



## How 2020 Accelerated Digital Transformation at Companies and What That Means for Frontline Workers

Hosted by UpSkill America, an initiative of the Aspen Institute Economic Opportunities Program, Wednesday, March 24, 2021

### Description

The events of the past year have led to unprecedented changes in how businesses operate and the way people live and work. These changes have included the acceleration and adoption of digital technology in the workplace. [UpSkill America](#), with the support of Strada Education Network and Walmart.org, spent six months conducting interviews and surveys with employers about how the events of 2020 have affected their businesses. In the process, we learned about how businesses have adopted new technologies to respond to workers' and customers' needs. For many companies, digital transformation has led to changes in how they think about the skills frontline workers need to be successful in their jobs and the investments in education and training programs needed to support workers' development.

Learn about results of our survey of over 340 business leaders and hear directly from leading employers in food service, healthcare, manufacturing, and retail. Panelists share how their businesses have responded to events in 2020, including ways they have responded to technological change and racial inequities in employment.

### Speakers

#### **Patti Constantakis**

Director, Corporate Philanthropy, Walmart.org

Patti Constantakis, PhD, is a director on the Economic Opportunity team for Walmart.org. She leads the Foundation's Equitable Talent Systems portfolio that seeks to engage employers in more equitable hiring and advancement practices. She brings decades of experience working to increase economic opportunities for underserved adult learners. Previously at Digital Promise, Patti was the director of adult learning and workforce development initiatives, where her work focused on using technology to build the literacy and numeracy skills of our lowest-skilled frontline workers. She also developed a competency-based digital skills program, backed by Facebook, for nontraditional adult learners and workers. Prior to Digital Promise, Patti was the director of product, content, and curriculum at

GreatSchools.org and was responsible for developing e-learning programs for teachers, as well as apps and other electronic resources for immigrant parents. In the years prior to GreatSchools, Patti worked with several startups, designing and developing products for community college students and other nontraditional adult learners.

Patti grew up on the US-Mexico border and, as a Latina, is fully bilingual in Spanish and English. She earned her Bachelor of Arts in Journalism and Spanish from New Mexico State University and her Ph.D. and Master of Arts in Communications from the University of Texas, Austin.

### **Maureen Conway**

Vice President, The Aspen Institute; Executive Director, The Aspen Institute Economic Opportunities Program

Maureen Conway serves as vice president at the Aspen Institute and as executive director of the Institute's [Economic Opportunities Program](#) (EOP). EOP works to expand individuals' opportunities to connect to quality work, start businesses, and build economic stability that provides the freedom to pursue opportunity. Maureen founded EOP's [Workforce Strategies Initiative](#) and has headed up workforce research at the Aspen Institute since 1999. Maureen also curates a public discussion series at the Aspen Institute, [Opportunity in America](#), which brings together voices from business, labor, policy, human services, media, academia, and others to discuss the challenges experienced by many in today's economy and new ideas for addressing these challenges. In addition, Maureen oversees EOP's leadership development programs, which connect innovators, both within communities and from across the country, to peers working to help low- and moderate-income Americans access opportunity.

### **Hao Dinh**

Director, Global Digital Industrial Operations, Electrolux

For the past two decades, Hao Dinh has led digital transformation initiatives for GE, IBM, Electrolux, Ford, and GM, and collaborated with IDEO and the Aspen Institute to drive social innovations. Additionally, he's successfully started two nonprofits that partner with the education systems in the United States and China to nurture the next generation of innovators. Lastly, he's completing US Navy SEALs training to strengthen his physical, mental, and spiritual self.

### **Jaime Fall**

Director, UpSkill America at the Aspen Institute

Jaime S. Fall is the director of [UpSkill America](#) at the Aspen Institute, an employer-led movement to expand opportunity for America's workers and to help our economy and communities thrive by promoting training and advancement practices to help workers progress in their careers and move into better-paying jobs.

Jaime has worked in the field of workforce development for nearly 25 years. Previously, Jaime served as Vice President for Talent Sustainability for the HR Policy Association and its nonprofit foundation. Jaime's government service includes serving as Deputy Secretary, Employment and Workforce Development, for the California Labor and Workforce Development Agency. As a Senate-confirmed leader in the Schwarzenegger Administration, Jaime provided policy and guidance to California's \$11 billion

workforce system and the nearly 9,000 employees that made up the entities within the agency. Previously, Jaime spent more than a decade in Washington, DC, working at the US Department of Labor's Employment and Training Administration; the National Association of State Workforce Agencies; Fall Communications, a workforce development-focused marketing and website development company founded by him and his wife; and on Capitol Hill.

Jaime was born and raised in tiny rural towns in North Central Kansas. He now resides in Sacramento, California. He has been married to his high school sweetheart for over 30 years and is the thankful father of two awesome daughters. He worked his way through college as a broadcaster before earning his degree in journalism from the University of Kansas.

## **Daryl Graham**

Senior Vice President of Philanthropy, Strada Education Network

As senior vice president of Philanthropy, Daryl A. Graham oversees Strada Education Network's strategic philanthropic investments and overall grant management efforts.

Prior to joining Strada in 2017, Graham spent 15 years with JPMorgan Chase & Co., in Wilmington, Del., serving more than a decade as vice president and relationship manager where he identified grant-making, sponsorship and volunteerism opportunities for the firm.

His background also includes accounting and auditing positions at J.P. Morgan Chase & Co., ConocoPhillips and General Electric.

He has served on a variety of nonprofit boards, including the Philanthropy Delaware Board of Directors, which he chaired. Graham has been honored for his leadership with the YMCA Black Achiever in Business and Industry Award, the H. Fletcher Brown Leadership Award and the Community Reinvestment Act Leadership Award.

Graham is a graduate of Morgan State University in Baltimore.

## **Ranita Jain**

Senior Evaluation Manager, The Aspen Institute Economic Opportunities Program

Ms. Jain joined the Aspen Institute [Workforce Strategies Initiative](#) — an initiative of the [Economic Opportunities Program](#) — in March 2014. Ranita currently assists with the planning, management, and implementation of a variety of WSI evaluation projects and has expertise in developing and implementing study designs and protocols, developing logic models, conducting data collection and analyses, and producing written reports and presentations. Over her career, Ranita has worked in the private, public and nonprofit sectors and has extensive experience working with agencies and programs providing benefits and services to low-income populations. From 2010 to 2014, Ranita was a Senior Study Director at Westat, where she managed multi-site, multi-year evaluation projects focused on assessing the impact of programs serving vulnerable populations. Prior to Westat, Ranita worked at Building Changes, an intermediary organization in Washington State that supports the delivery of social and economic opportunity services for homeless families. Ranita served as a researcher for New York City's Human Resources Administration/Department of Social Services where she assessed the impact of agency programs in providing services to TANF, food stamp, and Medicaid recipients. Ranita also

worked in the private sector with PriceWaterhouseCoopers as a Management Consultant. Ranita holds a Bachelor's degree in Business from the University of Virginia and a Masters of Public Policy degree from Johns Hopkins University.

### **Julius Ridgley**

Manager of Talent Development, Eat'n Park Hospitality Group

Julius is celebrating his 19th year with the Eat'n Park Hospitality Group and has worked his way up from hourly team member to assistant manager, manager, general manager, training general manager, and manager of team member experience. In 2020, he was promoted to his current position, manager of talent development, where he oversees performance management, succession planning, workforce development, diversity and inclusion, and change management training for the entire organization. This position allows him to use over 15 years of leadership experience to help others uncover their passions and talents and find new solutions to old problems.

### **Missy Sparks**

Vice President of Talent Management, Ochsner Health

Missy Sparks, PhD, serves as vice president of talent management in human resources at Ochsner Health. Currently employing more than 32,000 staff across Louisiana and Mississippi, Ochsner is Louisiana's largest not-for-profit employer, healthcare provider, and educator of healthcare professionals. She leads her team in developing a diverse talent pipeline to support top-quality patient care. She has established an effective workforce development platform to grow the pipeline of healthcare professionals through Ochsner-sponsored training programs for internal and external candidates, with a focus on opening career pathways for underserved communities. She brought up workforce programs such as the state's first registered apprenticeship for medical assistants to licensed practical nurses, as well as MA NOW, which has successfully brought over 300 previously unemployed into healthcare careers. Additionally, she leads college and post-graduate internships and fellowships, the Ochsner Career Center, orientation and onboarding, performance management, and engagement.

She serves on the workforce development boards of Orleans and Jefferson Parishes, YouthForce NOLA, Morris Jeff Community School, and Gulf South Communities in Schools. Additionally, she volunteers regularly to feed the hungry and homeless through St. Mark's United Methodist Church in the French Quarter.

### **Ken Taylor**

President, Training Industry, Inc.

Ken Taylor is president of Training Industry, Inc., and serves as editor-in-chief of Training Industry's editorial content, including TrainingIndustry.com and Training Industry Magazine, all of which provide guidance for the learning and development leader. Ken's passion for technology and its impact on organizational effectiveness drives his deep interest in learning technologies and the role of technology in employee development.

Ken's career spans over 30 years in leadership and entrepreneurial roles in multiple industries and functions, including consulting, operations, technology, sales, and marketing. His experience in finance includes serving as CFO of several multibillion-dollar business units. His prior experience and current focus combine to give him a unique perspective on the training sector, understanding both the challenges of learning leaders and the perspectives of leadership teams tasked with driving performance and outcomes. His experience also enables him to bring together companies and individuals who operate as suppliers and buyers of learning services.

Ken is co-author of the book, *What Makes a Great Training Organization*, written with Training Industry, Inc. Founder Doug Harward.

## Transcript

### Maureen Conway (00:00:00)

Good afternoon and welcome. My name is Maureen Conway. I'm vice president at the Aspen Institute and executive director of the Economic Opportunities Program. And on behalf of myself and my colleagues, Jaime Fall and Ranita Jain, we're really thrilled to welcome you to today's conversation on "Transformation in 2020: How 2020 Accelerated Digital Transformation at Companies and What That Means for Frontline Workers."

At the Economic Opportunities Program, we advance strategies, policies, and ideas to help low- and moderate-income Americans connect to and thrive in today's changing economy. And we've been focused on this work for over 25 years, expanding individuals' opportunities to connect quality work, to start businesses and build economic stability. In this work, we recognize that race, gender, and place play an outsized role in determining who is included in economic opportunity and who is shut out.

And in our work, we recognize these inequities and we try to address them to build a more inclusive economy and advance a more inclusive vision of economic justice. In this past year, these inequities have really been highlighted in the experience of the pandemic and the associated economic fallout from that. At the same time, we've all experienced how our work is becoming more digital as we're presenting this too digitally.

So, we're definitely having more digital in our work experience. And while it is hard to predict the future, it's also hard to imagine that some of these digital changes aren't here to stay, and this is going to have profound impacts for workers and for the skills workers need to bring to work and how they're able to advance their careers.

So, we're really excited to have this conversation today, to have a panel of employers that my colleague Jamie Fall will be moderating, who will share their stories from 2020. We'll also be hearing about research over the past six months, about how the pandemic has heightened attention to racial inequities that affect employment.

We're sharing that research today. So, we have a really robust conversation planned for you all today on how all of these trends are intersecting and what that might mean for us all going forward. I really want to thank very much our colleagues at Strada Education Network and Walmart.org who have supported this work and really been great thought partners in this work.

And I also want to thank our partner Training Industry who assisted us with the survey of employers that you'll hear about today. Just a few quick things on our technology. All attendees are muted during the webinar. Close captioning is available. If you need that option, please do use that.

Just to activate it, just click the CC button on the bottom of your screen. We're delighted to have you all with us here today. Please introduce yourself to each other and share comments and resources in the chat. That's great. We'd like to offer that opportunity and we'd love to hear what you're up to.

For your questions. Please put those in the Q&A box at the bottom of your screen, and we'll get to as many questions today as we possibly can. We also encourage you to tweet about this conversation using the #upskilling, and if you have any technical issues during the presentation, please email us at [eopaspen.program@aspeninstitute.org](mailto:eopaspen.program@aspeninstitute.org).

Okay, I'll try that again. [eop.program@aspeninstitute.org](mailto:eop.program@aspeninstitute.org). Finally, this webinar is being recorded and will be shared via email after this event and also posted to our website. And it is now my great pleasure to introduce Daryl Graham, Senior Vice President of Philanthropy at Strada Education Network, who will offer opening remarks. Daryl, over to you. Thank you.

### **Daryl Graham (00:04:09)**

Thank you so much, Maureen. It's a pleasure to be here with all of you today. I share the stage with some wonderful people. We've had a great opportunity to work with doing this outstanding work, which you'll hear about from Jamie and team later. I want to say thank you to many of my colleagues from Strada who are here today.

And I do want to thank Patti from [Walmart.org](http://Walmart.org) who's been a wonderful partner and allowed us to take place with this effort along with the team at the UpSkill America-Aspen Institute partnership. So, as many of you know, Strada is a national social impact organization.

One built to make a conscious and sustainable effort, not just to improve the current post-secondary education to employment system, but to shape the future path as well. Our approach combines innovative research, strategic philanthropy and investments in a network of mission, align affiliate organizations devoted to supporting students and workers throughout their careers.

To understand Strada is to know first and foremost about those we seek to serve. There are approximately 60 million people in America with varying situations, loosely and tightly tethered to a system that does not serve them well. Alarming, there are real and systemic barriers preventing these individuals from starting academic or skills-based programs, obtaining meaningful employment and overcoming conditions beyond their control.

Six million of those are ages 16 to 24 who are not currently enrolled in school, attending training programs or employed. 44 million of those are working age adults, aged 25 to 64 facing the greatest income and educational inequities. 10 million of them are low-income college students, which is half of the post-secondary student population facing the most significant systemic barriers to completion.

So, what does that mean for us today? So glad you're asking. Living in this para COVID-19 world, it was around this time last year when the nation was responding to the early stages of the global pandemic and a little over two months before America, again, was forced to acknowledge the social and racial inequities in the wake of the killings of Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Abernathy and George Floyd.

I remember strolling around Downtown Indianapolis. The weather was great. Streets were sterile and buildings were boarded up. It was eerie, a ghost town. I found myself thinking about employers, how the shift in how we work would affect the future of employees, adult learners, and those Strada seeks to serve. Our collective lives are forever changed because of this pandemic and the racial inequities that we suffered last year.

But what do we need to know so that we can improve the entire education to employment system? The best thing about societal questions and seeking answers is the power of connection and learning. In fact, it is what I appreciate most about my role at Strada, working with incredible leaders like Jamie Fall at UpSkill America, our co-sponsor Patti and team from Walmart.org, who you'll hear from later.

Signing on to be a sponsor of this wonderful research project was an easy yes, for three reasons. First, the employer and workforce perspectives are critical as we take stock of what's needed to improve the post-secondary education to employment system. Second, many of us hold a seat at the table. Today's discussion will shine, a light on the stories and perspectives without an intermediary translating this information to us and for us, and mostly for employers.

We can carry the direct communication from the leaders closest to the work and the workers back to our decision-making processes, that's leverage is learning that we'll hear about today across the board. And lastly, we will walk away with an understanding of the game changing skills and critical frontline industries through the lens of equity, agility, and how to move forward progressively.

So, if you can't tell by now, I am thrilled to share the screen with such an esteemed panel and proud to be a co-sponsor of this research that will advance and improve other's lives. So, we look forward to this discussion. We hope that you are engaged and we hope that this is a game changer for you as well. Jamie, we're in your hands.

#### **Jaime Fall (00:08:57)**

Thank you, Daryl. Appreciate you being with us today. Thank you for your time today and for your support of this important work. Hi, everyone. I'm Jamie Fall and Director of UpSkill America. Thank you for joining us today to discuss, How 2020 Accelerated Digital Transformation at Companies and What That Means for Frontline Workers.

This event is part of a year-long study we are conducting with the support of Strada Education Network and Walmart.org. In conjunction with this webinar, we're also releasing the results of an employer survey that we conducted in January.

We have an outstanding panel that's going to join us shortly. But first, I would like to introduce my colleague, Ranita Jain, Senior Evaluation Manager at the Economic Opportunities Program, who's going to hit some of the highlights from the survey results. Ranita?

#### **Ranita Jain (00:09:44)**

Thank you, Jamie. I'm going to go ahead and share my screen really quickly. So, I'm going to share the highlights from our recent survey. And also if you look in the chat box, there's a link to the full results of the study in there as well. But in January, 2021, we partnered with Training Industry to fill the survey, to learn from business leaders about how the events of 2020 really impacted their company in a range of ways, including their operations and their workforce practices, as well as the kinds of skills have become

increasingly important for frontline workers and the ways that they're supporting their employees during these challenging times. We were able to learn a lot about the breadth of experiences that companies are experiencing from the survey. To give you a little bit of background about from who we learned from, survey respondents included executive and senior leaders who are responsible for the hiring, training and development, supporting employee engagement, and as well as diversity equity and inclusion efforts at their companies.

And then you can see on this slide, the range of industries that the survey respondents that work in, which includes non-profits, healthcare, manufacturing and retail and food service. Survey respondents also included large employers as well as small businesses who we know have been particularly hard hit during the past year. You'll see on this slide that almost half of the respondents, 46% worked for a company that employs fewer than 500 employees.

Now, I'm going to try and to provide a little bit of context and to describe what survey respondents shared about how COVID-19, other events in 2020 influenced their business operations and workforce practices. And I really just wanted to start it off by highlighting this remark from a business leader who noted that they were really turned upside down this past year and that they realized, and they liked the view.

And I think you'll hear some similar sentiments during our conversation today with our panelists as well. This slide has respondents' answers to a question where we ask them to identify their top three concerns for their business. And employee safety and wellbeing was ranked first, followed by concerns related to financial stability for businesses. And in many ways, this really reflects what we've learned from our interviews with business leaders as well, that their ability to retain their employees is increasingly critical for operations and business success during this time. Overall, companies reported a mix of experiences with respect to business growth and customer demand. We did see some trends with respect to sectors and business size. For instance, we learned that larger businesses with more than 500 employees reported that they fared better than smaller firms. And with respect to sectors, we learned about a mix of experiences.

For example, we heard from a number of essential healthcare and retail businesses that they found themselves in a position where they were really struggling to keep up with customer demand this past year. We learned from manufacturing leaders that their experiences really varied in terms of market demand and customer demand and how that impacted their ability to stay open and operations during this time. And then we heard from a number of professional services in tech firms that they were really able to remain stable during this time, and in some cases even grow. We also asked survey respondents to describe how the pandemic had impacted their HR practices in our range of different ways. You'll see them here reflected on this slide. And not surprisingly, we heard from the majority of respondents that most of these practices were impacted in the areas of recruiting, interviewing, hiring, and training. Similarly, over a third of the respondents also reported that they made changes to the recruiting, hiring and training practices to address racial inequities in employment.

I also wanted to flag this 22% that reported none of the above. In open-ended responses, we did hear from a number of respondents that shared that their companies had changed HR practices prior to 2020 to address inequities and appointments. We thought that would be helpful to also [inaudible 00:14:26]. Then finally, the majority of respondents also reported that their businesses needed to pivot and train differently and train employees to perform new procedures for their jobs, as well as cross-training to do multiple jobs at the company or trained to do a different job at a company was also a common practice during this past year.

So, with that, that's a really quick snapshot of the survey results. We do have the full results available, but we thought it'd be helpful framing for the upcoming discussion. And I'll turn it back over to Jamie.

**Jaime Fall (00:15:03)**

Great. Thank you, Ranita. And now, it's my pleasure to introduce our panelists. If you would like more information on their careers and backgrounds, I invite you to see their full bios linked from the event page.

Our panelists are; Patti Constantakis, Director of Corporate Philanthropy, Walmart.org. Hao Dinh, Director Global Digital Industrial Operations at Electrolux. Missy Sparks, Vice President of Talent Management, Ochsner Health. Julius Ridgley, Manager of Talent Development, Eat'n Park Hospitality Group.

So, I would like to invite each of you to tell us a little bit about your company and your role there, and briefly describe if you would, what 2020 was like for your business, including its impact on staffing. Hao, could we begin with you?

**Hao Dinh (00:15:52)**

Hi, can you hear me?

**Jaime Fall (00:15:54)**

Yes.

**Hao Dinh (00:15:54)**

Perfect. Hi, my name is Hao Dinh. As Jamie mentioned, I work for Electrolux. Electrolux is a \$14 billion Swedish company that designs and manufacturers appliances worldwide. And what I do at Electrolux is I lead digital transformation for North America.

Last year, we saw a exponential growth or demand for our products and services. And luckily before the pandemic, we started our digital transformation journey and particularly deploying our smart factories, which is automating and digitizing our factories so that when the pandemic hit, we were actually able to keep our operations running so that we can produce the products that were high demand.

But what also was highlighted during the pandemic was the fact that we need to improve our upskilling and reskilling associated with the digital skills that are needed to keep our smart factories running. So, looking forward to have that conversation, about what we're doing in that space today.

**Jaime Fall (00:16:55)**

Great. Thank you, Hao. Missy, how about you?

**Missy Sparks (00:16:58)**

Hi. Great. I'm Missy Sparks with Ochsner Health. We are Louisiana's largest not-for-profit private employer, and we have about 32,000 team members who are helping to change and save lives in the Gulf Coast. We see close to a million patients annually, and as you can imagine, 2020 was an opportunity to do that even more so.

So, all of our operations pivoted in response to COVID and we have many lessons learned that we look forward to sharing today, including those that will continue forward as we're in 2021, still in the midst of a pandemic, but certainly seeing a light, maybe not immediately ahead, but off in the distance we can see it now, but we have changes that we have brought about to create a more just equitable, not just the healthcare system, but a state that we're working toward. And that we'll continue to go forward with us.

**Jaime Fall (00:17:53)**

Great. Thank you, Missy. We look forward to hearing more about that. Julius?

**Julius Ridgley (00:17:59)**

Hello, thanks for having me. I'm Julius Ridgley from Eat'n Park Hospitality Group based out of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. We're a regional food service company, that's been in business since 1949. And our footprint covers 13 different states and over 140 locations. For our footprint, we also have four distinct brands that service the family dining segments; the casual dining segments, the fast casual dining segments, as well as contracts food services in higher ed and corporate dining.

So, we have quite a bit going on. 2020 to say the least, was an interesting year. Lots of interesting challenges to face. In my role with the organization I serve as manager of talent development. So, I oversee performance managements, 9-Box Talent Reviews, succession planning, workforce planning, and our DE&I initiatives. So, I got to do a little bit of everything last year.

I think the main things that we found out is that we can function well in a crisis. And it's amazing how quickly you can figure out delivery and takeouts when your dining room gets closed. So, it's something that we had argued about for years, but we were able to turn it around in about a week or two once the pandemic hit.

**Jaime Fall (00:19:24)**

Great. Thank you, Julius. Patti?

**Patti Constantakis (00:19:31)**

Sure. I'm Patti Constantakis. I'm part of the Walmart Foundation. The Walmart Foundation is the corporate foundation for Walmart, which I'm sure all of you know who Walmart is. We're the largest retailer in the country with 1.5 million associates in the US and 2.1 million worldwide. We have over 5,000 stores. We like to say that we are just 10 minutes ... We're probably 10 minutes away from most people in this country. My role at the Foundation is a really interesting one. I have a dual role. The first of those roles is really a philanthropic role in which I get to participate in research projects like this and support

grantees, nonprofits, and other thought leaders who are really working to create multiple pathways to economic opportunity for frontline workers.

The other half of my job is really being a consultant to the Walmart business. So, we try to take everything that we learned from our grantees and from all of the work that we do on the philanthropic side, and really bring that back to our HR department and our training and development department, and really to work together as a team to improve the work that we're doing on the Walmart side.

We believe in this notion of shared value. So, in our minds, across Walmart and Walmart Foundation, we truly believe that what is good for society, and what's good for our associates, is also good for business, and we try to operate our business that way. So, how is 2020 been for us? Well, as most of you probably know, we were counted as an essential business. Our workers never stopped working.

In all of that, we had all of the challenges around keeping our associates safe and at the same time meeting the crazy demands for our services. Our in-store purchases stayed strong, but we also had this huge surge in our pickup services and in our online purchasing. So, what that ended up meaning to us was that we actually needed to staff up like crazy to meet those new needs.

So, we had different kinds of roles that came to be suddenly, that personal shopper, suddenly a big role. And then our distribution centers, we were moving things around and doing things quickly. And we had to really staff up that and ultimately where we ... oh, we also to say this too, because of all of our safety protocols in place too, we also needed to make sure that we had backup staff for the folks that were actually either getting sick or weren't feeling comfortable at all to come to work especially during the beginning of all of this. So, we announced in the mid-summer that we were going to hire 500,000 new associates, and we did that. And then we added 250,000 more, which has again, been crazy. And lately our latest staff additions have been around our pharmacies, to staff up vaccination clinics and all that kind of stuff. And I can talk a little bit later about what we did to do all of this hiring and what that meant for us.

#### **Jaime Fall (00:23:02)**

Great. Patti, let's just stay with that, if you don't mind. I'd love to hear more about how Walmart was able to get that done. What changes did you have to make within your hiring strategy, within technology? Tell us more.

#### **Patti Constantakis (00:23:16)**

Okay. Well, what we really needed to do was to hire quickly. And so, we did a couple of things. Well, we spread the word that we needed to hire quickly. If you thought about it, again, initially it was about 500,000 folks. And so we let people know. What we really tried to do was reach out in our communities to areas where job loss was already the highest.

So, what we were trying to do was kind of, can we take the folks in, in hospitality, in the restaurant workers? Can those folks who were suddenly out of jobs, could we rescale, cross-skill? Could we use some of their skills in our stores and in our work as well? So, we definitely did that. So some of those workers that we hired were temporary workers and many actually were permanent, because again, those new roles and the growth that we actually experienced in areas of our company that we hadn't had before ended up being permanent. But what was really interesting about all of this was that we restructured our hiring processes to go essentially from an average of about two weeks to hire to literally

24 hours for some of our common roles, right? Especially in the field, if you're thinking about the stores. And the way we basically did this is we adjusted our whole application system. We just said, "Hey, let's do this differently." So if you came on to apply, what you would do as an applicant, rather than applying to a specific job, you could mark your interest across several different roles.

You could mark your interest in location, and across your different roles. So then when a manager went to hire basically what they got as part of their pool, they basically got a bigger talent pool quickly of all the people that were interested in all the different kinds of roles, so that they could move very quickly on all of that. And it's really turned out, we don't intend to go back. This ends up being a very interesting way to hire from an equity point of view. Honestly, if you make that talent pool larger in every case, you are more than likely get a nice diversity of candidates who are interested in all of those roles. So like I said, our intention is to keep that, and then we're trying to figure out how we can take that same approach to hiring across different areas as well. So, that's it. As you talk to the people in the field, they say it made a huge difference in the way that they could quickly hire qualified talent.

**Jaime Fall (00:26:14)**

Great. Thank you, Patti. Very interesting. A wild time, huh. So Missy, I know you had lots of hiring needs as well. Could you share how Ochsner responded to meet your recruiting and hiring needs?

**Missy Sparks (00:26:25)**

Absolutely. And ours is slightly pivoting from Patti's, where when you're looking at health care, some certificates are required for many of our positions. But like Walmart, we want it to be a part of our community. And we knew that there were a number of individuals from hospitality, healthcare, from our great restaurants and hotels in New Orleans, that would be looking for opportunity, and more right now, unemployed. So we very quickly pivoted through our workforce development efforts, and set up some virtual learning opportunities with some partners we've had in our community for the last 10 years or so. And we were able to transition hospitality workers to healthcare career pathways. We were able to do this in partnership with our workforce development boards, the Mayor's office for the City of New Orleans. And really say, how can we who are in essential place of employment still would need work to be a source of economic opportunity within our community and helping to heal our patients.

So we pivoted that way and were able to stand up a four week patient care technician, certified nursing assistant program. And we ran two of these with some funding from some philanthropic arms, agencies here in New Orleans. And we were able to bring in a 100 new team members over the course of just a month to two months in the summer. When we really needed some additional people as backup inside of our units, as our staff on the frontline were facing many unknown, and if they were getting struck by COVID, if that had happened to them, whether in the community or elsewhere, then we had somebody at the ready, trained. We can shoot up an personal protective equipment and bring in, and they were ready to make a difference, and they had a way to continue to support their families. So, that's one way we did it.

We also shortened time to hire. So like Walmart, we went from two weeks on average to get somebody in from pre-hire status into the system by bringing employee health appointments out into our community. We set up some additional sites where people could go on the day of hire, and we're able to move to same day hiring. We delayed the background checks so that instead of having it as part of the pre-hire piece, somebody could actually go through the hiring phase and come in and we can complete that background check after they have arrived. We had already begun as an organization

to look at some of the barriers to entry for somebody who may have a prior record that we've already waived. Some of that from our past way of being, and having done that previously allowed us to be even faster with that hiring piece.

We set up a process where our talent acquisition recruiters would do the screening and the interviewing of candidates. And then we were able to share with our hiring managers, we have this candidate at the ready to come to you. And that way we took away the need to have an additional step in the interview process. And we were able through workforce development to give those hiring managers a ready-now member from our community, ready to take the next role on their team. So that's been some of our approaches that we will continue to carry forward to continue to work within the community and to reduce the time to hire.

**Jaime Fall (00:29:53)**

Great. Missy, I think it's also important, not only were you dealing with the pandemic, but you also had hurricanes down in your area as well. And I know that you set up a career center to try to help with some of that for your internal staff. Could you talk a little bit about that?

**Missy Sparks (00:30:09)**

Yeah. So kind of an extension of our re-deployments. We have multiple types of employees within a healthcare systems. We have our corporate employees doing the support services. We have our clinic employees, medical assistants, licensed practical nurses who are more around that 9:00 to 5:00, Monday through Saturday clinic operations. And then you have your 24/7 hospital operations. During the height of the pandemic, it is the hospital that really needed to be staffed up. Clinics, went and reduced the scope of practice, a lot of that move to digital. And we'll talk about what that did for those team members as we move them to be telehealth workers in many cases, or I'll say became a part of our hospital unit work, or work at a temp check site. Well, we also had the misfortune of several hurricanes. One of the busiest hurricane seasons that took us significantly into the Greek alphabet, if you remember we got all the way to hurricane Iota.

And then one of the areas that got hit really hard was Lake Charles, Louisiana. And we had medical assistants there whose homes were destroyed. And they were traveling now and sheltering at hotels that had been largely vacant in the New Orleans area. And through our career center, there we have a commitment that we are here to keep our team members employed with us. We didn't want to see anyone by the circumstances of COVID or a hurricane not able to meet their family needs. So when those individuals were repositioned to a hotel in New Orleans, we were able to put them with one of our internal career coaches who could then get that individual re-deploy to New Orleans clinic where they could then begin working again. And when they got pivoted up to Baton Rouge when New Orleans was under a hurricane threat, we were able to do the same.

So we were able to sustain employment for team members who may have been weeks to months out of their home, as their homes had to be rebuilt from being destroyed in a hurricane. Keeping them and their families supported throughout this period of time. So that is something our career center is doing and continues to do. It is also a source for us to make sure that it's an economic opportunity source. A lot of our frontline workers, they haven't had always the same opportunities to know about career paths, and how else they could grow their career. So we do a great job of bringing unemployed, underemployed into career pathways. But our commitment to our team members is not to launch pad on your career, it's not the destiny.

So the career coaches work with our incumbents then to help them determine the best career pathing opportunity for them. And if we see that there are skills that we need to bring up, then we use programs like Ochsner Scholars. We use our workforce development, programming. We use internal Ochsner Learning Institute to help to bring those individuals new skills that carry them from the entry point to the next position on the career path. And then we continue until they are all the way up to CEO or the position of their fullest desire. And, that's what we're aiming to do.

**Jaime Fall (00:33:37)**

Great. Thank you, Missy. Julius, beyond recruiting and hiring, the pandemic brought about significant changes to staffing and operations in 2020. Could you share what that looked like at Eat'n Park?

**Julius Ridgley (00:33:49)**

Yeah. So for us, things were a little bit different with the different COVID responses across our footprint. So we were dealing with different responses at the state and local levels. But one thing that impacted all of us across all of our brands, what was the closure of our dining rooms in a lot of instances. So when your takeout business... And we were forward-thinking, noticing that the trend in the business was moving towards a lot more takeout. So we were prepared to do takeout business, takeout was about 12 to 15% of our sales going into the pandemic. But when takeout becomes 100% of your sales almost overnight, you got to think quickly and you got to be nimble.

On the downside for us, we unfortunately did have to put some of our team members on temporary lay-off, which was very uncommon for our organization. Like I said, we've been in business since 1949, and we've never had to do something like that. So that was difficult for us. We were able to innovate a little bit though, and find some different opportunities to keep people in jobs as much as we could. So we partnered with the United Way for example, to provide school lunches to students who previously were attending school and relying on lunch or breakfast at schools. And sometimes unfortunately, maybe their only meals of the day. So we were able to provide millions of school lunches throughout the pandemic by partnering with the United Way. That enabled us to use our facilities and space and some of our team members to produce those lunches and allow us to give hours where maybe we wouldn't have been able to without that.

The other thing I think that was really a big for us, was since that arrow was pointing up on takeout. We also were able to harness the delivery. So again, we argued for years about whether or not we should do delivery, but we figured it out in about a week and a half. And that created some new opportunities as well. So a lot more need for staffing in the pickup window. Needs for new technology to help speed up the process. When people are lined up in your pickup window, 10, 15 cars deep at one time to get their orders, you got to figure out how to get them moving quickly. So there were some new opportunities, which was great. Unfortunately, like I said, having to lay-off some of the team members was painful for us, but we were happy that we were able to bring the vast majority of them back by the summertime.

And in between, we were able to figure out different ways to leverage some of the resources that we had to make sure that our team members on temporarily lay-off were cared for. Whether it was providing meals for families of our team members, ways to extend health insurance and benefits to team members on temporary lay-off. So as much as it was difficult, there was a lot of positives as well that we were able to pull out of the situation. Because we have some of the best people in the business,

as I'm sure Missy will say, as they moved into retail and other things during this time. A lot of really great people out there, and we're happy that we were able to take care of them to the best of our ability.

**Jaime Fall (00:37:10)**

Thank you, Julius. Hao, Electrolux has had a fascinating experience with using technology to meet the need to these times. Could you talk a little bit about Electrolux shift to smart factories, and how that has affected your staffing and operations?

**Hao Dinh (00:37:24)**

Yeah. So just a brief definition of what exactly is a smart factory. It's when we go into a manufacturing facility and we deploy robots, software, artificial intelligence, and a whole bunch of automation, so that the end result is for us to produce the maximum amount of our finished goods or products at the highest quality. So, like I mentioned earlier, luckily we started on this path years before the pandemic. So we were a bit automated in the plants that we're running in North America. So when the pandemic hit and a lot of the factories were limited around the number of people that they can bring in and also the social distancing associated with it, we weren't heavily impacted compared to a non-smart factory because we had a lot of automation in place. So that showed a lot of the benefits associated with smart factories. And then most importantly, that gave us a chance to show that the technology itself, right? The robots, the automation, artificial intelligence actually works.

And what has happened since then, and you'll see this across the industry around manufacturing is about 95% of the industry is accelerating or doubling down on smart factories. And as you imagined, that's caused us a bit of heartburn, because even before the pandemic to get these digital savvy people into our plants was challenging. Now with the demand tripling for this type of skillset, we're challenged to get the right digital skillset into our plants. So that's why we and the other organizations in manufacturing are also increasing our efforts around reskilling and upskilling when it comes to these digital skills. So there's plenty of opportunities now when it comes to digital space, but the problem is we need to build that bridge to get people who aren't very digital savvy to go and get trained so that they can partake and engage in these digital solutions.

**Jaime Fall (00:39:27)**

Great. So Hao, let me stay with you for a minute then. So obviously, digital skills are a big issue for your smart factory workers, but how about the other workers within your company whether it's leadership, HR, whatever it might be? Does it affect them at all?

**Hao Dinh (00:39:42)**

Yeah, that's very interesting because this was another learning that we had is, since we have a smart factory that's pretty much fully digitized. We have tons of digital data. So now all this digital data can be used in our corporate headquarters for sales, for them to look at the data and integrate that data of forecasting sales with our production. Finance can look at the data and also come up with innovative ways to reduce cost. And then supply chain can look at it and help us with our logistics. But also, the corporate needs to have that skillset training around absorbing a large number of digital information, and using some artificial intelligence, using some digital tools, that people aren't used to. So again, not

just in the plants, but we've also realized in our corporate headquarters, for pretty much all of our functions, we also need to provide some upskilling and reskilling around the digital mindset.

**Jaime Fall (00:40:38)**

Great, thank you. So that's a great segway then to talk about the skill needs. After all, we couldn't have an upskilling event without talking about ways employers are helping their workers gain the skills and experiences they need to advance in their careers. So it's a preview for our conversation. I'm going to ask Ranita to join us again and to share a few more slides or a study results.

**Ranita Jain (00:41:01)**

Thanks, Jaime. I'll go ahead and share the slides. So this slide shows the survey responses about rising skill needs for frontline workers. And what you'll see in the results is that foundational skills such as working in a team, problem solving, as well as the ability to implement new health and safety procedures, and new types of customer service skills really became more important than ever this past year. I think you'll hear about it more in the conversations ahead. But we also saw that the results indicated that the pandemic really accelerated the need for frontline workers to build a strong digital skillset, as Hao is describing.

So if you look at the next slide, we wanted to unpack what are digital skills, because we know that covers a range of skills. So we asked about what kinds of digital skills are becoming increasingly relevant for frontline workers right now. And these results really reflect the increased need to have a nimble and wide set of digital skills including, communicating in a digital environment, being able to manage increase automation, the skills to use basic office software and other technology in the workplace. So the other thing that we wanted to ask about was about the skill sets for managers of frontline workers. Throughout our interviews with business leaders this past fall, we've heard about this increasing importance of having strong managers who can support frontline workers especially during these challenging times.

So we included this question in our survey to ask about what kinds of skills are most relevant for managers right now. And what you'll see is that again, skills to support the implementation of health and safety procedures are at the top of the list. Digital communication and digital fluency are also really important right now, more so than they were over a year ago. But we also wanted to highlight these skills such as building trust within a team, impactic management, cultivating inclusivity. Those were also really highlighted throughout our conversations, and the survey as well, as being really critical skillsets for managers during this time. So that's just a highlight of the survey results, and I'll turn it back over to you and our amazing panelists.

**Jaime Fall (00:43:24)**

Thank you, Ranita. So for this segment of the conversation, it would be helpful to learn how each of you are experiencing rising skill needs for frontline workers. Missy, in our conversations you described how digital skills are increasingly important for both frontline workers and managers like Ranita was just talking about. Could you describe what Ochsner Health is experiencing?

**Missy Sparks (00:43:46)**

Yeah, absolutely. For many of our frontline workers, this was the first time, especially in corporate and some of our clinical areas, where team members had to pivot from in-person, I show up at an office, I perform my typical duties, to remote work. Our telehealth, our digital health platform grew exponentially by more than 2500% in a single month. So there was tremendous need for some of those medical assistants who were accustomed to rooming a patient in-person in a clinic, to how do I now engage in a digital conversation, mediated communication from my home? And, how do I do that in a way that works for me and for the situation that I may be on? For our leaders, it was learning not only the digital fluency needs of their team, but also as leaders how to lead with empathy, how to grow the ability to lead a remote team.

So very quickly when we pivoted our workforce from home, our learning team developed training and curated a number of resources for leaders so they could begin to dig in deep and hone that skill set. Because we could see from our very first case of COVID on March 9th at 2020 that this was not going to be just a short term situation, that this was going to carry us into the next year, and we needed to prepare our leaders for leading remote teams as quickly as possible. So, we began doing that. Some of the other skills that we know that are absolutely vital, cultural literacy. How do we train team members to really respect and to create a place where everyone belongs? And, how do you help leaders through having difficult conversations? So some of those pieces we'd had already started with our D&I work, but we were able to end points of inflection over 2020, say, we have to do more in this area.

So it accelerated some of the training and some of the development that we already had underway. In terms of all of our team members, there was a need to continue to grow skills around collaboration. How do I work past silos? Because in a world where you have to be nimble and responsive in the moment, there's no room for silos. There are no room for being able to say, "This is the way we've always done it." So shifting mindset and helping people adjust to that was equally important for our leaders to be able to manage with their teams. Certainly for healthcare in 2020, and I'm sure it's much like this for our other panelists, there were so many unknowns, and there was fatigue, and there was fear, in our team members. So the whole role of mental wellbeing, of wellness, and how do we bring that into our training and into our leadership, so that our team members are really experiencing us as an employer differently, that the value proposition between employer and employee shifted. You are now part of our family.

How do we make sure we are fully embracing each individual with the needs that they have? How do I encourage leaders to have more grace with pets and kids coming onto a Zoom meeting because it's going to happen, and it's okay. So it gave us an opportunity to recognize the human element of work in a way that resonated. And we've actually recognize that's a skill set that we needed to have developed in our leadership way before COVID, is live and lead with empathy, lead by trust. So those are some of the things we have seen. Digital is pervasive. And part of the challenge that we still face is the disconnect between those who have access through broadband, those who have access through a hotspot, and those who may lack access. And how do we get messaging to them and opportunities to them? And that's certainly something where we are working with our high schools and community groups to shorten that gap so that everyone has equal access to entry into careers in healthcare.

**Jaime Fall (00:48:18)**

Great. Thank you, Missy.

**Missy Sparks (00:48:20)**

Thank you.

**Jaime Fall (00:48:20)**

And Julius, how about you? What changing skill needs for frontline workers and managers surfaced at Eat'n Park?

**Julius Ridgley (00:48:28)**

Well, I think Missy hit a lot of them, but I will add on to a couple of those items. One of the big things that we noticed really was a need for more technology skill because again, when you're introducing new devices, like ways for people to pay quickly and speed up that process and touchless pay options, you need an opportunity to really get that education on how to utilize that technology in the hands of your frontline workers very quickly. So one of the things too was really, how do we do that? So utilizing microlearnings was one of the things that we really stepped up a lot. How do we take a topic that normally we would do in person with training and have a big long rollout, how do we get that topic down to 10 minutes so that people can look at it very quickly, get the idea, and then go do it? So, that was a big thing for us.

One of the big things too was no longer a need for specificity when it came to positions. Missy had mentioned this as well. There was no ability to say, "Well, I only wait tables. I'm not going to wash the dishes." There's always been a need for cross-deployment in the hospitality industry. Anybody who's ever worked in the hospitality industry knows that. And everyone also knows that nothing brings you together like a rush period. All those differences can be put aside real quick when you're in a rush period. So really preparing our managers to do from a change management perspective, how do you quickly get these changes across to the team members of the need to move around and do the different things? And how do you deal with these different safety procedures and protocols as they change sometimes from day to day? So change of management was a big skill that we noticed as well.

The last point that I would add is that we had the COVID pandemic, but really, in 2020 we had the pandemic of racism as well. And so how do we equip our managers and our frontline workers to handle a heightened sensitivity around that area? So again, really working on, how do we get information and training out to our team members on how to avoid getting our brains canceled? How do we keep people from stepping on those cultural landmines without intending to?

And the nice thing for us is that we had already been on that. I remember we were planning our year for 2020 back in October of 2019, and we had already earmarked a lot of these things as things that we needed to do, and how do we get this training in the hands of our team members? So when the unfortunate murder of George Floyd happened, we were already ready to roll. It just accelerated our timeline a little bit, but we had those plans in place. So like I said, I don't want to do a ton of repeating from Missy, but those were the things that really stood out for us.

**Jaime Fall (00:51:33)**

Great. Thank you. And so Patti, could you tell us about Live Better U and the Walmart Academies and what role they're playing in supporting employee upskilling? And also, as you expand to more online

offerings, what are you seeing as being the critical elements for workers being successful in those programs?

**Patti Constantakis (00:51:51)**

Sure. So just to echo one of the things that Missy said that we at Walmart really believe that you can have a great career in retail, or if nothing else, retail's a great place to start a great career in something somewhere. You gain a lot of skills by being with us. So we believe pretty strongly in investing in our associates. And actually, Walmart believes pretty strongly in promoting from within. You have people who have long, long careers at Walmart, including our CEO, who started as a store associate 25 years ago and he's now the CEO. So, that culture is embedded within Walmart and is important to us.

So we've got two major training and education programs at Walmart, both of which have actually been started within the last five years that Doug, our new CEO or our CEO now, he started about five years ago. And so they've come to be since he's come to be as well. The first one is our Academies program, which is really, that's our in-store, generally in-person training track that really is about leads from a store-level associate to management. And there's about 200 of these academies around the country. Like I said, they're generally in-person, but they have now, because of COVID, things have moved to virtual to a certain extent. Honestly, many of those roles are really designed to be on the job type of roles. And so then the training for them is obviously that. So about 50% of the training in some of those roles is actually just in-store. So the academies end up now they're moving to being kind of a hybrid way of training. The newest thing that we're testing with the academies is actually what we're calling the Academies in the Community, which is offering some of these same classes to families and friends of associates in the communities. A lot of that, what we're seeing that move to is a lot of those digital skills. So as we talk about all of these new technologies, these new kinds of roles, et cetera, the thought in those Academies in the Community piece is, not only can we also help bolster digital skills in the community, but for those folks who also would like to come work for Walmart or work for other organizations where digital skills are important, how can we do some of that as well? So, that's been an interesting ... That has been since COVID. That is something we've started to do just super, super recently.

The other thing I would say about academies, which is really interesting, is that most of the programs offer digital certificates or badges that they can take those with them as they go. And several of them offer college credit as well, depending on what that program is and how they align with certain kinds of college degree programs.

The second major education program that we offer for our associates is called Live Better U and it is known affectionately as our, a dollar a day college degree program that also includes high school equivalency and skilled trades certificates. They work with key academic partners through Guild. We use Guild's platform and we are partnered with, I don't even know, 30 different academic partners around the country to give these degrees. Most of those degrees or majors, there's about 30 of them, align with the kind of career that you could build in retail or in service sectors. So there are things like business, logistics, supply chains. And then like I said, some of the newer skilled trade certificates are around IT or HVAC, et cetera.

What's nice about this program is that any full or part-time employee is eligible. So you just start to work at Walmart and you are eligible to start in this program if you want it. Since this program began about two years ago, there've been about 30,000 people enrolled. In fact, there are 30,000 people enrolled right now and they kind of come and go, but our average enrollment at any one time is about 25,000, which is a lot. And we've had something around 6,000 graduates in these two years, which is amazing.

And we have this preliminary finding, and I say it very gently and say it more anecdotal than anything else, but we're finding that our associates that go through LBU are more likely to get promoted faster than those that do not.

So I think you asked what makes it successful and where do we go from here? We believe really strongly in that notion of multiple pathways. And for us, multiple pathways means degrees plus skills. So what we try to offer in these two programs is the opportunity for you to get what you feel like you need. So if what you want and need is a degree, how do we help you do that? If what you need to do is upskill in order to gain the skills you need to continue up your career pathway at Walmart or anywhere else, how about academies or any of that kind of stuff? So that's been important to us.

And then I think from a successful point of view, in particular LBU, it's affordable. It's flexible. You do it on your time. But I think a really important piece of it is that it's encouraged by Walmart. We encourage our associates to get involved. And so if you are enrolled in LBU and you're telling your manager you've got something you need to do today that's related to the assignments for that work, you're encouraged to do it, which is I think a key differentiator in a lot of ways. I will say though, that we've found some of the same challenges that you might find in other programs and actually even in college, is persistence. How do we keep people in these programs for the long haul? And we've found actually that the personal coaching, so some of the academic and career coaching that comes from Guild's platform, but in other cases within the academies, we've found that that coaching has really been a key factor in retention, which is great.

Actually, we're looking for ways to expand that, especially for our Black and Brown associates, whose retention rates in general are lower than their White counterparts. So we're trying to figure out what's good about what we have, but intentionally tweak it for our Black and Brown associates. And I think ultimately, I'd say that the program isn't perfect at the moment, it's come a long way in two years, I know Jaime followed it this whole time, it's come a long way in two years, but we're committed to continuing to tweak it and to continue on building what we've learned to really invest in the upskilling of our associates because in the end, we believe pretty strongly that if we can help associates build their skills, they'll be much better prepared to advance in our jobs and in others jobs. So we're committed there and we're still working on doing that the best way we can.

#### **Jaime Fall (00:59:46)**

Great. Thanks, Patti. So Hao, you get the last word on upskilling. Could you describe your skill development plans at Electrolux, who you're working with on upskilling and reskilling programs, and where you are in the process?

#### **Hao Dinh (00:59:59)**

Yeah. So we are very early in our stages around our upskill and reskilling initiatives, but one of the things that we're trying to do is to definitely learn from examples that we've learned here from the various participants and also some lessons learned from other organizations out there that are ahead of us. But our first step that we're doing is we're doing a digital assessment. We're trying to understand, what exactly are the digital skills that we need in our plants and also in our offices? And luckily, the European Union and also the company that I worked previously, GE, has come up with about 150 digital categories that they think are very relevant for now and the future. So we're taking those 150 categories and doing a skill assessment and identifying the gaps. And then once we identify the gaps, then for sure we'll work on mitigating those gaps.

Relating to that, there's been some really good research out there that we're learning, particularly from Amazon. And again, this is public knowledge, but Amazon is actually partnering with local community colleges in the areas where they have their distribution centers and they're investing millions of dollars in what they call their labs so that they can make a replica of ... All these digital robots and software and technology that they have in their facilities are now in the community college labs so that when you get a job at Amazon, they will send you to this community college for a week or so for you to get your hands dirty playing around with that technology, because I think all of us are aware learning technology by listening is not really beneficial. It's touching and feeling it. So once you go through that training and you go into the actual facilities, you're not scared of the technology, you know how to interact with it. So we're learning that that's a good best practice that we're going to try to incorporate as we go through filling out our gaps.

### **Jaime Fall (01:01:54)**

Excellent. Thank you. So we're going to move to Q&A here in just a little bit. So please continue adding questions into the Q&A section there. But as we're transitioning, Ranita, if you wouldn't mind, I'd love to have you put up one more slide. This is a slide of survey responses about policy investments. We ask employers from a national policy perspective what they believed would be most helpful for frontline workers to help them grow with their companies. And this is what they said. Ranita, I don't know if you have anything you'd like to add to this slide. Okay. So as you're all taking a moment to look at this slide, I wanted to let you know that we are, again, going to be opening our question and answer session in just a moment. While you're doing that, I would like to introduce Ken Taylor, President of Training Industry, Inc, who was our partner on the survey that we conducted and an invaluable partner. Ken, thank you for all you did to help us. Ken, you work with training and HR leaders all the time. I would love it if you could share a few thoughts on what you've seen in the survey results and also what you've heard today during the panel, and how that matches or doesn't match with what you hear from the companies that you work with every day on these issues.

### **Ken Taylor (01:03:22)**

Thanks a lot, Jaime, and it was a pleasure working with you and the institute on this particular project. It was fun to leverage training industry's panel of L&D experts and get them to weigh in on some of these subjects. And I think the results turned out pretty positively for everybody involved. From what I heard today and what we saw in the research, there's a couple of key themes that I think are common across almost all industries. And it was really interesting to listen to the panelists today and how they had very similar experiences around concepts like reskilling and upskilling, how they had very similar experiences around lack of data skills, not only on frontline, but also in leadership roles inside the organizations. These are common gaps across all industries, across all companies, and learning and development teams are being tasked with trying to close these gaps as fast as possible.

Really interesting supporting data that we're starting to see now in the first quarter is just the degree to which companies in general are making substantially higher investments in both the technologies to enable learning for their employees and the nature of types of programs that they're going to roll out. One other theme, I think, that I heard across all of the panelists today I thought that is really exciting, and again, supported by some other research that we have completed, is the increasing number of modalities being used to help employees consume new content and develop new skills.

We think that pattern has actually been coming along and was accelerated by the pandemic because we have done quite a bit of research around learner preferences and how that impacts the

employee's perception of both their role and the program that they're participating in, and that research has this one really cool finding that if I have at least one experience in a program in a modality that I prefer, and modalities could be in-person or some e-learning or microlearning or reading a pamphlet on it or having a job aid or having some coaching, if I have just one experience in a modality that I prefer, my whole perception of both the company and the program goes up. So we think that this theme of accelerated use of various modalities and concepts like practice, building practice into our programs, is really the future of learning and development. And supported by not only this research and the stories we've heard today, but by other research that we've been doing.

**Jaime Fall (01:05:52)**

Great. Thank you, Ken. And if it's okay, I'd love to invite you to stick around for the question and answer session.

**Ken Taylor (01:05:58)**

Happy to.

**Jaime Fall (01:05:58)**

And chime in there. Wonderful. Thank you. So as we move to questions and answers, I thought maybe we could do a really quick whitening round question and each of you respond. I would just love to know, what are some of the changes that 2020 brought about in your company that may be here to stay? Missy, how about you?

**Missy Sparks (01:06:24)**

I'll jump in. You cannot over-communicate. And time of crisis, people need to hear more, but that needs to continue. What we've found from our employees, the more that we were engaged in listening and sharing sessions with them, the more they felt that sense of belonging with the organization. So we definitely will continue to communicate and communicate frequently to keep that sense of connectedness and a world that is so very disconnected.

**Jaime Fall (01:06:55)**

Great. Hao?

**Hao Dinh (01:06:57)**

The thing that we learned about our organization is we're definitely more agile than we thought, and then we can quickly adapt quicker than we thought too. So having that type of confidence now knowing that if we're told to make sure that everyone in our plants is six feet away from us by next week, and getting that done has actually shown that when we put our efforts together as an organization, we can pretty much move mountains. So, that's a great confidence builder, and we're taking that learning and that feeling to go tackle some other big things that maybe in the past we didn't think we could do.

**Jaime Fall (01:07:34)**

Great. Thank you. Patti?

**Patti Constantakis (01:07:39)**

I'd actually echo Hao's piece that even a company as gigantic as ours is quite nimble and can do things very, very quickly. Probably we're supposed to do just one, but that's one, and the other really is the digital transformation. We are in the middle of it. We're here to stay. These tools aren't going away. They make us more efficient in some good ways, they make us less efficient, maybe in some others, but it's not going away. And so then what do we do with that as an entire company to really bring us all along in that transformation?

**Jaime Fall (01:08:17)**

Great. And Julius, I'd love to hear what you say.

**Julius Ridgley (01:08:21)**

I think there are some similarities here, but I think for us it's to not let the perfect be the enemy of the very good. So when you've been around since 1949, sometimes you run into a little bit of that, this is how we've always done it, but we've always prided ourselves on innovation. But I think it'll be much more rapid as it was during COVID. That's something that will not change. We will continue to move quickly. And if we fail quickly that's okay. It's not such a big blocker for us anymore. So I'm excited to see where it takes us, but that'll be one thing that definitely stays, for sure.

**Jaime Fall (01:08:57)**

Awesome. Thank you. So there are a lot of questions coming in that really want more detail on issues that were raised during your answers to questions earlier. The first one seems to be really around understanding the tools and processes that you all are using to help manage learning for your workers, including coaching services. Could you just maybe share a little more detail about some of the tools that you use?

**Hao Dinh (01:09:25)**

I can share one. So before COVID-19, our usual training was get everyone together in a room and sit through some training. And then you're an expert, go do. And a couple of things we've learned during the pandemic, we couldn't get everyone together, so we had to do it virtually. But something, I think Julius you brought up previously about these microlearnings, and videos in particular. So there's technologies out there where you can make quick videos of how to go solve a problem.

For example, in our example, you have an issue in the production line, you whip out your smartphone, you take a quick video about, "Hey, I encountered this problem and here's how I fixed it," not more than two minutes, you upload it to a site that we have that's shared across the organization, and we found out that a lot of people encounter the same issues. So now there's a platform just like a YouTube where people can go to and say, "Hey, does anyone else experience this problem with their machine?" And

within two seconds you've got your peer telling you how they fixed it. We found that being a great way to do some real-time training.

**Missy Sparks (01:10:39)**

Zoom, Zoom, Zoom. And certainly our learning management system, [SAB 01:10:44] is our back engine, so Ochsner Learning Institute leverages it to put out microlearning. They also put out curated lists, to Ken Taylor's point on multiple modalities for learning when we're thinking about, how does a leader lead with empathy? Then we curate a number of different types of learning that could appeal to a leader, whether a podcast, a magazine article, a book that they might read, or a Zoom virtual training that we have developed so they can pick what is right for them for learning.

The other piece that I would add to it in terms of helping us to move learning forward is an escalation huddle. So certainly, as our operations had to respond to daily, hourly changing CDC guidelines, we would have a daily huddle that started at the unit level within a hospital and then it would go up all the way to the CEO of that facility to a leadership council meeting. So all the lessons could be learned across the board and then disseminate it back out in an afternoon huddle. So, that sort of, how do we raise things at the frontline [inaudible 01:11:48] because they are closest to whatever problem is there that we need to solve for, and if somebody has a solution somewhere along that line, we'll be able to disseminate it across all.

**Jaime Fall (01:11:59)**

Great. Thank you. And Patti, you mentioned Guild and you mentioned some of the other resources. I don't know if there are others that you want to mention?

**Patti Constantakis (01:12:07)**

I watched Julius come off of mute, but I'll go first, then you can go.

Yeah. I would say the coaching tools that we were talking about, the majority of the ones I was mentioning are really a part Guild's platform. So they they're both academic and career type coaches and it's around trying to help folks find their way into the right programs. If they're tripping up in a particular course, what other help can they get for it, et cetera. So that there's somebody they can reach out to, to keep going basically, because we have learned, and I think others have learned a lot that often the single most important thing you can do for somebody is to answer a question in a moment when they have it, right? And that's what those coaches are really good about doing.

**Jaime Fall (01:13:11)**

And Patti, another question that came in dealing with [inaudible 01:13:13] was just how the program is funded?

**Patti Constantakis (01:13:17)**

So we pay for it. That's the simple answer. It is totally subsidized by Walmart and the employer, the associate pays a dollar a day. So, obviously there is some bit that they do, but it translates to about a dollar a day, their commitment to it.

**Jaime Fall (01:13:40)**

Great Julius, I'm apologize. I missed you.

**Julius Ridgley (01:13:43)**

Oh, no apology necessary. I would say I would echo Missy, a learning management system that can really meet your needs and allow you to meet your people where they are, through a lot of different mediums, whether it's digital training, digital instructor led, or for people who like to read instruction manuals and things. You want a learning management system that can really meet those needs and give you different media to reach people in the way that it's most effective for them.

The other thing I think that's been big for us is pulse surveys. We've always done a traditional engagement survey, but utilizing pulse surveys to very quickly get information and data to help you make better decisions, almost in real time from your frontline team is a real big win for your organization, if you can leverage that and use it properly.

**Jaime Fall (01:14:43)**

Great. And so one of the questions that's come in is asking back about the hiring process that we all talked about early on, and they're wanting to know, so are you going to continue this hiring process or do you think things will go back to the way that you originally did them?

**Hao Dinh (01:15:03)**

Is that question relating to like the demand that we have right now? Do we think that it's going to subside and decrease or is that... [crosstalk 01:15:11].

**Jaime Fall (01:15:10)**

I think it may have referred to the speed as well?

**Hao Dinh (01:15:14)**

Okay.

**Jaime Fall (01:15:15)**

And the process.

**Hao Dinh (01:15:16)**

Yeah. I'll talk about the demand side. I wish it went back to pre COVID-19 demand because right now it's gotten very difficult to find the right skillsets for digital workers. And again, that's the reason why we're investing in this reskilling and upskilling opportunities. But I don't think from the research we've shared here, the research I've seen, and also what I've experienced, there's not going to be a decline in digital skillset hiring, but there is a decline in what we call the 'turn the wrench' type jobs, right? These are the physical jobs in plants that our robots are replacing, but I think that's a great opportunity for us to up skill the employers that where doing the physical labor. Now we give them the skills to do more of the automation type stuff, which I think from our conversations with our employees is actually a better career path that they see.

**Patti Constantakis (01:16:23)**

I can speak to our sets of hiring processes. That notion of moving from, it takes two weeks to get a job in a store to, it takes a day to get a job in a store, is something that I think is going to be a permanent change. But beyond that, I would say that we are working hard to think about our hiring processes and to think about our advancement practices rate, so our promotions and everything else, really trying to think about that from a race and equity point of view, like that's important to us. So we are actually trying to actively change the way we do things so that we have a much more, I hate to use the words as blanketly as this, a much more diverse talent pool, but we intentionally are looking to understand the ways in which we might be keeping Black and Brown people from getting the kinds of jobs that they need. So, it's important to us.

**Jaime Fall (01:17:30)**

Great. Thank you, Patti. So another question has come in wanting to know if any of you partnered in any way with your local workforce investment system and what that partnership might've looked like? Missy, I believe you did.

**Missy Sparks (01:17:43)**

Yeah, and I'm actually a vice chair of the New Orleans Workforce Development Board, so I know there's another question about private partnership, private public partnership. Get involved. One of the best things that employers can do is show up the local workforce investment opportunity act boards in your community. They have access to talent that is looking for work, and it's a great opportunity to come in and have conversation around, these are the skills we're looking for, can we do a customized employer training program? Can we leverage STRIVE NOLA or one of the other groups that are doing work readiness programs, where we can readily plug talent in today. And we see that as an important entry point into our organization. And it's also a way that we can reach more individuals within the community who are looking for their next opportunity. So I would definitely say partner with your local workforce boards, they need active employers and they can help to even do the digital training that we are seeking.

**Jaime Fall (01:18:45)**

Great. Thank you. One of the members of our employer network advancing digital skills in equity, asked if any of you are working on building a digital resiliency with multiple languages, can anyone speak to that?

**Missy Sparks (01:19:02)**

We're not at this time, but certainly something that I do see on the horizon.

**Jaime Fall (01:19:10)**

Great. Okay. All right. Thank you. And Hao we also had a question, someone wanting more details about the information you shared around the digital assessments. Could you talk to us a little more about that in the categories for digital skills?

**Hao Dinh (01:19:24)**

Yeah. It's probably best to send you the link because there are 150 of them, but I can tell you when you read through them and this is something that I learned through this exercise. I'm actually biased because I grew up, I'm a techie guy, right? So I just make the assumption that everyone knows how to interact with computers and how to send emails and so forth, which is the wrong assumption.

So as you read through, and again, I can share the link with everyone to send out, but you'll read through it and it will set the baseline that, Oh wow, there's a minimum that needs to be in place that I just take for granted. And I think a lot of people take for granted, that we need to make sure we expose that, "Hey, this is causing the playing field to be unfair." And that's something that we're also addressing during this activity is, let's make sure that as we progress in this digital world, we don't leave people behind and it's happening. And it's very eyeopening for me. And like I said, there's the basic stuff is, can you actually bring up an email? Can you create an email and send it out? And, when I read that, I was like, "Seriously, why would you need to assess that?" And we took it back to our plants and looked at it. And yeah, there are a percentage of people that don't have that. They might know how to do it reluctantly, but they just don't feel comfortable doing it.

So again, it's the spectrum of, can they do it? Yes. But can they do it freely? And if you ask them to do it on the job, will they want to do it freely? And that's a different conversation. But I'll share that link with the group here.

**Jaime Fall (01:21:15)**

Great. Ken, I would love to know some of your thoughts on this topic as well. I would imagine that digital skills is got to be one of the topics that you hear the most about from the companies that you work with.

**Ken Taylor (01:21:27)**

Yeah. Completely. And, just to reinforce Hao's point, because I think it's on, on so many levels. The number one challenge we hear from heads of learning and development across the globe is that they

didn't know until COVID where their employees were in terms of their digital competencies, right? So there was no real ongoing testing to see if people could send an email and what they found out, because we saw during our pulse data that we were collecting from the whole market, right through the pandemic up to now, is they had this big spike in terms of just basic computer skills. Like can my knowledge workers even... Do they know how to get online remotely and are they comfortable in that environment? And, it's starting to come down now, they're starting to reduce that as a stress point, but it's still there. So, in front line workers, it has to be even more amplified, those gaps.

**Jaime Fall (01:22:25)**

Great. Julius, we had a question come in, asking for more information about your pulse surveys. Could you talk a little more about how you would administer those and the types of questions that you ask?

**Julius Ridgley (01:22:39)**

Yeah, for sure. So for our pulse surveys, our learning management system allows us to send those to all of our team members using the system, so that was helpful. We also utilized email and internal messaging systems to get the word out. Some of the things that we did pulses on, again, micro learnings was a new way of getting information out to our team members. So we would pulse on micro learning to see what the effectiveness of it was. And then utilize that information to select the next round of micro learnings or to figure out what gaps there might've been. So some of the questions around micro learnings would be like, how effective was this training? Was it relevant to your job? Would you recommend this training to a coworker?

And I really liked the opportunity to get comments to, people were able to give us comments and say, "Hey, I really like this." Or, " This training only took 10 minutes and it was very impactful." So then I used that to sell it to other people. Yeah, absolutely. Here, this is straight from your colleagues and from our fellow team members, that this micro-learning was 15 minutes and it was great. So sort of helped to sell the stuff as well.

We also pulsed on, how did team members feel about our pandemic response? How did our, like myself, corporate support center team members feel about working from home? Some of us may have experienced this, I know for me, it was March 13th, I left the office and then I didn't come back for at least a month or two then. And even then it was just to pick up some things. So just checking in with people to see how they felt about things. And then as long as we felt like we had enough responses to take action, we would use it to take action and informed decisions. So hopefully that helps.

**Jaime Fall (01:24:30)**

Great. Thank you, Julius, you have, absolutely.

So a lot of our conversation today is focused on larger companies, and we'd just love to know what advice you might have for small and medium-sized companies, how they might be able to take on things like digital skills and what advice you might have for them.

**Julius Ridgley (01:24:46)**

I can hop in if that's okay?

**Jaime Fall (01:24:53)**

Sure.

**Julius Ridgley (01:24:54)**

I would say one of the big things, it doesn't matter if you're a small company or a large company. I think we all have a lot of the same problems. Sometimes it's just a matter of how much budget you have to throw at it. But, you really want to focus on your people, right, the focus needs to be on your people and understanding what their needs are and then figuring out the best way to meet them. And again, I think I said it before, meeting them where they're at and being able to meet their needs in the way that they need them met. I think if you can focus on that, then you can make the budget work to the best of your ability to do exactly that.

**Hao Dinh (01:25:32)**

Yeah. I just want to add onto that. So, we interact with various types of companies, big and small. And one of the things that we learned is if you're a small organization and you're one of our vendors, we want you to be successful too, because we need you to be successful in order for us to be successful. So to Julius' point, be transparent and say, "Hey, we're going through our digital journey too. Why don't we pair up and collaborate?" And, the costs can be spread out and also the risks could be spread out.

But one of the things that we've learned is, around digital, is you don't do digital outside of your corporate walls, you're not going to succeed. You got to bring in your customers, you got to bring in your vendors and irrespective of the size, because it doesn't matter if it's a small vendor, if they can't provide you that one component, you're not going to ship any products, right? So you're not going to discriminate against a big or small trading partner, but just make sure that we reach out, we're building that relationship, it's actually strengthen our relationship. We've identified points of gaps around our digital connection, which once we solve it, will make both parties better. So, that's the advice I give is, go talk to your... If you are small and you're hesitant to go talk to maybe your bigger customer or so forth, don't because they're also going through their learning journeys too.

**Missy Sparks (01:26:50)**

Another piece of advice I'll tag on to that is leverage mentorship, internship opportunities, mentorship internally, great opportunity. You can even do some reverse generational mentoring because oftentimes it is our Gen Zs and millennials who are really tech savvy, and they can partner with somebody else in the organization and they can do some cross skills, transferring through a mentorship, and that can be no cost to a small organization.

You can also leverage internship, summer internships with young adults, 18 to 24, who are looking for entry-level opportunities, bring them in for the summer and get them plugged in and connected. And through that internship, teach those digital skills, leverage your local workforce arms, your local community technical colleges typically have adult education courses that can be brought in and made available to team members. And as long as you've created a safe place, we're all on this journey together, if you lack those skills now that's okay. We're here to partner with you to get them. Then people feel safe admitting, "Yeah, I'm not so good at that email, but I know you're working with me and it's not a barrier to my continuing to be here with you."

**Jaime Fall (01:28:06)**

Great.

**Hao Dinh (01:28:06)**

I just want to add... [crosstalk 01:28:09].

**Jaime Fall (01:28:07)**

Go ahead.

**Hao Dinh (01:28:07)**

I'm sorry.

**Jaime Fall (01:28:07)**

Go ahead.

**Hao Dinh (01:28:12)**

Yes. So in a previous company, we did that partnership where we have the, we call them digital natives, right? These are the people that were born with an iPad in their hands. All right? And then the digital immigrants is, myself, where I lived in analog world and I'm immigrating to the digital world. But the thing that was quite interesting is the digital natives [inaudible 01:28:38] and they know all about technology, but they know nothing about the process. They know nothing about the products that we make and so forth. And on the flip side, we have our more experienced employee who knows everything about our products and our processes, but they're just not digitally savvy.

But Missy, to your point, we built that safe environment. We said, "You're going to help each other out", because a digital native, this person has 30 years of experience that he or she can teach you within a few months and then vice versa, right? This person can text blindly. So, just partner up. And we built these 'learn at lunches' where we partner people up and say, "At this lunch, we're going to talk about this product", where the more experienced person would teach. The next 'learn at lunch' was around, "We're going to teach you how to send an email." And it was very powerful.

**Jaime Fall (01:29:29)**

Great. So we're going to try to work in one last question here, even though we're almost at time. So we learned so much today from changed hiring practices, to how you're working with managers, to be better listeners, how you're listening to your employees more through the pulse surveys and other things. So over the course of the last year, have you seen anything around retention? Are you seeing any positive signs there that all of these things that you're doing are paying a positive dividend there in retention?

**Patti Constantakis (01:30:03)**

From a giant company point of view? Yes, we are absolutely seeing those differences in retention. I think we've got a preliminary again, measure that are our retention rate for our frontline employees is up about 15% from where it's been a couple of years ago.

**Jaime Fall (01:30:22)**

Julius.

**Julius Ridgley (01:30:22)**

Fantastic Patti. I don't know that we can yet say whether or not we've seen a huge impact on retention, but we did see a very large impact on our engagement surveys. We have the highest return on engagement survey responses in 2020 than we've ever had. And I think that some of it was because we forced people to use that digital platform a little bit more frequently, and people got a little bit more comfortable with it. So we were able to get a lot more responses than we've ever gotten in the past. So I think that that's an encouraging sign for us longterm, but I don't know that we can say for sure, exactly any hard data yet when it comes to retention.

**Missy Sparks (01:31:04)**

And I think our engagement, we use Gallup and we're at the 80th percentile for healthcare entities. So we feel really strong about, we have a great positive live environment for our employees. We have steady retention year over year. We didn't have it significantly high before pandemic either. What we do see though, and this will just be my plug, continue to social distance and wear your masks because healthcare is exhausted and we've really got to bring down the numbers and we need to do this for our frontline caregivers so that they know that we as a global community are all in this together.

**Jaime Fall (01:31:45)**

Great.

**Missy Sparks (01:31:46)**

Plug over.

**Jaime Fall (01:31:48)**

Great. Ken, if you don't mind, I'll give you the last word here and then I'll close things out, but we really spent the last hour and a half looking at what happened in 2020 and what's happening now and some of the implications for the future. What do you expect in 2021 in looking forward?

**Ken Taylor (01:32:05)**

More of the same, the speed of the change isn't going to get any slower. I think the nature of company's dependency on data literacy and digital skills is going to be even stronger and L and D's, learning and development as a functions responsibility, to think more broadly about how to train and equip our employees to make them ready for this change is a number one priority.

**Jaime Fall (01:32:31)**

Right. Ken, thank you. Appreciate it. So that is all the time that we have for today. We really appreciate you all being a part of this important discussion. I'd like to thank our panelists; Patti Constantakis, Walmart.org, Hao Dinh, Electrolux, Missy Sparks, Ochsner Health, Julius Ridgley, Eat'nPark Hospitality Group. Also Daryl Graham, Strada Education Network, and Ken Taylor, Training Industry Incorporated. Thank you also to our sponsors for this work and for today's webinar; Walmart.org and Strada Education Network.

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So thank you everyone. Have a great rest of your day. Thank you for being a part of this discussion.