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A transformation in how the workforce operates and, more specifically, in how energy and the environment factor into the responsibilities of each employee, is the cornerstone to successfully addressing climate change, says Daniel Kreeger, co-founder of the Association of Climate Change Officers.

Over the past few years in the US, organisations in industry, government, academia and the non-profit community have made significant commitments to cutting their carbon emissions and implementing wide-ranging climate strategies. Over a thousand American mayors have signed the US Conference of Mayors Climate Agreement and nearly half of American states and Canadian provinces are signatories to regional climate pacts. In the private sector, hundreds of multinational corporations have made public commitments to reduce their carbon footprint.

Many more climate-related commitments are being made worldwide. While these commitments reflect an extraordinarily encouraging groundswell of climate responders, they also lead to a great challenge: how do we modernise a workforce and our governance systems that are accustomed to operating, functioning and rationalising based on a concept not too distant from the 200-year-old American doctrine, Manifest Destiny?

A 21st century workforce

Climate change presents a set of risks and opportunities to an organisation's operations that are unprecedented in scope, complexity and scale. The modern workforce will evolve to tackle these challenges, which include:

- Incorporating energy and environmental impact analysis into all job descriptions;
- Developing green incentive structures for employees whose innovations result in climate-related risk mitigation or cost/emissions reductions;
- Establishing internal communications campaigns and updating standard operating procedures;
- Developing new organisational structures to accommodate change in management and operations,

Modernising the workforce:

understanding the role of human capital in responding to climate change

and in particular, to establish enterprise governance on climate-related strategies.

The greatest challenge in achieving these goals relates to how we integrate environmental attributes into the basic functions of all jobs and governance systems. Essentially, the guiding principle in the modern workforce is not 'green jobs' for some, but 'job greening' for all. Principles that will need to be reflected in the job greening process include:

- Natural resources are not limitless;
- All actions have immediate, potentially wide-ranging and long-term implications on ecosystems;
- Energy and environmental considerations play a fundamental role in all operations and professions and must be considered by all members of the workforce, regardless of role or seniority;
- Environmental impacts can be assigned tangible value resulting from the lifecycle assessment of operations and products and the recognised value of ecosystems, thus enabling environmental impacts to become a prime component of the business case for operational strategies.

Is all this necessary?

Industry, academia and government are decades overdue for a complete overhaul in how business is conducted, professionals are educated and trained, management is structured and how energy and environmental considerations are factored into the business bottom line. Our ability to redesign the workforce is hinged upon executives and senior officials understanding the role of human capital and its importance in their organisational missions. While those executives are focused on green jobs, a shift in mindset to job greening is the real chasm that needs to be crossed.

Recent studies indicate that hundreds of billions of dollars is squandered within the US workforce alone due to 'disengaged employees'. Organisations with an engaged workforce have 2.6 times the earnings per share growth rate over comparable organisations in the same industry with a less-engaged workforce. Added to this, research has found that college graduates are increasingly likely to

select an employer that prioritises operational greening over one that does not.

Professionals will modify their behaviour to mitigate impacts and seize opportunities if they understand the significance of energy and environmental considerations in their respective roles. Savvy organisations are already moving in this direction, and it starts with the basics:

- Numerous companies have created and support employee 'green teams', whose members monitor the activities of their peers and seek to shape behaviour.
- Companies such as Walmart have launched personal sustainability programmes and have seen extraordinary innovation in the workplace develop as a result.
- Other companies, such as Lockheed Martin, General Electric and Toyota, have conducted 'treasure hunts' to identify money-saving opportunities related to waste, energy and other environmental considerations at their facilities and saved millions of dollars.

These examples demonstrate the importance of leveraging the combination of green and clean energy professionals in overhauling and modernising industry operations. Imagine, though, where industry would be if the architects and designers of these operations had already been educated and trained to take these sorts of factors into consideration when the operations and facilities were launched?

Education ... Education ... Education

A modern workforce that accounts for energy and environmental implications as a fundamental principle of operations does not come at the snap of the fingers, despite the evident rewards. Education and training are necessary to change behaviour and provide the capacity to effectively tackle the challenges and opportunities ahead.

A growing number of professions are evolving in response to climate change challenges and opportunities. From clean energy procurement to supply chain efficiencies, investor/stakeholder relations to legal/liability considerations, facilities and operations management to product design, an explosion in skill sets is taking place.

So how do we embed these skills and principles into all areas of an organisation? Some crucial steps toward modernising the workforce are illustrated below:

- **For executives/senior officials:** Workshops to bring these insights to senior executives and officials across all sectors will be critical to secure senior level support and resources allocated to overhauling the workforce.
- **For human resources administrators:** HR professionals are often left out of discussions related to climate change but play significant roles in effecting change in the workforce. Training priorities in HR will include how to incorporate climate change responsibilities into job descriptions, identify candidates better positioned to meet these challenges, and how to develop internal communications campaigns about sustainability.
- **For academic institutions:** These institutions will need to develop new curriculum across all of their programmes, including, at the very least, business schools, engineering and environmental programmes, public affairs, law schools, medical schools, research institutions and IT programmes.

Next steps

How do we convince society that the same actions that led to great comforts and new pursuits now threaten the very fabric of humanity and ecosystems on Earth? Ultimately, this means that the challenge in responding to climate change is one that must be met by the force of extraordinary human capital. So, how do we rewrite the human resources handbook?

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A roadmap to educating an entire workforce and government, and functionally changing culture, is necessary to transform our operating practices. If our practices of the past century are point A, then charting a course for point B, a society whose operating and business practices are fully sustainable is our mission.

Getting from A to B requires researching and developing new technologies, innovating new business processes, overhauling waste streams, and accounting for lifecycles of operations and products. These actions, amongst others, reflect a new way of doing business. From a human resources perspective, one might consider this job greening, and the modernisation of the world's workforce.

Daniel Kreeger is co-founder and Executive Director of the Association of Climate Change Officers. While leading the association he has focused on educating industry and government on the importance of developing sound organisational structures and change management programmes, and establishing incentives to encourage innovation and successful response to climate change considerations.

The Association of Climate Change Officers is a non-profit, professional development organisation founded in 2008. It aims to advance the knowledge and skills of those responsible for leading climate change strategies in both the public and private sphere. The Association of Climate Change Officers provides a flexible forum for collaboration between climate change officers and the exchange of best practice, industry standards and new thinking around climate change strategy development. It educates industry and government on the importance of employing qualified professionals, developing sound frameworks for sustainability and establishing incentives to encourage innovation in greening jobs and operations across whole organisations.

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