

# *Talent Resilience*

**BOLD LEADERSHIP FOR  
ACCELERATED CHANGE**

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# “Disruptive times make traditional leadership models redundant.”

-Korn Ferry

If talent leaders ever needed a catalyst to inspire change, 2020 is it. COVID-19 triggered a brutal domino effect from which it will take us years to recover. Yet as we set about the business of recovery, we shouldn't forget the other events that have occupied mindshare and shaped our collective experience. Mounting pressure for social justice, the challenging realities of remote teams, and the swift rejection of flawed data may have read like headlines this year, but moving forward, they represent strategic opportunities for HR to learn and lean in to **bold leadership** and **accelerate overdue change**.

## Purpose-driven leadership is bold leadership.

In the highest-performing organizations, traditional “command and control” leadership—wherein employees are seen as “cost centers” and talent practices are designed to increase company profits—is losing ground. A purpose-driven approach is taking its place. Purpose-driven leadership means understanding that thriving employees are the fuel that drives success and competitive advantage. It means designing talent practices around the unique value employees bring to the organization and having the capability to invest their value across dynamic roles, teams, and leadership opportunities. Just as importantly, it means trusting talent decisions to data over gut instinct. Purpose-driven leadership is an executive mandate. According to a new report from KPMG, 81% of CEOs say managing environmental, social and governance factors will be critical to driving growth in the long term.<sup>1</sup> Focusing on purpose is not only “the right thing to do,” it makes great business sense. Purpose-driven companies gain higher market share and grow on average three times faster than their competitors. In fact, **86% of overperforming companies link everything they do to purpose.**<sup>2</sup> In doing so, they strengthen their relationships with every stakeholder, including employees, customers, and shareholders.

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<sup>1</sup> KPMG 2020 CEO Outlook: COVID-19 Edition. 2020. <https://assets.kpmg/content/dam/kpmg/ca/pdf/2020/09/ceo-outlook-2020-en.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> <https://thearf.org/insights-2020/>

Obviously, just talking about purpose isn't enough. Purpose-driven leaders bring an authentic commitment to a purpose that supersedes mere profitability and growth. They walk the walk by developing diverse and inclusive leadership at every level of the organization. They drive a sense of belonging, build trust through empathy, and show up with uncompromising accountability.

In 2020 and beyond, talent strategies need to catch up to purpose-driven leadership by placing the value of every employee's human potential at the center of every decision. Talent Resilience is how you do that.

## Talent Resilience is how purpose-driven leaders accelerate overdue change.

To understand how Talent Resilience accelerates change, we must first define it. Talent Resilience is an unbiased, data-driven approach that simultaneously accounts for the dynamic nature of both critical jobs and human potential. Talent Resilience empowers leaders to accurately align talent with business strategy at speed and scale.

### Why it works: Critical roles change. Human potential persists.

The pace of change in the job market is accelerating. According to the World Economic Forum, as of 2020, “administrative functions, along with manufacturing and production roles, will see dramatic declines accounting for over six million roles over the next four years.” Hop ahead less than a decade from now, and “some 65% of children entering primary schools today will likely work in roles that don't currently exist.”<sup>3</sup> In such a dynamic job market, how can decision criteria based solely on hard skills and past experience stay relevant? The simple answer is that it can't.



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“When tasks and responsibilities change quickly, as they do during business disruption, roles become less and less useful as a proxy for required skills.”

– Gartner

<sup>3</sup> Dunne, Niall. “How Technology Will Change the Future of Work.” World Economic Forum. February 24, 2016. <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2016/02/the-future-of-work/>.

## One Consistent Metric. Countless Outcomes.

Talent Resilience relies on one consistent metric leaders can leverage for countless talent decisions: quantified human potential. Quantified human potential is a universal, unbiased talent metric, rooted in industrial/organizational (I/O) psychology.

Measuring more than hard skills and knowledge, it reveals a person's innate Talents, including **innovation**, **persuasion**, **teamwork**, **adaptation**, and **communication**. Often referred to as "soft skills," Talents represent how we are consistently hardwired as humans.

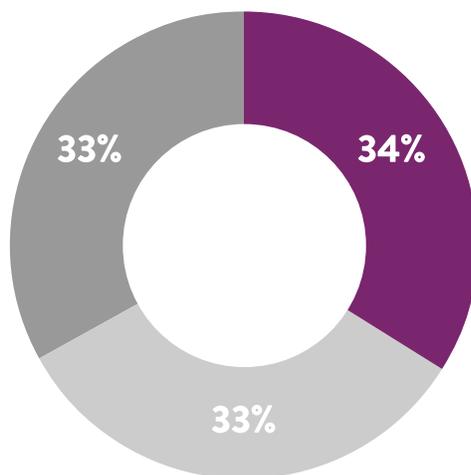


Hard skills and knowledge refer to a specific set of learned activities required for a job, but they lose some relevance as roles evolve or disappear. Talents, on the other hand, are recurring patterns of thought, feeling, and behavior. While we find hard skills and knowledge on traditional resumes, Talents are more difficult to measure; even so, measuring them is the game changer.

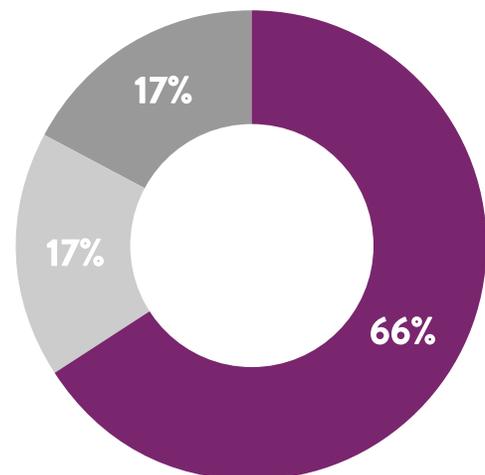
Talents are up to **4X more predictive** of success than job-specific skills and knowledge. Why? Because they predict an individual's behavioral competency for a role rather than just their eligibility. That competency has nothing to do with race, gender, or age.

### Predicts Future Job Performance When Moving People to Job That Are...

Similar/Don't Change Much



Very Different/Change A Lot

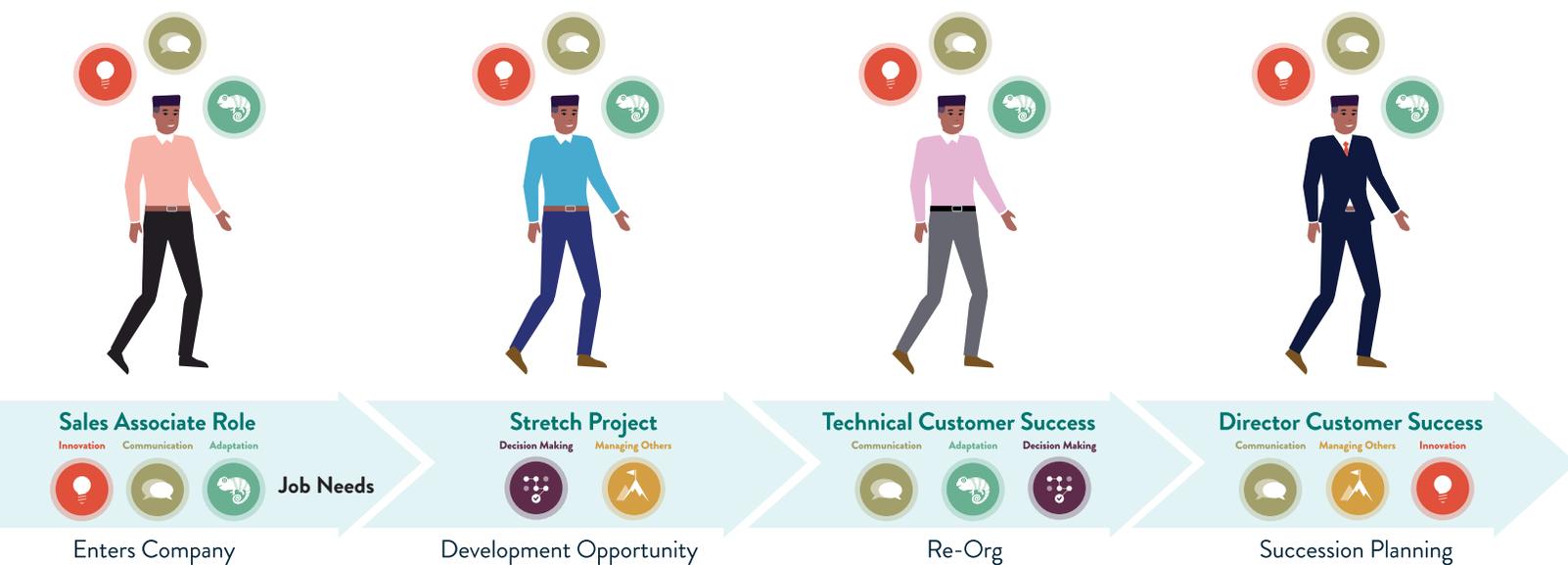


- Talents
- Hard Skills
- Knowledge

General Guidelines for Interpreting Validity Coefficients - Department of Labor - US (1999)

By prioritizing quantified human potential ahead of hard skills and experience alone, purpose-driven leaders root any number of talent decisions in one unbiased metric that is consistently accurate and relevant. Whether it's talent acquisition, employee development, workforce re-org, or succession planning, using one consistent metric speeds decision agility and makes it much easier for leaders to align the real-time talent and the potential of their current workforce with their most critical roles.

**Talents stay relevant across the entire employee lifecycle when hard skills and experience become obsolete.**



Quantified human potential not only reveals the unique Talents of each individual employee, it also helps team leaders quickly see exactly where employees can bring the most value to a team. For example, a leader may need to improve team dynamics by introducing better communicators and shore up performance by building execution skills. By understanding their people's Talents, team leaders deliver consistent support when and where it's needed and confidently place people where they will thrive.

Finally, by seeing and considering everyone with the right Talents, potential, and interest for a role, leaders show their workforce a powerful commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion. The result is a highly adaptable, explicitly inclusive workforce that keeps pace with change.

## Three opportunities to accelerate overdue change in 2020-2021

### Opportunity #1: Remove bias at the source of talent decisions.

This year's focus on social justice and calls to dismantle systemic racism permanently elevated diversity, equity, and inclusion (DE&I) from a compliance requirement to a non-negotiable imperative. Corporate stakeholders want transparent, purpose-driven leaders who are unafraid to step up, be bold, and lead in the face of systemic bias. They want explicit proof that organizations who state a commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion will embed that commitment into their actions, holding themselves accountable to their stakeholders and society as a whole.

From a talent perspective, organizations who are serious about DE&I must remove systemic bias at the source—their data, and have the courage to replace it with data that is scientifically unbiased and more accurate at predicting a person's potential. Data that relies on hard skills, knowledge, and past experience is inherently biased. It's tainted by the systemic barriers in our society that dictate access to education, access to internships, and opportunities to progress in a career. In 2020, what felt like pushing the envelope just a few years back is now a signal of future-ready leadership.

### Why Talent Resilience accelerates change:

Talent Resilience uses quantified human potential as the consistent metric to drive talent decisions. By removing bias from talent identification, purpose driven leaders unlock a diverse pool of talent and skills.

# Scotiabank

## Purpose-Driven Leadership Is Bold in 2020

In 2020, Scotiabank put a bold commitment to DE&I into action, inviting candidates to introduce themselves through their inherent Talents, not the 8.5x11" version of themselves. By actively scrapping resumes in favor of scientific data to identify the right talent, Scotiabank is creating opportunities that otherwise didn't exist.



## **Opportunity #2: Build inclusive employee experiences with meaningful team leader insights.**

COVID-19 thrust teams into remote work overnight, exposing vulnerabilities and accelerating changes that were long overdue. Team dynamics rushed to the surface as team leaders tried their best to meet remote team members in their own unique environments while keeping everyone organized, focused, and productive. Communications fractured into project “threads,” and managers were forced to guess who thrives with autonomy and who struggles in the face of change. From a talent perspective, remote work highlighted the importance of not only truly knowing individual team members, but also understanding what kind of support they need and how they fit into the overall team.

If team leaders have a fast, reliable way to understand what drives or drains their people, they can do a better job of personalizing support, improving team dynamics, and putting individuals in positions in which they will thrive. For example, they can pair creatives who love autonomy with people who can shore up execution, or they can align exceptional communicators with people who thrive on teamwork.

In addition, giving employees an opportunity to signal interest in future roles invites them to participate in their own long-term success. Team leaders can help employees build their own ‘career lattice’ by marrying employee interest with roles where the job-matching criteria aligns with their natural Talents.

### **Why Talent Resilience accelerates change:**

Talent Resilience helps team leaders build inclusion by understanding their people at a deeper level, ensuring they thrive in current and future roles.

## **Opportunity #3: Strengthen decision confidence, build trust and adapt faster with accurate, credible data.**

2020’s tsunami of confusing headlines about COVID-19 eroded trust and weakened the public’s confidence in the collective response. This fueled a demand for credible, accurate data and defensible decisions that are here to stay. We need confidence that data is collected consistently and presented accurately. We want to trust that the decisions being made are the right path forward.

Amid all the chaos, businesses who already align strategic decisions with credible, accurate talent data are in a position to adapt quickly. Whether it was GM pivoting from cars to ventilators, fashion houses making personal protective equipment (PPE), or cosmetics companies producing hand sanitizer, these organizations were able to reorganize their talent, teams, and workflows quickly and effectively.

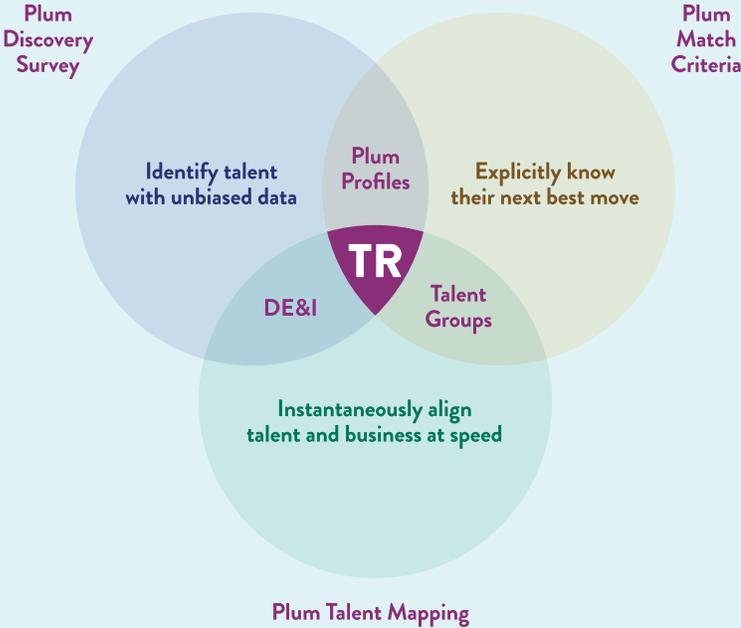
From a talent perspective, organizations that aspire to strengthen decision confidence, build trust, and adapt faster must start by using credible data that crosses “decision silos.” It’s no longer useful to make people decisions with data that looks backward. To really push the organization forward, the data itself must be future proof and universally accurate. While hard skills and knowledge have a shelf life, talent data is evergreen.

### Why Talent Resilience Accelerates Change:

Talent Resilience helps leaders strengthen confidence, build trust, and adapt faster by putting the same accurate, credible data at the foundation of every talent decision.

## Requirements for Building Talent Resilience at Speed and Scale.

### TALENT RESILIENCE



### Building Talent Resilience requires a strategic trifecta:

- ◆ Identifying talent through unbiased data and then use it to break decision silos.
- ◆ Building inclusive employee experiences with the right talent in the right roles
- ◆ Instantaneously aligning talent with changing business needs at speed and at scale.

## How do purpose-driven leaders build Talent Resilience?

Let's break it down in three steps:



### Identify talent through unbiased data and then use it to break decision silos.

In step one, purpose-driven leaders change the game on DE&I by stripping bias from talent decisions and embracing everyone for the Talents that make them exceptional. Not only do purpose-driven organizations know that this is the right thing to do, employees instinctively know they deserve a better measure of their value. They crave the feedback, and if their leaders can deliver it instantly, this becomes a stand-out experience.

This step begins with a paradigm shift around what constitutes credible, predictive data. Resume data is systematically biased; education depends on financial resources, key internships depend on social opportunities, and so on.

Yes, algorithms can filter out adverse impacts posthaste, but that approach still falls flat (see Amazon story below). Instead, leaders at all levels should reject the belief that backward-facing data accurately predicts future success.

After bias is removed, the decision silos must be too. Leaders should commit to collecting and measuring the quantified human potential across the entire workforce, not just the top 10% or bottom 20%. For decades, I/O psychology investments have bypassed the middle 70% of the workforce and fed limited decision silos such as succession planning.

By quantifying the Talents of the entire workforce, talent leaders democratize access to this highly accurate, predictive data and extrapolate its power across any talent decision.



### Amazon Fails to Root Out Bias In Hard Skills–Based Data

In 2015 Amazon scrapped a secret AI recruiting tool because they couldn't get the gender bias out of their algorithms. Why? Because their computer models were learning how to sort candidates by observing patterns from an inherently biased pool of resumes. They were using resumes from a ten-year period when the majority of the resumes reflected male dominance across the tech industry. The moral of the story: Get the bias out of the data pool; algorithms aren't enough. [Read Article >>](#)

# Step 2

## Building inclusive employee experiences with the right talent in the right roles.

In step two, purpose-driven leaders build inclusion by understanding their people on a deeper level. They know where each individual thrives today but also where their Talents can flourish in the future.

This step begins with tight collaboration between team leaders and job experts who have firsthand knowledge of what it takes to succeed in a given role. Together, they design accurate job success criteria weighted by the most important Talents and replace vague job descriptions with contextually accurate opportunities that allow the right people to thrive.

Once a role is defined by the Talents required to succeed, leaders can proactively match individuals who rank the highest on the most heavily weighted Talents to these roles. Remember, because of step one, leaders are tapping into an unbiased, accurate measurement of both existing Talents and human potential. This is key as leaders in this step are not only predicting who will succeed in a role, but also revealing a diverse group of people who can step into a new role quickly with personalized guidance.

By matching everyone to their best opportunities using their Talents instead of their status, purpose-driven leaders embed a fair process that builds trust, strengthens team diversity, and nurtures an inclusive employee experience.



# Step 3

## Instantaneously align talent to changing business strategy at speed and scale.

In step three, purpose-driven leaders tap into a wider pool of diverse talent and use technology to instantaneously align that talent with changing business strategy at speed and scale. As soon as leaders predict their next business move, they are planning its execution by visualizing workforce scenarios based on real-time talent data.

Step three marries the outcomes of steps one and two by instantly mapping talent to opportunity at scale. Mapping quantified human potential with accurate job success criteria, leaders gain the ability to surface, see, and short-list genuinely diverse groups of talent. In this step, leaders instantly see:

- ◆ Everyone currently fit for a specific role
- ◆ Everyone who can grow into roles where they will naturally thrive
- ◆ Everyone who expresses interest in a specific career opportunity

Whether at the team level or on a global scale, purpose-driven leaders strengthen confidence, build trust, and adapt quickly by putting accurate, credible data at the foundation of every talent decision.



## Conclusion

To be sure, 2020 has introduced and intensified more challenges than most talent leaders have ever tackled simultaneously. But with those bigger challenges comes the necessary urgency to prioritize overdue change. We need to remove bias at the heart of talent processes and finally give everyone a fair chance at becoming all they can be. We can't keep talking about DE&I as a ratio or an outcome. Instead, we need to start prioritizing it as the strategy for tapping into the very best of our people and getting them excited about bringing the full power of their Talents to work everyday. Finally, we can't keep reacting to the crisis. We need to lean in to a credible source of truth from which we can make accurate, confident decisions in real time. We need Talent Resilience.

Purpose-driven leaders are poised to turn 2020 into a first mover's advantage by embracing the bold leadership it takes to achieve Talent Resilience. They are systemically removing bias by leaning in to unique potential. They are future-proofing job models by designing stronger teams around a perfect mix of soft skills. Finally, they are putting the explosive power of an employee's intrinsic Talents at the core of retention, leadership development, and career growth.



Learn how Plum's Talent Resilience Platform enables you to design an unbiased and transparent talent strategy at scale at [www.plum.io](http://www.plum.io)