Who Develops Talent?

Designing Post-Schooled Society Models for Learning and Work

LEARNING SOCIETY



Who Am I

Anne Trumbore

Author, the Teacher in the Machine: A Human History of Education Technology

Education Futures Fellow, Stanford Center for Longevity, Stanford University

Chief Digital Learning Officer, Sands Institute for Lifelong Learning, The Darden School, UVA

Founder and Director, Wharton Online, The Wharton School, University of Pennsylvania

Coursera, NovoEd, Stanford Online High School

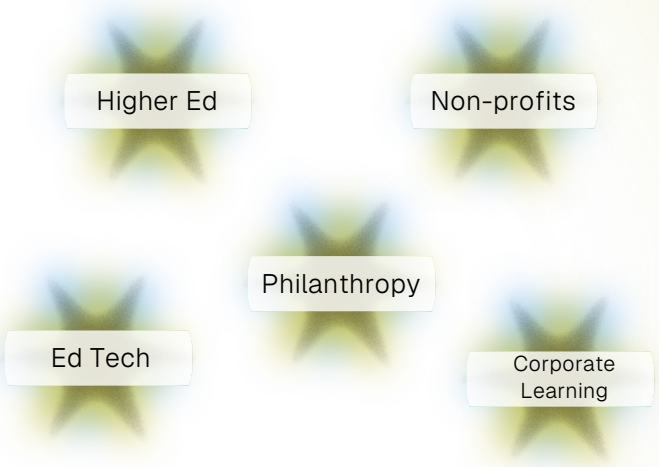
The Central Problem

For generations, the division of labor seemed clear: Schools develop human talent and employers buy it in labor markets. This is expensive, slow and suboptimal for talent development, especially in our time of rapid change.

Many have advocated for “work-based learning” strategies, but there’s a coordination problem…

THE PROBLEM: WHAT WE HAVE

Disconnected, siloed systems...with AI impacts looming

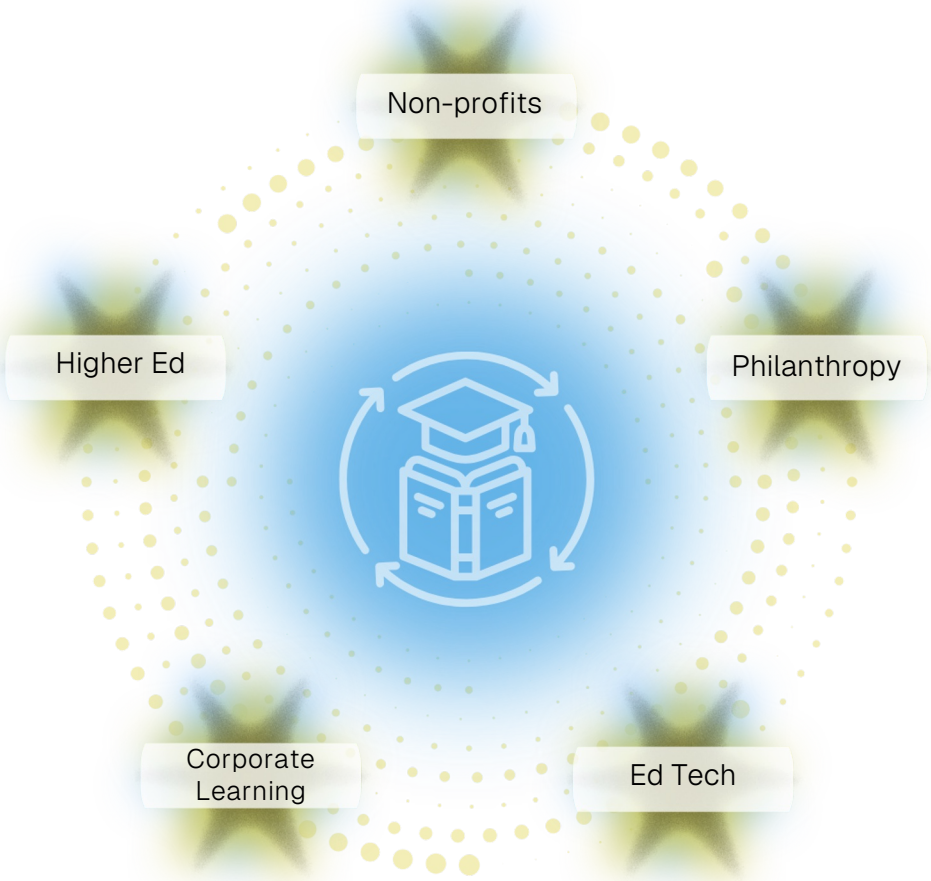


Artificial Intelligence

One solution is to move from a Schooled Society to a Learning Society

What is a Learning Society?

A connected ecosystem with learning at the center



This is not a dream.
It is possible and
already happening.



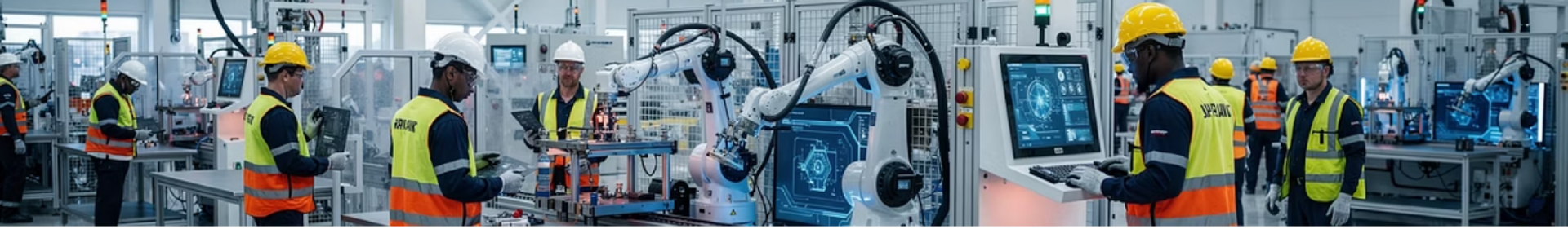
THE FUTURE IS NOW

America's HR & Talent Leads on AI and Learning at Work

LEARNING SOCIETY

UVA DARDEN
SANDS INSTITUTE *for* LIFELONG LEARNING

STANFORD CENTER ON LONGEVITY



METHODOLOGY

15 C-Level Executives. 4 Questions.

The Impact of AI and Technology on Work

How artificial intelligence is transforming job roles, workflows, and organizational structures

Building Skills and Talent for the Future

Strategies for developing capabilities that match emerging technological demands

Supporting Talent Development Over Lengthening Working Lives

Approaches to continuous learning and adaptation across extended careers

Novel Partnerships Between Businesses and Higher Education

Innovative collaborations reshaping the traditional education-to-employment pipeline

Answering the Talent Question Across a Range of Industries































The Transformation: From Buying to Building Talent

The evolving landscape of work, accelerated by AI, is driving a fundamental shift in how companies approach talent. Our research reveals a new imperative: moving from simply 'buying' talent to actively 'building' it through continuous development and shared responsibility.

AI's Impact: Changing Human Work

AI technologies are changing, not eliminating, human work. Competitive advantage now lies in human talent and continuous development, requiring new approaches beyond "plug and play."

"AI can help me be a better experience maker."
— Tim Massa, Kroger

A New Social Contract

A new social contract is emerging: shared responsibility between workers and employers for skill development. This replaces the old model where workers alone bore the burden of investing in college degrees.

"Companies have a responsibility to help all their workforce, just as educators, to be smart consumers and users of these technologies."
— Chris Ernst, Workday

Longer Workspans, Continuous Learning

Longer workspans mean individuals can anticipate multiple careers and require continual re-skilling. Companies are experimenting with flexible models like phased retirements and cross-generational mentoring.

"Lifelong learning is so important, so essential. There should be dignity in big career changes."
— Donna Morris, Walmart

KEY FINDINGS

Four Critical Insights Reshaping American Talent Strategy

The explosion of AI technologies is rapidly changing how work gets done in virtually all business sectors, compelling corporate leaders to recruit and invest in human talent differently. Our research revealed four transformative insights that are redefining the future of work.



AI Transforms, Not Replaces

AI technologies are reshaping demand for human capabilities, transforming work and workers as much as they are replacing tasks



Workplaces as Learning Hubs

Because traditional talent pipelines aren't adapting quickly enough, workplaces themselves are becoming innovative sites of talent development



Beyond the Degree

Employers are growing skeptical of college degrees as proxies for capability, developing more differentiated ways to assess skills, adaptability, and potential



Continuous Investment Across Lifespans

Continual investment in workers across lengthening lifespans reflects recognition that economic resilience matters for individuals and companies alike

INSIGHTS

Challenges and Opportunities Ahead

Despite significant momentum in workplace learning, several barriers constrain scale, while emerging opportunities offer new pathways for talent development in the age of AI.

Challenges

- **Financial Pressures**
  Short-term financial priorities often view training as a cost, hindering long-term talent investment.
- **Organizational Inertia**
  Large enterprises adapt slowly, with risk concerns about security, privacy, and compliance.
- **Unequal Access**
  Disparate access to educational opportunities limits individual mobility and workforce reskilling efforts.

Opportunities

- **AI-Enabled Personalization**
  Transparent skill taxonomies democratize talent development through personalized learning paths.
- **Human-Centered Adoption**
  Focusing on human needs in technology adoption reduces fear and builds confidence in new tools.
- **Immense Scale Potential**
  The 31M Fortune 500 workers (2:1 vs. high school students) represent a massive pool for upskilling.

YOUR TURN: AUDIENCE DISCUSSION

What if we had a truly unified learning sector centered around developing human talent? What would be different?

Imagine what types of outcomes for shared prosperity — both economic and human — would become more readily possible.