



INCLUSIVE FUTURE OF WORK PODCAST

Envision Episode



About the Podcast

The [Inclusive Future of Work](#) explores solutions for building a future where all workers have the motivation, means and opportunity to adapt to and thrive in the digital economy.

Episode 2 of the Inclusive Future Of Work Podcast features workers sharing firsthand perspectives, as well as solution providers and scholars intimately familiar with the barriers and breakthroughs in this space.

- [Julie Hutchinson](#), Managing Director for Skills & Employment at the [East London Business Alliance](#)
- [Dom Atkinson](#), Founder of [Stay Nimble](#)
- Dr. Alex Cutting, Psychologist and Professor at the [University of Notre Dame](#)
- [Michelle Buechler](#), Head of New Skilling at [Accenture](#)

Hear them discuss how to best support individuals' awareness and exploration of the new world of work, their own existing strengths, and positive engagement with organizational change. Listen to the episode on [iTunes](#), [Google Play](#), [Spotify](#) and [SoundCloud](#).

[Subscribe](#) to the Pulse newsletter and visit our [website](#) to be the first to hear about collaboration opportunities, updates on our action projects, latest thinking and insights from new skilling pioneers.

Episode References

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Guest Speakers



Dom Atkinson

Dom has spent the last two decades leading organizations, coaching individuals and building software applications to make business better. Following studying as an occupational psychologist, he extended training into Learning and Development with CIPD and became a Fellow of the RSA. He formed [Stay Nimble](#) – dubbed the Headspace of career coaching – in response to changes to employment due to rapid technological advancements. Dom believes that with the right support and coaching, we can all navigate whatever comes next in our careers.



Michelle Buechler

Michelle is a Senior Manager in Accenture's Global Human Resources organization, serving as Accenture's Global lead for Reskilling. Her main responsibilities include building solutions to reskill Accenture's workforce at scale. She has been with Accenture since 2000 holding a variety of positions across Learning and Talent Development and Consulting. Half of her time was in Accenture's Talent and Organization Performance consulting practice working with clients on people transformations. Michelle then moved into Accenture's Human Resources team focusing on Talent and Learning. Michelle has worked across many lines of business within Accenture designing new and innovative learning solutions.



Dr. Alex Cutting

Dr. Alex Cutting is a Professor of Psychology and a Professor of Physiology at [The University of Notre Dame's](#) London campus. She specializes in socio-cognitive psychology, stress and mental wellbeing, learning, health psychology and research methods. She is also a qualified psychotherapeutic counsellor and has worked with adults and young people on a wide range of issues for many years.



Julie Hutchinson

Julie is the Managing Director of the [East London Business Alliance Employment and Skills](#) division and Not for Profit social mobility specialist recruitment agency, London Works. She joined the charity in 2004. She has significant experience of developing models and measures that engage ELBA's alliance of major City and Canary Wharf employers in the skills, diversity and workforce progression agenda.



Podcast Transcript

Michelle Buechler A couple of years ago, I got a ping from my manager saying, “Hey, I need you to get to your local office, immediately.

Lisa Neuberger This is Michelle.

Michelle My name is Michelle Buechler, I work for Accenture in Talent Organization and I lead the New Skilling team. In other words, I figure out how to reskill our people at scale across our firm.

Lisa Neuberger A few years ago, her team didn’t exist yet. And elsewhere in the business, fast-changing business demands meant that leadership had to make tough decisions about how to reskill her colleagues working in mortgage advisory. Michelle was one of the first people they called.

Michelle So I got that ping and was told we need to come up with a plan to reskill hundreds of people.

Lisa We’ll hear more from Michelle shortly. But for now, imagine that you’re her on the day she received that ping. What would you? Or perhaps even more nerve-wracking: what would you do if you were one of the people asked to pivot?

Francesca Fernandez This is the Inclusive Future Of Work podcast, exploring how to build a future where all workers have the motivation, means and opportunity to adapt to and thrive in the digital economy.

Lisa I’m Lisa Neuberger-Fernandez, Managing Director for Strategy & Innovation within Accenture Corporate Citizenship. For the past decade, I’ve been on a mission to help people gain the skills to get a job or to build a business.

Francesca And I’m Francesca Fernandez. Working with Lisa, I’ve been distilling insights and developing initiatives that help today’s workers prepare for tomorrow’s jobs.

In today’s podcast episode, we’re looking at how to equip yourself for the changing world of work particularly in the face of intelligent technologies, and we’re exploring what motivates people to skill for that future *proactively*.

Lisa Our starting point for this podcast is the research we undertook for a report called “Inclusive Future Of Work: A Call To Action”. It looks at solutions to help working individuals

- 1) better understand and reframe their skill sets,
- 2) expand their access to learning,
- 3) experience new roles and build work history, and
- 4) empower one another for lifelong learning.

And today our focus is on Envision, which is all about ensuring that workers

- know how the nature of their jobs will be changing,
- are able to identify and articulate their transferrable skills, and
- can chart a path for sustained, gainful employment.

Francesca The world of work is constantly evolving; that's always been the case. But the pace of that change has been accelerating with increased use of intelligent technologies in the workplace. And the effects are felt more immediately by some than others.

Rudy Workforce is completely different now than it was when I first got hired on in my position. An Associate's degree – what I have – isn't enough anymore. I'd have to up my resume, hustle like crazy, and try to do part time while going to school. Not to mention taking care of my family. It's not something that's easy to think about right now.

Francesca That's Rudy, one of 60 people we spoke to in 5 countries, all of whom are currently or were recently employed in occupations where technology has significantly altered the way that work is carried out. Rudy works at a public library. He actually welcomes automation. He feels it will help people, including himself, do their jobs better. But he's also conscious that it's taking over a lot of activities that used to be part of his role.

Rudy Automation and self-service is taking over so much. Most my jobs have been cashiering or helping people and heck even McDonald's has a self-serve kiosk now that you don't even need to pay the people, you just *beep beep beep*, done.

Lisa We partnered with our colleagues in Accenture Research to analyze jobs across Brazil, France, Germany, Japan, South Africa, the UK, and the US and found that workers who spend the majority of their time carrying out routine activities are at risk of what we call a Double Disadvantage.

To be precise, workers in these more routine roles are 7x more likely to spend a significant proportion of their work time on activities that will change with the introduction of intelligent technologies. They're also more likely to have low job security, lower financial security, lower education levels and less access to on the job training.

Francesca One thing I've been wondering though Lisa is, surely, as people's work activities change, won't they adapt accordingly? Won't they just get more proficient at the new activities?

Lisa In an ideal world, yes. But these changes are happening faster than we've ever seen before. And besides, not everyone has the experiences necessary to pivot. According to the International Labour Organization, people in elementary occupations – such as construction, transportation, sanitation, and food preparation – report significantly fewer opportunities to learn new things, engage in creative or complex work, and solve unforeseen problems as part of their job. This means they're not getting exposure to the kinds of experiences that would prepare them to work alongside intelligent technologies.

Now, they could try to get that exposure outside of work, but there are a number of reasons why that might not be feasible. We worked with Dr. Alex Cutting, a professor of Psychology at the University of Notre Dame, to map the journeys of 57 workers trying to navigate away from routine work lives. Here's what we found:

Dr. Alex Cutting

There were four barriers that we identified: dispositional, situational, practical and external. A way we can look at those in terms of reality, is “won’t”, “can’t”, “don’t”, and “isn’t”.

Dispositional barriers are barriers to do with workers’ mindsets – how they are actually thinking and feeling. Dispositional is “won’t”: I don’t want to do this. Situational barriers are basically other responsibilities they have – constraints on their time, for example – that prevent them from doing what they might choose to do because they have other commitments elsewhere. Situational is about “can’t”: it’s about not being able to do this usually because of other responsibilities in your life.

There are practical barriers as well which is the simple process of knowing how to go about looking for a new job or how to go about updating your CV. Practical is “don’t”, as in, don’t know how to do it, don’t know what to do.

And then there are external barriers which are completely beyond anyone’s control from a worker’s perspective. There are still ageist hiring procedures, the training somebody might want to do may not be available, it may not be funded. External is “isn’t”, in the sense that it isn’t actually possible in some situations.

So, we have four different barriers. There is a degree of overlap between them, they can all occur simultaneously. So, if you’ve got “won’t”, “can’t”, “don’t” and “isn’t” all facing you, you’re probably not going to go anywhere. And employers can do something about the “don’t” and the “isn’t”. The “won’t” is something that we have to tackle in terms of changing people’s awareness and helping them to grasp the practicality of retraining, the value of retraining.

Lisa

It’s the dispositional barriers that the Envision solution is designed to address. Someone who has observed dispositional barriers first-hand is Julie Hutchinson of the East London Business Alliance, also known as ELBA. ELBA puts corporate partners in touch with local social initiatives to promote education, employment and community development. As Director of Employment & Skills, Julie helps people in east London find work among the city’s top employers.

Julie Hutchinson

A few of the security guards, one in particular jumps out. Actually, in a group dynamic, he was confident, outgoing, had a great sense of humor. In his community where he lived and he lives in a borough of very high unemployment – one of the highest in London – he was a massive success to a lot of the people in his family, a lot of people in his neighborhood.

And he was very unsure about the changes and implications that were happening to his sector and his employer, and where he could go next. And the minute we unlocked that side of him, we could see and sense the real vulnerability because he had a massive issue with being seen to need help. Because he was that nervous about any sort of change and what it would do to the people he supported. And actually, a little bit of: ‘I am a success already. And I would prefer to just keep doing this.’ As far as he was concerned, he would say things like ‘I’ve got another 20 years’ until he retired. He hadn’t planned to make any changes in those 20 years. That was it. He was going to do this for another 20 years and

everything would be fine. Actually, in reality, a lot was going to change in that time and he needed to be supported to be okay with that.

Francesca This experience that Julie shared shows that the dispositional barrier is about much more than just complacency or unwillingness to adapt. It's about lack of information: not knowing how much, how soon or in what ways work will change. And it's about vulnerability: putting yourself out there and potentially risking where you've gotten to so far. There's one more aspect to the dispositional barrier that our research uncovered.

Emma You'd be surprised how many people find it really difficult to pick out their competencies but when you start talking about it you go, "Oh yeah, I didn't realize I'd done that." People find it very difficult to talk positively about themselves and their skills.

Francesca That's Emma. She works in property management. She's another person we spoke to as part of our ethnographic interviews and she makes the very good point that often, people don't know how to articulate the skills they already have. Stay Nimble is an organization working to counteract that. They're a social enterprise providing virtual coaching to help people find good work today, while also equipping them with the skills and self-knowledge to help navigate a future of rapid change and uncertainty. Here's their founder, Dom Atkinson:

Dom Atkinson We've been working a lot around language, trying to help people reinvent themselves and actually, maybe it's not about reinvention, and indeed maybe it's more about having the knowledge of who you are and finding where you fit. Of course, one of the biggest challenges we find within career change is identity. If you consider the importance of work as a label and the importance of a job title as a label, you really start to kind of fracture somebody's identity if you're saying you need to continually reinvent yourself.

Lisa Dom, why is it so difficult for people to pick out their own competencies?

Dom Well, I think some of the common misconceptions around things like understanding strengths and skills and interests is actually conflation across those three categories. For example, when we ask people about what their strengths are people identify tasks. I think it's because we don't encourage that discussion to take place, to really help people understand that their unique human qualities aren't the tasks that they perform, or the specific skill that they learned making up the type of role they perform, but actually these very latent abilities within each of us that can be directed to learn many different things, and display many different types of skills, that allow us to perform many different types of tasks. Part of our very ethos (if you'd like) at Stay Nimble, is: how do you help people recognize what those strengths are and help them articulate them in such a way that makes it clear to an employer?

Francesca That difficulty – of connecting one's existing skills to new opportunities – is exactly the challenge faced by the last worker whom we'll be hearing from today. This is Lloyd. Lloyd has worked in the financial industry for about 9 years and – at the time when we interviewed him – was looking to change careers altogether.

Lloyd The temptation is to always look for jobs that kind of exactly match the experience you've got when in actual fact, if the skills you've got are transferable, it was good to know companies or industries that would also be interested in your experience.

Lisa We went back to Julie to understand the link between knowing one's own existing skillset and reaching for entirely new horizons.

Julie So, there's two sides to help people understand, this is you, what's unique and innate in terms of their characteristics. Here in the UK, it's such a practical, transactional relationship when you're working, particularly in getting people to work. So when you've got unemployed cohorts or groups of people who need to find a job, unfortunately it's not always about "Tell me what you want and who you are, and I'll find a job that meets your needs," it's much more like "Here are some vacancies, they pay X an hour, you're capable of doing it. Instead of signing on and getting benefits, you should do that job." And so over time, people can stop thinking about what they want to do and how skilled they are and focus more on the very practical 'I have a job'. For years, we've been trying to offset that style or that approach in individuals by helping them to understand what their unique strengths and capabilities are because that's easily traced to different careers.

Francesca And that brings us full-circle back to Michelle. When we left Michelle, she had just found out that she needed to help people reskill. Here's what happened next.

Michelle So the day came when we had to present in front of the people who were being impacted. About 10 of us walk into the room, in front of the room. We have a big presentation screen, it was a large room, we went through, we presented for about 20 minutes, we presented the option of reskilling.

And it stopped. We just got blank stares. Nobody said a word. Then there was 1 brave person who raised their hand, and he said: "What do we do when we walk out of here and everyone else in this building learns about what's happening here and wants to do this too? Because this is awesome. This is not what I expected to walk into today. You've changed our lives."

It was amazing. It was really an amazing, remarkable moment.

Lisa That's incredibly powerful! So where did you go from there? One of the questions we often get from fellow employers when we share our vision for an inclusive future of work with them is: Great, but where do we begin? What approach did you take?

Michelle We then scheduled one-on-one meetings with everyone. In those one-on-one meetings, we had both a learning expert and a recruiter, so that we could hear their questions, hear their apprehensions, understand what they were thinking, help them understand what this new journey and lifestyle would be like, and more importantly have the opportunity to ask any questions they wanted to, privately. As we sat in those 1-on-1 conversations, it was heart-wrenching to listen to some of these stories. I sat with a gentleman whose wife had cancer and he was unable to travel, and he had tears in his eyes when he was talking about this opportunity because he absolutely, he had wanted to be in the technology field many, many

years ago. He was probably a middle-aged man; in his early 20s he was helping his father. He was the IT department for his father's very small business and he was supposed to take that business on. And after his father passes away, he could not continue on with the business and he could not continue on in the IT field. He had a young family, he had to put food on the table, he just kind of fell into the mortgage industry. Fast forward 30 years later and this opportunity fell into his lap, so it was almost a dream come true. So hearing these stories and giving our people the opportunity to make these sorts of life-changing events happen for them and all while being contained within the same company just has a tremendous amount of goodwill. We continued the hands-on, high-touch experience for about the next 4-8 weeks, we gave them specific training. They always had the option of choice, continuing or opting out. We flew experts in and practitioners, to deliver the training, gave them the opportunity to talk to experts and people in the field doing this work, so they always had that connection. And always again, had the choice of not continuing if that was their choice. We gave them shadow assignments, where possible. We tried to have a variety of roles that would interest them. Not just one option.

Francesca

How did people take to that approach?

Michelle

Some of them chose not to go on for their own personal reasons, and that's ok. many of them were flagged for promotion and even labelled as high performers. Ultimately it was an amazing experience. We gained ultimate trust and loyalty from our people, from the people who went on and successfully completed the program and even those who chose not to.

And the bottom line is that because they were given that choice. We were able to fill many gaps within our own organization and different parts of the business. So, it truly was an absolutely win-win situation for us. We know that the people we hire are great people and performers, it's just a matter of giving them the opportunity that they may not otherwise have had.

Lisa

It's clear that both from the employer and employee perspective, being able to deeply and clearly understanding available skills, and having the courage to apply those to new contexts, is a real value-add.

Francesca

Thank you to Michelle Buechler for sharing her experience and insights. And thank you to Julie Hutchinson of ELBA, Dom Atkinson with Stay Nimble, and Dr. Alex Cutting at the University of Notre Dame for likewise sharing their expertise.

Lisa

To read the report mentioned in this podcast, visit [Accenture.com/inclusivefutureofwork](https://www.accenture.com/inclusivefutureofwork).

Francesca

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Lisa

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