

# Trends impacting the ‘world of work’ in 2024

 By [Lyndy van den Barselaar](#)

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The world of work is in a complex state as we enter 2024. The lockdown-driven work-from-home requirement has shifted to hybrid or a full-time return to the office – but that was just the start of an avalanche of change.



Lyndy van den Barselaar, managing director at ManpowerGroup South Africa

Over the last year or so, the emergence of AI and a more focused transition to a green energy future have driven a greater demand for specialist skills amongst workers, along with the ability to pivot and adapt rapidly. The key here is that even as the focus has shifted towards how technology can play a role in day-to-day operations, it's the human element that remains essential and central to success.

The onus is not only on employees to adapt - more than ever, unlocking potential while meeting employee expectations for flexibility, autonomy and skills development is critical in helping companies grow and drive productivity. As change accelerates, people will continue to power the future.

## Talent at a premium

The accelerating pace of change is set to ramp up the persistent talent scarcity which many businesses already experience – and that's good news for workers.

This imbalance between the shortage of talent and the surplus of demand is illustrated by our research, which demonstrates that more than two-thirds (77%) of employers globally say they are struggling to find the skilled talent they need. Despite a slowing global economy, this is the highest percentage in 17 years.

## More prominence for soft skills

Finding talent with the right technical training remains a challenge, but soft skills are also in demand. Across all industries, employers cite communications, collaboration and teamwork (39%), accountability and reliability (33%), and reasoning and problem-solving (29%) as the most important attributes to consider during the hiring process.

This points to a shift towards being more accepting of older workers who have learned these skills over time, as soft skills are hard to teach - and acquire - as part of formal education for younger workers.

However, these skills are being developed in younger workers through e-sports and gaming. More than half of employers globally would now consider gaming experience when hiring, and 65% of employers say they will in the future.



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## Valuing experience

The global talent scarcity is creating opportunities for non-traditional candidates. In the past year, employers have become more willing to consider 'seniors' (34%), candidates with employment gaps due to caretaking responsibilities (27%), and the long-term unemployed (26%).

Placing emphasis on experience and being more open to candidates who are 'teachable', rather than seeking the 'finished product', creates more opportunities for more experienced – and possibly even already-retired – employees who have invaluable work and life experience.

## New productivity drivers

Clarity, careers, and culture will become the keys to productivity. Despite the tension created by return-to-office mandates, only 19% of employers believe in-person collaboration is a top productivity driver – likely because lockdowns illustrated that well-managed teams can succeed, remotely.

Instead, professional development (40%), clear goals and objectives (37%) and positive work culture (36%) are considered most important – pointing to a shift towards understanding the needs of employees rather than forcing culture on them.

## Sustainability focus

The mounting global urgency to fight climate change, growing demand for sustainable products and government incentives are combining to accelerate the green transition – and organisations need to get on board because a company's green credentials are becoming increasingly important to existing employees – and prospective ones.

Recognising this, 70% of employers are actively planning to recruit for green jobs and skills – and it means they'll need to continue to apply the same sustainability mindset to their human resources.

## Tech won't replace human power

While AI and VR tech continue to evolve rapidly, there's an understanding amongst both employers and employees that it won't replace the human element. 58% of employers worldwide are optimistic that new technology won't eliminate jobs — but rather create them - and have a positive impact on hiring.

The fact that the future of work will be shaped by the accelerating pace of change and persistent talent scarcity is good news for the talent pool. With employers increasingly open to non-traditional candidates who may exhibit valuable skills outside those in the job description, there are more opportunities for more experienced workers with invaluable work and life experience, and individuals with skills learned outside the workplace.

The evolution of work is thrilling, and the pace is searing – but it's heartening to see that the human element is only growing in import.

### ABOUT LYNDY VAN DEN BARSELAAR

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