

# Accelerating workforce reskilling in a digital world

BOTH the digital transformation disruption and Covid-19 pandemic have accelerated the rise of automation and concerns about job losses.

"This is a double whammy. It complicates the challenge of companies that are trying to digitalise their operations. Some sectors are impacted more than others. Many companies will need to shift up a gear in the digital economy," said Low Choy Huat, who is a partner (people advisory services) in Ernst & Young Advisory Services Sdn Bhd.

Low, who has over 24 years of experience in helping clients to improve organisational, workforce and people performance, will have a "Is your workforce your greatest asset in a digital world?" presentation at the upcoming #digitalXdata 2020 live virtual conference.

He has worked with various companies in diverse industries including energy, natural resources, aviation, automotive, financial services and public services, across Malaysia, Thailand, Singapore and Indonesia.

He also has significant experience in major human resources (HR) transformation projects including the setting-up, design, development and delivery of HR shared service centers for a national oil and gas company, a major Malaysian conglomerate, a global chemicals company and a global mining company.

More recently, Low has been supporting clients to address critical people, reskilling and culture issues caused by digital disruptions. He noted that many organisations have adapted to new ways of working by adopting an agile operating model in the way they work and how they manage talent.

"However, it is important to enable an agile mindset which is more responsive and adaptable - making sure that people have the courage to go through these tough times. In the push to change operation structure and jobs, if the mindset does not change, you go back to square one," said Low.

Another priority for organisations is the need for upskilling and reskilling interventions.

The modern way of learning puts the learner at the centre; hence the move from creat-



**Stepping up:** Low says many companies need to step up a gear in the digital economy.

ing learning for the masses to a personalised "ask me, tell me, show me" learning experience that focuses on micro skills.

"In the new digital world, learning has to shift up another gear and be more personalised. When companies send people for training, and they don't apply what they learn - they are wasting time and effort," said Low.

According to a survey done by Kelly Services, job opportunities in information technology (IT), and digital sales and marketing will be most in demand as Malaysia emerges from the Covid-19 pandemic, as these capitalise on remote working and changing consumer habits.

Low said the rapid changes in the demands of the new digital environment also posed another challenge for the Malaysian workforce.

"Many clients that we talk to these days, they look at the roles like data engineers, cloud developers - those are the hot ones right now. Lately, there has been a lot of discussion about predictive analytics. But if you ask me 18 to 24 months from now, those jobs would have evolved further as new tools and plat-

forms come into play," he said.

Low also pointed out that besides the hard skills, companies also need to focus on the newer soft skills such as storytelling, how to work collaboratively in a virtual world, and leading with purpose.

"The areas that companies want their employees to be reskilled in - have also shifted from the more traditional topics like communication and team building," he said.

Another challenge for organisations is the speed and scale of re-skilling their workforce.

As an example, Low cited a client which is looking at setting up a digital academy for its 15,000 employees around the region.

"While there is a need to re-skill, how do you do it quickly because people still have their nine to five jobs, right?"

"To achieve this balance, we need to carefully look at certain parts of the workforce, and how do we personalise the learning journey, in relation to what we want to do next. And also given them the opportunity to immediately apply what they learn," said Low.

Low will be one of the speakers at the upcoming #digitalXdata 2020 live virtual conference, which is aimed at helping companies solve business challenges and uncover growth opportunities by redesigning a data-driven digital future.

The event will showcase market outlook and forecast for 2021 and beyond in the areas of technology, digital and analytics.

There will be eight main tracks, namely, smart city, retail, people, financial, drone, reach, green and manufacturing.

The two-day programme will also be powered by panel discussions on Designing Society 5.0, Gearing Towards Business 2021, Re-Engineering Security in the Next Normal and Empowering Future-Ready Youth.

#digitalXdata 2020 is organised by Star Media Group Bhd with Fusionex as Exabyte Partner and Boston Consulting Group, Ernst & Young, Frost & Sullivan, Ipsos, Kantar, McKinsey and PwC as Knowledge Partners.

The live virtual conference will be held on Dec 1 till 4 over Cisco Webex.

Registration is free. For more information, visit [bit.ly/digitalxdata2020](http://bit.ly/digitalxdata2020)