

# Lack of data and defined employee responsibilities amongst key challenges to implementing strategic workforce planning, says new research

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Poor data quality and a lack of clearly defined roles and responsibilities within the organisation are amongst the key challenges management faces when implementing vital strategic workforce planning (SWP), according to new research.

The researchers also found that a lack of methodology to execute a strategic workforce planning and the lack of support across all organisational units of the firm were contributing to a slower and less efficient SWP.

This SWP is also becoming more and more vital, with the researchers finding that almost 75% of firms are operating in complex corporate environment in terms of the dimensions of technology, competition and market, where SWP is needed to deal with unexpected uncertainties.

This research was conducted by Ronald Gleich, Professor of Management Practice and Control, and Nils Gimpl, researcher at Frankfurt School of Finance and Management (<https://www.frankfurt-school.de/en/home/>), who were investigating the drivers for implementing SWP, the problems involved and determinants of success.

To do so, the researchers surveyed 123 firms from a wide range of industries, with the interviewees providing insights on their current SWP strategies, their reasons behind implementing these strategies and the challenges they are currently facing.

The researchers also found that the main drivers for implementing SWP were demographic changes, meaning that a great number of employees retire in near future, the labour market situation, where there is a shortage of skilled workers in many regions, industries and occupational groups, and new skill and competency requirements are needed due to ongoing digitisation.

Professor Gleich says,

“The majority of companies are now living in a volatile and unpredictable environment, and it’s vitally important that firms look to strategically plan their workforces, due to a growing number of mega trends affecting our working lives.

“Whether it’s aging populations, the impact of immigration, workforces hiring on a global scale or increased automation and digitisation, workforces need to plan ahead, and there are many challenges stopping them. It’s important HR departments convince the organisation of the importance of planning, in order to effectively do so.”

The results also show that implementing a SWP is positively correlated with better predictive outcomes of key HR functions and measures, whilst companies that used a far-reaching skills management system achieve significantly more precise results with their SWP.

The researchers suggest a number of ways to ensure that this planning is affective as possible. Firms should ensure they learn from other companies mistakes and problems during implementation. They should also look to determine the most appropriate methods for their company, clarify and explain the importance of this to senior leadership, implement a skill management system, and standardise and embed SWP in these systems.

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