The Conference Board Research Working Group Project Summary:

**Training Up: Re-skilling Current Employees for Future Workforce Needs**

**Research Question:** As corporations face changing workforce needs, how can they train and develop their current employees to be well-prepared for future business requirements?

**Research Proposal**

As companies integrate better data into their workforce planning, they are coming to recognize a growing skills disparity between their needs in the medium term and their existing workforce. It is now a corporate imperative to plan strategically several years ahead for the skills needed for a workforce to contribute to the success of the company, and often there is a gaping hole ahead. This is an organizational readiness issue that will require multiple solutions. The Conference Board will partner with forward thinking corporate workforce planners and learning and development professionals to study how companies can implement training programs that transform their workforce of today. We will examine how to develop your existing employees to be the well prepared worker with the skills that will be need in just a few short years.

In many cases, new technologies are coming online that will disrupt traditional workplace positions. The advent of 3D printing will force a shift from tool and die makers to people able to operate sophisticated equipment to produce products and manipulate 3-D CAD design software. Changing workforce needs is a perennial problem that is often driven by changes in customers, technology, product demand shifts, etc. Sometimes, the mismatch is geographic. Workers with desired skills may be in short supply where companies have current facilities. Rather than leaving a region and its dedicated workforce, companies can actively develop those workers and reap the benefits of worker longevity and community involvement.

There is a larger trend that current educational programs are not producing qualified candidates for the changing roles corporations now seek to fill. According to a McKinsey Global Institute study, “In 2011, when US unemployment exceeded 9 percent, an MGI survey found that 30 percent of US companies had positions open for more than six months that they could not fill. Despite rising educational attainment across advanced economies, by 2020, the United States may have 1.5 million too few workers with college or graduate degrees and nearly 6 million too many who have not completed high school.”

Despite many job training programs available, the problem continues to grow. Current college-company partnership models may already be outdated, as Massive Open Online Courses (MOOC), etc. create the opportunity to 'learn for free'. Major employers need to develop a strategy to plan for their workforce of the future, and also ‘train up’ their existing staff. We seek to provide companies a way to strategically map out how to transform their skilled and specialized workforce to be effective employees tomorrow.
The Conference Board proposes to convene a new Research Working Group to help companies successfully develop a strategy to prepare the workers they have, rather than look for new employees, often at the cost of building new facilities and abandoning communities.

The group will investigate the following themes of “training up”:

- What are best in class doing to support a strategic initiative in the next 5 years? What can organizations focus on and change?
- What can we learn from existing college-company partnerships and how can we increase their effectiveness?
- Do you continually train up? Can your employees become lifelong learners and not just rely on the next training program? What lessons can be applied to leadership development?
- What learning methods are best incorporated? On-site, or with an educational partner? What is the role of E-learning and games to re-skill?
- How do you best select the employee populations or roles/jobs to re-skill in a given organization? In which re-skilling endeavors should organizations invest their limited resources?
- How can the ROI of re-skilling programs be assessed in the short-term and over time? What are the key measures of short- and long-term success?

While this process will require a deep organizational shift and outlook, the potential benefits include better employee and community relations, lower relocation and talent acquisition costs, and a greater sense of workforce security.

The Conference Board is well positioned to launch this Research Working Group. In recent years, we have undertaken studies on workforce readiness, education and business partnerships, and hiring the disabled. We are a world renowned provider of learning and development and strategic workforce planning research. Our Help Wanted Online Database will provide a statistical resource for working group members.

Made up of Chief Learning Officers, CHROs, Strategic Workforce Planners and their teams, this group will identify dynamic opportunities to partner with their current workforce, academic and professional communities and government entities to insure organizational capacity.

**What is a Research Working Group?**

A Research Working Group (RWG) is a collaborative project that convenes peer companies and researchers in a rapid deep dive and targeted focus on a compelling business issue. When firms across industries with similar concerns come together and are guided by subject matter experts, there is a rich transfer of ideas and knowledge. The result is comprehensive findings designed to shape a platform for enterprise-wide action and impact.

At The Conference Board, our team of in-house researchers, partnerships with leading organizations and deep commitment to our members make us uniquely positioned to produce high quality, innovative research.
Format & Takeaways

Timing: Launching **February 11-12, 2014 in New York**, this Working Group will work together over 6 months to develop actionable solutions. The group will meet 3 times in-person to share their own practices and challenges in a confidential, hands-on environment. The participants typically commit 2-4 hours a month to the project, outside of the in-person meetings.

Format: Each company will send two participants from their teams. There will be virtual meetings and small group teleconferences throughout to continue the Group’s collaboration. Together with top specialists, thought leaders and researchers, the members will build tools and frameworks to effect change throughout their organizations. The meetings are held in a confidential setting to allow the free exchange and examination of ideas.

Deliverables: This collaboration will result in a report comprising detailed findings, conclusions, and recommendations for action. Each working group selects the deliverable formats that will have the most impact into their corporations and these ranges from a series of short, focused Executive Action reports to in-depth Research reports. Groups often prepare webcasts, PowerPoint presentations and use other media to share their findings with their colleagues. By participating, your team will develop useful new strategies, have access to subject matter experts and be able to benchmark with like-minded companies.

Participation fee: $18,000 per company enables two executives to participate and have access to the research and subject matter experts, peer benchmarking and reports. This fee enables covers all materials, and meals during in-person all meetings, but does not include travel & hotel to in-person meetings. RWGs are only open to member companies of The Conference Board. A $4,000 courtesy reduction in participation fee will be extended to companies that hold a membership in one of The Conference Board’s Councils on Learning and Development, Strategic Workforce Planning, and Business & Education.

To join or for further information, please contact Daria Lamb, Director of Research Working Groups: Daria.Lamb@conference-board.org or 212-339-0428.

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