



BUILDING A

SKILLS-FIRST ORGANISATION

THROUGH WORK TRANSFORMATION

Case Study of Cragar Industries

A project partnering organisations to guide them through the process of work redesign, to enable their transition into skills-first organisations and strengthen workforce resilience.

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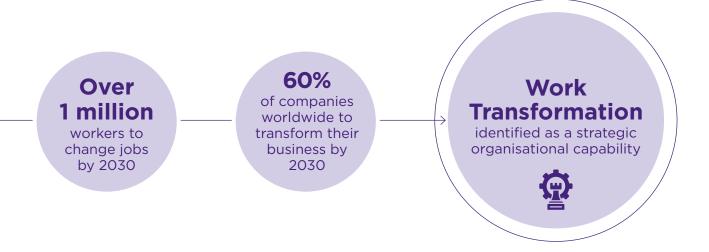
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BACKGROUND

Organisations of today grapple with challenges in the area of rising business costs, technological disruptions, increasing competition and new work arrangements (Jesuthasan & Kapilashrami, 2024). These structural shifts have intensified the imperative for organisations to modernise and strategically reposition themselves, with workplace and workforce transformation emerging as central priorities.

Global studies highlight the scale of disruption, over 100 million workers will need to change jobs by 2030 due to automation and Al with 60% of companies worldwide expect to transform their business by 2030 (World Economic Forum, 2023; Mckinsey 2023).

In response, work transformation has been identified as a strategic organisational capability, that enables organisations and their employees to adapt to evolving roles, responsibilities, and technologies, while building resilience and sustaining competitiveness.



FOCUS OF STUDY

This project is a pilot study that engages selected organisations to co-design interventions that support their transition into skills-first organisations through a structured work transformation process.

Anchored in a five-step work transformation methodology, it brings participants through a deliberate, hands-on journey to transform jobs by examining how work is structured, organised, and delivered across the organisation, while also integrating technology, workforce skills, and business strategy.

The project further aims to build organisational capability and confidence, enabling participating organisations to scale and sustain work transformation practices and apply them to a broader range of roles in the future.

PARTICIPANTS

Cragar Industries is a long-standing manufacturer serving both global and local partners in the global supply chain. Founded in 1990, it specialises in precision manufacturing of component parts for the Optics and Biomedical Industry.

At the strategic level, Cragar Industries intends to leverage its strong business foundations for a move to the next level. Its business transformation success is being engineered through a myriad of key initiatives aimed at effective resource management and people-centric workforce upskilling. The organisation has embarked on transformation efforts aligned with its strategic direction. Such efforts include the adoption of a Human Resource Management System (HRMS), strategic projects related to automation and resource planning as well as the introduction of On-the-Job Training (OJT) for all staff.

In partnership with Cragar Industries, the Centre for Skills-First Practices (CSFP) conducted a two-part Work Transformation Workshop on 16 and 22 July 2025. Designed as an experiential learning intervention, the workshop involved participants from the organisation's management team, Human Resource department and job incumbent from the Finance department.

Through guided facilitation, CSFP walked participants through the foundational principles, methodology and practical processes of work transformation, turning theory into actionable practice. Over two half-day sessions, participants transformed the Finance Executive role to one of a Business Data Analyst. The adoption of technology and considerations of work alternatives were further explored as part of Cragar's business transformation needs.

Beyond optimising existing roles and introducing innovative strategies for redeploying work, the workshop serves to build participants' capabilities in replicating and expanding these transformations to other job roles post pilot study.



METHODOLOGY: A 5-STEP WORK TRANSFORMATION

The project adapts the 5-step work transformation process (Mercer, 2025) which provides a structured approach to making work agile, future-ready, and human-centered. It starts by deconstructing work into tasks—examining their nature but also the pain points employees face in carrying them out, and conducting a Return on Improved Performance (ROIP) assessment to identify what can be automated, redistributed, or redesigned. The process then explores redeployment options to align employees with changing roles before reconstructing work across people, technology, and new work models. As part of this reconstruction, attention is given to the new skills employees require when additional or transformed tasks are introduced, ensuring that workforce capabilities keep pace with the newly transformed role. Finally, the process identifies priority skill requirements for staff development, reducing inefficiencies, empowering employees, and driving sustainable productivity and innovation (see Figure 1).

DECONSTRUCT REDEPLOY RECONSTRUCT the work the work the work Task classification **Automation type** Reconstruction Define the key activities and Automation opportunities, Reconstruct the remaining/ tasks, skills needed, and the augmentation new work into existing/ nature of the work new roles Robotic Process · Repetitive/Variable Automation Identifying the optimal source of work for each · Independent/Interactive Social Robotics activity (automation, centralisation/shared Physical/Mental Cognitive services, agile talent Automation pool, etc.) Return on improved performance Redefining new skills **Work alternatives** 4 Assess the return of improved for new roles/tasks Alternative work options that performance, risk, speed and can substitute/augment the value of each task; alternative Ensuring the continued work, risks and considerations work opportunities relevance of talent Centralisation/ through the mapping **Shared Services** Constant Incremental Exponential Negative of developmental interventions to Contractor/ emerging skills Gig Worker demand Organisational Value Opportunity Identifying any Marketplace constraints to deployment Outsourcing/ Third Party Level of Performance

Figure 1: 5-Step Work Transformation

OVERVIEW OF ORIGINAL VERSUS CHANGED JOB-TASKS-SKILLS

Job Role	CURRENT Finance Executive		444	TRANSFORMED Business Data Analyst		
	Current Tasks	Time Spent		Transformed Tasks	Time Spent	
Tasks	Generate invoices	16 hr		 Generate invoices 	3 min	
	Prepare GST submissions	0.5 hr	Transforming Work with AI and	 Prepare GST submissions 	15 min	
	Collate finance documents	28 hr	Alternative Ways of Working	 Collate finance documents 	60 min	
	Produce financial reports and insights	4 hr	Augmented with digitalisation (e.g., Artificial	 Produce financial reports and insights 	45 min	
			Intelligence, Robotic Process Automation,	 Perform internal finance control 	8 hr	
			Enterprise Resource Planning System)	 Produce BI dashboards 	8 hr	
	Total Time: 48.5 hr Current Skills		>>>	Total Time: 18 hr 3 min New Skills 1. Transactional Accounting 2. Financial Transaction		
Skills	Transactional Accounting Financial Transaction					
	3. Audit Compliance			3. Audit Compliance		
				4. Financial Analysis	4. Financial Analysis	
				5. Business Acumen6. Digital Technology Adoption and Innovation		

The tasks highlighted in **blue** in the transformed chart represent newly added or significantly redesigned tasks that were not part of the Finance Executive's original scope of work. With routine activities increasingly automated, the Finance role was reconstructed to focus on higher-value contributions. These additional tasks strengthen financial governance, embed data-driven insights to support decision-making, and align the role with Cragar's business transformation priorities. They also signal a shift from administrative execution to analytical and strategic responsibilities, requiring the employee to build new skills (highlighted in blue) in financial analysis, business acumen, and digital technology adoption and innovation.

The figures shown in **green** indicate a reduction in task duration, made possible due to technology adoption and augmentation. The time allocated to each task is estimated over the course of a week.

ENABLERS AND CONSIDERATIONS FOR WORK TRANSFORMATION

The Cragar Work Transformation Workshop brought together the key participants from management team, Human Resource department and job incumbent from the Finance department to transform an existing Finance Executive role and examine how it can evolve into a higher value role as Business Data Analyst. The methodology offered a structured, strategic approach to work design. Participants found the experience systematic and eye-opening, especially in identifying blind spots on current tasks and skills, opportunities to enhance job value, aligning tasks to evolving skill needs, creating more meaningful roles within the organisation and validating digitalisation decisions.



Joseph Wong (Managing Director of Cragar Industries):

Over the past months, we at Cragar have gained a deeper appreciation of the 5-step work design process. This has not only shown us how work can be deconstructed, reimagined, and rebuilt, but also how it can empower our people and strengthen our organisation.

Building on this learning, our management team is committed to deploying the methodology across the rest of the organisation. By doing so, we will gain sharper insights into the effectiveness of our transformation efforts, ensure that our strategic projects are validated with evidence, and make more informed decisions about workforce deployment and upskilling.

Most importantly, this approach is not about change for the sake of change. It is about enabling each of us to do more meaningful work, to be more productive, and to take on roles that prepare us for the future. Together, we can scale this journey, build confidence in the process, and create sustainable value for both our people and our organisation."



Key enablers of the successful adoption of work transformation included:



The participation of key stakeholders such as the management team, HR, line managers and job incumbent



A forward-looking management approach that prioritised long-term workforce planning



Openness to a management-employee collaborative conversation



A readiness to explore alternative models for work redeployment



Strong alignment with overarching organisational strategy



Awareness of emerging technologies and AI solutions with potential to enhance or support transformed roles As the work transformation methodology is introduced and applied, several important areas have also emerged that warrant closer attention to maximise its impact. These relate to how time is allocated for workshops, the availability of data and performance metrics, the clarity of frameworks such as ROIP, and the need for strong facilitation and communication with employees. Proactively strengthening these aspects will enable the organisation to embed the methodology more effectively, build confidence within the organisation, and extend its value across roles and workforce planning efforts.



Time Constraints

Workshops were time-intensive especially since participants were new to the methodology. Based on the content of the work transformation methodology, a 2 full day workshop was planned so that participants might experience and practise key elements of the process. However, this was shortened to 2 half-day workshops as participants could not commit 2 full days for the workshop sessions.



Availability of Data on Work Processes (Process Mapping) and **Performance Metrics**

The performance of the selected job role (Finance Executive) required coordination with other upstream collaborators. Role incumbents are very familiar with their tasks and job role, though not so much the skills or performance indicators. The absence of data on work processes and performance metrics resulted in extended time spent on clarifying these areas for the subsequent task-skills classification and other components of the work transformation process (such as ROIP).



ROIP

Participants took a while to understand and differentiate between the four ROIP categories. While specific examples were provided on the goal and value of improvement, the participants required additional conversations for clarity on what they entail. For example, the difference between the category on 'Breakthrough' where improved performance of a task creates exponential value versus the 'Improve Productivity' category was discussed. Understanding improved once examples that were directly relevant to their industry context were introduced, as these helped participants relate the different categories to their own work practices.





Process Facilitation Skills and Mindset

As the organisation replicates the work transformation process, it is crucial that a strong facilitator equipped with process facilitation skills is present to bring the individuals and teams through this process. The ability to stay neutral and draw out responses and insights from all participants, distinguish relevant input (e.g., distinction between an ad-hoc task and a permanent task for the changed Job Role-task-skills components) and manage the entire process will determine the eventual buy-in of participants as well as the overall quality of output.



Addressing Employee Concerns

The employee(s) whose job is being transformed might feel a sense of anxiety stemming from the possible redundancy of his/her job. It is important for the management team to assure the employee about the purpose of the work transformation; not to make him/her redundant, but to help him/her do more meaningful work, be more productive and take on a higher value job.



Value Proposition of Work Transformation

Work Transformation should be positioned as a strategic tool that enables organisations to align roles, skills, and processes with future business needs. By highlighting its ability to inform workforce planning, guide upskilling efforts, and support transformation priorities, participants can better appreciate how the methodology contributes to long-term organisational resilience and competitiveness.

EMBARKING ON THE WORK TRANSFORMATION JOURNEY IN YOUR ORGANISATION

For organisations looking to implement a Skills-First approach through Work Transformation, we suggest partnering with CSFP and implementing the following action steps to get started:



Define Strategic Direction and Needs of Organisation

Define the organisation's strategic goals and the specific challenges it faces, such as technological disruption or challenges in talent acquisition and retention. This ensures that any work transformation effort is not an isolated project but a direct response to a clear business need.



Deconstruct Work and Assess Performance

Gather the key stakeholders / participants whose input are crucial for the Work Transformation conversation. Use a systematic approach to break down existing jobs into their core tasks and skills to understand what work is currently being done, the ROIP and determine which tasks can be automated, redistributed, or redesigned.



Reconstruct Work and Create Higher-Value Roles

Rebuild jobs by reallocating time and tasks from low-value, repetitive activities to higher-value, more strategic, analytical functions. This step often involves exploring potential automation options and work alternatives which align with the priorities of the organisation.



Identify and Develop New Skills

Once the new roles are defined, identify the specific skills required to perform them effectively. Develop a personalised learning plan for upskilling and training employees to bridge the gap between their current capabilities and the new skill requirements.

Support employees transition through skills development and coaching.



Pilot, Scale, and Sustain with Stakeholder Buy-in



Test the transformed role in a small-scale pilot project to refine the process and gather feedback. Ensure key stakeholders, including employees and management, are actively involved to secure their buy-in and address concerns about job redundancy. The goal is to build internal capability to replicate this process, making work transformation a sustainable and scalable practice across the entire organisation.

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Silin is Deputy Director of the Centre for Skills-First Practices at the Institute for Adult Learning, where she oversees the analytics function at the centre. With nearly 20 years' experience, she translates data, behavioural insights, and trend forecasting into strategic workforce solutions. Silin also leads transformation initiatives, working with stakeholders to strengthen organisational and workforce agility. She is both the founding editor and an editorial board member of the *Singapore Labour Journal*.



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Jessline Yap is an organisational development consultant with over two decades of experience driving business transformation through workplace learning. She partners with corporate stakeholders to co-design practical, sustainable solutions that align with strategy, optimise processes, and build internal capability—ensuring measurable impact on performance, productivity, and organisational resilience.



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