



# Navigating the end of jobs

Skills replace jobs as the focal point for matching workers with work

Coauthored by Karen Weisz.

*Since the dawn of the industrial age, the job has been the defining structure for organizing and managing every aspect of work. That approach made sense when business changes occurred slowly, and workers were just pieces in the industrial machine. The solution? A skills-based approach to managing work and workers, delivering business agility and worker autonomy by enabling work to be performed beyond formal job boundaries.*

THE CONCEPT OF the *job*—a predefined set of functional responsibilities assigned to a particular worker—is so ingrained in how organizations operate that it’s hard to imagine any other way of managing work and workers. Yet many recognize this traditional construct is failing to serve our boundaryless world. Our [skills-based organization survey](#) revealed that only 19% of business executives and 23% of workers say work is best structured through jobs. As a result, a growing number of organizations are beginning to imagine work outside of the job—turning workforce management on its head by increasingly

basing work and workforce decisions on skills—not formal job definitions, titles, or degrees.

This shift is being driven by several related factors:

**Performance pressure.** Thirty percent of our skills-based organization survey<sup>1</sup> respondents report their organizations are ineffective at matching the right talent to work. A skills-based approach boosts productivity, efficiency, and effectiveness by better aligning workers with work that fits their skills and capabilities, including technical skills, soft or human skills, and potential

future skills in adjacent areas. Organizations that do this effectively can unleash worker potential to drive greater value and are 52% more likely to be innovative.<sup>2</sup>

**Need for agility.** Sixty-three percent of business executives report workers are focused on team and project work that falls outside their current job descriptions. Further, 81% of executives say work is increasingly performed across functional boundaries. A skills-based approach improves organizational agility by enabling workers to be quickly deployed—or redeployed—based solely on their skills and the work that needs to be done, irrespective of their job title or functional area. Organizations with a skills-based approach are 57% more likely to be agile.<sup>3</sup>

**Talent shortages.** Focusing on skills helps alleviate talent shortages by providing a more expansive view of the work people are able to do, instead of artificially limiting the talent pool to people with specific backgrounds and job histories. This also allows organizations to mitigate talent shortages by plugging gaps with internal resources

instead of hiring from outside. Organizations with a skills-based approach are 107% more likely to place talent effectively and 98% more likely to retain high performers and have a reputation as a great place to grow and develop.<sup>4</sup>

**Increased focus on equitable outcomes.** A skills-based approach also helps promote diversity and equity in the workplace. In the skills-based organization survey, 75% of executives say hiring, promoting, and deploying people based on skills (versus tenure, job history, or network) can help democratize and improve access to opportunities. Merck and IBM, for example, are part of a coalition called OneTen that is committed to hiring, upskilling, reskilling, and promoting one million Black people without four-year degrees by shifting to a skills-first approach.<sup>5</sup>

## The readiness gap

In the Deloitte 2023 Global Human Capital Trends survey, 93% of our respondents said moving away from a focus on jobs is important or very important

### SIGNALS: THIS TREND APPLIES TO YOU IF ...

- Your organization spends too much time adjusting job descriptions to accommodate changing work
- You are losing top talent as a result of inadequate development opportunities to grow adjacent skills
- You are having difficulty accessing talent due to overreliance on degrees and previous roles over skills and potential aligned with emerging business priorities
- Promising, diverse candidates are being screened out of talent pipelines due to their supposedly inadequate job history
- Workers are struggling to find new opportunities outside of their siloed business units

FIGURE 1

## The readiness gap for a skills-based approach

Moving away from the job construct is important or very important to my organization's success

93%

My organization is very ready to address the movement away from jobs

20%

Source: Deloitte 2023 Global Human Capital Trends survey.

to their organization's success. Yet only 20% believe their organization is very ready to tackle the challenge, representing the largest readiness gap of all trends surveyed (figure 1).

What's holding organizations back? According to the skills-based organization survey, the top challenge/obstacle is *legacy mindsets and practices*, cited by 46% of business and HR executives as one of the top three obstacles to transforming into a skills-based organization. Technology is not the issue; only 18% cite lack of effective skills-related technology as a top three obstacle, the lowest of the 10 obstacles listed.<sup>6</sup>

## The new fundamentals

### Define work based on the skills required.

Instead of defining work as a specific set of tasks and responsibilities (i.e., a job), define work primarily based on the skills it requires. Organizations will need to first consider their strategic objectives or desired outcomes, then identify the work that needs to be done to achieve them and the skills required to do that work.

### Collect and analyze data about worker skills.

Thanks to recent technology advances in skills assessments, skills inferencing, analytics powered by artificial intelligence (AI), and live “tryouts” for evaluating external candidates, organizations have

access to a differentiated level of work skill data. Similar technology can be used to inventory the skills of existing workers, supplemented with more holistic data about workers' interests, values, work preferences, and more.

Collecting data about workers can be controversial, as discussed in our “[Negotiating worker data](#)” chapter. However, in the context of skills, our research suggests workers are more open to having this data collected. Eight in 10 workers are willing to have their organization collect data about their *demonstrated* skills and capabilities and seven in 10 are willing to have data collected about their *potential* abilities. This even extends to using AI to passively mine worker data as they work, with 53% of workers seeing this as positive.<sup>7</sup>

**View workers based on their skills, not job titles.** Instead of viewing workers narrowly as job holders performing predefined tasks, view them holistically as unique individuals with a portfolio of skills to offer—and then match them with work that aligns with those skills. The work might be performed by an individual, a team, or a shifting set of resources, each person contributing their appropriate skills (while improving their current skills and developing new ones), then moving on to other work when their particular skills are no longer needed. As part of the deployment process, it's ideal to match workers with work that aligns not only with their skills, but also with their unique interests, values, passions, development goals, location preferences, and more—since people are happiest and most productive when doing work that fits who they are and what they care about. Doing so will help workers maximize their personal contributions and growth. It will also help create a more equitable and human-centric worker experience, creating value for workers and society at large.

**Make decisions about workers based on skills.** Beyond matching workers to work based on skills, organizations will want to make skills the

focal point for all workforce practices throughout the talent life cycle—from hiring to careers to performance management to rewards—placing more emphasis on skills and less on jobs. For example, in hiring, that means evaluating candidates based on skills and capabilities rather than degrees and certifications. More than one in three respondents to the Deloitte 2023 Global Human Capital Trends survey state that they are not using skills to help their workforce meet their fullest potential, highlighting an opportunity to embed skills throughout the talent life cycle.

“Skills can be a very objective, quantifiable measure of capability and proficiency. We’re able to use skills data as an input into workforce planning decisions, where we take a lot of different data sets, and we align that to business strategy. With Cisco being a large, complex global organization, this strategy will allow us to be nimble and very intentional about our workforce planning decisions.”

— Kate Driscoll, Workforce Strategy and Organizational Design leader, Cisco<sup>8</sup>

## Current experiments: What leading organizations are exploring

- **The US Army Civilian workforce** is implementing a career-pathing capability for its contracting and logistics professionals, moving toward a skills-based organization with increased flexibility to meet changing mission needs and workforce agency to enable employees to better own their career and stay longer within the Army. The career-pathing approach allows Army leadership to visualize the skills and preferences, not just positions, of its current talent, shows fit alignment to future-state roles, and leverages talent data to support a more resilient and sustainable future workforce.<sup>9</sup>

- **A financial services organization** developed a virtual career assistant that uses AI to mine employees’ skills and interests to determine their most suitable jobs—and where training could help them pursue new opportunities.
- **Morning Star**, the tomato-processing company, has only two management layers: the president, who makes strategic decisions, and everyone else. Instead of job titles, workers create their own list of outcomes and problems to be solved, with authority and pay based on skills, expertise, and value created—rather than position.<sup>10</sup> For example, one worker’s personal mission is to turn tomatoes into juice in a way that’s highly efficient and environmentally responsible.



## The path forward

FIGURE 2

### Survive. Thrive. Drive.

Survive	Thrive	Drive
<p><i>Remain viable in the marketplace</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deconstruct work to its lowest level and define work outcomes to align with business priorities</li> <li>• Inventory current skills in critical workforce segments</li> <li>• Create a work architecture by mapping work to skills to jobs</li> <li>• Pay for hot skills versus priority jobs</li> <li>• Link skills to learning to unlock workforce potential</li> <li>• Increase access to talent through screening criteria that emphasize skills over job history</li> </ul>	<p><i>Differentiate to gain competitive advantage</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expand skills inventory with a greater focus on future skill needs</li> <li>• Define broad work clusters based on outcomes or challenges to be solved</li> <li>• Establish an internal talent marketplace to match workers to work and learning</li> <li>• Refocus leaders on managing to outcomes, not job-based tasks</li> </ul>	<p><i>Lead the market by radically innovating and transforming</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extend the talent marketplace to include your entire workforce ecosystem (internal and external workers)</li> <li>• Involve workers in cocreating their own customized work experiences</li> <li>• Use skill adjacencies and AI for emerging work, reskilling opportunities, and career progression</li> <li>• Set compensation based on a worker's skills and outcomes achieved</li> <li>• Transform talent management so that all practices are skills-based</li> </ul>

Source: Deloitte analysis.

## Looking ahead

A skills-based approach is not an invitation to exert more control over what people do by using algorithms to assign people to ever-smaller pieces of work based on ever-narrower definitions of skills. Talent marketplaces today, in contrast, use AI to suggest new opportunities to people (e.g., projects, tasks, mentors, learning experiences, and more), granting workers autonomy and choice in what they decide to pursue.

To thrive, organizations should trust workers to deliver outcomes based on their skills, interests, and potential, not just their past credentials and job history. It will also require a willingness to assign work based on adjacent skills, not just

current skills. This will give workers opportunities to grow in adjacent areas by building on the skills they already have, which is extremely beneficial both for them and the organization.

Efforts to adopt skills-based thinking range from modest to radical. Some are starting with classifying skills, while others are doing away with the concept of jobs entirely. In a conversation with M&T Bank's Chief Talent Officer Neil Walker-Neveas, he shared, "When the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) was rolled out during the pandemic, we had to stop thinking about jobs and start thinking about skills. We were the number six Small Business Administration lender in the country—and the number one in much of the Northeast US—so we had a responsibility to help

small businesses stay viable. By focusing on skills versus jobs—and rapidly mobilizing talent in an agile way—we outperformed our peers, funding 96% of qualified applicants loans in the first round, and 100% in the second round, versus peers with more advanced technology that struggled to fund more than 50% in the first round.”<sup>11</sup>

Regardless of which approach you take on your journey to become a more skills-based organization, one thing is clear: There are

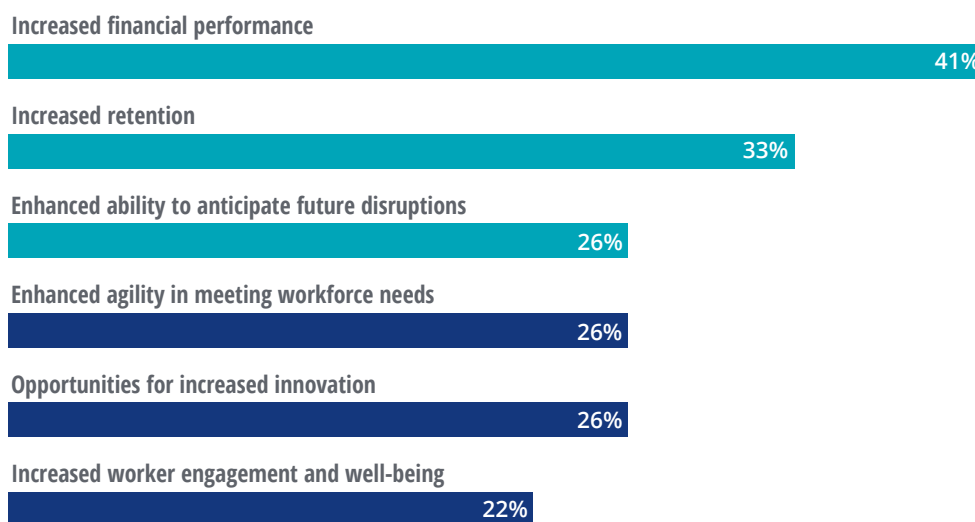
significant outcomes to be achieved, both for the organization and for the workforce.

*Deloitte’s 2023 Global Human Capital Trends survey polled 10,000 business and HR leaders across every industry, with 105 countries participating. The survey data is complemented by interviews with executives from some of today’s leading organizations. These insights gathered shaped the trends in this report.*

FIGURE 3

### Benefits from effectively matching workers to work

■ Benefit to organization ■ Benefit to workforce



Source: Deloitte 2023 Global Human Capital Trends survey.

## Endnotes

1. Sue Cantrell et al., *The skills-based organization: A new operating model for work and the workforce*, Deloitte Insights, September 8, 2022; the article features data from Deloitte's skills-based organization survey, which polled 1,021 workers and 225 business and HR executives across a range of industries and in 10 countries, namely Australia, Brazil, Canada, Germany, India, Japan, Singapore, South Africa, the United Kingdom, and the United States.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
5. PRNewswire, "OneTen launches technology platform to create and enable one million career opportunities for black talent over the next 10 years," June 29, 2021.
6. Cantrell et al., *The skills-based organization*.
7. Ibid.
8. Interview with authors.
9. Based on work done by Deloitte with this client.
10. Gary Hamel, "First, let's fire all the managers," *Harvard Business Review*, December 2011.
11. Interview with authors.

## Acknowledgments

**Karen Weisz** coauthored our 2023 Global Human Capital Trends discussion on "Navigating the end of jobs."

The authors would like to thank **Kate Driscoll** (Cisco) and **Neil Walker-Neveas** (M&T Bank) for their contributions to this chapter.

The authors would like to thank **Sarah Hechtman** and **Abby Shuster** for their leadership in the development of this chapter, and **Grace Stafford** and **Gwen Widicus** for their outstanding contributions.

Deloitte's Human Capital professionals leverage research, analytics, and industry insights to help design and execute the HR, talent, leadership, organization, and change programs that enable business performance through people performance. Visit the Human Capital area of [Deloitte.com](https://www.deloitte.com) to learn more.

## About the authors

### **Christina Brodzik | Principal | Deloitte Consulting LLP | [cbrodzik@deloitte.com](mailto:cbrodzik@deloitte.com)**

As a principal in Deloitte Consulting LLP, Christina Brodzik brings more than 20 years of experience to the human capital space. She focuses on financial services and insurance, and specializes in a wide range of transformations including strategic change, talent strategies, learning solutions, talent acquisition, and diversity & inclusion. As the national leader of Deloitte's Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Client Service practice, she is a certified facilitator for Deloitte's Inclusive Leadership Experience and Strategy Inclusion Labs.

In addition her client responsibilities, Brodzik has served as the Financial Services Women's Initiative lead for partner/director talent planning, as well as the Human Capital Women's Initiative deputy.

### **Sue Cantrell | Vice President | Deloitte Consulting LLP | [scantrell@deloitte.com](mailto:scantrell@deloitte.com)**

Susan Cantrell is vice president of Products, Workforce Strategies at Deloitte Consulting LLP. She is a leading expert and frequent speaker on future of work and human capital. She is co-author of the Harvard Business Press book *Workforce of One*, and has been published widely in publications like Harvard Business Review, Wall Street Journal, and MIT Sloan Management Review. She has more than 20 years of experience serving as an executive advisor, author, researcher, and developer of new solutions that help organizations harness digital technologies and evolve their workforces to innovate, unlock agility, and drive transformation. She holds a Master of Science degree in management information systems from Boston University, and a Bachelor of Arts degree from Vassar College.

### **Kraig Eaton | Principal | Deloitte Consulting LLP | [keaton@deloitte.com](mailto:keaton@deloitte.com)**

Kraig Eaton is a principal in Deloitte Consulting LLP's US Human Capital service area and serves as the colead of the Deloitte Global Human Capital Trends team. Eaton has more than 28 years of experience working with senior business and HR executives to transform their human capital strategies and capabilities to better support the business goals of the organization, specifically supporting some of the world's leading organizations on efforts spanning the full spectrum of HR and workforce transformations, from upfront strategy development through large-scale operating model, organization, and technology implementations.



**John Forsythe | Managing director | Deloitte Consulting LLP | joforsythe@deloitte.com**

John Forsythe is a managing director in the US Government & Public Services (GPS) Human Capital practice of Deloitte Consulting LLP. He specializes in helping executive clients lead behavioral change across organizational boundaries and is the senior sponsor of Deloitte's GPS Culture Transformation offering. Forsythe has more than 31 years of business experience, including 23 years in public services consulting. During his career, he has led many consulting assignments, developing expertise in culture, leadership development, strategic change, organizational assessment, communications, leadership alignment, and executive coaching. He has provided strategic advice and counsel to clients from across the government and commercial sectors, and his clients include the following public sector organizations: the US Air Force, the US Navy, the US Army, the US Marine Corps, the Office of the Secretary of Defense, US Transportation Command, Special Operations Command, the US Department of Commerce, the US Patent and Trademark Office, the US Department of Agriculture, the Environmental Protection Agency, the US Forest Service, the US Department of Veterans Affairs, and the US Department of Housing and Urban Development.

**Michael Griffiths | Principal | Deloitte Consulting LLP | mgriffiths@deloitte.com**

Michael Griffiths is a principal in Deloitte Consulting LLP's Workforce Transformation practice and serves as the colead of the Deloitte Global Human Capital Trends team. Griffiths leads Deloitte's Workforce Development market offerings, which drive the market in learning transformations, knowledge management, leadership development, and assisting clients to become skills-based. Griffiths is well published in the field of learning and talent and is the leading market voice on becoming a skills-based organization.

**Steve Hatfield | Principal | Deloitte Consulting LLP | sthatfield@deloitte.com**

Steve Hatfield is a principal with Deloitte Consulting LLP and serves as the global leader for Future of Work. He has more than 25 years of experience advising global organizations on issues of strategy, innovation, organization, people, culture, and change. Hatfield has advised business leaders on a multitude of initiatives including activating strategy, defining a preferred future, addressing workforce trends, implementing agile and resilient operating models, and transforming culture oriented to growth, innovation, and agility. Hatfield has significant experience in bringing to life the ongoing trends impacting the future of work, workforce, and workplace. He is a regular speaker and author on the future of work and is currently on the Deloitte leadership team shaping the research and marketplace dialogue on future workforce and workplace trends and issues. He has a master's degree in social change and development from Johns Hopkins and an MBA from Wharton, and is based in Boston.

**Lauren Kirby | Manager | Deloitte Consulting LLP | lkirby@deloitte.com**

Lauren Kirby is a manager in Deloitte Consulting LLP's Workforce Transformation practice with specific expertise in employee experience, talent, leadership, and change programs. She focuses on advising organizations as they align business and talent strategy and define the strategic initiatives that make their people a critical enabler of business and market success. In addition to authoring this report, Kirby served as the program manager for the 2023 Global Human Capital Trends team. She has an MBA from Duke's Fuqua School of Business.

**David Mallon | Vice president | Deloitte Consulting LLP | [dmallon@deloitte.com](mailto:dmallon@deloitte.com)**

David Mallon, a vice president with Deloitte Consulting LLP, is chief analyst and market leader for Deloitte's Insights2Action team. He and the Insights2Action team help clients to sense, analyze, and act—with purpose and precision—at the ever-shifting intersection of work, workforce, workplace, and industry. Part of Deloitte since 2013, Mallon is the former head of research for Bersin. He brings more than 20 years of experience in human capital and is a sought-after researcher, thought leader, and speaker on organization design, organizational culture, HR, talent, learning, and performance. Mallon is an author of Deloitte's annual *Global Human Capital Trends* study and a cohost of the *Capital H* podcast.

**Shannon Poynton | Senior manager | Deloitte Consulting LLP | [shpoynton@deloitte.com](mailto:shpoynton@deloitte.com)**

Shannon Poynton is a senior manager in Deloitte Consulting LLP's Human Capital practice with more than 10 years of experience designing and executing organization, talent, leadership, and change programs that enhance business performance. Poynton advises organizational leaders on strategies to help them retain critical talent, engage their workforce, and reimagine work through innovative combinations of humans and technology. She is a frequent speaker on talent and workforce trends and has coauthored Deloitte's 2020, 2021, and 2023 *Global Human Capital Trends* reports.

**Nic Scoble-Williams | Partner | Deloitte Tohmatsu Consulting LLC | [nscoble-williams@tohmatu.co.jp](mailto:nscoble-williams@tohmatu.co.jp)**

Nic Scoble-Williams, a partner with Deloitte Tohmatsu Consulting LLC in Japan, is Deloitte's global leader for Work. With more than 20 years' cross-industry experience in information technology services, talent strategy and advisory, and mergers and acquisitions, Scoble-Williams works with businesses and governments to embed future of work vision into enterprise transformation strategies. She is also a practicing lawyer and passionate about multilateralism to help provide equal access to opportunities for all, and position workers to thrive in the green and digital economies, in which decent work and life-long learning are key to putting humans on the path for a sustainable, equitable, and inclusive future. Scoble-Williams is a regular speaker and author on the key shifts transforming the future of work and the new opportunities and aspirations they present for making work better for humans and humans better at work.

**Joanne Stephane | Executive Director, DEI Institute | Principal, Deloitte Consulting LLP | [jstephane@deloitte.com](mailto:jstephane@deloitte.com)**

For more than 25 years, Joanne Stephane has worked with C-suite executives to define, design, and operationalize their workforce experience vision. She helps clients transform their Talent and HR organizations, strategy through implementation and beyond, to achieve sustainable results. Stephane is eminent on the evolving role of HR, and of the CHRO, in shaping the way enterprises compete, access talent, and curate experiences, and show up in the communities where they operate. She brings this perspective in examining how organizations can and should drive towards racial equity. In addition to serving clients, Stephane also leads Deloitte's US HR Strategy & Solutions Talent Group in the HR Transformation service offering, is the Chief DEI Officer of Deloitte's US Human Capital practice, and is the Executive Director of Deloitte's DEI Institute. Joanne primarily focuses in the Consumer Products, Health care, and Life Sciences sectors.

**Yves Van Durme | Partner | Deloitte Consulting | [yvandurme@deloitte.com](mailto:yvandurme@deloitte.com)**

Yves Van Durme is the global organization transformation leader for Deloitte and is a partner in the North & South Europe Consulting practice of Deloitte. Van Durme has been leading the Strategic Change team on a journey to change “Change.” He specializes in cultural transformation, leadership and organization development, and data-driven people strategy, and has more than 24 years’ experience as a consultant, project manager, and program developer for human capital projects for multiple European, Japanese, American, and Belgian multinationals. Based on his experience coaching high-performance sports, he has an affinity for leadership and organization development. Previously, Van Durme was the business unit director “talent management” for Hudson BNL, where he was involved from a content and management perspective with HR strategy, competency, and performance management, career counseling, assessments, management development, organization, and change.

# Deloitte. Insights

Sign up for Deloitte Insights updates at [www.deloitte.com/insights](http://www.deloitte.com/insights).



Follow @DeloitteInsight

## Deloitte Insights contributors

**Editorial:** Junko Kaji, Rithu Mariam Thomas, Rebecca Knutsen, Hannah Bachman, Blythe Hurley, Emma Downey, Aditi Gupta, and Arpan Kumar Saha

**Creative:** Matt Lennert, Natalie Pfaff, Govindh Raj, Meena Sonar, and Hazel Raj

**Audience development:** Nikita Garia

**Cover artwork:** Eva Vázquez

## About Deloitte

Deloitte refers to one or more of Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu Limited (“DTTL”), its global network of member firms, and their related entities (collectively, the “Deloitte organization”). DTTL (also referred to as “Deloitte Global”) and each of its member firms and related entities are legally separate and independent entities, which cannot obligate or bind each other in respect of third parties. DTTL and each DTTL member firm and related entity is liable only for its own acts and omissions, and not those of each other. DTTL does not provide services to clients. Please see [www.deloitte.com/about](http://www.deloitte.com/about) to learn more.

## About this publication

This communication contains general information only, and none of Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu Limited (“DTTL”), its global network of member firms or their related entities (collectively, the “Deloitte organization”) is, by means of this communication, rendering professional advice or services. Before making any decision or taking any action that may affect your finances or your business, you should consult a qualified professional adviser. No representations, warranties or undertakings (express or implied) are given as to the accuracy or completeness of the information in this communication, and none of DTTL, its member firms, related entities, employees or agents shall be liable or responsible for any loss or damage whatsoever arising directly or indirectly in connection with any person relying on this communication. DTTL and each of its member firms, and their related entities, are legally separate and independent entities.

© 2023. For information, contact Deloitte Global.