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## Shift 2018: Reimagining Work and Bringing More Meaning to the Employee Experience

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One January 23rd, we brought together some of the most innovative leaders and thinkers in HR and people development to discuss how to infuse greater meaning into the employee experience. [Shift 2018](#) offered a jam-packed, whirlwind tour of content that left us all feeling energized, inspired, and more dedicated than ever to our mission to help professionals everywhere pursue their lives with greater clarity, purpose, and passion.

“We are human beings first, employees second.” — Alexi Robichaux

Our CEO, [Alexi Robichaux](#), set the tone by highlighting BetterUp’s research findings that make the case for meaning at work being critical not only for individual well-being, but also for the bottom line (more on this soon). We then heard this message elaborated and reinforced

throughout the day. He told the packed room that **for most people, work is about half as meaningful as it could be.**

Harvard Business School Professor [Robin J. Ely](#) spoke of purpose as key to [inclusive leadership](#). Leaders seeking to overcome the double-bind of traditionally male leadership qualities can find a solution in an orientation toward the group's broader goals. Regardless of gender, **leaders who focus on how teams can achieve their purpose outperform those focused on how they are perceived by others.**

Patty McCord, Workplace Innovator, Culture and Leadership Consultant and Former Chief Talent Officer, Netflix, reminded us that we're all collaborators in work and we must look at everything we do (including annual performance reviews) and ask, "why?" Because if you don't, you're wasting your time. To find great talent, we need to start with the problem and look for people who will help solve that problem and not just focus on who we believe is the "right" culture fit. [Culture will form](#) around them.

"We are moving into a world of continuous exponential change." —  
John Seely Brown

[Fred Kofman](#), LinkedIn's VP of Leadership and Organizational Development, emphasized that **employees without purpose will not deliver the same quality of work as those who see the larger picture.** He illustrated his message by bringing an audience member onto the stage and — in his famous way — offered a "live" coaching session. Central to his message were two key insights:

- It's everyone's job in the company to, first and foremost, ensure that the organization achieves its intended purpose.
- Counterintuitively, the hardest organizational problems — aligning people and systems around core goals — have the softest solutions: meaning and purpose.

Amazon Board Member and Co-chair of Deloitte Center for the Edge, John Seely Brown blew us away with the intellectual injection that *unlearning* is as important as learning, because the successful practices that got us to where we are today are so rapidly outmoded. To overcome the "tyranny of the present," we need to engage in unlearning, while simultaneously cultivating the practice of [pragmatic imagination](#).

Teams will become the organizing structure of the corporation

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[Josh Bersin](#), Principal and Founder of Bersin by Deloitte, closed our event by emphasizing that employee engagement will become a core business strategy. Incorporating insights from Davos as it was happening, he told the audience that **the half-life of job skills and specialized knowledge shortens**, and re-training becomes the rule, management will need a new toolkit to support employees through their evolving responsibilities. Teams will become the organizing structure of the corporation of the future. Consequently, leadership skills oriented toward team unity will become increasingly valuable.

## Explore the Digital Conference Experience

Over the next few weeks, we'll be sharing exclusive learnings from select sessions. For those of you who missed Shift 2018, you can view session recordings, speaker slides, and other materials through [the Digital Conference Experience](#). We'll update this post with new content as we make it available.

The conversation we sparked at Shift 2018 only emphasizes that for organizations to succeed in this new world of work, they need to reimagine the employee experience with a refined focus on creating meaning and purpose.

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