This year, at the World Economic Forum, one message was loud and clear: in order to future-proof our companies, and the economy, we must future-proof our people.

And the fact is, we have a lot of work to do. Right now, there are more than 7 million vacant jobs in the United States, but many of them can’t be filled because workers do not have the requisite skills. But I want to be clear, the problem isn’t a lack of talent, it’s that our labor market is still operating on a playbook written decades ago. It’s exceedingly difficult for Americans, to get insight into which skills are in demand and training in those skills—and even with that training, too many workers are still overlooked just because they don’t have a four-year college degree.

On top of that, job-readiness is an ever-moving target. By 2022, the core skills required to perform most roles will change by more than 40 percent. That means people will have to learn new skills several times over their careers, just to keep up.

This raises two important questions: First, are companies overvaluing four-year degrees at the expense of tangible skills and real-world experience? And second, in an economy that is facing constant, unyielding disruption, how do we ensure more Americans have the tools they need to thrive in the years to come.
Last week in Davos, I joined a gathering, organized by the White House, of 31 business leaders from across every industry—including IBM CEO Ginni Rometty, Apple CEO Tim Cook, Salesforce CEO Marc Benioff and Dell Technologies CEO Michael Dell—to try and answer those questions. But we did more than have a conversation, we took action, and created a cohesive plan to support the Ad Council's upcoming Workforce Readiness Initiative, led by its CEO, Lisa Sherman.

In a moment when American jobs are rapidly changing, this groundbreaking national campaign will shine a light on how today’s students and workers can prepare themselves for tomorrow’s jobs. The Workforce Readiness Initiative is designed to share vital information Americans need to find jobs that match their skillset. It will also provide guides to help people find additional training or up-skilling to apply new positions. And while this program will no doubt help all Americans looking for new opportunities, they will, in particular, have incredible long-term benefits for the unemployed, women, and communities of color. NBCUniversal is proud to provide media support to help this initiative reach Americans coast to coast and give them the tools to succeed for decades to come.

Of course, this campaign is just one piece of the larger puzzle. Every CEO and executive needs to look inward, and build workplaces that ensure our employees, current and future, can always succeed amid rapid transformation.

That’s why NBCUniversal is investing in programs that help our people stay ahead of the curve—including doubling down on training and professional development, establishing simple and effective hiring practices, scaling programs to bring people back into the workplace, and implementing more flexible work schedules and policies.
Linda Yaccarino
Chairman, Advertising & Partnerships
NBCUniversal
Linda Yaccarino is also the Chairman of the World Economic Forum’s Taskforce on Future of Work, and
the Vice Chairman of The Advertising Council.