned to win out at scale, to rise in a disruptive environment, and no better time than now to really see those organizations, those companies that already started down that path of reskilling and reinvention as naturally part of how you do your job will be

better at embracing technology and really using it to your advantage to actually build security and certainty into this world of constant change that we are in.

**Hanish:**

Dana, just on that, and really kind of anchoring in on, Josie, what you mentioned around the Autism Hiring Program, that's absolutely wonderful. And I think about just the greater amount of inclusion that has taken place across all organizations, and it strikes me that absolutely when I think about it, success just looks different today than it did in the past. And organizations increasingly need to depend on innovation and programs that you talked about and creativity to thrive. And so, Dana, how can businesses help their employees really tap into these skills?

**Dana:**

Well, I love Josie's example of institutionalizing reskilling at scale. And I think one other element of that is getting exposure and experiences. So older way of thinking about development and learning really around training programs and learning functional or technical skills, which still are an important element of how we do our jobs. But if we start to dial in to that higher order work and those higher order skills, then it really is about having those professional experiences and getting access to that. So to the new way of working in this virtual environment, giving equal access to the organization via programs and platforms, to projects, to maybe conferences or learning opportunities that are nontraditional, that don't require you to have a specific network of leaders or teams, that allow you to reach outside of your silo, outside of your function, into new areas and really build those cross-functional problem-solving skills, really those industry and business context problem-solving capabilities will be the way in which we think about learning and growing in the future. A really new way of thinking about your own personal development and career growth.

**Hanish:**

Using that word *development*, we've certainly seen over "N" number of years the development and progress when it comes to

AI, artificial intelligence. So, no conversation would be complete around this topic if we didn't talk about some form of automation. The question I want to pose to all three of you, and maybe I'll start off with you, Ina, is thinking about all the advances in AI, how should organizations invest in reskilling?

**Ina:**

It's actually an excellent question because when I think about what we were just listening to, the really insightful examples from Dana and Josie, there's a lot about the intersection between what we call resilience, the new skills, and giving people access to build them both so they can continue to innovate and so they can also feel much more stabilized. The safety and security that Dana mentioned I think is essential. I also want to think there's the dimension companies need to think about potential. To me, the word *potential* is actually what we'll continue to talk more and more about and almost like one of the words that is entering our vocabulary when we talk about talent management. We talked a lot about performance. We started to shift towards potential, and it also starts to tie to two new concepts I think we are seeing to enter the marketplace. One is the employee experience. How is everything tied together so our employees, our colleagues, collaborators, whether they are external gig workers, or whether they're contractors of the crowdsourcing community, what is their experience as they upskill, reskill, innovate, realize their potential, and how they realize, I would say something, Josie, that you mentioned that really resonated with me, you called it the professional ambition. And I've always been thinking and talking recently about how the word *career* is actually somewhat limited because it implies constant promotion when we're actually entering the space of resilience around us being able to constantly grow. And this professional ambition, professional growth is critical. So, to your question about automation, we see how automation and AI can really take the components of skills, tasks, needs, and opportunities and create a safe, dynamic place.

Josie, you spoke about the opportunity marketplace. We hear it being referenced

as well, talking about talent marketplace, or even marketplaces in plural, because they continue to multiply. Again, vocabulary we anticipate will be very common-day vocabulary in probably just a couple of months or even a year. And the importance of AI to give people visibility in what's available to them, this ability to the managers, to the organization of what skills capabilities capacity is available in the workforce, and also opportunity to make this in a very customer great experience.

So far, we have not seen that experience in the talent HR platforms. With the advancement of AI, we see much more opportunity for us to get consumer-grade customized, very well-refined experience. And the reason I want to call it out is because it's enabled by technology through machine learning. So we now see how AI machine learning technology starts to really enhance the human experience. So I'm very excited about what technology can do for us, knowing that it's also in a growing path that we will experience some hiccups as we experiment. But I think companies, just like you've mentioned what you're doing at Dell, that's the future.

**Josie:**

I totally agree. And I love that you dropped the term *consumer* because it's important when you think about questions like AI or terms like AI and rescaling together, it can sound kind of scary, the implication there automatically to people is job loss or massive disruption that is frightening. But when you drop this term *consumer experience*, it's really in tandem with employee experience, it allows you to see this through a different lens. So today, if you want to go learn, say, you want to assemble something, say you want to learn guitar. As a consumer, what do you go do? You normally go out to watch videos online or if you want to help yourself become in much better shape, you use a fitness app. So all of these are driven by AI. Why can't those same concepts directly apply to work?

**Josie:**

I talked about one of those before with the Opportunity Marketplace. The AI is what matches our people, the skills they

possess, their testament to the skills they want to grow, to the opportunities in the organization. And it goes beyond that. We also have a social learning platform at Dell too where anybody can go post content, anybody can go seek content out. Just like you'd see at a variety of different companies where you see videos getting posted online, or where you see open exchanges of ideas and connections between people. AI drives all of this.

**Josie:**

When I think about AI and reskilling, what I see is the upside. What I see is us getting to higher order human thinking. And frankly, for everybody to be able to grasp this concept, it's going to require a great deal of effort, but organizations, including Dell, are already making strides with these concepts by leveraging AI to help people reskill in such a way that meets what they define as their career of the future. And it's always helpful for them to understand that the career of yesterday is not the career of tomorrow.

**Josie:**

We need to focus more on skills and capabilities, not just the jobs that you hold and the jobs that you want to hold. Traditional ladder or lattice career paths just aren't as attainable in every company anymore. What's much more common is and becoming common, how do you grow the right skills and capabilities to future-proof yourself? And I'm hopeful that AI and machine learning will continue to help us in that endeavor across industries and companies.

**Hanish:**

Dana, your thoughts?

**Dana:**

When thinking about technology, the challenge on the table is really to create an environment that doesn't fear technology but embraces it as a way to be more productive and create more meaning out of work. We've seen a slight increase in productivity in this current environment because we no longer have to commute to work. And because we're willing to get up first thing in the morning and jump on to our computers and stay on until the evening,

neither of which is sustainable. So, it's our opportunity to use this time to think about, what does it look like as we start to move back into a more flexible work environment where we are seeing each other, we are connecting as humans, we are getting the value out of that in-person connection, but we are leveraging technology in more interesting ways to truly become more productive and more effective and be more innovative and experimental in the way that we deliver our services and products to our customers. And that partnership is only going to increase, that technology and human partnership, is only going to increase as our capabilities around machine learning and AI increase and as our saviness around getting the most out of the technology increases and getting smart about when human interaction, when technology interaction is right for the outcomes that we're trying to drive.

**Hanish:**

Thank you. Dana, Josie, Ina, we covered a lot of ground today, and to wrap, I'd really like to get one key takeaway for our listeners from each of you on creating a resilient workforce. So, with that, away you go.

**Dana:**

I really believe the challenge in front of us and the challenge on the table for all companies is to create a culture that recognizes and even requires the value of learning, reskilling, and reinvention as a way in which you meet customer needs, as the way in which you become a more productive, yet more innovative business, and a way in which you maximize human potential at work and ultimately become more resilient.

**Hanish:**

Love it.

**Ina:**

And my take on it, I'm going to home in on the word *resilience* because it can have a negative connotation almost like survival, but the word *resilience* when positioned in the context of growth and innovation can be very, very positive. So my key takeaway and my hope and my wish is that we talk about resilience as a very positive quality that

companies, employees, teams talk about. And they're really proud of it. And they're excited about that resilience, about that flexibility, innovation, agility, and constant development and growth.

**Hanish:**

And Josie, to bring us home.

**Josie:**

Absolutely. And I completely concur, Dana and Ina, with your points, and I'd add one additional layer. The ability to be resilient, at least to me, is partly contingent on having an underlying trust in the organization that one works in. I love your points, Dana, on viewing career development differently. Viewing career development as something that upscaling in real time is a necessity to be able to make sure that you as an individual are future-proofed and that your organization is. But the organization has got to make clear that the time will be afforded

to be able to learn and grow in the flow. And that, in some instances, that means more rapid failure. And that's okay, because organizations learn and adjust that way. Failure is part of learning. So that's one point I think I would leave this with, Hanish.

**Hanish:**

In a world where the only constant is change, supporting workers in reinventing themselves offers organizations a sustainable path forward as they aim to equip their workforces for the work they've got to do today and the future, especially when we consider that data point that Josie brought up earlier that 85% of the jobs in 2030, they don't even exist yet.

So with that, I really want to thank my guests, Josie, Ina, and Dana for joining me today to discuss creating workforce resilience. And until next time, happy listening.

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