



The changing workforce. A brief introduction

Ioan Durnescu

Brief overview on the 'who works'

- I identified six generations of probation officer's professional profile:
 - 'Man of God' - the missionaries had to have faith in every single individual and treat them all as holders of the 'divine spark'.
 - Years of professionalization – the right personality and training - 'Can there be a better definition of a probation officer – the great teacher and the good shepherd?' (Selbie, 1927)
 - Years of Casework – good relationship and diagnosis
 - Years of pessimism – Martinson (1974) – nothing works
 - Rehabilitation revival – what works
 - Desistance – from the learning perspective



Article

What matters most in probation supervision: Staff characteristics, staff skills or programme?

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Abstract

This article explores what the existing literature has to say about what is most important in the probation supervision: staff characteristics, staff skills or programmes? In broader historical perspective, the story begins in a time when the probation officer was cast as 'a man of God ... full of the milk of human kindness' (Jarvis, 1972: 8) and arrives in the present day when the probation officer looks like 'homo technicus'; equipped to deliver sophisticated programmes. One important observation of this critical historical analysis is that although they were considered essential in the early days, the centrality of staff characteristics faded from view in the years after professionalization. At the same time staff skills and programmes came to be seen as more and crucial in probation supervision. A possible explanation of these developments is that the quest for professionalization increased the pressure on probation practice to gain public recognition and that this was pursued through the imperative of objectification (Kaufmann, 1998 [1996]), which forces all sciences to use observable tools. Another explanation of the disappearance of probation characteristics in the literature could be that the current mainstream research methodologies are not fully capable of capturing the complexities of the human and social worlds in which supervision takes place. By using Cohen's (1985) and Garland's (2001) work, it also provided a possible framework for understanding this dynamic within a broader crime control perspective. At the end of the article the author suggests some ideas that could be explored in future research.

Keywords

desistance, effectiveness, industrialization, probation, programme, research methods, RNR, social casework, staff skills and characteristics, What Works

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Observation

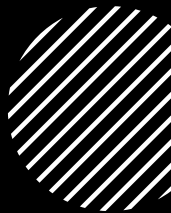
Each generation with its own priorities

Each generation with its staff skills and characteristics





Current trends related to staff



Feminization of staff



Overloaded casework



Staff dissatisfaction – protests, resignations, vacancies



The infusion of technologies



Changes in the client's profile: more mental health cases, more addiction, issues around radicalization, foreigners, elderly etc.



Changing workforce

- World Congress on Probation and Parole 2024
- Annemieke van der Laan

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We should act today

“Never has it been more important to rebuild the core role and purpose of the HR function. Our trusted playbooks are no longer relevant. The “**double disruption**” of automation and new ways of working are fundamentally changing the world of work in ways that enterprise leaders have not yet fully comprehended.”

— Robert Bolton

*Head of Global People & Change Center of Excellence,
KPMG International; Partner, KPMG in the UK*



The Skills Shortage

- Demographic changes and migration caused the labour market to tighten in 2019. Employers were facing systemic skills shortages and the state and local government were no exception. Covid-19 has accelerated the skills shortage as roles which were hard to fill before the pandemic are now proving almost impossible.



A Seller's Market for Skills

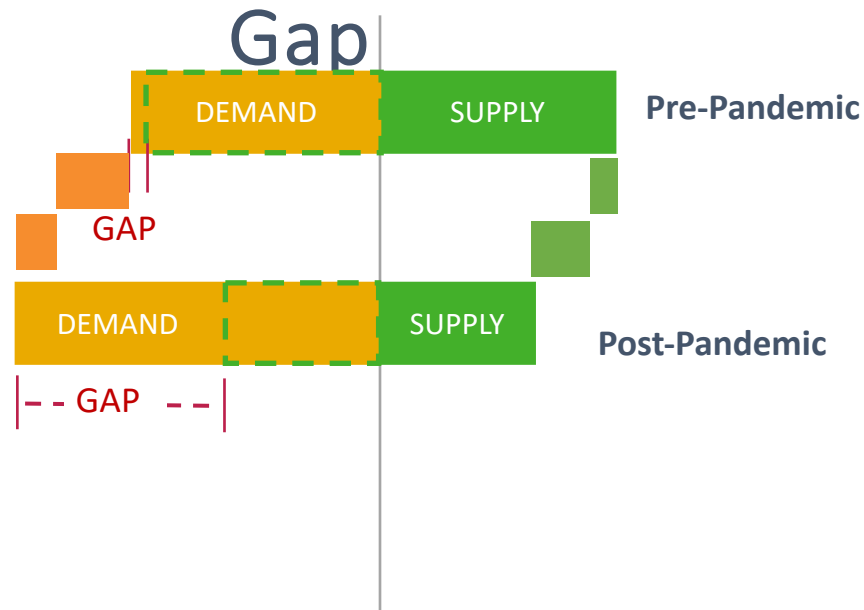
The demand for skills more than exceeds the supply, consequently creating a skills shortage.



Increase Training?

Business as usual training approaches will not deliver skills inside the training lead time.

The Skills



Covid-19 has accelerated the already widening gap



Churn is High

As employers compete for workers, the churn of employees has increased.



Those with deepest pockets can outbid you

Employers from other sectors may have more scope to flex wages and adjust business models to cope with higher input costs.

It's not just external disruption; the workforce is changing, too



**100 year
life**



**Contingent and
gig workers**



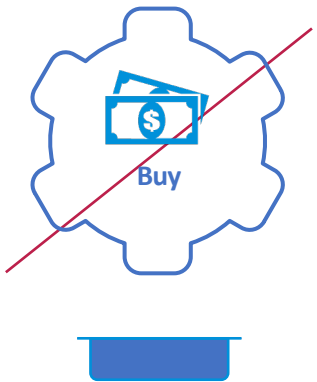
**Intelligent automation
and the workforce**



**Consumerism
behavior**

Build don't buy

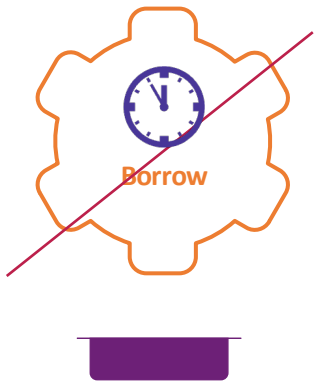
• *Pre-pandemic strategies won't resolve a systemic skills gap*



Buy

Recruit more workers from the market.

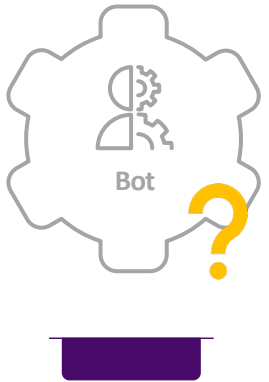
In a systemic shortage, nowhere in your domestic labour market has a skills surplus, and international recruitment is hard during a pandemic.



Borrow

Use contingent workers to meet temporary gaps.

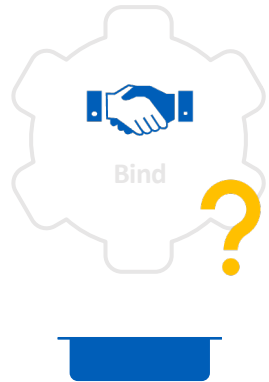
The pool of resources to borrow from doesn't exist reliably. In a systemic shortage, these resources also go to the highest bidder.



Bot

Use technology to automate and augment staff.

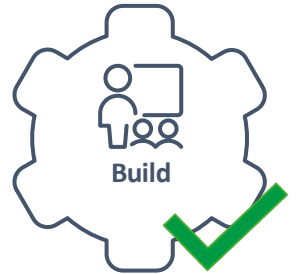
Consider previously discarded proposals to see if cost benefit dynamics may now work. Not every role can be automated.



Bind

Actions to improve retention or defer retirement.

Might mean more flexibility around T&C's – in the era of the great resignation, does everybody need to work Mon-Fri 9-5?



Build

Upskilling workers.

Providing skills to new entrants from other sectors or helping upskill those already in the sector.



Bolster

Support those with rare skills.

Delegate aspects of professionals' roles to get the most out of their rare skills.

Build and bolster can't work unless you can attract career switchers and new entrants

What should organizations do

Market disruptors and a changing workforce increases the urgency for organizations to:

Think differently



From an organization to a platform

Work differently



From the role to the work

Respond differently



From annual to ongoing

Engage differently



From parental to partnering

All workers feel connected to a consistent platform

Shift from mapping names to roles, to mapping skills to the work

Employee motivations are understood and their needs predicted

The employee continues to choose you as a place to work

How can HR support?

Based on our last three years of research, **Pathfinding HR functions** are acting today by:

- They **have a clear sense of purpose**, and this in-turn informs their mindset of how they operate in practice
- A **strength in developing analytical insight** that is focused on business questions
- A **desire to build the workforce needed to face the challenges** of both today and tomorrow
- Complete **focus on providing a strong experience at work**, including ‘learning in the flow of work’, so that both individuals and the total workforce can remain in flow
- A belief **that work does not exist in isolation of life and home. Purpose, wellbeing and ESG are major concerns of the modern worker and people functions must deliver** on these expectations as much as traditional talent management concerns.





Thank you!



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Questions:

30 min work

15 min reporting

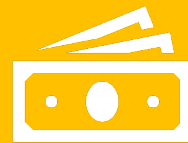
5 min wrap-up



What are the implications of these trends on the staff skills and characteristics?



How can the POs adapt to these changes?



How can the POs balance quality and quantity?