



The Value of Organizational Education and Reskilling
in the Age of Enabling Technology
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The Opportunity

In a time when technology has become a common natural support in our daily lives, we are also experiencing a heightened awareness of the value of enabling technologies for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD). Support providers, families, employers and individuals are now advocating for the inclusion of technology at home, at work, and in the community. As states broaden their definitions of “assistive technology” in their Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) waivers, more individuals will have access to a wider array of technologies that support a variety of priorities, concerns, and outcomes.

The Challenge

According to the recent McKinsey Global Institute report, *Jobs Lost, Jobs Gained: Workforce Transitions in a Time of Automation*, 66 percent of the respondents in their survey noted that “addressing potential skills gaps related to automation/digitization” is at least a top ten priority with a third of the respondents placing it in the top five. Moreover, 62 percent of those surveyed believe they will need to “retrain or replace more than a quarter of their workforce between now and 2023.”¹

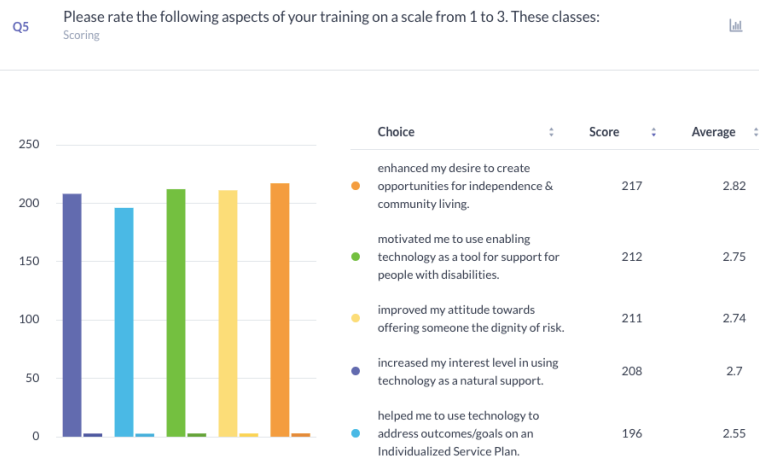
The Response

With technology transforming the way organizations provide direct and natural supports, it is critical that they train and reskill staff, not only in the application of enabling technology but also in newly evolving job responsibilities. Organizations must be committed to leveraging learning and development (L&D) if they want to sustain a qualified workforce, attract new professional talent, and prepare for technological innovation.

The Solution

SimplyHome has developed an online learning system that is affordable, accessible, and relevant and explores the various aspects that service providers and their staff need in order to become successful “technology first” organizations.

SimplyHome partnered with the Tennessee Department of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (TN DIDD) to pilot courses and resources as a part of the three-year Technology Transformation Project. Post-survey data indicated that training impacted attitude, interest, application and motivation.



¹ Pablo Illanes, Susan Lund, Mona Mourshed, Scott Rutherford, and Magnus Tyreman, “Retraining and Reskilling Workers in the Age of Automation,” *McKinsey Global Institute*, Jan. 2018, <https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/future-of-work/retraining-and-reskilling-workers-in-the-age-of-automation>.

The Benefits

Organizations:

- *Staff are more likely to engage in the application of technology as a natural support:* Staff understand how to use the technology to address the outcomes stated in the Individualized Support/Service Plan (ISP).
- *Staff take ownership of the new corporate culture and support model:* Education creates opportunity for learning, discussion, and feedback so that staff are more likely to buy into the new procedures, processes, and practices.
- *Learning and development align with the organization's mission:* Providing training to staff indicates that organizations are not only enhancing the growth of the people they serve but also the skill development of those who provide the direct supports.
- *Online learning is affordable and accessible:* For what an organization would pay to send one person to a conference, multiple people can be trained in the same information. Staff take courses when it is convenient for their schedules and do not need to travel or secure substitute staffing.
- *Consistency in programming practices:* With everyone trained in the same information, support practices and transitions can occur seamlessly.

Staff:

- *Staff are more likely to remain or advance when they understand the expectations for their position.* Learning and development help staff feel valued in their positions, even when job responsibilities may be reallocated.
- *Staff understand the relevance of technology as one tool for support.* Training creates appreciation for technology as one source of natural support rather than as a replacement for the direct support they provide.
- *Staff become mentors, instructors, and support for each other.* In the long run, an organization's L&D model can also be a source for professional advancement and leadership development as individuals grow in their skills, experiences, and knowledge.
- *Staff who experience job satisfaction are more likely to be invested in their organization.* As staff better understand their roles and responsibilities and the benefits of technology, they are more likely to be role models to others on the team. They may also become the best marketing tool for attracting new talent.

The Call to Action

With "technology first" taking center stage in the IDD world, organizations and states are asking what they will need to accomplish in order to attain this status. The key question in this discussion should be, "How are we going to prepare for the next five years and beyond?" Without education, learning and development at all levels of an organization, technology integration will be misunderstood or arbitrary, and success will be minimized. To move forward as innovative agencies and providers, we must empower and equip ourselves with the knowledge and experiences needed to maximize the possibilities that technology has to offer.