From Sunset to Sunrise: Rethinking Skills Across Core Business Functions

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ABSTRACT This white paper presents a cross-functional skills transformation strategy across six key business areas, highlighting emerging ("sunrise") and declining ("sunset") skills. Based on Draup intelligence, WEF data, and government labor insights, it guides HR and transformation leaders in preparing for the future of work.

Executive Summary

Six core business functions are transforming significantly Commercial, Digital, Engineering & Security, Finance, Procurement & Supply Chain, and Global Business Services (GBS). Each is moving away from traditional methods toward more tech-driven models, creating demand for new capabilities and phasing out old ones.

Highlights include:

- **Commercial:** Shifting from basic selling to value-based strategies. New skills include dynamic pricing, digital customer engagement, and strategic partnerships.
- **Digital (IT/Data/AI):** Becoming the engine of innovation. The needed skills include AI, cloud architecture, real-time data, and cybersecurity. Routine IT support is decreasing due to the increasing use of automation.
- **Engineering & Security:** Merging hardware, software, and cybersecurity. In-demand skills include system modeling, embedded AI, electric vehicles, and safety design.
- **Finance:** Evolving into a strategic role with focus on forecasting, ESG, and analytics. Advanced modeling, real-time insights, and risk analysis are key. Manual bookkeeping and basic accounting tasks are being automated.
- **Procurement & Supply Chain:** Moving toward agile, digital, and sustainable operations. Key skills include supply chain analytics, blockchain, and circular economy strategies. Manual processing and low-tech logistics roles are being phased out.
- **Global Business Services (GBS):** Transforming from clerical support to digital service delivery. Skills in automation, AI-enabled services, and customer experience are rising, while traditional data entry and routine tasks are being phased out.

Chapter 2: Commercial Function: From Transactional to Value-Driven

Sunrise (Emerging) Skills – Commercial: New in-demand skills in the commercial domain include:

- **Dynamic Pricing Analytics** – the ability to use data science and market signals to set and adjust prices in real time for optimal revenue.
- **Digital Customer Engagement** – expertise in omni-channel customer outreach, social selling, and CRM analytics to personalize the buyer experience.
- **Strategic Partnership Management** – skills in building and managing alliances or ecosystems, aligning multiple stakeholders for mutual commercial benefit.
- **Advanced Contract Structuring** – proficiency in crafting complex deal structures and commercial terms for large-scale or long-term agreements.
- **Consultative Sales Leadership** – higher-level commercial acumen to act as a *trusted advisor*, aligning solutions with customer's strategic goals (an extension of global commercial leadership).

These emerging competencies reflect a more analytical and consultative approach to commercial roles. **Analytical thinking** and creativity top the list of core skills sought by employers globally, which aligns with the Commercial function's need for data-driven strategy and innovative deal-making.

Sunset (Declining) Skills – Commercial: Several traditional commercial skills are diminishing in importance amid automation and changing buyer behavior:

- **Manual/Intuitive Pricing & Sales Tactics** – relying on gut feel, static price lists, or one-size-fits-all sales pitches is less effective now that competitors use real-time data to tailor offerings. Algorithmic pricing tools and data-backed sales playbooks are replacing such ad-hoc approaches.
- **Transactional Selling Techniques** – skills focused on pushing single product transactions (cold-calling scripts, basic persuasion tactics) are sunset as the focus shifts to solution selling and long-term relationship building.
- **In-Person-Only Customer Interaction** – exclusively face-to-face sales skills are less critical in an era of digital channels. The rise of video conferencing and self-service portals means salespeople must excel in digital communication; those who have only mastered in-person networking must upskill or risk obsolescence.
- **Sales Support Tasks** – Tasks like order entry and invoice processing, once handled manually, are now baseline candidates for automation. What's changed is the sophistication: modern systems not only process transactions but also validate, flag anomalies, and integrate with predictive analytics.

SUNRISE SKILLS

SKILL	WHY IT'S SUNRISE
Subscription Pricing Strategy	Supports Power-by-the-Hour, SaaS, and DaaS models
Value-Based Selling	Aligns with outcomes-based contracts and service transformation
Digital Product Monetization	Needed to commercialize SaaS, PaaS, and data services
Customer Success Management	Ensures long-term value realization in service-based and recurring revenue models
Commercial Data Analytics	Used in pricing, contract optimization, performance benchmarking
Contract-as-a-Service Structuring	For flexible, usage-based, and digital commercial agreements
Sustainability-Linked Pricing	Tied to CO_2 emissions reduction or energy efficiency performance
Platform Ecosystem Management	Growing importance of managing digital aviation and service platforms
Global Strategic Partnerships	Essential for SMR, hybrid propulsion, and regional growth strategies
XaaS Business Modelling	Understanding how to design and sell "Everything-as-a-Service" offers

SUNSET SKILLS

SKILL	WHY IT'S SUNSET
One-Time Capital Equipment Selling	Shift to service- and outcome-based monetization
Static Cost-Plus Pricing	Replaced by dynamic, usage-based, and performance-based pricing
Siloed Sales Process Management	Commercial teams now work cross-functionally with product, digital, and operations
Manual Proposal Writing	Replaced by AI-enabled deal structuring and CPQ (Configure Price Quote) platforms
Legacy B2B CRM Practices	Advanced customer intelligence and telemetry are transforming engagement models
Transactional Bid Management	Shift toward consultative, co-created and lifecycle-focused proposals
Local-Only Deal Structuring	Most offerings now require global scale and cross-border regulatory considerations

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Chapter 3: Digital Function: IT & Data as an Innovation Backbone

Sunrise (Emerging) Skills – Digital

Demand is rising for advanced digital skills that were rare or non-existent a decade ago. Key emerging areas include:

- **AI and Machine Learning**: Building and deploying AI/ML models, now among the fastest-growing global skill areas.
- **Real-Time Data Orchestration**: Designing pipelines for streaming and IoT data, enabling predictive and real-time decision-making.
- **Cloud-Native Architecture**: Proficiency in platforms like AWS and Azure, and microservices for scalable, distributed systems.
- **Digital Twin Simulation**: Creating virtual replicas of physical systems, blending software, engineering, and data expertise.
- **Cybersecurity and Networks**: Skills in ethical hacking, threat analysis, and secure coding to counter rising cyber risks.
- **DevOps and Automation**: Implementing CI/CD pipelines and infrastructure-as-code for faster, agile delivery.

These skills align with global forecasts: technical capabilities (AI, cloud, cybersecurity) combined with human strengths (agility, creative problem-solving) will shape the future workforce.

Sunset (Declining) Skills – Digital

As digital evolves, some traditional roles are waning:

- **Legacy Systems Management**: Maintaining outdated systems is declining as firms migrate to modern cloud solutions.
- **Routine IT Support**: Tasks like password resets and basic troubleshooting are increasingly automated via chatbots and scripts.

- **Skill Silos**: Specialists limited to narrow tasks (e.g., DBAs without automation skills) risk obsolescence in a multidisciplinary environment.

Chapter4: Engineering & Security: Integrating Advanced Tech and Safety

Sunrise (Emerging) Skills – Engineering & Security
Emerging skills reflect the integration of software, systems thinking, and security into core engineering:

- **Model-Based Systems Engineering (MBSE):** Designing and simulating complex, multi-domain systems using modeling tools
- **Embedded AI & Software Engineering:** Integrating machine learning into physical products (e.g. IoT devices, autonomous drones), particularly where AI is deployed on the edge.
- **Advanced EV and Green-Tech Engineering:** Expertise in batteries, power electronics, and renewable systems is growing as electrification drives demand for roles in EVs and sustainable energy.
- **Secure-by-Design Cyber Engineering:** Building security into systems from the start, including encryption, threat modeling, and zero-trust architecture—now expected of engineers, not just IT.
- **Integrated Safety Engineering:** Ensuring functional safety in autonomous systems, including certifications like ISO 26262 and skills in risk assessment and analytics.
- **Additive Manufacturing & CAD/CAM:** Using 3D printing, generative design, and advanced simulation to enable rapid prototyping and AI-optimized geometries.

Sunset (Declining) Skills – Engineering & Security
As technology advances, some skills are losing relevance:

- **Purely Mechanical Skill Sets:** Mechanical engineers without software or electrical knowledge are increasingly limited, especially as EVs replace ICE technologies.
- **Manual Drafting and 2D CAD:** Traditional drafting and 2D CAD proficiency alone no longer meet industry expectations—3D modeling and simulation are the new baseline.
- **Isolated Electrical/Electronics Skills:** Electronics engineers without programming or IoT integration capabilities are being eclipsed by those with hybrid expertise.
- **Reactive Cybersecurity Approaches:** Post-incident tactics like manual log reviews or perimeter-only defenses are being replaced by proactive, integrated security practices.

Chapter 5: Finance Function: Toward Strategic, Tech-Enabled Finance

Sunrise (Emerging) Skills – Finance
Modern finance teams require talent with strong analytical, technological, and strategic capabilities:

- **Advanced Financial Modeling & Analytics:** Creating dynamic models using Excel, Python, or specialized tools to forecast scenarios and support decisions, moving beyond static budgets.
- **Digital Finance & Automation (FinTech):** Using tools like RPA, AI forecasting, and ERP analytics (e.g., SAP, Oracle Cloud). As automation handles routine transactions, finance professionals are needed to manage, interpret, and optimize these systems.
- **ESG & Sustainable Finance:** Applying ESG metrics, reporting frameworks, and green financing tools. Finance is responsible for tracking sustainability performance and aligning investment decisions with ESG goals.
- **Risk Analytics & Mitigation:** Using data to identify and assess financial and operational risks, including supply chain volatility and currency exposure. Competence in statistical tools and scenario modeling is increasingly vital.
- **Real-Time Performance Monitoring:** Leveraging dashboards, KPIs, and visualization tools to deliver continuous business insights. Finance must now steer decisions proactively—not just through month-end reports.
- **Strategic Business Partnering:** Communicating insights, influencing decisions, and collaborating cross-functionally. Soft skills—like storytelling with data and strategic thinking—are critical for finance professionals to lead at the executive table.

Chapter 6: Sunset (Declining) Skills – Finance

Several traditional skills are losing relevance due to automation and system centralization:

- **Manual Transaction Processing:** Tasks like invoice entry and check cutting are now automated or offshored, reducing demand for clerical roles focused solely on these activities.
- **Basic Accounting in Isolation:** Knowledge of entries and reconciliations remains important, but execution is system-driven. Professionals with narrow, task-based accounting roles risk obsolescence without broader analytical or tech skills.
- **Report Compilation (Without Insight):** Assembling reports is increasingly automated; the value lies in interpreting data, not just compiling it.
- **Single-Domain Financial Specialties:** Narrow roles (e.g., only payroll or collections) are often automated or merged into broader responsibilities. Versatility across finance, tech, and compliance is now expected.
- **Legacy Software Proficiency:** Familiarity with outdated systems (e.g., desktop spreadsheets or legacy ERP platforms) is becoming less useful as organizations shift to cloud-based and AI-enabled tools.

While these sunset skills aren't entirely obsolete, they are being absorbed into automated systems or centralized in Global Business Services (GBS) hubs. As a result, finance professionals in business units are increasingly freed from clerical work and focused on high-value analysis and strategy—accelerating the shift in required skillsets across the finance function.

SUNRISE SKILLS

SKILL	RELEVANCE TO ROLLS-ROYCE'S FUTURE MODELS
Subscription & Recurring Revenue Accounting	Critical for SaaS, Power-by-the-Hour, and DaaS/PaaS models
Financial Modeling for XaaS	Supports pricing, profitability, and scalability of as-a-service offerings
Value-Based Revenue Recognition (IFRS 15 expertise)	Key to managing outcomes-based contracts
Scenario Planning & Predictive Forecasting	Needed to model uncertainties in demand, service usage, and long-term contracts
Digital Cost Allocation & Usage Tracking	Tracks platform and data service utilization for financial transparency
Carbon Accounting / ESG-linked Financials	Aligns with Rolls-Royce's push into sustainable aviation and SMRs
Commercial Finance Business Partnering	Finance embedded into product and platform teams to co-drive monetization
Data-Driven Decision Support (FP&A 2.0)	Advanced analytics, driver-based planning, and real-time dashboards
IP Valuation & Intangible Asset Management	Important for digital twins, software, and data licensing models
Outcome-Based KPI Alignment	Tied to uptime, efficiency, and CO_2 reduction—not just traditional profit metrics

SUNSET SKILLS

SKILL	WHY IT'S BECOMING LESS RELEVANT
CapEx-Centric Financial Planning	Shift toward OpEx-heavy service and subscription models
Manual Journal Entry & Reporting	Automated by ERP and AI-powered finance systems
Linear Budgeting Techniques	Replaced by dynamic, scenario-based, driver-led planning
Siloed Finance Functions	Finance must now collaborate deeply with commercial, product, and engineering teams
Project-Based Costing Without Usage Insight	Inadequate for tracking profitability of as-a-service products
Historical Variance Analysis Focus	Less useful in fast-evolving, forward-looking service models
Fixed ROI/NPV Modeling	Inflexible for subscription models with rolling value realization
One-Time Product Margin Tracking	Fails to account for long-tail revenue streams from service models

Chapter7: Procurement & Supply Chain: Building a Digital, Resilient Supply Network

Sunrise (Emerging) Skills – Procurement & Supply Chain

In-demand skills reflect digital integration and strategic thinking:

- **Supply Chain Digitalization & Analytics:** Using tools like blockchain for traceability and AI for forecasting and risk modeling. Professionals who can map multi-tier supply chains and predict disruptions via machine learning are highly valued.
- **Blockchain and IoT Applications:** Applying blockchain to verify provenance and IoT to track shipments or monitor conditions in real time. These tools boost transparency and trust—e.g., Costco's use of DNA molecular tags to ensure cotton authenticity.
- **Supplier Ecosystem Management:** Designing resilient networks through multi-sourcing, supplier development, and strategic collaboration. This goes beyond transactional vendor management to include relationship-building and risk mitigation.
- **Agile & Lean Operations:** Applying Agile methods and lean principles to rapidly adjust logistics and eliminate inefficiencies. These practices enable fast, cost-effective responses to market shifts.
- **Sustainable and Circular Supply Chains:** Incorporating sustainability into procurement—assessing carbon footprints, using circular economy practices, and selecting suppliers based on environmental and social criteria.
- **Advanced Logistics Planning:** Optimizing last-mile delivery, warehouse automation, and contingency strategies (e.g., 3D printing parts onsite). Those

who innovate using analytics to reduce cost or time in distribution are in high demand.

The intersection of tech and logistics is where job growth is strongest. Roles that blend analytics with operational coordination—such as logisticians—are projected to grow significantly.

Sunset (Declining) Skills – Procurement & Supply Chain
Several traditional skills are losing relevance:

- **Single-Sourcing and Rigid Just-in-Time Practices:** Over-optimized, lean models exposed vulnerabilities during crises. Solely focusing on cost without factoring in risk or flexibility is outdated.
- **Low-Tech Sourcing:** Relying on personal networks and manual RFQs is declining. E-sourcing platforms and analytics-driven procurement are now the standard.

Chapter8 : Global Business Services (GBS): Transforming Support Functions through Automation and Analytics

Sunrise Skills – GBS
Modern GBS teams need a mix of process expertise, tech skills, and customer focus:

- **Hyper-Automation & RPA:** Identifying and implementing automation using tools like UiPath or Automation Anywhere; certified professionals who can manage bots are in demand.
- **AI-Enabled Service Design:** Embedding AI (e.g., chatbots, smart ticket routing) into workflows and redesigning processes for human-AI collaboration.
- **Data Analytics & Process Mining:** Using data tools to find inefficiencies, track KPIs, and drive continuous improvement.
- **CX/EX Optimization:** Enhancing user experience through journey mapping, UX design, and service-level improvements.
- **Global Process Leadership:** Leading standardized processes across regions with a focus on compliance, governance, and change management.
- **Multilingual & Cross-Cultural Skills:** Supporting global operations with language fluency and cultural awareness.

Sunset Skills – GBS
Traditional, manual tasks are being automated or replaced:

- **Scripted Call Handling:** AI manages basic queries; agents now need problem-solving and communication skills.
- **Single-Process Roles Without Tech:** Specializing in one manual task is risky—tech fluency and flexibility are now essential.

- **Manual Report Creation:** BI tools replace routine reporting; value lies in analysis, not formatting.
- **Language-Only Roles:** AI handles translation; staff must also resolve issues and apply context-specific knowledge.

SUNRISE SKILLS

SKILL	WHY IT'S SUNRISE (EMERGING IMPORTANCE)
Robotic Process Automation (RPA) Implementation	RPA bots are essential for automating repetitive tasks in shared services, driving cost reduction and accuracy improvements.
AI-Powered Chatbots & Virtual Assistants	AI, including GenAI, is enhancing customer service and IT support, with skills in managing conversational AI for 24/7 support roles in high demand.
Process Mining & Analytics	Process mining tools and data analytics are crucial for identifying inefficiencies and recommending optimizations in business processes for continuous improvement in GBS.
ITIL 4 and ITSM Tool Expertise	Mastery of ITIL 4 and platforms like ServiceNow is crucial for efficient, customer-centric IT service delivery in GBS organizations.
Cloud Infrastructure & SaaS Management (GBS)	Skills in migrating and managing shared service applications on cloud platforms like ERP, CRM, and HCM are in demand as GBS transitions to cloud-based operations.
Data Security & Compliance in Shared Services	GBS professionals skilled in data privacy, security, and compliance (e.g., GDPR, ISO 27001) are crucial for safeguarding sensitive data across global processes.
Cross-Functional Analytics & Reporting	GBS professionals skilled in integrating data across functions provide insights that support strategic decision-making.
Lean Six Sigma (Continuous Improvement) with Digital Integration	GBS experts using Lean Six Sigma and automation drive process efficiency and quality improvements.

SUNSET SKILLS

SKILL	WHY IT'S SUNSET (DECLINING RELEVANCE)
Manual Data Entry & Processing	Automation is reducing manual, repetitive tasks in GBS, making traditional roles increasingly obsolete without upskilling.
Legacy On-Prem System Administration	Legacy enterprise system management is declining as cloud and SaaS adoption requires modernization skills.
Phone-and-Email-Only Support	Traditional support via phone and email is declining as digital self-service and automation take precedence.
Set-and-Forget Processes	Continuous process improvement is essential in GBS; outdated approaches lacking refinement will fall behind.
Paper-Based Documentation & Approvals	Managing paper trails for approvals is outdated as organizations shift to digital workflows and e-signatures.

GBS is clearly transitioning toward a smaller, more capable workforce focused on complex, tech-enabled tasks. As repetitive work disappears, reskilling becomes critical. The WEF estimates that 59% of workers may require reskilling by 2030—a trend GBS exemplifies.

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- SkillsFuture Singapore (2024). *Skills Framework Initiatives*– Example of a national government program emphasizing continuous development of emerging skills and lifelong learning as a response to changing workforce requirements.