


## Executive Learning Insights

Exploring the skills  
leaders need  
to meet today's  
**challenges**  
and the latest routes  
to acquiring them



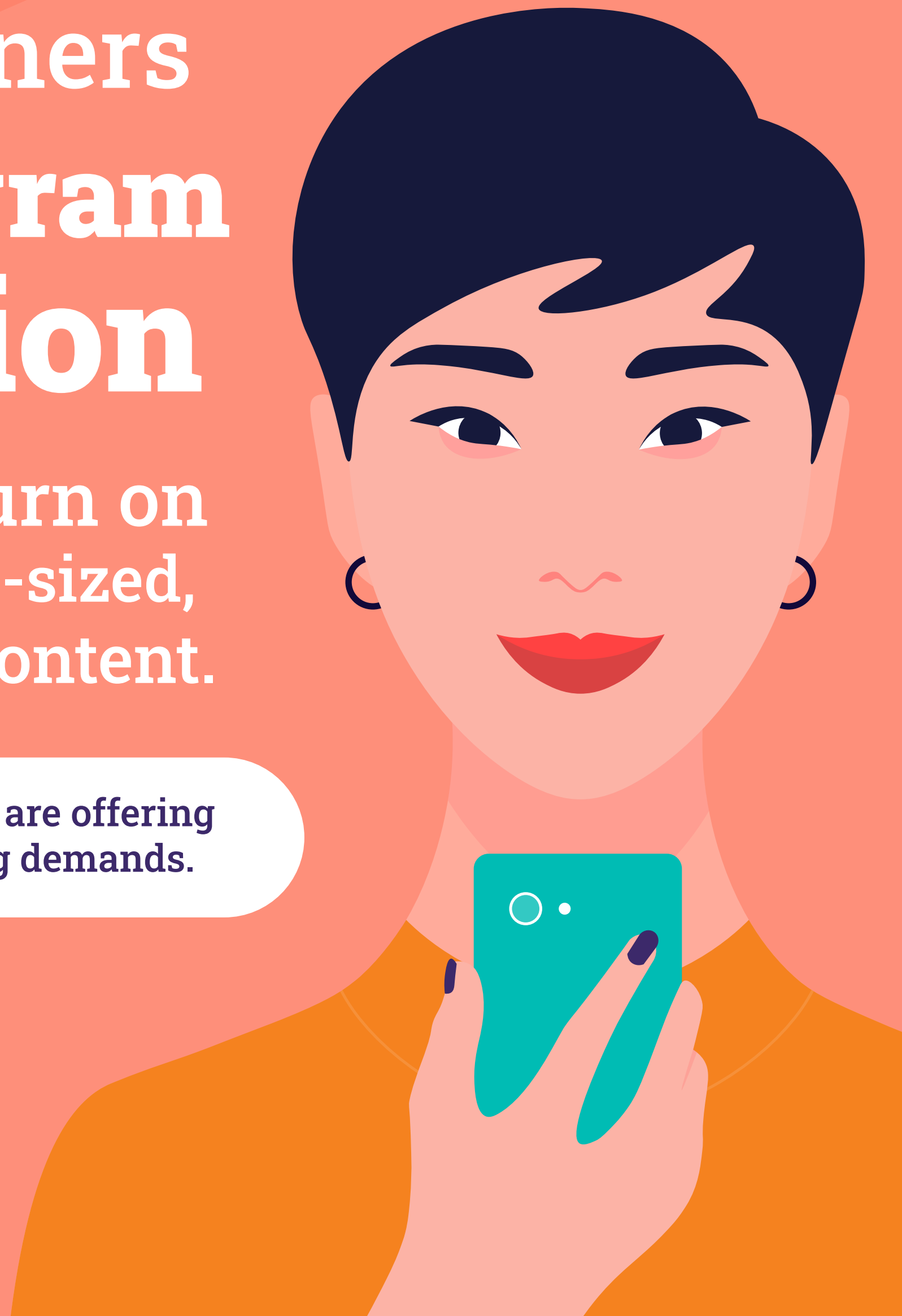


**Mini-MBAs are growing in popularity offering super-flexibility and a ‘balcony perspective’ for those seeking to level-up their business knowledge and acumen while continuing to develop their careers day-to-day.**

# Today's learners **The Instagram generation**

want a rapid return on investment and bite-sized, tailored learning content.

Increasingly popular Mini-MBAs are offering a direct solution to these shifting demands.



# Faced with

**A GLOBAL PANDEMIC**

**TECHNOLOGICAL & MARKET DISRUPTION**

**ECONOMIC TURBULENCE**

**A MOUNTING ENVIRONMENTAL CRISIS**

has the world ever been in greater need of a skilled and capable generation of business leaders, entrepreneurs, and managers readied to solve its multi-various challenges?

**As the world of  
work has been  
disrupted, so  
too has the  
world of  
business  
education**





**shaken up by  
technology and by a  
growing call from  
business professionals  
and client organizations  
for flexible, immediate,  
and accessible  
learning solutions.**

**There is a renewed appetite from people already in business from managers to young executives and entrepreneurs, to SME owners—to learn more about business, to upskill, but to do so while earning a living.**



**There is a desire amongst these audiences to use this moment to increase their earning potential and help themselves stand-out in a hard-hit jobs market.**





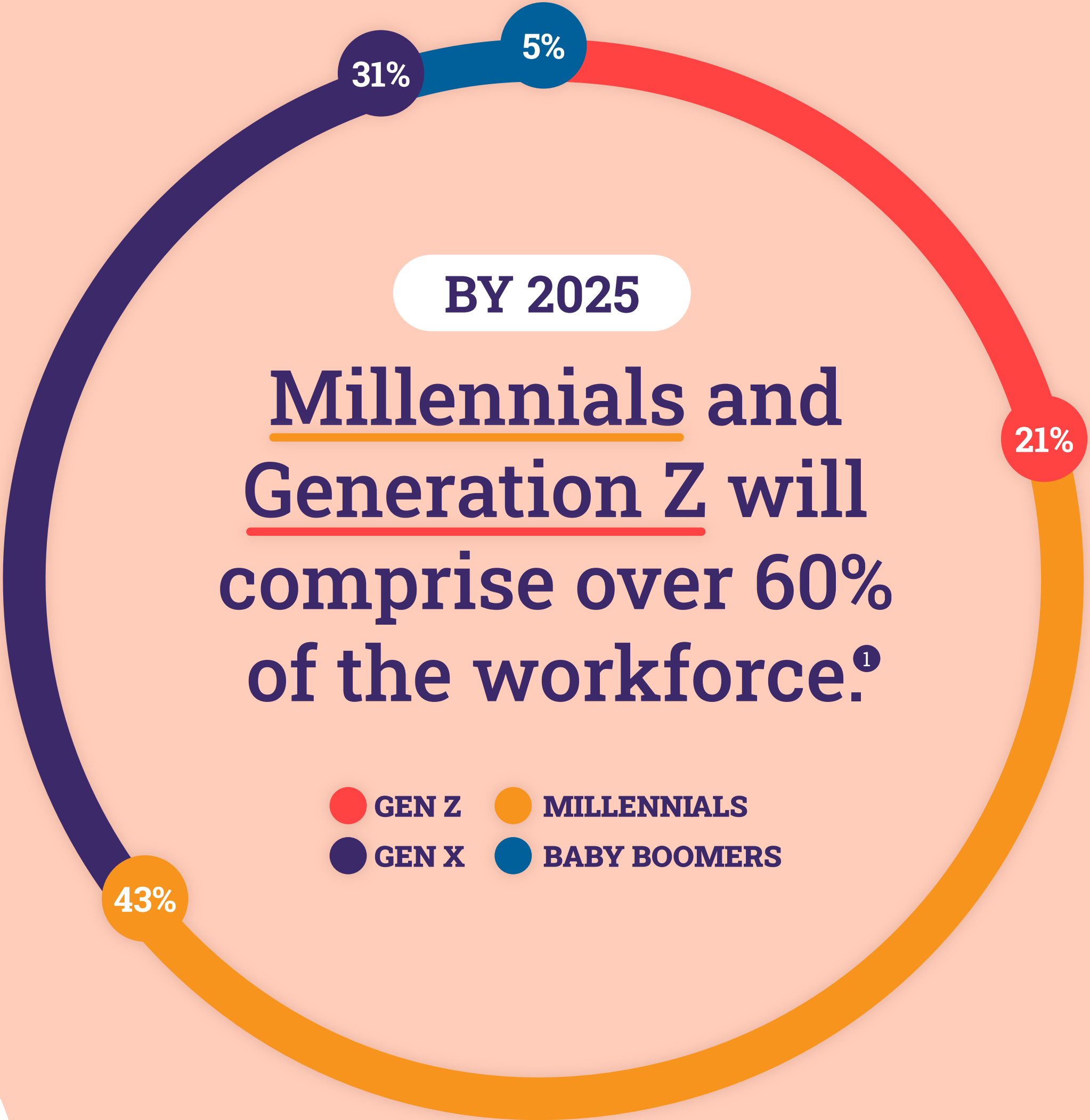
**The executive education sector is alive to this market feedback, and the response beginning to emerge is one of innovative, digitally enhanced, smartly flexible new formats and modes of learning typified by the**

**Mini-MBA**

An illustration of a young man with dark skin and short dark hair, wearing a blue t-shirt. He is resting his chin on his right hand, looking thoughtfully towards the viewer. In front of him is a yellow cup of coffee with steam rising from it. The background features soft, abstract shapes in shades of orange and peach. The overall style is clean and modern.

# The Learning Needed Now

As the world is changing  
so is the workforce.



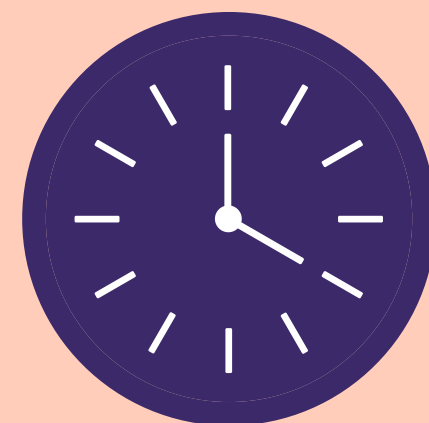
**BY 2025**

**Millennials and Generation Z will comprise over 60% of the workforce.<sup>1</sup>**

- GEN Z
- MILLENNIALS
- GEN X
- BABY BOOMERS



With this demographic shift comes a new perspective on work, and a new perspective on learning with a growing call for



FLEXIBILITY



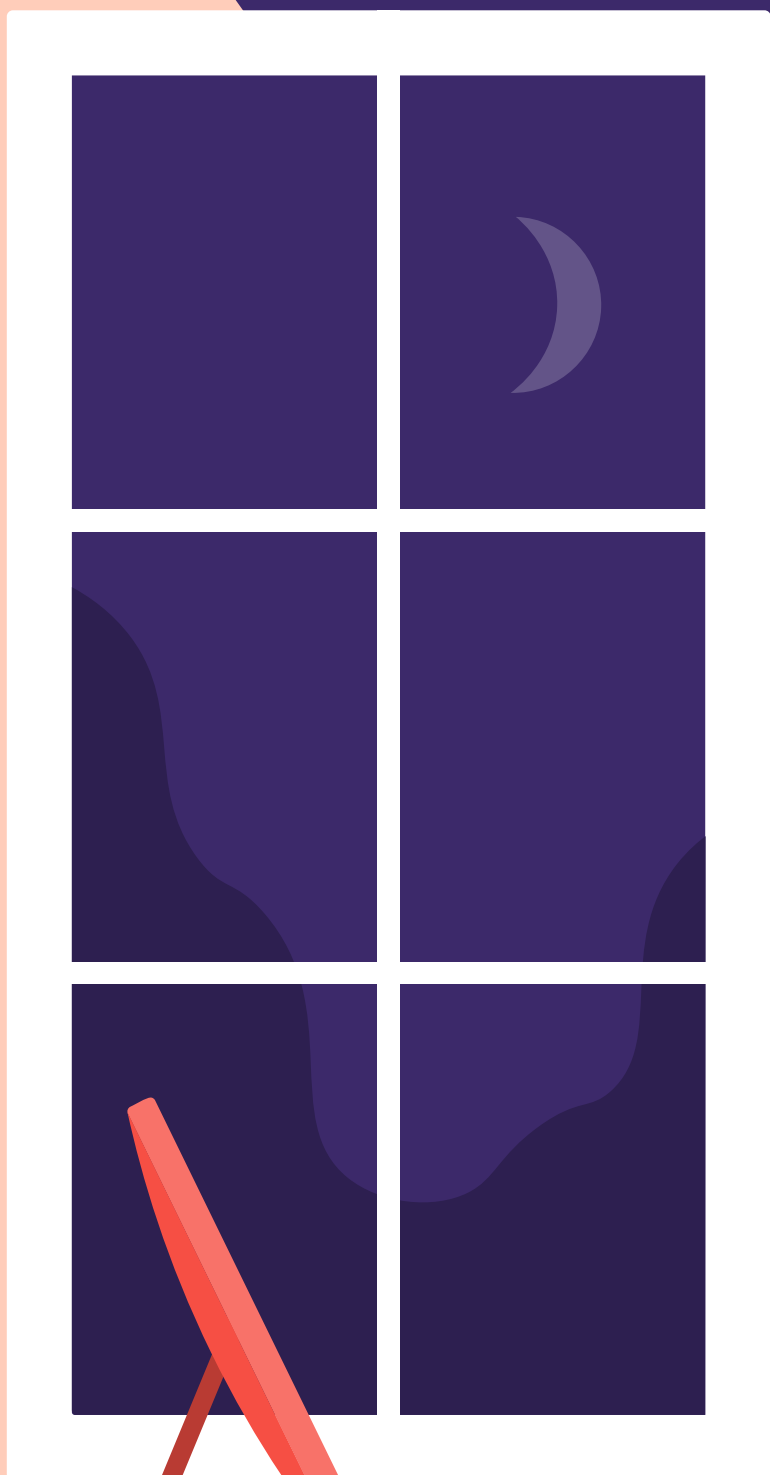
DIGITAL  
DELIVERY



FAST ROI FOR THEIR TIME & MONEY



**A new wave of Mini-MBAs is offering professionals the learning they need to compete and operate effectively in today's business world, in a format that best suits the way they live now and the way they are increasingly used to receiving and absorbing knowledge.**



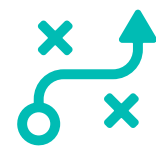


**All current and future leaders need to understand how business really works at the macro level, from strategic planning to creating and distributing new value.**

# They need to acquire foundational skills in:



DECISION MAKING



STRATEGY



OPERATIONS



MARKETING



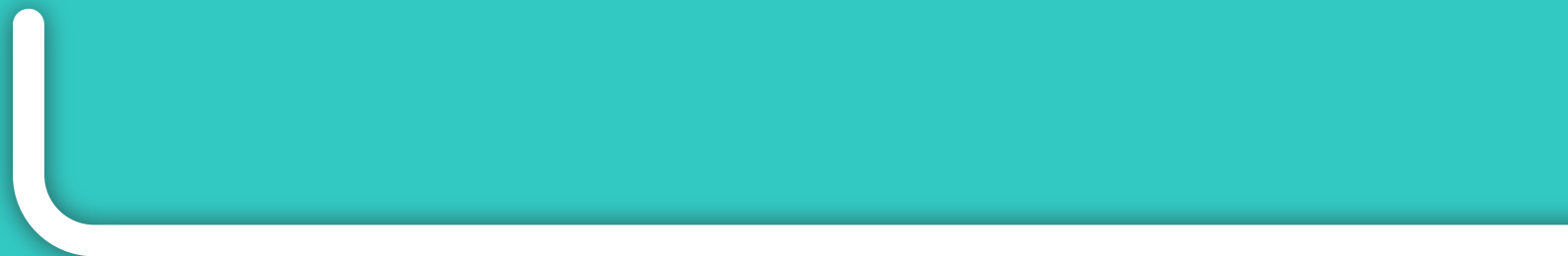
FINANCE & ACCOUNTING



HR



COMMUNICATIONS



They also need to explore 'tomorrow's fundamentals' - emerging areas such as:<sup>2</sup>



**DATA ANALYTICS**

85%



**DIGITAL LITERACY**

75%



**INNOVATION**

72%



**DESIGN THINKING**

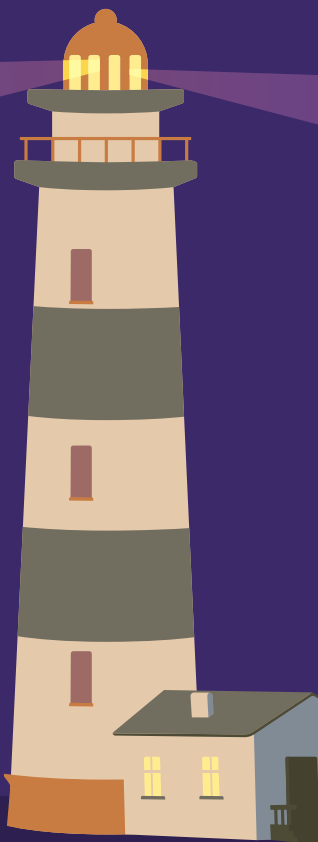
71%

Percentages show share of employers surveyed by EMBAC who view this as an important skill for employees to have.



Crucially, today's learners need to develop  
**a 'balcony perspective'**  
to be able to look over all areas of  
business and understand how they  
**integrate and work together.**

The ability for someone to be cognizant of  
**the interplay and interrelationships**  
**between business functions and**  
operational areas, rather than seeing them  
as a static snapshot of disparate concerns  
**is critical for solving problems in today's**





**WUJCA**

(Volatile, Uncertain, Complex, and Ambiguous)

**WORLD**



# **Flexibility and Accessibility**

**Traditional MBA programs remain  
the gold standard in this market.**

Mini-MBAs, now offered by several leading business schools globally, are growing in popularity, but are not equivalent to a full-time MBA. Nor do they seek to be, as cramming all the knowledge of an MBA into 40 hours of teaching would clearly be an impossible task. These short, accessible Mini-MBAs should not then be viewed as a replacement or an alternative to the 'real thing' of a full-time MBA but rather as a different, complementary value proposition.

**A key component of that  
value proposition is**

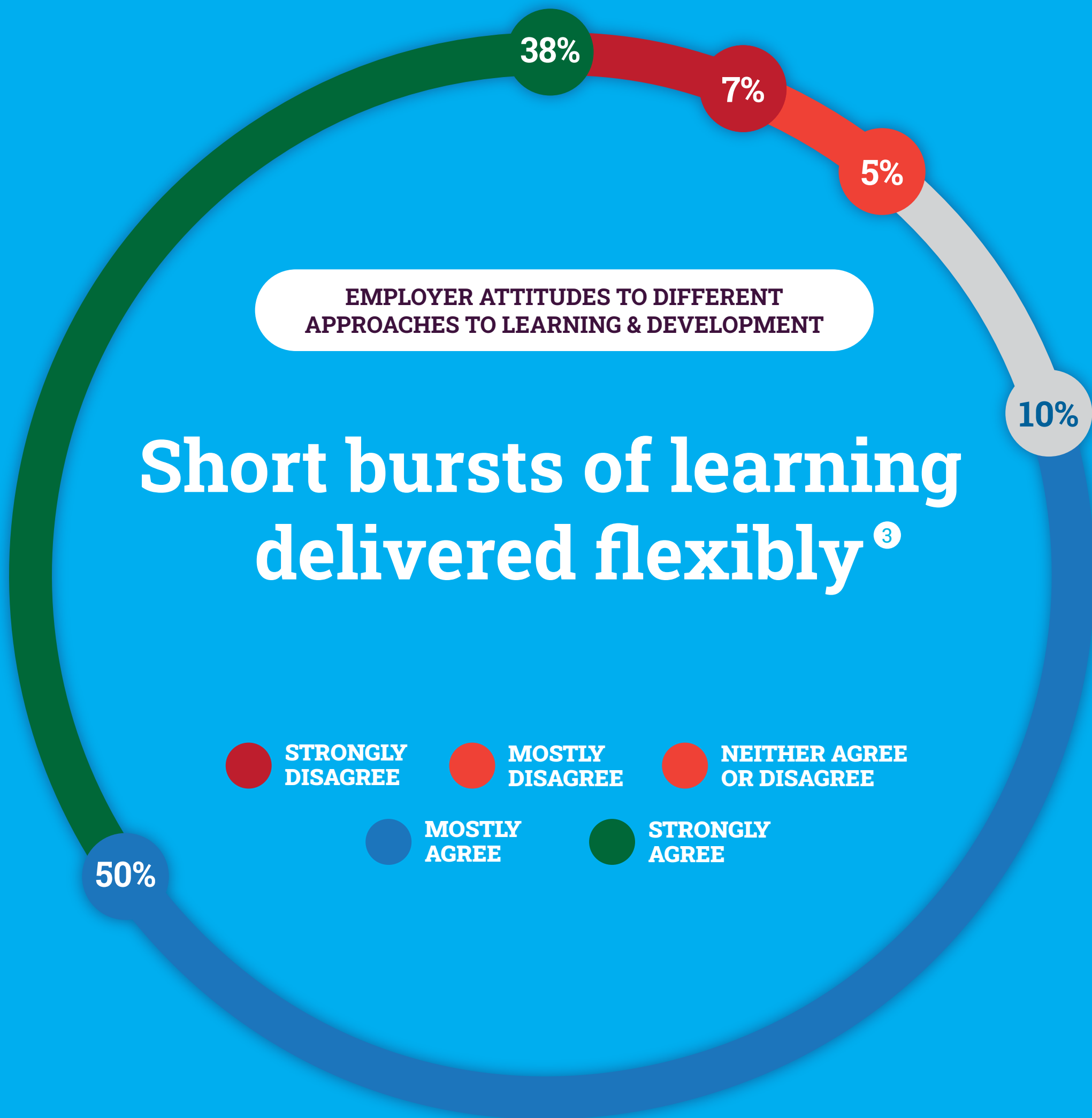
**FLEXIBILITY  
BILLIETY**

There is a dynamic market force at play here in the demand for flexibility from a generation of learners used to curating and consuming information at their own pace.


For those seeking to build their business acumen and knowledge without having to put their careers on pause while they do so, as well as for those wanting to sample the level and feel of an MBA without committing to a full-time program, this flexibility becomes key.

EMPLOYER ATTITUDES TO DIFFERENT  
APPROACHES TO LEARNING & DEVELOPMENT

# Short bursts of learning delivered flexibly<sup>3</sup>



- STRONGLY DISAGREE
- MOSTLY DISAGREE
- NEITHER AGREE OR DISAGREE
- MOSTLY AGREE
- STRONGLY AGREE

An illustration of a man with dark hair, wearing glasses, a white face mask, a white shirt, a red tie, and a dark suit jacket. He has his arms crossed and is looking directly at the viewer. The background is a mix of blue and purple with abstract shapes.

**It is also true that in the wake of the global pandemic, perceptions of what can be achieved in a digital space have shifted.**

**This has certainly been the case for executive educators.**



**The lockdown has given us a massive social experiment that has suggested that you can do an awful lot more online than we ever thought possible.**

Professor Tim Wray, Director of Executive Education, Warwick Business School, speaking to IEDP <sup>4</sup>



**Leading business schools now offer online programs that mix synchronous elements—allowing participants real-time interaction with their tutors and break-out sessions with their peers—with rich asynchronous pre-recorded content.**

**There are other short, flexible new modes of learning materializing alongside them.**

**Rather than sweeping away degrees, new types of online credentials - various certificates, Micro-Masters, badges and the like - are instead playing a complementary role, creating the building blocks for newer, more affordable degree programs.**

**Sean Gallagher, Executive Director of Northeastern University's  
Center for the Future of Higher Education & Talent Strategy <sup>5</sup>**

# Business Schools Still Set the Standard



Despite the entry of many new actors in the field of executive education, university-based business schools, devoted to excellence in teaching methods and rooted in sound academic research, are still the gold standard in executive education, and offer the most well-respected learning opportunities.

A key part of their lasting appeal lies in the ability to bring to bear strong connections across different subjects and disciplines, drawing on specific area expertise from across a university.

**The 'Netflixization' of executive education is going to happen. But there is a difference between the deep learning we can provide and superficial learning.**

**Mike Malefakis, CEO and Associate Vice  
Dean of Wharton Executive Education<sup>6</sup>**

**Employers too of course, are well-attuned to this, and the reputation of a provider remains the most significant factor for employers when assessing providers of executive development.**



# Learning for Today's Workplace



The popularization of the Mini-MBA is very timely. It arrives at a moment of radical change in the world of work. Business practices continue to be transformed by technology as AI, machine learning, and Industry 4.0 are ushered in. The very purpose of many businesses is being challenged and rewritten. Organizations themselves have changed too as more agile, distributive, structures replace older hierarchies leading to a need for leadership, and thus learning, at all levels.

**All this has been exacerbated by the challenges of the Covid pandemic.**

**Many of the measures enforced in response to the pandemic will continue to have a huge bearing on workplace practices. Embracing a digital workplace, reskilling and retraining, flexible working arrangements, establishment of health and safety protocols as we move towards (...) the workplace of 2021 and beyond.**


**Geetika Tandon, Senior Director, Booz Allen Hamilton<sup>7</sup>**

In a future of increased automation many occupations will see growing demand, while others will shrink, leading to

**75 to 375  
million**

workers potentially needing to upskill or switch occupations by 2030.<sup>8</sup>





**Meeting this challenge and building a sustained post-pandemic recovery will require a new injection of well-trained business leaders, sufficiently upskilled with business acumen fit for the next two to three decades.**

**Positively  
Disruptive, and  
Disruptively  
Positive**



**Any recruiter will know  
they aren't equivalent**  
[of the differences between the  
full-time MBA programs and  
the new wave of Mini-MBAs.]

Andrew Crisp of CarringtonCrisp marketing  
research and consultancy for higher education<sup>9</sup>

And yet this is undoubtedly a space within the executive education market that organizations will be pleased to see being addressed with

 **FLEXIBILITY**

 **ACCESSIBILITY**

 **ACCELERATION**

at a time when speed is of the essence for many.





The emergence and evolution of the Mini-MBA is clearly good for the business community, and the wider societies and economies in which it exists.





For inclusivity, for social mobility, a world-class executive education product at a highly affordable price point, accessible to people already in work, of different ages, of different social groups and family statuses—what kind of benefits to society and economies might this bring?

We will see in the long-run, while in the short-run the benefits to employees and employers both are clear.



# References

- 1 Data from UN, OECD and ILO sources as collated by HR & Payroll analyst Anita Lettink  
[Link](#)
- 2 Data from EMBAC's 'A New Way of Working and Learning' report  
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- 3 Data from EMBAC's 'A New Way of Working and Learning' report  
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- 4 'No More Business As Usual', IEDP.com, April 2020  
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- 5 'How the Value of Educational Credentials Is and Isn't Changing', Sean Gallagher, HBR.org, Sept. 2019  
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- 6 'How Business Schools Compete in a Disrupted Market', FT.com, June 2019  
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