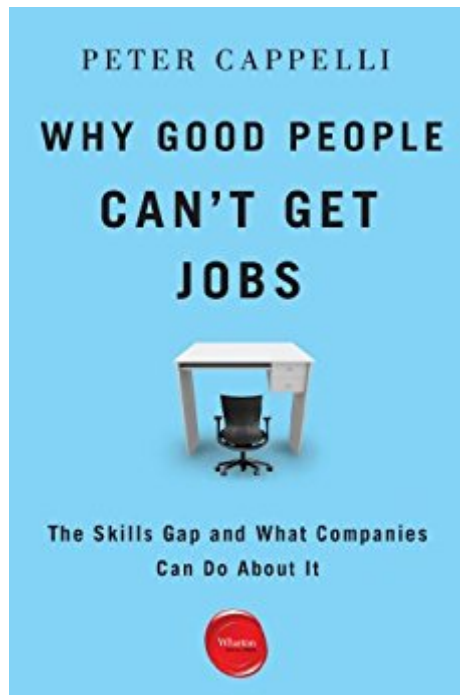# Why Good People Can't Get Jobs: The Skills Gap And What Companies Can Do About It

Synopsis

Peter Cappelli confronts the myth of the skills gap and provides an actionable path forward to put people back to work.Even in a time of perilously high unemployment, companies contend that they cannot find the employees they need. Pointing to a skills gap, employers argue applicants are simply not qualified; schools aren't preparing students for jobs; the government isn't letting in enough high-skill immigrants; and even when the match is right, prospective employees wonâ ™t accept jobs at the wages offered.In this powerful and fast-reading book, Peter Cappelli, Wharton management professor and director of Whartonâ ™s Center for Human Resources, debunks the arguments and exposes the real reasons good people canâ ™t get hired. Drawing on jobs data, anecdotes from all sides of the employer-employee divide, and interviews with jobs professionals, he explores the paradoxical forces bearing down on the American workplace and lays out solutions that can help us break through what has become a crippling employer-employee stand-off.Among the questions he confronts: Is there really a skills gap? To what extent is the hiring process being held hostage by automated software that can crunch thousands of applications an hour? What kind of training could best bridge the gap between employer expectations and applicant realities, and who should foot the bill for it? Are schools really at fault?Named one of HR Magazineâ ™s Top 20 Most Influential Thinkers of 2011, Cappelli not only changes the way we think about hiring but points the way forward to rev Americaâ ™s job engine again.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"Why Good People Can't Get Jobs" illustrates a simple truth that is obvious to anyone who looks at help-wanted ads: employers are looking for incredibly specific skills. They don't want someone who CAN do the job; they want someone who has already done the exact job. As the author points out, this creates a catch-22 situation for anyone who has skills, but not the precise ones for a particular job.The author relates how CEOs constantly blame the educational system, but clearly it is ridiculous to ask schools to prepare students to fit immediately into exact jobs. Some level of on-the-job training has always been required. This is true for even the the highest levels of education. Imagine, for example, if we expected doctors to be able to jump directly into a job from medical school with no additional training.Yet, today, there is such a surplus of prospective workers that employers have the luxury of waiting for the ideal candidate (meaning someone who already has that job) to show up. The author also points out how technology, such as automated systems that match resumes, is driving this by rejecting anyone who is not a precise fit.Technology is also having a more general impact. As the author notes, many companies simply decide to wait and leave positions unfilled, letting other workers carry the load. They can do this partly because constantly advancing technology is automating more jobs and tasks and allowing fewer workers to do more.This is really the elephant in the room that no one talks about. Technology is getting better and better, and things are likely to become even more difficult for prospective workers.

Who cares about unemployment? Books like "The Great Reset" by Richard Florida predict that jobs will be redistributed based on the skills of people around geographical centers of excellence. In his new book "Coming Apart" Charles Murray tells us that people struggle to find jobs because they have abandoned traditional American values. We hear every day in the media that our next President will be the one who convinces us that he can resolve the jobs crisis. One wonders whether there's a conspiracy going on with jobs when we hear that companies are sitting on $2 trillion but are reluctant to spend because of low demand and because they can't find candidates with the skills they need. We hear how job hunters--some with advanced degrees and years of experience--suddenly don't have what it takes to work in this economy. And let's face it ... most of us worry personally about working on our own terms, if not for ourselves then certainly for our kids.

So it seems that people not only care about finding jobs but it's an emotional issue that gets more emotional every day.In "Why Good People Can't Get Jobs" Peter Cappelli lays out how we've gotten here, not emotionally and certainly not as an issue of rich vs. poor, liberal vs. conservative, or Democrat vs. Republican as recent books about our current problems tend to do. Cappelli--a management professor at The Wharton School and director of Wharton's Center for Human Resources--is in a unique position to see what's different today than what happened when emerging from recessions in 1991 and 2001. This book is a very fast read because it is to-the-point and clearly presented.Adapting to the global economy and having a glut of labor from the baby boom generation, Cappelli says, has the changed the expectations of employers.

Author Peter Cappelli is a professor at the Wharton School and former co-director of the National Center on the Educational Quality of the Workforce during the Bush and Clinton administrations. This book grew out of a series of articles written by him for 'Human Resource Executive' magazine, as well as correspondence with many who wrote back after a Wall Street Journal follow-up. Author Cappelli contends that the 'real culprits' are the employers themselves, wanting prospective workers to fill a role without any training. not eg. applicants choosing to get worthless degrees. One company even claimed that despite 25,000 applicants for a standard engineering position, not one was qualified.Thus, concludes Cappelli, blaming schools and applicants isn't the solution, nor is continuing the way we're doing things now. More must be demanded of employers, as in the past. Example: During the IT job boom of the 1990s, only about 10% of the people working in IT jobs had any IT academic qualifications.The 'good news' is that employee productivity grew 6.7% from 2008 to the start of 2012. The 'bad news' is that GDP was only 1.2% higher at the start of 2012 than 2008, so employers needed 5.5% fewer employees. Meanwhile, population continues growing - about 140,000 each month (4% larger now than at the end of 2008).Employers also complain that the problem is that the American education system is at fault. Cappelli found that mostly they're not complaining about lack of academic skills but lack of work experience. A 2011 Accenture survey found only 21% of U.S. employees receiving any employer-provided formal training in the past five years.

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