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Automation, machine learning, and other technologies have riddled news headlines, influenced political debate and discourse, and is set to change the way we work across industries. Coupled with today's tight labor market, with unemployment hovering at **3.5%** nationally and at just **1.4%** in the accounting industry, business

decision makers face the ongoing pressure of not only finding top talent but

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substantial workplace modifications for workers.

While this may be distressing to some, there are ways for firms to get ahead and adjust accordingly. As technology creates new opportunities and job positions within the workplace, it becomes increasingly important for accounting firms to fill these new roles with candidates who possess relevant, specialized skill sets. The setback, however, is the time and effort it takes to find top talent to fill these roles. Rather than spending months finding the right candidate, organizations can train the workers they have to learn the skills needed for the role. Implementing upskilling programs within your workforce allows organizations to work towards closing the talent gap while maintaining their current workforce.

## Why Upskilling Matters

Firms looking to fill positions have to keep in mind that today's top talent is looking for companies where they can see themselves growing in their careers. Offering a clear career path that outlines their growth at the company is an essential part of any job offer candidates would be willing to consider. Providing employees with tools, such as online modules and in-class courses can not only help employees develop new skills and expand on their existing abilities, but it can also help employers strengthen relationships with their employees, while effectively minimizing the skill gaps that might be present within the organization.

For candidates, it's more so about how companies follow through on initial offers. In a recent [survey](#) by Accounting Principals and Ajilon, 42% of respondents looking for a new job said that their current position lacks the advancement opportunities that were described in initial interviews and job descriptions. It's important to remember that overpromising but under-delivering on career growth opportunities can cause restlessness, prompting employees to start looking into new job opportunities. As employees feel their employer cares about them and their career goals, the

organization is bound to reap some of the other benefits of upskilling programs, such

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Jeramy Rahman is Head of Professional Recruitment, West at [The Adecco Group](#).

## How can organizations create upskilling programs themselves?

Creating upskilling opportunities within the firm isn't just a nice perk to include in a job offer, it's critical to the long-term growth and success of the firm. Luckily, these programs are relatively easy to implement, depending on the organization's needs. Before setting out to put an upskilling strategy in place, companies have to take an introspective look and anticipate what skills they might need from their workforce down the road. Once their needs are assessed and in-demand skills are identified, executives can work with HR to implement an upskilling program that would work best for them, a few of which are outlined below:

### ● Mentoring Programs

A simple way to begin is by implementing a mentoring program where employees wishing to learn more about a certain application or skill are paired with an employee who is already familiar with it. This costs the company almost nothing to implement and is a great way of showing employees that they care about their long-term career growth at the company.

### ● Tuition Reimbursement

If the skills needed from employees is something that is better taught in a classroom, rather than on the job, companies can reimburse employees for taking online modules or classes at a local college. Additionally, companies can partner with an external upskilling resource, such as General Assembly or LinkedIn Learning, to offer an array of on-demand classes that employees can choose from.

### ● Credential Programs

Offering employees the option to complete job-specific training programs can

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Having these kinds of upskilling programs in place can make any firm's talent pipeline more robust and future-proof, but its benefits are not only for companies. For candidates, it's just as crucial that organizations offer these programs so that they have the opportunity to further develop their skills and outline their career progression. Employees interested in honing their skills should reach out to their managers and HR departments to learn more about the opportunities offered. Those looking to change employers or positions should also consider working with specialized staffing firms that can find the perfect position that already has these programs in place.

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