

# VERSION NEXT **NOW**

TEKSYSTEMS TALENT ISSUE | DECEMBER 2021



## NAVIGATING A NEW TALENT **EXPERIENCE**

How Companies are Adopting New Talent Strategies to  
Navigate the Tech Talent Shortage

# Overcoming the Talent Gap in the Tech Industry

Technology's promise has always been that of a great equalizer—giving every human, regardless of age, race, sex, gender, ethnicity, religion—access to information and connection around the world. Unfortunately, it has failed spectacularly in living up to this promise, and it is only now that challenges to its role in perpetuating inequalities are arising.

These challenges coincide with a widening skills gap and a war for talent; organizations are struggling to find, hire and retain tech talent to further their digital transformation initiatives. The good news is that by addressing the diversity, inclusion and equity challenges, organizations can also solve the talent crisis and accelerate digital transformation so that they can truly thrive.

***The even better news? It's not as daunting as it sounds. There are proven strategies for tackling all these challenges—and you can start right now.***



**Sharon Florentine**  
Contributing Editor





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### THE CHANGE AGENT

Organizations must adapt their talent strategies, so they can acquire and cultivate the skills they need to grow their business for the future. To get there, companies must architect a new talent experience.

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# THE CHANGE AGENT

Organizations must adapt their talent strategies, so they can acquire and cultivate the skills they need to grow their business for the future.  
To get there, companies must architect a new talent experience.

## 1

# The great talent reset

The “war for talent” was coined by Steven Hankin of McKinsey & Company in 1997 to refer to the relentless competition involved in attracting and retaining exceptional talented employees. Nearly 25 years later, organizations are still fighting this war and the battle is as intense as ever. Technology projects, especially, are frequent casualties; often projects are slowed or can even fail outright due to a lack of talent. With many companies accelerating their [digital transformation](#) efforts, organizations need a new strategy to address the talent gap.

On any given day, the number of open tech jobs is six and a half times greater than the number of workers available to fill those roles, and that’s likely an underestimate. Organizations are struggling to find the talent with the skills they need to grow their businesses. In a survey from Gartner, Inc., IT executives see the talent shortage as the most significant adoption barrier to 64% of emerging technologies.<sup>1</sup> As technology and business models continue their rapid transformation, the types of skills organizations need are also evolving.

The war for talent isn’t just a transitory product of the pandemic, though that has certainly exacerbated the situation. Any hiring manager in search of an experienced software engineer in the last decade can tell you about the fierce competition for tech talent. Individuals with in-demand skills and experience can be selective about the opportunities they decide to pursue. They simply have more options, as evidenced by the nearly six million tech jobs posted online over the last 12 months.

**6<sup>1/2</sup>** times more IT job openings  
than talent available to fill them<sup>3</sup>





## SECTION 01



54%

of IT leaders  
say it is now  
more difficult  
to hire and  
retain skilled  
IT staff<sup>4</sup>

### Navigating the talent shortage

As we've seen in many instances, the pandemic accelerated technology and hiring trends that were already in progress. Now, companies must navigate a number of trends that have exacerbated the severe talent shortage.

- **Artificial intelligence** – From AI-enabled virtual assistants and chatbots to contactless cashiers to robot-assisted surgery, artificial intelligence and automation are driving significant change in the types of skills organizations need to thrive.
- **Remote work** – Enabled by technology, work from anywhere models provide flexibility and create both opportunities and challenges for organizations attempting to attract and retain a geographically dispersed labor pool.

In the face of these tech and workforce trends, organizations must adapt their talent strategies so they can acquire and cultivate the skills they need to grow their business for the future. To get there, companies must architect a new talent experience.

AI and  
automation  
could lead to  
the creation  
of **97 million**  
**new roles**  
by 2025<sup>5</sup>







## SECTION 02

# MARKET PERSPECTIVE

Per Scholas Executive Vice President Damien Howard shares his insights on building diverse talent pipelines and what organizations need to think about when applying equity to employee development.





# Being intentional with equity



What do organizations need to think about to ensure inclusion and diversity initiatives don't get put on hold due to the pandemic?



**Damien Howard (Per Scholas):** The pandemic has illustrated just how essential inclusion and diversity (I&D) are, and if we don't continue to focus and call for action in this critical area, we'll never have an equitable recovery. The recent jobs report shows that progress is being made as the nation continues to feel the repercussions from COVID-19. But it also reveals that huge equity gaps remain:

- [Black unemployment rates are still double](#), and Hispanic unemployment rates are one and a half times higher than white unemployment rates.
- Further, [more than half of October's job gains went to women](#)—but many were still in jobs in retail and hospitality, which offer fewer opportunities for growth. In order to get more women into high-paying tech jobs, women need additional attention and support from employers across the board.

Being successful at inclusion and diversity takes tenacity and intentionality at all levels of the organization. Furthermore, C-suite leaders and all leaders who support them should believe in diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging (DEIB) simply because it makes good business sense! The pandemic has forced so many organizations to focus on what matters most, and I'd argue that diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging top that list. We're all facing a war on talent amid the Great Resignation, and I strongly believe that a focus on diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging will fuel equitable hiring decisions, which in turn will drive business—and bottom lines—forward.



"Being successful at inclusion and **diversity takes tenacity and intentionality** at all levels of the organization."



**Damien Howard**  
Executive Vice President, Social Ventures  
Per Scholas



## SECTION 02



Has the surge in remote work been more of a benefit or a barrier in the mission of building a more diverse technical workforce?



**Damien Howard (Per Scholas):** Honestly, this transition to remote work has been both a benefit and barrier in terms of building a more diverse technical workforce from my perspective as a leader at a national nonprofit that trains diverse individuals for high-growth careers in technology. On the positive side, our nation's shift to remote work and learning has increased access and accessibility, enabling more individuals who might not have been able to previously, due to transportation or geographic constraints, or responsibilities at home such as child or elder care, to apply for and enroll in our rigorous tuition-free training. We've modified our curriculum and professional development offerings to address and train learners for potential remote work roles.

From a hiring perspective, I see tremendous benefit in terms of an employer's ability to connect and recruit our incredible, skilled tech talent regardless of where an individual is geographically located. But at the same time, new barriers have emerged. We realized very quickly as we transitioned to remote training that the majority of our learners didn't have the tools that they needed at home to be successful—a powerful laptop, reliable internet—which is why we've started to provide tech kits to learners as they embark on their training. We anticipate that remote work will continue to be part of the new normal, which is why we're proud to continue to offer our training in both remote and in-person settings based on a learner's preference.

## SECTION 02

Q What can organizations do to improve their ability to build a diverse talent pipeline?

+ A **Damien Howard (Per Scholas):** I love this question. First, let me underscore the business case for diversity:

- Inclusive teams make better business decisions up to [87% of the time](#).
- Teams that follow an inclusive process make decisions [twice as fast with half the meetings](#).
- Decisions made and executed by [diverse teams delivered 60% better results](#).
- A study conducted by the [Boston Consulting Group \(BCG\)](#) identified diversity as a key driver of innovation, finding that diverse teams produce a minimum of 19% more revenue.
- According to the latest from [McKinsey](#), companies that are racially and ethnically diverse outperform the bottom lines of those that are not by more than 36%. Imagine that profitability, simply tied to intentional and inclusive hiring.
- Plus, [Harvard Business Review](#) shows the dividends that diversity drives are multifaceted—not only do diverse and varied teams make better decisions, but they also make better investments, too.

Simply put, diversity drives dividends and makes good business sense! With that understanding, I think there are three key, pragmatic solutions that organizations must focus on to improve their ability to build diverse talent pipelines. First, evaluate your current I&D makeup with your people or HR team. Where is your organization diverse? Where are you too homogenous? What teams could benefit from alternate perspectives? Second, revisit your recruiting strategy and set realistic quantitative and qualitative I&D targets based on your evaluation and analysis. And finally, strive to remove both explicit and unconscious bias from your recruitment and selection processes.



Q On the surface, equity is fairly simple. But organizations still struggle to build and apply equitable workplace practices. What do organizations need to think about when applying equity to employee development and promotions?

+ A **Damien Howard (Per Scholas):** I'd argue that organizations struggle to provide equity because equity is inherently complicated. Unfortunately, there isn't a silver bullet or one-size-fits-all solution to DEIB, and equity demands a one-to-one solution. That's where I believe intentionality comes into play. Organizations must be thoughtful and customized in their equity plans and practices to ensure results that are beneficial to both the employer and the employee. This is where I think transparency, accountability and effective communication come into play, along with collaboration among key stakeholders and decision-makers.

Lastly, we offer consultative leadership around all aspects of implementing diverse and equitable practices for small to enterprise-level firms. If your company is struggling with this, we would love to have a conversation with you and see how we can work together to drive DEIB within your firm!





## SECTION 03

# OUR PERSPECTIVE

TEKsystems leaders Leslie Deutsch, Nina Kindrick and Lauren Kolodrubetz share their perspective on the talent strategies required to address the looming skills gap, build the future workforce and accelerate transformation.





# Solving the talent gap

The relentless pace of technology adoption shows no signs of slowing down and will likely accelerate in some areas. The specific technology (and in some instances, the processes), are less important than having the right talent and expertise—that’s where organizations can gain competitive advantage. But keeping technology priorities on track, on time and aligned to strategy won’t be easy. [Two out of five organizations](#) believe they need to make major changes to their workforce to ensure their digital initiatives are successful. They won’t get there overnight, but if organizations get creative with their talent strategies, they can build a foundation for lasting success.



UPSKILL



## SECTION 03

# Driving meaningful change with inclusive workplace practices

The headlines today are filled with glowing proclamations about a company's commitment to inclusion, diversity and equity. This focus is long overdue. While on the surface it seems we're making progress, there's still work to be done. The good news is that 70% of organizations report they have mature diversity, equity and inclusion practices in place. Companies that proclaim their intentions to address racial, sex and gender inequalities and to cure social ills should be commended. But those noble efforts often amount to little more than a slogan or a feel-good story for investors. Companies are not intentionally sabotaging these efforts, of course, but their focus often does little but reinforce inequities in hiring. If we're being honest, current attempts to build a more diverse IT workforce do not work. If they did, we'd see a dramatic improvement in diversity in IT; that we haven't speaks volumes. Meaningful change will never take place if companies don't fundamentally change the hiring and retention systems that perpetuate inequities.

In some ways, building an inclusion and diversity strategy is the easy part—it is in the tactical execution of these strategies where organizations struggle. IT teams are under deadline pressure and already struggle to attract and retain talent. Simply telling HR, hiring managers and recruiters to send more

diverse candidates doesn't solve the root problem. Leadership must promote and support a culture where teams feel empowered to be intentional about their goal to create an inclusive environment, and where employees feel safe and can envision a future career in the organization—no matter their race, sex, gender, religion, ethnicity. Leaders must build a culture where every employee is encouraged to be their authentic self at work and, most importantly, leadership must model that same behavior.

Activating an inclusion and diversity strategy that truly makes a difference can seem overwhelming, but you don't have to change everything all at once. Start small. Empower your teams. Evaluate your systems and make adjustments that will drive meaningful change.

*"Promoting equality for all can **create more inequities in finding talent**. If you want to drive real change, transform the systems that are in place to get over the hurdle."*



**Lauren Kolodrubetz**

Executive Director, Diversity Marketplace Solutions  
TEKsystems

*By 2022, the financial impact of the **IT skills gap** will grow to **\$775 billion** worldwide.<sup>2</sup>*



## The right tech talent, right now

The fact is, successful digital transformation requires the right skills and expertise, and must be addressed in a holistic way. In many respects, the talent required simply doesn't exist, at least not in the volume that enterprises need to drive their digital initiatives forward. Organizations that fall into a trap of continually trying to fill technical talent gaps piecemeal are ignoring the bigger problem, failing to create a talent experience that meets the needs and desires of the workforce as a whole.

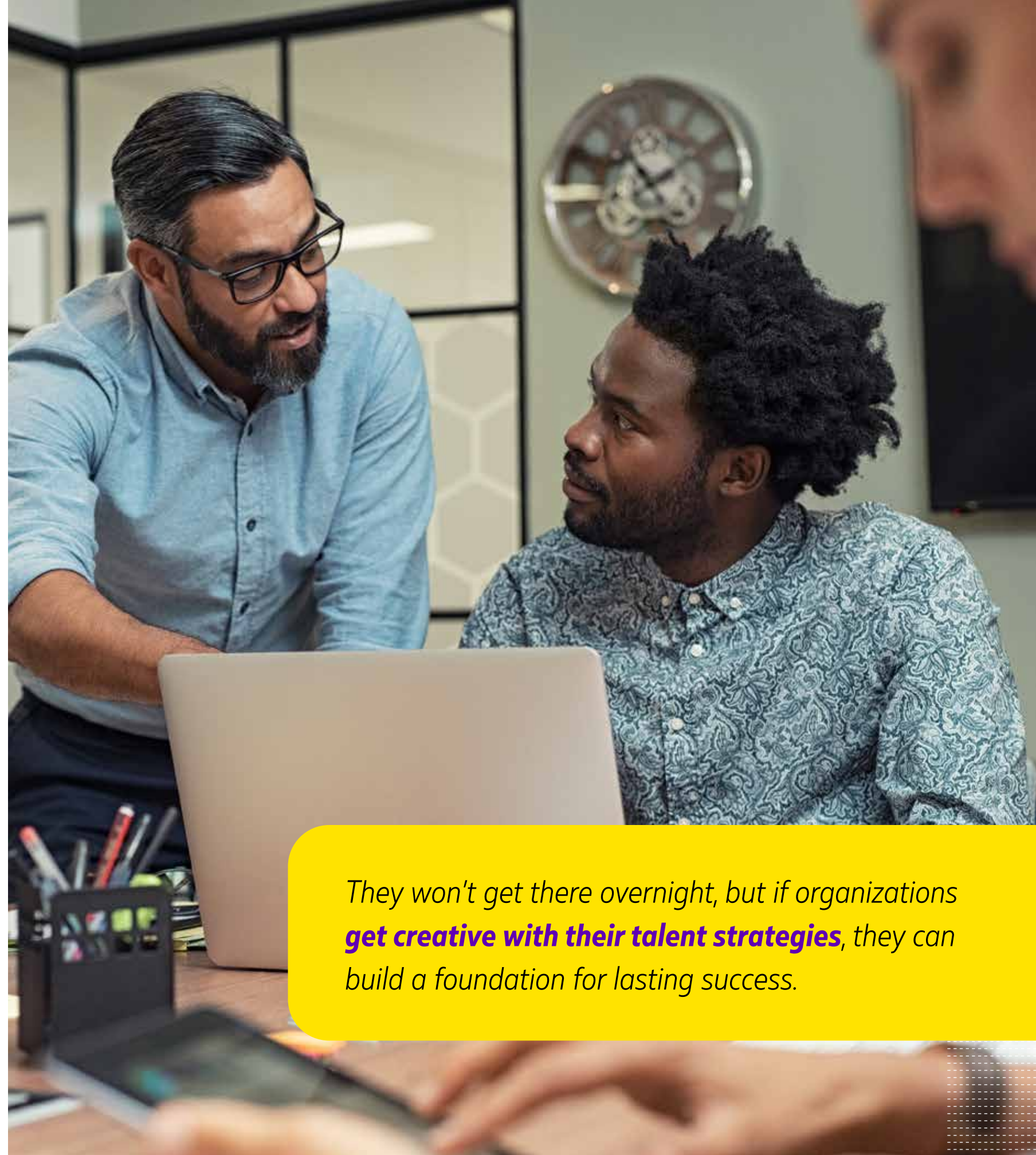
The good news is that proliferation of remote work models has completely changed the talent landscape for the better. Top tech talent wants opportunities where employers offer flexibility—but it doesn't stop there. They want to understand how you're integrating remote and onsite workers. What is the experience during collaboration meetings? What kind of technology is being used to create a seamless experience for everyone? Fully integrating remote and onsite talent is critical for your future workforce. Organizations that don't support hybrid work models will limit their capacity to engage top talent.

Compensation, perks and benefits are all part of the talent attraction and retention puzzle, but top talent wants and needs more. They need to see a roadmap for their career. To really stand out and become an employer of choice, organizations must work to create career roadmaps and professional development plans that illustrate the opportunities for tech talent.

*"Make your brand synonymous with **career growth and opportunity**."*



**Nina Kindrick**  
Executive Director, National Recruiting Center  
TEKsystems



*They won't get there overnight, but if organizations **get creative with their talent strategies**, they can build a foundation for lasting success.*



## SECTION 03



## Future-proof your IT workforce

The technologies and processes that fuel growth are critical enablers of your business. But without the skills and abilities of your workforce, those technologies and processes are meaningless. Leading organizations are evolving their workforce development strategies based on the strategic goals of the business. They're asking themselves what skills are required to achieve these goals today and what skills are needed for the future. This skills mapping process illuminates core themes that reveal where there's a skills surplus or skills gap. Armed with that knowledge, the company can target programs to grow skills where needed or shift resources to build for the future. For example, you could be top-heavy with backend development skills but lack enough frontend development talent—skills mapping can help you create learning curriculum to target those areas and cultivate the skills you need for the future.

Everyone is adapting to new ways of working; that makes this the ideal moment to begin (or continue) adapting and transforming your talent strategies so you can meet your people where they are and support them as they learn and grow their career. Provide employees the tools they need to seamlessly and easily learn so they can be more productive in

their job. Build continuous learning mechanisms into everything you're doing. That creates learning and development opportunities that connect directly to the business challenges your teams are solving for every day. Encourage employees to fearlessly experiment and test new technologies, processes and ways of working so they can learn from both successes and failures. These are the hallmarks of a really good learning culture.

Workforce development is an essential element of any solid talent strategy, but it requires more than just building a robust education curriculum. Getting workforce development right also requires a shift in how the company delivers learning opportunities so that they are available and accessible when and how your employees want. Employees expect companies to prepare them to thrive in a technology-driven future, where acquiring new skills is essential to remaining relevant. Organizations that establish a learning culture and encourage intellectual curiosity will be better positioned to attract, retain and cultivate the skills they need to succeed.

*"It's not a lack of available training or different modalities to offer. It's **connecting them in the way** your people need to succeed."*



**Leslie Deutsch**

Executive Director, Learning Solutions  
TEKsystems



# TEKsystems' Tips



**Think about flexibility:** Workers are approaching jobs and careers differently. They've learned to adapt and thrive within flexible work arrangements, while remaining highly productive. Provide detailed guidelines, policies and expectations for hybrid work models.



**Mind unintentional bias:** Evaluate your hiring process. Your systems could be perpetuating bias that already exists. Look at who is on your hiring panel and think about how to bring more diverse perspective to the process.



**Build a brand identity:** Make your brand synonymous with career growth and opportunity. Talented employees want a roadmap for their career. Help your current workforce and potential candidates see their future within your organization.



**Breakdown barriers:** Something as innocuous as a degree requirement can create artificial barriers that hinder diversity efforts. Remove those barriers and inequities that make it harder for underrepresented groups to engage with your company.



**Reconsider job requirements:** Is that degree really necessary to get the job done? Evaluate the "must haves" and refine them to better reflect the role and responsibilities.



**Meet people where they are:** Employees, particularly the newest generations, want to learn while doing their jobs. Create on-demand learning opportunities that give your people flexibility to learn in a way that meets their needs.



**Proactively engage talent:** Tech talent is hard to find. Once you've defined your diversity hiring goals, don't shy away from interviewing a talented candidate, even if you don't have a specific job opening.



**Balance your focus:** Workforce development often focuses on the technical skills, but soft skills development should get equal attention. Build your skill profiles with a focus on both technical and soft skills, so you don't create unintended talent gaps.



# Real-World Application: Amazon Web Services (AWS)

For years, leaders from both government and private sector businesses have pointed out global talent challenges and the growing technical skills gap. The majority agree about the importance of democratizing knowledge and providing all individuals, regardless of background, education or social status the opportunity to build technical skills.

In 2020 at [AWS re:Invent](#), Teresa Carlson, vice president of worldwide public sector at Amazon Web Services (AWS), announced a new massive training initiative. By 2025, AWS is committed to helping [29 million people globally grow their technical skills](#) with free cloud computing skills training. The program will be provided through existing AWS-designed programs and will include new courses to meet a wide variety of schedules and learning goals. The content varies widely. A two-day program prepares students to work as entry-level fiber-optic fusion-splicing technicians. This in-demand field involves testing and installing the delicate cables made up of minuscule glass tubes that power cloud data centers. Another course, called Cloud Practitioner Essentials, covers the basics of the AWS cloud, while other training focuses on more advanced skills such as machine learning. The push could help millions of workers navigate career changes without incurring steep debt at a time when many find themselves out of work and burdened by student loans.

*All information shared herein was accessed from public sources as indicated.*





# TEKsystems Talent Portfolio

Accelerated innovation is here to stay—enterprises need a future-ready workforce.

- Whether expanding a team, upskilling employees or outsourcing work, our scalable talent solutions keep your business on the fast track toward sustained high performance and operational resiliency.
- Deep, hyper-local knowledge in 400+ metropolitan markets worldwide.
- Talent placed at 80% of Fortune 500 companies
- 80,000+ professionals deployed each year
- 100,000+ check-ins with IT professionals every week
- 150+ customized training programs annually
- 1 million+ learners reached across 15+ countries over the past 15 years
- 94% customer satisfaction with our services
- We're an [Amazon Web Services \(AWS\) Partner Network Training Partner](#).
- Improving access and equity in the tech industry through our partnership with [Per Scholas](#).
- [In good company](#): Transformational technologies demand equally transformative partnerships.

The views and opinions expressed in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of TEKsystems, Inc. or its related entities.

# Meet Our Contributors



**Damien Howard**  
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Damien is executive vice president, Social Ventures at Per Scholas. He is responsible for launching and scaling revenue-generating enterprises that fuel innovation and provide working capital to reinvest in all of Per Scholas' offerings. Prior to his current role, Damien led Per Scholas' Employer Engagement team as well as the Asset Recovery service. He has been with Per Scholas for more than 15 years, helping drive Per Scholas' long-term growth and entrepreneurial initiatives. Damien attended Baruch College and is a graduate of the Columbia Business School Institute for Nonprofit Management.



**Lauren Kolodrubetz**  
*Executive Director, Diversity Marketplace Solutions | TEKsystems*

Lauren leads TEKsystems strategy to help customers build more diverse and inclusive technology workforces. Whether you're looking to hire more diverse candidates, renovate your culture to build a greater sense of belonging or diversify your supplier roster, TEK's programs fast track diversity, equity and inclusion goals.



**Leslie Deutsch**  
*Executive Director, Learning Solutions | TEKsystems*

As the executive director of Learning Solutions at TEKsystems, Leslie oversees a team that drives learning and adoption services within our client organizations as well as our internal programs. These programs focus on building a future workforce with tomorrow's skills, upskilling and reskilling current teams, or changing behavior needed to impact productivity.



**Nina Kindrick**  
*Executive Director, National Recruiting Center | TEKsystems*

As the executive director of the National Recruiting Center at TEKsystems, Nina oversees a team that focuses on providing proven resources to our clients. The team connects the dots between the right talent and the right career opportunities regardless of geographic location, creating more opportunity for consultants and a broader talent pool for our customers.





### About TEKsystems®

We're TEKsystems. We accelerate business transformation for our customers. We bring real-world expertise to solve complex technology, business and talent challenges—across the globe. We're a team of 80,000 strong, working with over 6,000 customers, including 80% of the Fortune 500 across North America, Europe and Asia, who partner with us for our scale, full-stack capabilities and speed. We're strategic thinkers, hands-on collaborators, helping customers capitalize on change. We're building tomorrow by delivering business outcomes and driving positive impacts in our global communities. TEKsystems is an Allegis Group company.



### Sharon Florentine, Contributing Editor

**Sharon Florentine** is the contributing editor for Version Next, Now, TEKsystems' quarterly publication. She is an award-winning independent writer and editor with more than 20 years of experience in the tech industry. Her work has appeared in Computerworld, PC Magazine, CRN and eWEEK, among others, and she is a passionate advocate for equity, diversity and inclusion in tech and beyond. Most recently, Sharon was a senior writer for CIO.com, where she covered software development, Agile, IT careers, learning and development, and DE&I. She lives near Philadelphia.



### Listen Now

Don't miss Leslie Deutsch, Nina Kindrick and Lauren Kolodrubetz, on [The Agile World](#) podcast. In a three-part series, host, author and business expert, Greg Kihlström, sits down with Leslie, Nina and Lauren to discuss the talent strategies needed to build the future workforce.



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### Sources

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