Transforming to a new kind of energy company

A unique IBM-inspired learning platform, along with hackathons, partnerships, internal social networks and a little friendly competition, have empowered and inspired more than 25,000 Shell employees

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Session speaker:

Frans Klaassen
Shell's capability and skills manager

The challenge: Empowering a digital workforce

Like many companies, Shell wants to increase productivity, reliability and performance across its business while reducing costs and being more responsive to customers, as Frans Klaassen, Shell's capability and skills manager, explained at Think 2020. Unlike other digitally transforming companies, Shell is also looking to technology to help reduce emissions for itself and its customers.

 With operations spanning every conceivable terrain on every continent but Antarctica, **Shell has to manage vast and varied data streams**. The chief data and analytics officer, to whom Klaassen reports, set out to answer four key questions:

What is the data:

Do workers and leaders grasp the data models and flows? Can they build a centralized approach?
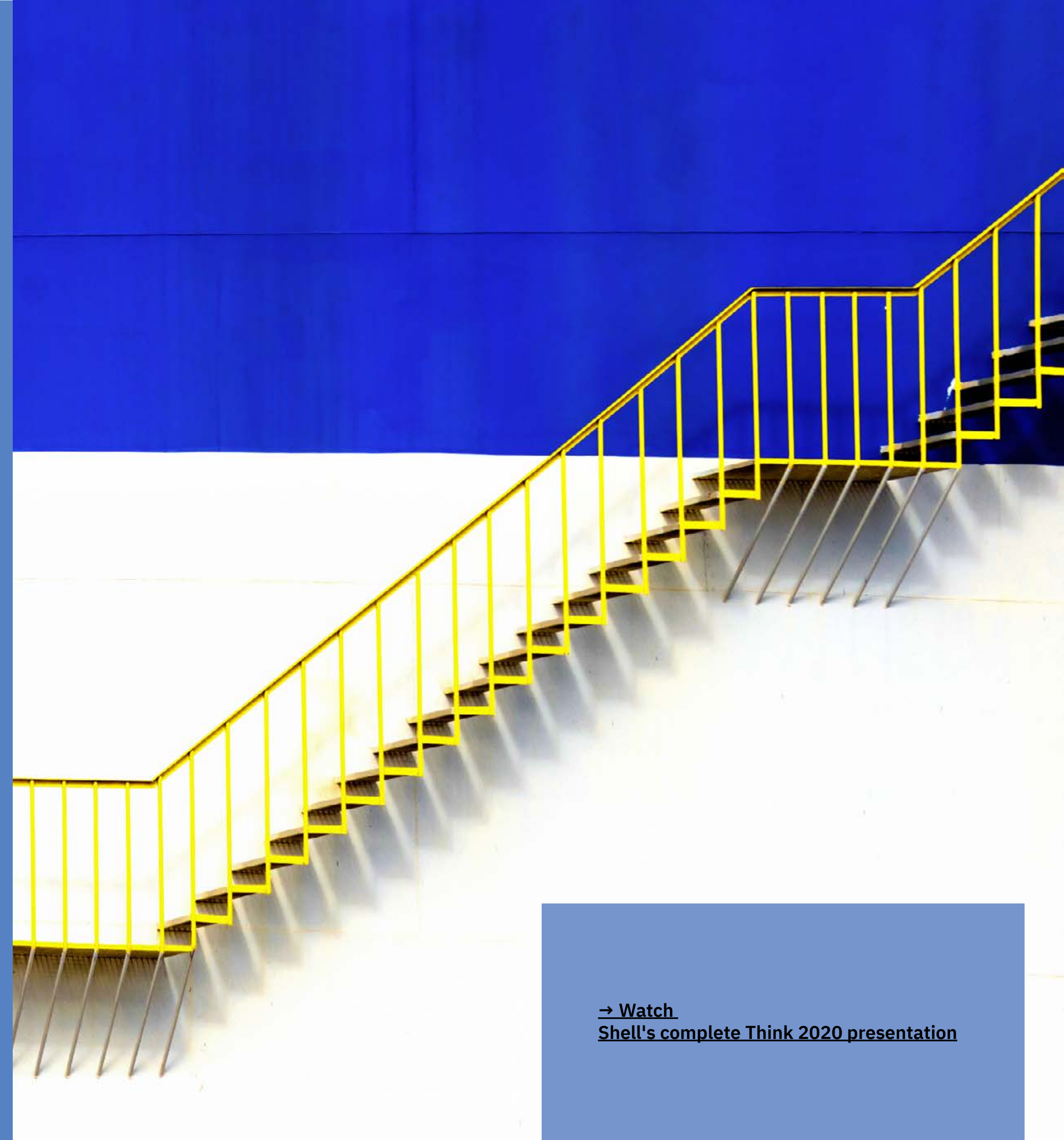
Why data matters:

Does the company understand the value of its data and have a strategy for it?

How healthy is the data:

Is there enterprise-wide data governance to ensure access and ongoing quality?

Where is the data:

Is there a data catalogue to support analytics, develop tools and improve data topologies?

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Shell's complete Think 2020 presentation

> "The lifetime of knowledge is getting shorter and shorter. By adopting new skilling approaches, we can support our workforce needs while evolving to embrace new opportunities."
>
> –Frans Klaassen
> *Shell's capability and skills manager at Think 2020.*

The approach: Peer-to-per learning platforms

For more than a year, Shell has been collaborating with IBM to deploy a unique educational platform for retraining and upskilling. It's helped simultaneously progress careers and the business. In a competitive environment for high-skill workers, retention and satisfaction are especially important.

"The lifetime of knowledge is getting shorter and shorter," Frans Klaassen, Shell's capability and skills manager, explained at Think 2020. "By adopting new skilling approaches, we can support our workforce needs while evolving to embrace new opportunities."

Through a series of peer-to-peer programs in Houston, London, Bangalore and The Hague, around 1,000 Shell employees have participated so far, and nearly 800 graduated. They have not only earned certification in data analytics or data engineering—**they've become evangelists for life-long learning at Shell.**

A five-day, immersive experience was the chosen course to allow for focus as well as collaboration. Peer learning from in-house experts was an essential component. It demonstrated the learning was applicable to frontline work. Before the live sessions, attendees were required to complete 13 hours of pre-reading and exercises, so they came prepared while also demonstrating commitment to the course.
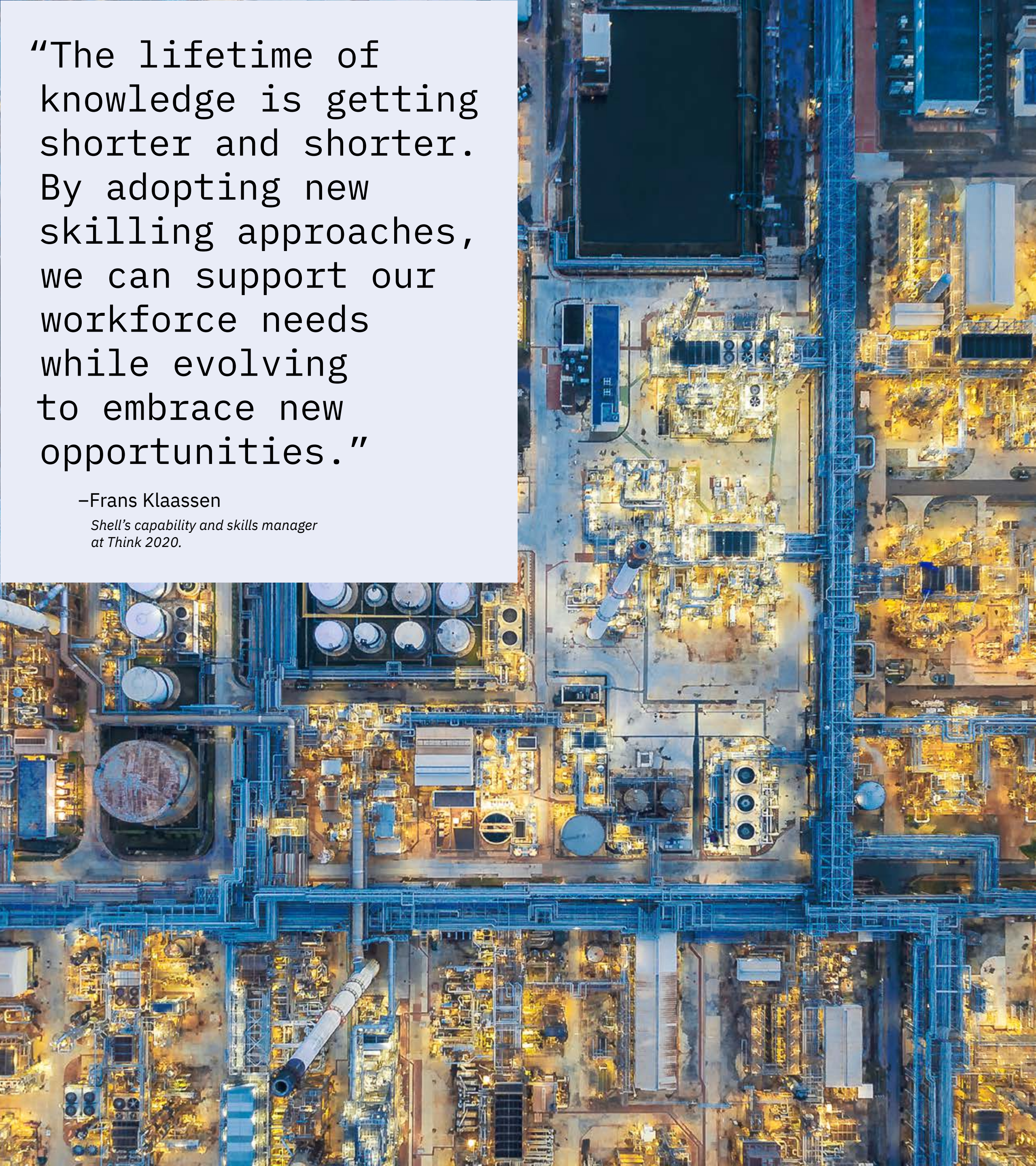
The impact: New skills around the globe

As workers began to graduate, word spread, and interest grew companywide. Certifications and badges, along with hackathons, promoted a spirit of friendly competition. More than 45% of attendees on the second round of sessions were from outside IT.

Such motivation is becoming a challenge for every company in every industry. Talent is scarce, workers are aging, technology's importance and complexity only grows. Fortunately, **technology can also be used to help the workforce keep a step ahead.**

"Organizations that excel at delivering a digital workplace will gain significant competitive advantage as digital transformations accelerate," Klaassen said. "Properly implemented, a digital workplace strategy will help make employees more mobile, analytical, creative, collaborative and innovative through the use of tools, training and encouragement."

Highlights from Think 2020

"At Shell, our aim is to be able to build AI capability at scale and at speed–keeping just ahead of the pace our business is transforming and in need of these capabilities. And to build them where they are needed, so we're not restricted to a central digital hub."

"In the next three years, as many as 120 million workers in the world's 12 largest economies may need to be retrained or reskilled. In addition, only 41% of CEOs surveyed by IBM say that they have the people, skills and resources required to execute their business strategies."

"Important for us in the design of the content was to ensure there is a good balance between learning, fun and hands-on exposure to technologies. Each learning path had that right mix between lecture, short presentations and actual hands-on exercises."

"Our assumption was that everyone likes to go to a conference, being away from work for a couple of days, meeting peers and networking, and we brought that to the training. We wanted staff to have some skin in the game, to make a personal investment."

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–Frans Klaassen

Shell's capability and skills manager at Think 2020.

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