

It seems clear that the ways that the service workforce of the future acquires, organizes, and applies knowledge must continue to undergo dramatic change. Technology has already made exciting new channels and techniques available for helping individuals learn. However, we need to rethink much more than how learning is delivered because the challenges of this era are much broader than how we make individuals knowledgeable.

- First, the breadth of information that an individual may need as they carry out modern service jobs demands that we think of learning as something that goes on largely at the point of need, rather than in dedicated, just-in-case learning sessions. We can no longer pretend that we're creating capable workers by teaching them everything they need to know in preparation for their opportunities to perform; instead, we need to think about the capable worker as someone who goes into performance situations with two things: 1) Enough knowledge to bootstrap their performance, which is to say to determine what knowledge is needed, what their gaps may be, and how those gaps can be quickly addressed through learning or collaboration. 2) The tools (technological or otherwise) to find the people or knowledge resources needed to provide the needed service. It's less about an individual being smart about all the situations he or she might face, and more about that individual being able to get smart quickly.
- And increasingly, when we think about having the knowledge needed to provide top quality service, we need to think at three distinct levels: 1) the individual level, the team level and the organizational level. The real question is how does the organization get the best thinking on every project and problem. Some of this can be addressed by training members of one's team to handle the next project, but much will be about re-imagining what a team is: We need to move beyond the notion of a static organization in which the org chart determines what team is asked to attack a problem, to a dynamic organization in which the needs of the problem – rather than organizational boundaries - determine what people and resources are assembled to attack the problem. An effective manager will be one who can put together and orchestrate ad-hoc teams of people and systems, sourced on demand, with the right knowledge and skills to succeed on each project.

In the brief presentation for this panel, I'll outline the hypotheses above, and discuss some of the techniques we've been exploring to make knowledge available at the point of need, supports dynamic sourcing of talent, and supports execution with ad-hoc teams assembled to bring together the knowledge and skills needed to carry out each project.