



# Navigating the future of work

The power of a technology-  
enabled **Strategic Workforce  
Planning** approach

# 1. From firefighting to foresight: Why it's time to rethink reactive workforce planning

Organizations are operating in an increasingly **fast-moving and complex environment**. A combination of structural and accelerating **trends** is disrupting workforce supply and demand on multiple levels:

- **Technological disruption** (e.g., automation, AI, digitalization) is shifting the skills required in almost every industry. Jobs evolve, and entirely new roles emerge while others become obsolete. According to research by KPMG, 77% of executives believe that AI will necessitate significant investment in upskilling and reskilling programs for their workforce.<sup>1</sup> Supporting this view, analyses indicate that the number of skills required for a single job is increasing by 10% year over year, and over 30% of the skills needed three years ago will soon be irrelevant.<sup>2</sup>
- **Demographic shifts**, such as ageing populations, reduce the available workforce and increase the pressure on talent pipelines.
- **Changing workforce mobility**, especially among younger generations, leads to shorter job tenures and increased turnover.
- **Globalization of work**, including remote and cross-border collaboration, intensifies competition for scarce talent and opens new sourcing channels.
- **Economic uncertainty**, such as market volatility, inflation, or shifts in customer demand, makes organizations more cautious in hiring, increasing the importance of selecting the right talent, and driving a renewed focus on leveraging the internal labor market.

- At the same time, **employee expectations are evolving**: Gen Z and Millennials seek purpose, flexibility, and continuous skills development, putting pressure on traditional workforce models.

These forces create both **qualitative and quantitative mismatches** between workforce supply and business demand. Research indicates that only 20% of employees have the skills needed for both their current role and their future career.<sup>3</sup> Notably, in Belgium, 32% of workers are employed in jobs that do not match their educational skill level.<sup>4</sup> The quantitative mismatch is also evident. Research by SD Worx among European companies<sup>5</sup> shows that nearly half (46%) are struggling to find the right talent. For some, this is a skills shortage issue; for others, it relates to changing expectations about how and where people want to work. Interestingly, Belgian companies report the greatest difficulties in finding candidates with the right skills<sup>6</sup>.

As a result, organizations face growing challenges in aligning their talent strategy with rapidly shifting business needs. Therefore, they must fundamentally **rethink their workforce strategy**, embedding a **forward-looking** perspective that anticipates future skill needs, labor market shifts, and business transformations, and ensuring **stronger alignment between workforce and business strategy**.

This is where **Strategic Workforce Planning comes in**.

## 2. Strategic Workforce Planning – Beyond the buzzword

**Strategic Workforce Planning (SWP)** is a structured approach to aligning an organization's future talent demand (workload) with the anticipated talent supply (workforce). By bridging the gap between workload and workforce evolutions, SWP helps ensure the right mix of talent and employment models to achieve strategic objectives in the long term. SWP takes a forward-looking approach, anticipating future trends and needs, and helps organizations build a future-proof workforce. Ultimately, **the goal of SWP is to ensure that an organization has the right people, in the right place, at the right time, and in the right size, aligned with business strategy and financial ambitions.**

SWP enables a **proactive, data-driven approach to workforce decisions**. Beyond identifying and forecasting skill gaps or redesigning work, it enables organizations to respond in real time to shifts in talent demand and supply. In practice, SWP delivers value by providing a comprehensive view of the entire workforce, including external contractors and the sourcing mix. It highlights which profiles and skills are needed to meet future business needs and helps prioritize workforce allocation to activities with the greatest strategic value, while enabling rapid reprioritization when required. Finally, SWP analyzes aging patterns and identifies succession risks, ensuring long-term business continuity.

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<sup>1</sup> KPMG, *AI Pulse Survey*, 2025.

<sup>2</sup> Gartner, *TalentNeuron Data*, 2020.

<sup>3</sup> Gartner, *Shifting Skills Survey*, 2018.

<sup>4</sup> OECD, *Job Creation and Local Economic Development 2024: Tackling the Future of Work*, 2024.

<sup>5</sup> SD Worx, 2025.

<sup>6</sup> SD Worx, 2022.



### 3. Breaking silos: A unified approach to workforce planning

If SWP offers such clear advantages, the question naturally arises: why is it still adopted by only a minority of organisations?

One key reason lies in its perceived **complexity**<sup>7</sup>. Many organizations struggle to **implement** an effective approach and in practice, find it difficult to move beyond short-term planning—often looking no further than the next 12 months<sup>8</sup>. This leaves a significant gap between the perceived importance and competence of business leaders in their understanding of how the shape, size, skills, and organization of the workforce needs to change to meet future needs three years out<sup>9</sup>.

It's important to recognize that Strategic Workforce Planning is **not a quick fix**—it requires time, commitment, and, most of all, new ways of thinking. That's why we help organizations embed SWP through a structured four-phase approach, as shown below:

01

#### Workforce baseline

Getting a clear and overarching view of the total workforce—both internal and external—and their corresponding activities.

02

#### Talent demand evolution

Getting a quantified view on workload drivers and their effect on workload needs across the organization

03

#### Talent supply evolution

Estimate how the workforce will evolve in the coming years and identify potential workforce shortages and surpluses.

04

#### Consolidation and workforce roadmap

Identifying HR solutions to bridge the most important gaps and surpluses.

Workforce planning is a strategic organizational process that **integrates data and input from finance, HR, and business operations** to ensure that an organization's workforce aligns with its strategic objectives and operational needs. **Cross-functional cooperation** between the broader business, finance, and HR teams is vital.

Therefore, to fully unlock its strategic value, **SWP** should not be treated as a standalone HR initiative. Its true power lies in its integration across **the broader organizational landscape**, particularly within **HR and finance processes**. However, achieving this level of integration requires more than a good plan—it **demand the right digital support**.

**Scalable technology platforms** help **anchor** SWP within daily operations, bridging data across HR, finance, and business planning, and enabling real-time insights that drive strategic workforce decisions at scale. Still, turning this potential into reality remains a **challenge** for many. Research shows only 23% of HR leaders report using specialized technology or mapping tools to collect SWP data<sup>10</sup> and 55% of their current technology solutions do not cover current and future business needs<sup>11</sup>. Such a gap can hinder the successful implementation of Strategic Workforce Planning—or prevent organizations from unlocking its full potential.



<sup>7</sup> Vlerick Strategic Talent Management Centre & Hudson Benelux, *HR Barometer 2024: HR priorities and spotlight on strategic workforce planning, 2024*.

<sup>8</sup> Gartner, *Top 5 priorities for HR leaders in 2025: Actionable insights to navigate challenges and drive business impact, 2025*.

<sup>9</sup> KPMG International, *The future of HR: From flux to flow, 2023*.

<sup>10</sup> Vlerick Strategic Talent Management Centre & Hudson Benelux, *HR Barometer 2024: HR priorities and spotlight on strategic workforce planning, 2024*.

<sup>11</sup> Gartner, *Top 5 priorities for HR leaders in 2025: Actionable insights to navigate challenges and drive business impact, 2025*.

## 4. Workday Adaptive Planning as an enabler of SWP

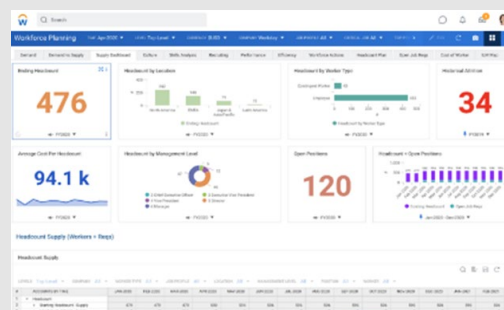
To truly optimize your talent strategy, both internal and external workforce data must be accessible and integrated. When workforce, financial, and operational data come together, workforce planning can serve as **a bridge between finance and HR**. This integrated data foundation enables workforce planning decisions to be guided by a broader, more accurate picture. Rather than simply flagging a vacancy, HR teams can identify the skills new hires will need—both now and in the future—pinpoint pain points in talent acquisition and retention, and conduct **“what-if” scenario planning**. As a result, **workforce planning becomes far more strategic**.

**This is where Workday Adaptive Planning enters the picture:** as a unified platform, it provides the tools and insights to scale your Strategic Workforce Planning process. Its intelligent planning capabilities and real-time analytics help organizations **move beyond static planning** and turn workforce data into actionable strategies. In the overview below, we explore how Workday Adaptive Planning can support each step of the SWP process:



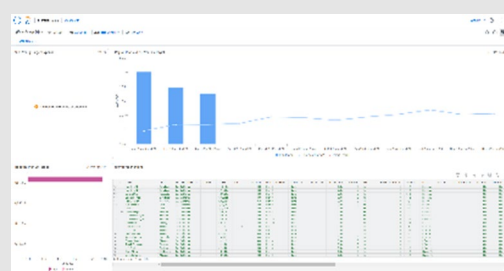
**Workforce baseline:** Getting a clear and overarching view of the total workforce—both internal and external—and their corresponding activities.

- As the single source of truth, Workday provides an accurate and reliable **workforce baseline**.
- **Multidimensional workforce information** provides insight into job level, department, job family, skills, projects, locations, and the breakdown between FTEs and contractors.
- **Dashboards and reporting** enable clear and role-based visibility, supporting data-driven decision-making from the start of the process.



**Talent demand evolution:** Getting a quantified view on workload drivers and their effect on workload needs across the organization.

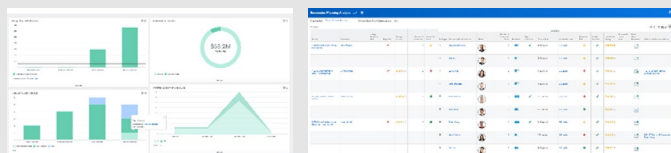
- **Driver-based planning** translates strategic priorities or external changes to workforce impact: **adaptive planning** enables you to define workload drivers that will shape workforce needs in the coming years.
- **What-if scenario models** allow you to analyze how changes in these workload drivers create workforce gaps and/or surpluses.
- **Top-down and bottom-up models** provide flexibility in planning methods, ensuring people and resources are aligned with strategic objectives.
- **Integration with financial models** ensures alignment between workforce and budget planning.





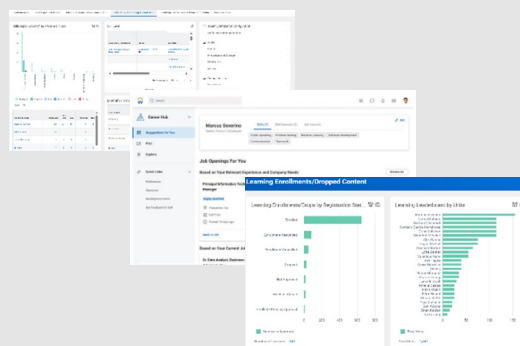
**Talent supply evolution:** Estimate how the workforce will evolve in the coming years and identify potential workforce shortages and surpluses.

- **Workforce analysis** makes skills, headcount, and related risks visible across roles, departments, or skill sets.
- **Real-time tracking** enables continuous monitoring of workforce changes and adjustments.
- **Segmentation** by skill or function allows for targeted analysis and decision-making.



**Consolidation and workforce roadmap:** Identifying HR solutions to bridge the most important gaps and surpluses.

- Skills Cloud automatically detects, categorizes, and updates skills across your workforce. It provides a dynamic, real-time **view of current skill sets**.
- Skills Planning builds on these insights **to anticipate future skill gaps** across dimensions such as department, job family, or location. This planning capability enables you to align talent development strategies with future business needs by projecting where critical skills will be missing.
- Development of **tailored learning & development plans** helps you address skill gaps and visualize their impact on costs and strategic targets. These plans help prioritize the most effective upskilling and reskilling efforts, ensuring learning investments are targeted and aligned with evolving workforce demands.

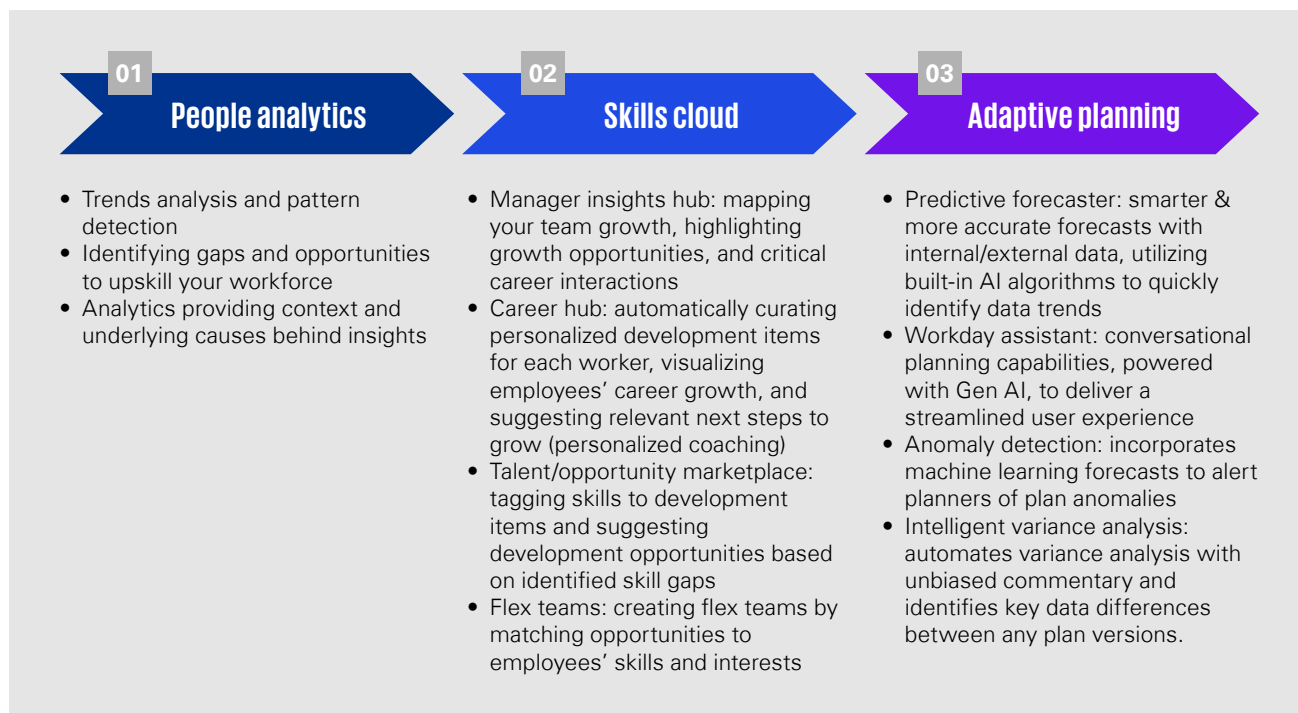




Finally, Workday **integrates AI** to bring even more intelligence and efficiency to Strategic Workforce Planning. With Workday's AI capabilities, HR leaders can minimize time spent on manual data analysis and uncover new insights. A new AI-powered user interface will help streamline bottom-up workforce

planning across finance and HR, ensuring alignment between workforce and financial plans while fostering cross-department collaboration.

**Below are examples of how AI is leveraged with Workday Illuminate:**



## 5. Wrap up: Turning workforce challenges into opportunities with SWP

In today's ever-changing environment—where agility is no longer a nice-to-have but a must—Strategic Workforce Planning is the key to building a future-ready organization. By taking a forward-looking approach, it enables organizations to anticipate and respond to the needs of tomorrow and beyond. To truly integrate SWP, organizations need the right supporting tools and systems. Offering a broad set of capabilities to support every stage of the SWP process—from people analytics to scenario modeling

and financial integration—Workday and Workday Adaptive Planning are valuable tools that help scale your SWP process. If your organization has not yet established a formal SWP approach, Workday and Workday Adaptive Planning can grow alongside you and ultimately become a driver of the process. With this foundation, Strategic Workforce Planning positions your organization to meet future demands with confidence and turn workforce challenges into opportunities.

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