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Upskilling the Blue-collar Workforce:
The need of the hour

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The **Indian manufacturing sector** is likely to touch USD 1 trillion by 2025, creating massive job opportunities across the nation.

With government-launched initiatives like "Make in India" picking up pace post-pandemic, there will be an enormous demand for blue-collar workers across many sectors. Despite such a massive demand for workers, the existing numbers fail to meet that requirement. A recent report suggests several sectors, including logistics, manufacturing, construction, e-commerce, and real estate, are facing a staffing shortage of around 20-25%. And with technology beginning to shape the blue-collar job market, the existing workforce is becoming obsolete, thereby underpinning the importance of upskilling blue-collar workers.

Like other industries, the blue-collar sector is rapidly adopting new technologies. Upskilling existing workers play a critical role in the company's sustainable growth. It leads to less downtime, improved productivity, boosted teamwork, and lower attrition rates. Hence, upskilling has become the prominent solution to changing dynamics across industries.

Upskilling - An Indispensable Aspect for Industries

- **The staffing shortage -** Indian industries are dealing with an acute shortage of blue-collar workers. This trend remains prevalent after the COVID-19 outbreak, with migrant workers hesitant to return to the cities. Many workers have taken up jobs in their native towns, putting a massive void in the blue-collar sector. Such scarcity of blue-collar workers is typically evident with a significant shortage of drivers, welders, stitching machine operators, housekeepers, warehouse employees, crane operators, etc., across metro cities.

- **Changing Roles of Blue-collar workers -** The advent of technology has dramatically altered industries, and blue-collar workers employed by Organizations are no exception. Industry 4.0 introduces critical transitions in the industries with artificial intelligence, machine learning, 3D printing, and robotics, further redefining the role of blue-collar workers. As a result, companies need to change their hiring processes and upskill existing employees to remain relevant in the competitive market.

- **Dependence on Technology -** While technology has brought flexibility and seamlessness to businesses, it is also true that these businesses have become highly dependent on the same. Besides, business and technology integration has opened the door to a wide range of opportunities for companies. As a result, companies have to take significant steps to upskill their workforce to stay competitive and relevant in the market. Such upskilling activities will prepare their employees to take up newer roles.

- **Next-Gen in Blue-Collar Workforce -** India is home to the largest youth population, and as per the Census Data (2011), over 28% of the total population is youth. Youth participation in the blue-collar workforce will only increase with a rapidly growing population. This new generation of workers is more tech-savvy, and it becomes critical to engage with them through digital upskilling.

- **Employee Satisfaction & Retention -** Apart from incentives and compensation, upskilling is another aspect that companies can focus on to improve their retention rate. Availing upskilling opportunities to workers provides a pathway to new skills and helps grow their careers within the organisation.

On-site Training and Prevalent Challenges

While upskilling is a critical area where organisations need to focus, execution has become an extensive challenge. Especially since the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic, where companies had to shut down their operations temporarily, on-site training has become a challenge owing to safety regulations. However, companies can mitigate this problem with e-learning.

In-person Training Challenges -

A majority of upskilling conducted across industries has always been in-person. While it may seem cost-efficient and effective, many gaps exist in this approach. Also, in-person training has typically become a tedious option since the Covid-19 outbreak; thus, it is time to shift to e-learning.

No Personalisation-

Lack of personalisation is one of the critical challenges of on-site training. With a large group of employees being trained together, there is a very slim chance that each employee will get an opportunity to interact with the trainer individually. Besides, the curriculum provided to all the workers is standard, making the training ineffective.
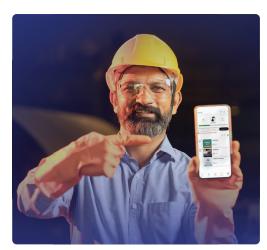
Distributed Workforce-

Many organisations have worksites across the city, districts or even states, where on-site training becomes a hassle. They may be working for the same organisation but across different cities or states, making it difficult to train them.

Lesser focus on results & assessment -

One of the significant issues with in-person training is that there is little to no emphasis on the results. Most of the time, there is no post-training assessment of the employee in on-site training due to distributed workforce or a large sum of employees, rendering the training activity moot.

Non-engaging Content-

With on-site training, blue-collar employees often get non-engaging, mundane content to learn. The entire process of training becomes rudimentary and less educational.

Language Barriers-

India is one of the most diverse countries, with over 121 languages spoken by her population. With migrant blue-collar workers having minimal familiarity with local, regional languages or even English, on-site training becomes a hassle due to the language barrier.

Mitigating the Obstacles in Upskilling

Although the challenges mentioned earlier will prevail, the organisations can leverage the capabilities of e-learning integrated with AI to up their upskilling game.

1. **Take Advantage of the SaaS Platform -**
    Optimising the learning process has always been an existential challenge in companies. With a limited budget and tight schedules hindering the upskilling activities, e-learning using a SaaS platform can be an excellent solution. With SaaS, organisations have to do minimal administrative work where training programmes are ready for direct take-off with low investments.

2. **On-the-go, engaging content -**
    Creating exciting content for the workers would amplify the training productivity, rendering a better outcome for the organisation. With the help of artificial intelligence, organisations can provide on-the-go content for their employees, making the entire upskilling process more engaging and fruitful.

3. **Practical Assessment -**
    Post-training assessment is crucial to ascertain the effectiveness of the upskilling programme. Digital learning can offer many options to assess the employees, after the training, through quizzes, online polls, and peer evaluation & review.

4. **Gamification & Engagement -**
    One of the most innovative ways to improve engagement in upskilling activities is to gamify the entire process. Interactive, intuitive gaming options are more captivating and fun, offering the workers a unique opportunity to hone new skills.

5. **Offline-mobile learning -**
    Another advantage of e-learning is the availability of downloadables. Employees can download the lessons and enhance their skills in their spare time. Such provisions provide much-needed convenience to employees, making the upskilling sessions more practical and compelling.
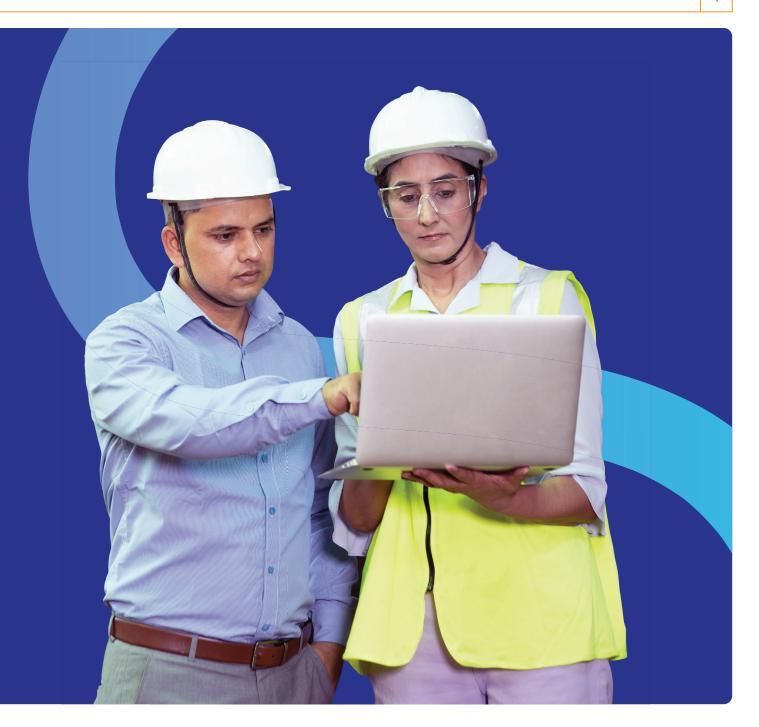
6. **Multi-language Content -**
    Since not every employee would be comfortable with English as the primary communication language, providing them with training material in regional languages would make a better choice. In this way, workers can quickly grasp the training content and implement newly earned skills in the workplace faster.

Final Thought

Blue-collar workers do and will continue to play a critical role across all industries. With changing global dynamics, it has become crucial to upskill employees, hone them in new technologies, and prepare them better for future opportunities. **Oust Labs by BetterPlace;** is a mobile-first gamified microlearning platform that provides essential upskilling to blue-collar workers across different industries. Oust Labs, with its curated bite-sized content and result-focused end-to-end approach, can help blue-collar workers gain new skills in their respective fields.

Oust Labs provides a SaaS-based upskilling platform catering to your specific requirements. The training content is available offline in 35+ languages with lightweight animations graphic & audio transcription, making the training experience more intuitive and thrilling. Furthermore, organisations can execute real-time analytics based on user behaviour, time of day, and location to ensure effective and scalable training. With Oust Labs, enterprises can improve compliance, accelerate revenue generation, and reduce personnel costs.

Not blue or white, jobs get green collar

Sizable chunk of jobs in country set to go green as India pledges to be 'Net Zero' by 2070. If India shifts to a green economy, it could add over 2.5 million jobs in the sector by 2030 as targeted by the government.

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The pandemic has made it easier for your driver to find a job now

A segment majorly dominated by word-of-mouth referrals, blue-collar hiring is now seeing an encouraging jump in online recruitment. And the pandemic has a part in this rise as well.

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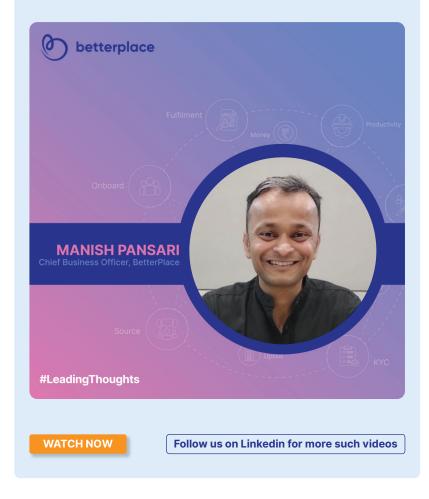## 5 Reasons to Upskill Your Blue-Collar Employees

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How BetterPlace & Rocket App are bringing a change in the blue-collar ecosystem

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Chief Business Officer, BetterPlace

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