

# Workforce Foresighting Hub Episode 4

[00:00:00] I'm Sachin Semage, a Workforce Foresighting Hub coach, and your guest host for today's episode. Joining me, I have two more Workforce Foresighting Hub coaches, Jack Lockhart and Samantha Yar. In this episode, we will delve into their stories and discuss their significant contributions to this project. We will take you through some highlights from the cycles they've been involved in, and explain why it is crucial for you to be engaged in this.

And when I said engaged, it may sound different based on the listener. If you are a technologist, an employer, or an educator in any of these sectors in focus, your involvement is very hands on, and we will get into details [00:01:00] on that in a moment. But even if not, even if you are a regular taxpaying citizen, There is a profound impact in this project that makes at a national level.

All right. As I said, we've got three workforce foresighting coaches in the room today for the coaches corner. And one of the coaches you've already met in the previous episode, Jack Lockhart. And joining with me is also Sam Yahr. Just to introduce ourselves for the sake of the first time listeners and anyone who would like to get to know about What this coaches do and what exactly our role in within this program?

I'd start with Jack first. Would you explain a bit about your background and how you add value to the whole project? Yeah, so I've spent Around 11 years in telecoms, in, uh, manufacturing, in the music industry. So again, this, this broadness of understanding different industries, their technology [00:02:00] challenges, and also where they've got similarities of challenges as well.

I think people think they've always got this, you know, unique challenge. Um, so I think I get to bring that to this, this ability to cut across multiple, uh, multiple industries, multiple different, um, setups and. And help sent us through with the challenges that way. Yeah, brilliant. And Sam? So I've had quite a diverse career myself.

So started off as a mechanical design engineer, working in telecoms and then took a sideline and was actually an entrepreneur for about 16 years. I had my own workforce. I've co founded a retail business and had about 40 employees and had to deal with technology implementation into my own business. And then I decided to step into this role.

I was really pleased to bring back that technical side of my skills, problem solving, helping people through this process to solve [00:03:00] the big challenges. And, you know, I'm really excited to be part of this. Yeah, um, I can resonate with both of you in many different levels. And I quite like this job mainly because of how diverse each of each and one, every one of us are and how different all of us become.

Uh, our skill set is, uh, for example, you come from a very HR, uh, oriented and training background and you come from a different, um, um, training plus entrepreneurship. And then I come from an entirely different background, uh, trained as an engineer, but then into HR and HR tech and data analytics. And the difference I see is though we all are workforce foresighting coaches, the value that we bring.

within the team compliments to get this very agile project. We need to bring out all the talent from different people, different sectors. Yeah. And as coaches, all we do is facilitate that, which brings us out to the next [00:04:00] question placing really well. What is actually a workforce foresighting coach? What do we do here?

What is a foresighting coach? Go on. Okay, so workforce foresighting coach, we guide participants through the process of workforce foresighting through a series of workshops and really we are explaining the principles, explaining what we need them to do. We are facilitating them. It's just enabling, we are enablers that create that platform where the actual leaders of that technology can discuss actual employers who would use those skills in the future can discuss and make changes that would impact at a national level.

So it's, it's quite fascinating to be at the epicenter of that. Yeah, absolutely. Yeah, absolutely. Right. So, um, in terms of, The participation, as I slightly move on to the other side of the story where the participants get [00:05:00] engaged with direct participants, which are the technologists or the educators or the employers.

And we'll get into details on what all of these words mean, but those are the direct participants who will get more hands on with our cycles, who will get direct immediate benefit out of these information that we build. Let's get into the first bit where we discuss about the different types of participants, the direct participants.

Let's get in and grind down what the key roles are and why they should be engaged and why the engagement is so critical to make sure our cycles are

effective. So to begin with, let's. Go to Sam. Sam, what is your take on the employers and why should they be involved in this cycle? Okay, so I think it's really important for the employers, um, to be involved because they're the ones that might be losing sleep at night thinking of this emerging technology that they can see on the, on the horizon [00:06:00] that they need to bring in.

To maintain or indeed gain that competitive global advantage, but they're thinking, okay, there is this technology, but how am I going to get my workforce upskilled or find the right workforce to take this on? So by getting involved, they're getting early insight into what the capabilities their organization and other organizations are going to need to do to get the work done.

So, Definitely important to get involved as an employer, large or small, because you can be in the room with other employers. You can be in the room with the technologists, um, uh, you know, at certain points within the, within the cycle. So that you're getting that early insight. And indeed it's back to that collaboration piece.

Um, the networking it's about proactively planning for the future rather than reacting. And I really feel like, you know, the project [00:07:00] is supported, uh, sponsored by Innovate UK, the ultimate aim is to grow, um, the UK's gross value added. The UK's productivity rates and as employers, uh, they are the ones that really drive that.

So, um, employers want to increase that and optimise that productivity. And by being involved, they can take a proactive step towards that. I'd like to drill a dig deeper with Jack on that. I think the other challenge with it, um, Satyen, And I, I get to, I get to speak from this from someone who spent 11 years in industries, developing the skills and knowledge to training programs, the competency programs to, to support people, people that often by the time you're talking about skills, it's too late.

The technology has been chosen. It has been implemented. And it's at that point that they realized we've got no skill or the skills skills we expected just aren't [00:08:00] there. So it's an opportunity to look ahead. Uh, and. I've got this kind of belief that today's, today's skills challenge was yesterday's foresight and opportunity.

So if we operate in that same way, don't be surprised that that skills challenge five years ahead is the one you had an opportunity to look at. So you're right, you know, some, some organizations do not have the luxury of it. I've worked in

organizations where it's hard enough trying to get a, uh, a five week or five month for you down the line of what, what, what you're trying to do, let alone a, a five year.

So it does require a different mindset set. You don't turn all your resources to it, but it does require you to look strategically forward and say, you know, we, we know this is going to happen again. Let's at least begin to look at it. So, yeah, I think, yes, there are today's fires to fight. You're going to be doing it again in five years time if you don't look at it now.

I think as well, it gives them a real strategic insight, um, as, as, um, employers [00:09:00] that they get to see it above what the skills challenge is. They're seeing what capabilities, what, what, what do they need to actually have in place to, to get the work done? I come back to that point. Um, so. You know, from this, you know, they get those future job roles, those future occupational profiles.

Okay, they know they're going to need to employ these type of people in the future or upskill these type of people, but they actually get to see the capabilities that they need to do. And from from a point of view, you know, as an entrepreneur, you know, in my in my previous role to actually know What I, what I can do to actually get the best out of my business and my people, uh, further away from that top level is extremely powerful and can drive the whole strategy of the business forward.

Moving on from the skills bit, because now let's assume that all [00:10:00] the technologists or the, or the, um, or the, employers agreed and they are all on board with it. But then still, if we have the list of capabilities that we need to make change in the future, there is a different set of people who needs to actually make that a reality, who need train those employers, upskill, retrain, do whatever that they'd like to do.

And that's the educators who would make the changes actively to the curriculums to reflect what we are recommending. It is paramount that we get them involved in this cycle as well. So in your opinion, Jack, what is the key value that educators bring into this whole system? Again, look, I'll put my previous educator hat on and it was very common to be caught too late in the processes.

You know, we've, we've identified the technology. We've, we've, we've made the capital investment as an organization and oh my God, oh my God, oh my [00:11:00] God, we need. People trained now, and you're coming in too late, so

by bringing educators in. into this process, there's an opportunity to do a number of things.

Essentially, you get to look over that fence a lot earlier. And when we look at the education system or education provision in the UK, you've got anything that could be, you know, continuous personal development, short, quick, you can turn those, those products around a lot faster, but, but we also have degrees and we have masters and we have apprenticeships and we have HNC, you know, we, we have a change in, um, educational landscape.

And they take two, three, four, five years to turn around. So there is an argument. I made this when myself and Andrew from Offshore Renewables sat down. Is that a degree that you enter on today can be five years old. You know, that started five years ago. So if you [00:12:00] can get ahead of that and cut that sort of lag down, if you know, it takes five years, you can begin to get into that system now, the changes that are required to match the adoption of the technology.

So, so there's, there's one is it helps, it helps change that, that, that skills ecosystem, the opportunity and the provision. The other is it, it gets, it gets people involved and networking. You develop collaborations, you develop networks as a result. So I think the really big part of that, you get to position yourself as part of the solution and not just tagged on as a tagged on to the outputs at the end.

So there is an opportunity there where you become a part of the solution and educators and the education ecosystem becomes part of the solution. The educators and then we have the technologists who are the key partners of these technologies that we are discussing. The set of stakeholders who are doing their own research, [00:13:00] who are trying to bring this technology from white papers or research papers to scalable solutions that are being actually used out there in the industries.

Who are technologists? Are they the research engineers or are they the employers, but in a different level? What's your take on this? The technologists, the domain specialists, the people we bring in early into this process do come from a very sort of broad church. So you're right. The people who are actively doing the research out there, doing the hard work of writing the papers, helping move things through, you know, technology readiness levels.

But we have had experiences as well. on cycles where there are people in at that technologist or domain specialist level to come and participate. They're early

adopters. They're the people that have really rolled their sleeves up, uh, and got involved. So yeah, really broad church in terms of the involvement, but that's the magic of that, being able to hone and get that, that experience from people.

Cause you're right, we go back to, we're not technical [00:14:00] experts. We're not technical experts. They work within the area. of the technology is going, because the technology won't have been adopted yet. But they've got specialisms to go, okay, we need to move from this point A, where we're standing now to point B.

So, and on top of that, they may not come from inside industry already. You know, if these are new technologies that are being adopted, you know, but they're used in other industries. That's an opportunity to bring those, those technologies in it. So that, that, that technologist fate, you know, if people who wear that hat in our process, it really is a melting pot.

People who are in the industry, people who are from outside the industry, who can bring that technology expertise and that different way of looking at things. It really is an interesting space. And you're right. You know, we've had really broad amount of people there, but I'm never, you know, sorry, I'm not, I'm always.

always beautifully surprised [00:15:00] by what people bring to it and the passion and the detail and the desire to get it right. That's that. That's that always shines through. Yeah. And, and one of the key meta analysis or key observations, meta observations that we've made is also that a new technology for an industry is a very mature technology for another industry.

Yeah. Because of that, you get the opportunity of looking cross industries because of the way we analyze our data. You have a way of looking into cross industries to see what other industries will have the training requirements already sorted for them, which is, um, a one to one replacement, or maybe a replacement with a bit of changing around.

And I think we can come up with like many different examples if we, if we have the time. Well, I've got one very specific example that that cross cutting approach. So, you know, when we've done an analysis on, on one of the cycles, one of the potential education [00:16:00] opportunities that came out the end was, uh, a chief brewer.

Now we haven't done any cycles around the brewing industry, but we have done cycles around. Sort of manufacturing in, uh, vaccine development. And there

was a, there was a crossover between the need to be sterile, run a sterile process, you know, move, uh, sort of move different liquids between batches, et cetera.

And there was that crossover, but because we've been able to do that and bring the right group together, it locked that new opportunity. We would never have looked there. In the past, we would never have gone. Actually, we could take 80 percent of what a chief brewer does and begin to upskill people that way or top it up.

So yeah, it creates these really interesting, sometimes curious, and sometimes you double check yourself to the cross cutting opportunities, but it only comes from that melting pot. Yeah. Exactly. People we bring in. All three of us have been in the job for a while now. Has there any time been any instances where you felt like [00:17:00] you stopped for a moment and you realized, well, we actually.

Yeah. So, uh, I was involved, uh, I was involved, um, supporting Jack, um, in a recent cycle for the National Manufacturing Institute of Scotland. You got that right. Really good. Yeah. On the first try. And, um, foresighting in, for the shipbuilding industry. So robotics and automate automation in welding and. A real penny drop moment was after we'd worked with technologists and gathered 178 capabilities for how to get this emerging technology into it into the industry.

Um, a key industry player in our employers workshop, Uh, when we presented the future occupational profiles, where we draw those capabilities into job roles of the future, we presented them to be refined and reviewed and he actually went, Oh gosh, you know, this is, I can really [00:18:00] see where we're going now.

These are the job roles of the future. It's all coming together. All that hard work we did, you know, all that hard work that we've done so far during this cycle has come together and I can actually see what we're going for. Um, so that was a penny drop moment for him. And for me as well and felt really powerful.

Yeah. Yeah. That's, that's a quite good observation. And me being a bit of a nerd on that, my, my observation is how much we use the power of new technologies ourselves, because we can always tell others to like use new technologies and all of that. But unless you actually walk the talk, then you are just preaching to the, to the, to the crowds.

And my experience was the use of. So, thanks a lot. Yeah, you're welcome. very much. Okay. Yes, So, very much. And so, so much for coming and speaking to us today. And we want to for always listening to our podcast. What happened is that [00:19:00] we have reached out to all the organizations in our department that are on your section, structures the future of that workforce.

And then we look at all the IEF 8 standards, which must be in the thousands, so if not in the ten thousands, all the IEF 8 standards, and then try to match those with a MAP and GAP analysis to understand how much we have in terms of training so far to fit that future requirement. and how much we don't have and what we need to do to bridge that gap.

And I don't think if a person is to do that manually to a semantic match, we would only get like two cycles done for two years with 10 people working on it. And still the accuracy would be much less than what we do with the power of AI that we use so far. Cause it, it, makes our lives so much easier in a very good way where we can focus on what matters while the AI takes care of [00:20:00] the hard work.

And Jack, would you, would you like to add to that? So I think the tools that we've developed and we've honed and refined. Have given us two penny drop moments as well. So one is we have, and, you know, and we use this in a sort of a more focused way now is we can use our artificial intelligence tools to begin to suggest potential capabilities where there might be gaps.

You know, when we work in early on in the process, we say, right, you know, if we're getting people who've always operated in the same way before, we're likely to get the same capabilities so we can use that to begin to see the conversation and we get a penny drop moment where people are reviewing these capabilities and say, yep, we need that in the future.

without them realizing actually that's been, that's not from an existing dataset that's been suggested through, through a large language model. Just, just for the clarity of the audience, uh, what we are talking here specifically is that we use the power of AI to come up with capabilities that future might hold.

by giving them prompts and these [00:21:00] capabilities are not in any database. This is where we perceive there are gaps currently, and we can't find something that exists already. So you get a penny drop moment whereby using those tools, people go, yeah, we do need that for the future. It may not have been thought about before.



And Sachin, you talked about this idea of a mapping gap analysis that we do. So once we gathered all the information, we then compare it to, you know, Institute for Apprenticeships, their occupational. Standards and the example that I talked about before this idea, when we look about the future and change and especially change around, you know, people and skills and job roles, one of the big things can be is how much change are you saying I'm gonna have to completely forget everything I've known before, and all of the training standards we've used before to tackle this new challenge and a penny drop moment can often be, no, there are things out there that get us 40, 50, 60, 70, 80 percent of the way there.

And you just need to tailor the rest. So I think the [00:22:00] scale of the change or the smaller scale of the change, it was really, you know, that may have been thought about that can be quite empowering. And look, conversely, the other side is we do need a lot of change in this industry. We just didn't know what we need to change into and we're able to.

with a, you know, a level of accuracy and a, you know, a level of, uh, sort of forensics around that say, this is what we believe is, is required. Let's take a break now from, and a step back from what we've been discussing and take our workforce foresighting, um, coach hats off and discuss the broader impact that this has, and this could be the students that who are, who are studying, trying to.

Pick, figure out what their best higher, higher study choices are, or this could be a mid career employee looking for that next transition. This has impact for them. And as I, I'd like to start this from a parent's [00:23:00] point of view, because both of you are parents, what is in your mind, not as future workforce foresighting coaches, but as parents?

on the changes that are happening, which are so rapid that you don't know what is expected to be out there when your children goes to higher studies. What is your opinion on that? Well, yeah, as a parent, you know, I want my children to have interesting and fulfilling careers. I want them to be excited when they go to look at their education options next.

So wouldn't it be great if there were, it was educational provision that would draw them into an industry where they're taking on emerging technologies. For job roles that we, we, we actually don't know. So, you know, there is that interesting statistic around, you know, 20 years time, there's going to be lots of job [00:24:00] roles that haven't even been thought of yet.

Well, actually we're there thinking about them or facilitating that process. So from a point of view, as a parent, you know, it's really, really, I really want, I'm

happy to be part. Facilitating that future job role for them. My two are young enough that actually the technologies that we're talking about today will be long gone or they'll actually be sort of well embedded.

They'll be the norm. So, you know, I'm a governor of a school as well. And I, you know, I see that that sort of journey through it's the fact that it's being thought about and it's not, yeah, look, we get to play a part in that as coaches, absolutely. But there is something bigger than this. That is, there is a recognition that.

The skill system and the education system we have at the moment does, uh, does a job, but there is this gap here at the moment, how do we look a little bit further forward? So the fact it's been thought about gives me a level of confidence in the future that when. Mind you get to that point, somebody's talked about those jobs of the [00:25:00] future and they've got that clarity around moving into an industry or an area that's going to be adopting a new technology.

It's going to be thought about. And the fact that we create that information out there is enabling everyone else to make that decision a more informed one. And what about someone who is in mid career? Well, Sam said it before, it's about. Being informed. It's about pathways. It's about where are the similarities that I can move across?

So actually how easy is it to transition to create that just transition. But, but the other side is. It's that lead time. It has to happen. It has to happen now. We are giving people the ability to look three, four, five years down the line and support people through that. So I think it's, if you're mid career looking for a career change, you know, this is the opportunity to be supported through that or, or to, or for the support to be created, um, for, [00:26:00] for, for that to happen across industry.

Yeah, I agree. I mean, it's pretty much. A national wide change that we are making, we are involved in fabricating the future of the workforce and workforce. I'd like to say workforces. Engaging, being engaged and informed in the workforce is something like being engaged and informed in politics because you can ignore and say, I don't want to be engaged, but it's going to affect you anyway, so might as well make that informed judgment rather than being disengaged with it.

And this is the best platform and this is the best place for you to have a look at it, get a glimpse of it and make more informed decisions. And hopefully there'll

be those CPD, those short form educational pieces that they can start to get involved with. Yeah, yeah, you know, and that could be driven, uh, by private training or bring it into the boot camps world, you know, the boot camps world, you know, where you can, [00:27:00] you know, work in your current job, but actually get that extra training to then, yeah, make that proactive leap into your next career choice.

Yeah. Brilliant. And before we wrap up, um, just any final words that you would like to have made be for the indirect audience that we just meant we're talking about or made be for the direct audience or the key stakeholders that would engage in our cycles. Do you have anything else to add? There's an opportunity to embrace this process.

And, and Andrew in a previous podcast talks about it really strongly in terms of, you know, this is still a developing process that we are refining how this looks like, and the only way that we will land it, refine it, perfect it is by people. Being involved. And that is going to require people to embrace the opportunity, embrace that curiosity, but what is it?

How do we get involved? I think that's the big, I think that's the biggest part of the participation from curiosity or from wanting to embrace it. That's [00:28:00] that, that, that would be my, my biggest recommendation to people. Love that following your curiosity. Definitely do get involved, you know, have a look at the website.

Um, You know, we, we need participants, you know, from, from, from every angle. And I'm sure that we could definitely involve you in an upcoming cycle. And one final words is just that one thing that I'd like to highlight is irrespective of whether you focus on the skills or not, the technologies that we are focusing on.

are going to come out. Yeah. They are going to be ready in three to five years. Yeah. So it's whether you put a focus on the technology and on skills. Or you focus on the technology and then decide what to do with the skills. It's about that proactiveness that you focus on. And the only way to make it better is by the experts who are listening to this podcast [00:29:00] to be engaged with it, to change the fabric of the skills of the UK and the future of the UK in, in, in any industry.

And, um, with that, we'd like to conclude. today's podcast. Thank you very much. for joining. And in the upcoming podcast, we can expect lots of other interviews from different cycles that we've done and coming up cycles that we

are about to run and lots of other information that you. probably would be interested to listen.

And, um, I'd like to thank everyone for listening to this podcast and we'll see you next month. Thank you for listening to the Workforce Foresighting Hub podcast. If you would like more information, please look at the podcast show notes or visit our website and follow us on LinkedIn. Thank you very much.