

# Managing Talent in the **Digital World**



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## Highlights:

- Digital talent needs to be, first and foremost, 'talent'. This baseline competence is then added to digital-first mindset and an ability to apply modern technology, agility, and rapid innovations to deliver value to organisations.
- Hybrid work adds a new twist to staff productivity and career fulfilment. Employees cherish increasing autonomy and a perception of control. The possibility of redefining work-life balance that remote/hybrid working provides is an attractive trade-off for pay.
- Continuous training to develop relevant digital skills is no longer a "nice-to-have" - it is a must-have for all organisations.
- Borderless hiring accelerated by rapid digitalization, the global COVID -19 pandemic and restrictions on working from the office and migration of talent across borders; perhaps has important upside of access to significantly wider and deeper global digital talent pool
- Recruiters must consciously embrace a forward-looking market approach to sourcing digital talent by understanding skill gaps that are likely to appear over a three to five years' timeframe and define clear talent resourcing strategies in response.



The work-from-anywhere/work-from-home model is increasingly adopted by global organisations. Findings by Accenture ([Future of Work Study 2021](#)) indicate that 83% of employees express preference for hybrid working. 63% of high-revenue-growth companies surveyed have already implemented a hybrid work model. Airbnb, in April, 2022 announced that employees [can work remotely forever from anywhere](#). Other global organisations that have implemented similar work-from-anywhere model include [Facebook](#), [Shopify](#), [Dropbox](#), etc.

After 20 months of remote work from home, Verraki Partners adopted a unique flexible working model, allowing employees work from client sites, in office, from home, and include arrangements for cross-border work. Cross border migration is putting pressure on pool of critical talent with profound implications for recruitments, employee engagement and retention, productivity, employee fulfilment and even corporate culture. The pandemic accelerated the disruption of labour markets globally and elevated the idea that a workspace (and not a workplace) may be all an employee needs to get the job done. This has implications on how talents

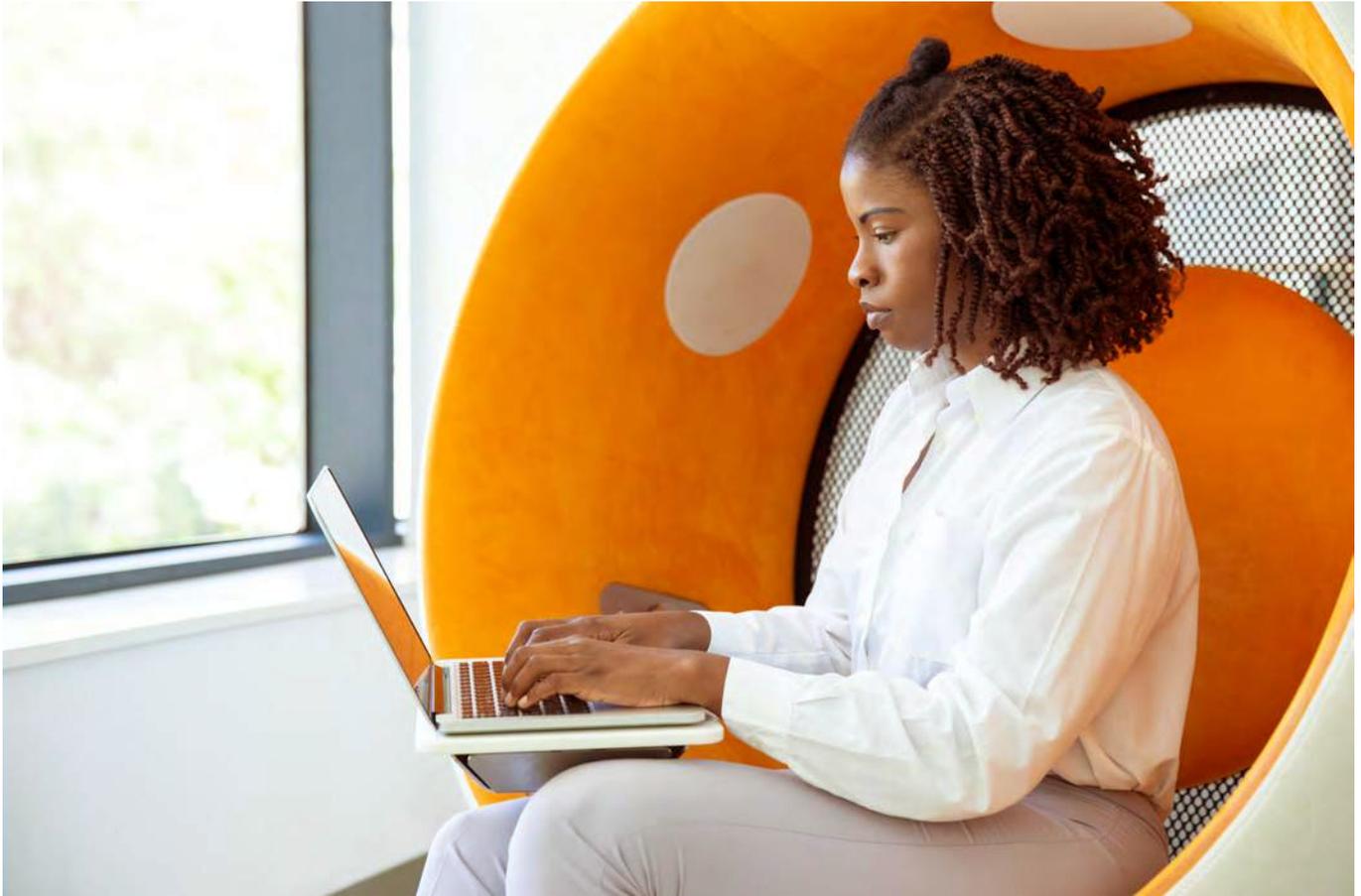
are managed in the evolving digital economy.

But what is digital talent and what does the new context of work mean for 'digital talent'? Digital talent needs to be, first and foremost, 'talent'. This baseline competence is then added to digital-first mindset and an ability to apply modern technology, agility, and rapid innovations to deliver value to organisations. Digital talent should not be simplified as employees with academic degrees or certifications in computer-related disciplines. It is more about employees who have acquired the necessary digital skills, have the digital mindsets and are able to apply modern technology to their chosen career path. They are employees who can learn and adapt very quickly to the job demands of the digital world. Beyond the usual practice of offering higher salary to attract/retain digital talent, digital talent want much more. In a recent [report](#) by the Boston Consulting Group, digital workers want flexibility in where and when work gets done. They prioritise work-life balance, they value relationship with colleagues, and pay attention to the financial stability of the employer. Business success in a digital-first world is impossible without a digitally savvy workforce. Here are five important areas organisations must focus on:



# 1 Flexible work style: in-person, remote or hybrid

Perhaps the most obvious impact of COVID-19 on the labour force is a realisation that a hybrid work model in which part of the workforce works outside of the traditional office for part of the time is doable, and even desirable in some instances. Nonetheless, the concept of flexible work must be well understood as it is beyond giving employees the freedom to work remotely as detailed in an 'updated company policy'. Leaders must acknowledge that employees today demand flexibility tailored to their specific needs, whether it be work-life balance, physical and emotional health, or caring for family. Within this context, managers then become more realistic regarding where, when, and how work can be done. Typically, the decision to go full remote or adopt a hybrid model must be determined by the nature of the business, the cost drivers, service delivery model, amongst other factors. It is important to note that implementing an incompatible remote work model could have detrimental effect on the workforce and the business. To implement any form of remote work, some basic technology prerequisites are worthy of mention: cloud hosting of all company applications for full remote access, a VPN installed on work systems/laptops, and a good internet connection.



## Digital talent scarcity

The scarcity of job-ready digital talent is a major drag for digital transformation across organisations globally. The Salesforce's [Global Digital Skills Index 2022](#) ranks global workplace digital skill readiness at 33 out of 100. This notwithstanding, digitisation, changing business models, technological innovation, etc. continue to mount demand pressure on the shallow pool of global digital talent. Recruiters must consciously embrace a forward-looking market approach to sourcing digital talent by understanding what skill gaps will appear over the next three to five years and begin now to fill them. It is also important for recruiters to recognise candidates as important stakeholder in the hiring process to open doors for authentic discussion with candidates about job opportunities. Companies today need recruiting staff with social media and online networking skills, HR software capabilities, and digital knowledge. This will facilitate access to larger and more diverse talent pools, leveraging third party recruitment platforms, borderless jobs and returning employees. The nature of the workforce will also change from full time to a mix of full time, part time, contract, consulting, partner, etc. Leaders need to institute a culture that keeps the door open for former employees to happily return and contribute even more to the organisation. Finally, investing in existing staff is arguably the most effective way of bridging digital skills gaps. This is "non-negotiable" for business competitiveness and growth.



# Borderless jobs:

a threat and an opportunity

**W**ith the increased acceptability of remote work comes a new reality – working from anywhere is akin to working from home. This relatively new trend has been fortified by rapid digitalization, the pandemic and migration of talent across borders. Several businesses in Nigeria are becoming more comfortable hiring Nigerians (or other nationals) abroad for job roles that can be serviced full remote. Similarly, there are many Nigerian-based talent who work for companies based in Europe, Asia, and North America from the comfort of their homes. Borderless hiring comes with an important upside: it makes the digital talent pool significantly wider and deeper. It eliminates geographic restrictions and time constraint in talent search, and provides an opportunity for companies to cast a wider net while hiring. Borderless jobs also provide an interesting pathway to workplace diversity, granting employees an opportunity to interact, learn and grow. On the flip side, borderless jobs imply more intense competition for local talent who may be more interested in remote jobs that pay in foreign currency. In addition, borderless hiring demands a lot of knowledge about laws and regulations from recruiters, and places additional background checks, tax, and compliance burdens on the organisation.



# 4. Staff productivity and career fulfilment

**H**ow does a work-from-anywhere model impact employee productivity and career fulfilment? Every organisation desires a healthy and productive workforce regardless of the workplace model it operates, but digitisation adds some new dimensions to achieving optimal productivity and fulfilment. First, leaders must hire the right employees and provide a remarkable experience that motivates them to stay and contribute their best to the business. Secondly, it pays to be realistically flexible regarding roles that should be in-office, remote or hybrid. Employees are somewhat informed regarding these possibilities and cherish some autonomy to improving their work-life balance. Leaders must demonstrate that the employees are trusted to embrace remote/flexible work productively and be firm to apply disciplinary actions when necessary. Another strategy that helps improve productivity and fulfilment is for leaders to clearly communicate the big picture to every employee, and how their roles connect to the vision of the organisation. Leaders must pay attention to the importance of access to the right tools, technology, and training to productivity. All recurring and monotonous tasks should be automated, as this allows employees to focus on core revenue-generating activities. Finally, allow your employees time to get the job done by reducing the frequency of meetings. Unnecessary meetings are among the biggest time wasters in the business world. When unavoidable, meetings must be scheduled, short, focused, and flexible per the mode of attendance.



## 5 Investment in modern technology, tools, and solutions

**D**igital talent require the right technology to function effectively. This makes investments in modern technology a necessity in the digital transformation of any organisation. In the digital economy, employees become empowered problem solvers when they have access to the right technology, the knowledge to use that technology, and the freedom and support to learn, experiment, and improve processes. Leaders must understand the new technologies that are available for their line of business. Few categories to consider include cloud solutions, workflow management solutions, collaboration platforms, artificial intelligence tools, Internet of Things (IoT), cyber-security, etc. Leaders must also note that poor implementation can impede the expected efficiency gains from technology solutions. It is advisable to have a broad digital transformation strategy that not only addresses the demands of today's jobs, but also anticipates, and equips employees to meet the future business needs. Employees can also play a role in identifying and testing relevant technology tools before corporate adoption.

Digitalisation is a strategic imperative for business competitiveness and survival. The digital talent gap is widening. Companies need digital workers more than ever to execute (or sustain) digital transformation and modernise their operations and processes. At the same time, people with these skills have more job options, including opportunities to work remotely for employers, home and abroad. To ensure best outcomes for organisations, leaders must be clear about their current and future talent needs, and subsequently develop a digital talent strategy that would inform whether the business build digital talents internally, hire new digital talents or outsource some business functions to vendors with the requisite talents. Nonetheless, investing in continuous digital training is no longer a “nice-to-have”—it is a must-have for any organisation.

*Verraki's [Advisory Practice](#) provides digitally transformative services to the African market, leading the charge to deliver cutting-edge innovation solutions to organisations – unleashing their growth potential. [Talk to one of our experts](#) today to learn more.*

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## About Verraki

Verraki is a proudly African company partnering with enterprises and governments to accelerate the development and transformation of Africa by providing business solutions designed for Africa. We build and implement technology solutions for seemingly intractable challenges, provide advisory services to drive the capacity and motivation for change, and curate innovative ventures to unlock new sources of growth across our continent.

A fusion of two words: ‘Versorium’ (Latin for Turn Around) and ‘Meraki’ (Greek word used to describe the action of doing something with soul, creativity, pouring oneself into a task), Verraki aptly captures the essence of our company; to turn around African enterprises and governments via smart, future-focused solutions and business insights, new growth opportunities, helping to unleash their potential, turnaround their performance and achieve the seemingly impossible, with the sole goal of creating a better future for Africa.

We are committed to enabling the African (start-up) story by supporting high-impact socially-conscious entrepreneurs and catalysing self-sustaining enterprises and governments within the continent to deliver affordable services across critical sectors.

## Our Growth Optimisation Offering

The contemporary business environment is dramatically different from what it was ten years ago, and it continues to evolve at an increasing rate. Consumer trends, macroeconomic shifts, technological advances, changing competitive dynamics, climate change, supply chain disruptions, digitalisation and pandemics are accelerating the pace of change, leaving many businesses struggling to grow amidst the turbulence.

At Verraki, we understand client needs and provide innovative new approaches that help enterprises and governments to explore new market opportunities including expansion into new regions, identification of new channels, targeting of new customer segments, or even the creation of new product categories in a way that moves them from “surviving” to “thriving.” Verraki develops and delivers the practical tools, frameworks, and organizational capabilities required to gain competitive advantage, and achieve sustainable growth, utilising customer insights, big data, and proprietary knowledge to achieve a deeper understanding of demand, customers, competitors, and opportunities.

Our seasoned executives and team have a broad range of multibillion-dollar P&L experience delivering long-term growth and optimisation vision, strategies, and management at global Fortune 500 companies.

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