

# Building the Future of Work Through Skill Verification

A Strategic Guide for Enterprise CHROs

Empathy

91%

Acknowledgement

78%

Positive Language

75%



## Executive Summary

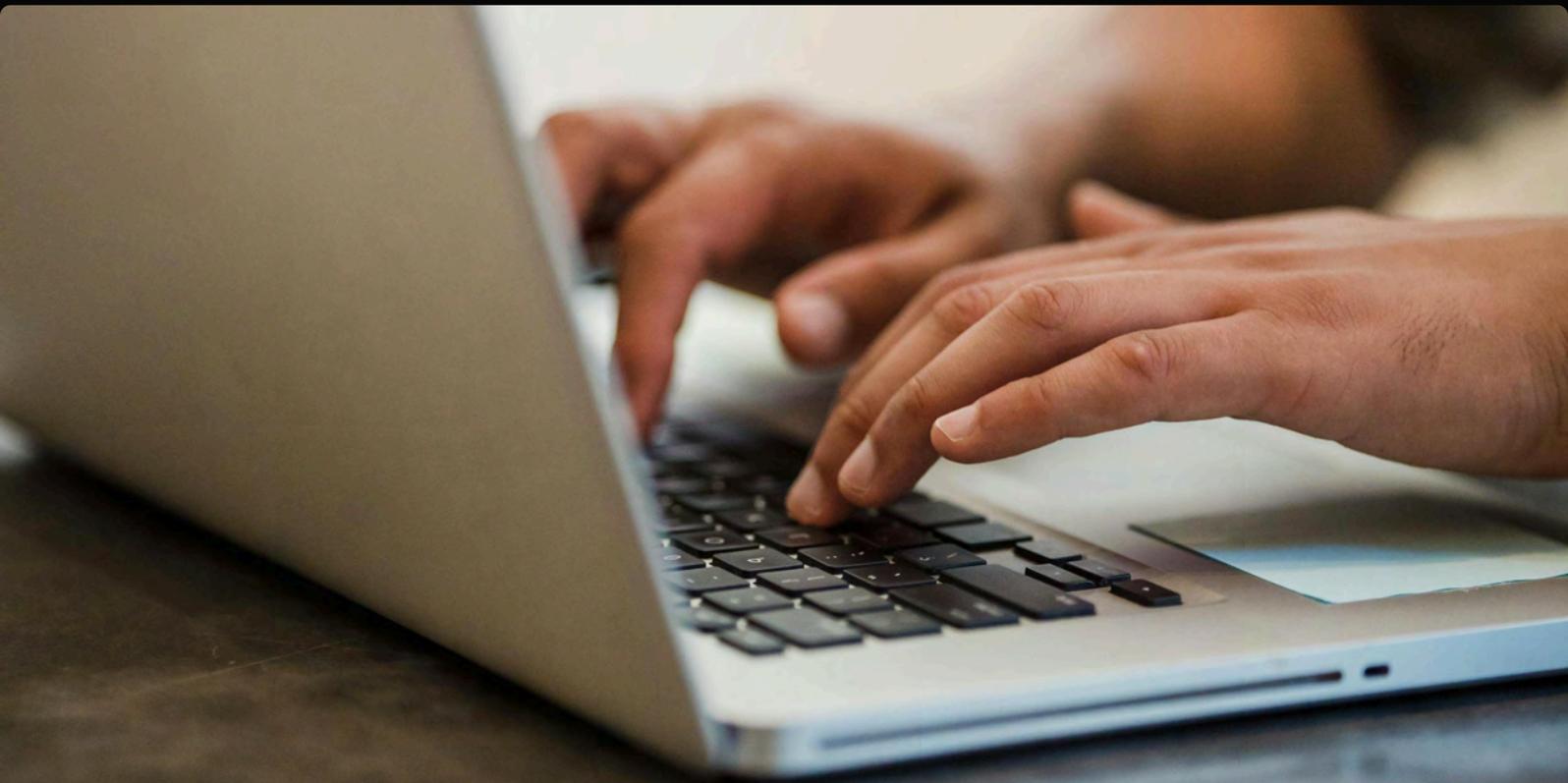
# Why Verified Skills Are the Missing Infrastructure of the Modern Workforce

Self-reported skills dominate hiring records today. Most HR systems rely on applicant self-assessments, manager opinions, résumé uploads, and maybe training attendance. None measuring performance capability.

Without verified skills, strategic workforce planning becomes guesswork, and initiatives like internal mobility can suffer. McKinsey estimates that enterprises misallocate 30% of their workforce due to misalignment between skills and roles. Most companies have better data on their office furniture than on their people.

To build a future-ready workforce, CHROs must transition their organizations to skills-based talent architectures, supported by standardized, verifiable skill data. The ability to verify skills systematically is a strategic capability that defines enterprise agility, reduces workforce risk, strengthens internal mobility, and improves fairness in talent decisions.

This ebook explores the imperative for skill verification, provides a strategic framework for implementing a standardized approach at scale, and outlines what the next decade of skills workforce transformation will require from CHROs.



# Contents

- 1** Executive Summary: Why Verified Skills Are the Missing Infrastructure of the Modern Workforce
- 3** The Skills Mismatch is the Defining Economic Problem of Our Time
- 4** The Workforce Is Changing Faster Than HR Systems Can Keep Up
- 8** Skill Verification Is the Next Urgent Frontier for CHROs
- 10** Understanding Skill Verification
- 11** The Building Blocks of Skill Verification
  - 11** Block 1: Skills Taxonomy (the language)
  - 15** Block 2: Verification Mechanisms (the tools)
  - 17** Block 3: Governance & Ethics (the guardrails)
- 19** Success Story
- 20** Implementation Checklist for Skill Verification Programs
- 21** The Future Belongs to Organizations That Unlock the Full Potential of Their People

# The Skills Mismatch is the Defining Economic Problem of Our Time

According to the [World Economic Forum](#) (WEF), more than 20% of the global workforce will experience significant disruption to their jobs by 2030 due to automation, AI, and technological change. But job disruption is only part of the story. The larger, quieter crisis is the misalignment between workers' real capabilities and what employers think those capabilities are.

Organizations suffer from a lack of understanding about their current talent. Just [54%](#) of leaders believe that they have a clear view of the skills held within their organization. According to SHRM, [37%](#) of workers around the world said that they hold jobs that don't closely match their skills and experience, leading to unused talent and unnecessary external hiring. A McKinsey report finds that [87%](#) of executives say they have skills gaps today or expect them within five years. But the number of workers with verified digital, analytical, and automation skills has not grown at the same rate.

Economist Erik Brynjolfsson said at [MIT](#) that this is the age of mismatched prosperity. Indeed, [productivity gains from AI](#) and digital technologies will not translate into shared prosperity unless labor markets can match people to the right work quickly and fairly. While companies are working to solve this problem now, like [Google's new "Career Skill Matcher"](#) that uses AI to match user skills with roles, the heart of this industry problem is a fundamental absence of trusted, standardized skills data within organizations.

**“Beyond evaluation, AI has the potential to reshape workforce planning, helping companies anticipate talent needs, identify skill gaps and recommend upskilling opportunities for employees. Organizations may also leverage AI-driven career matching, guiding candidates toward roles that align with their strengths and aspirations rather than just past experience.”**

-[World Economic Forum](#)

Without verified skills data, even the most advanced HR systems operate on assumptions rather than evidence. “Shortage of talent is not the issue, but it is the lack of visibility into the talent that exists,” reports [People Matters](#). This is why skill verification has emerged as the strategic backbone of the future workplace. While skill verification is the solution, we must first understand the problem at a systemic scale.

# The Workforce Is Changing Faster Than HR Systems Can Keep Up

Traditional talent proxies can no longer capture the pace or complexity of the skills required for modern work. These seismic changes stand out:

## The Half-Life of Skills Is Collapsing

A widely cited IBM analysis estimates that the half-life of work skills is now five years, and in technical roles, it is closer to two years. HBR reported a half-life of 2.5 years for technical skills as well. This means that a skill learned today could be half-obsolete by the time an employee reaches their next performance review.

While technical skills are changing faster than HR can keep up, IBM pointed out that soft skills, like effective communication and leadership, are valid for more than seven years. That means focusing on measuring soft skills can build workforce resilience through times of change.

## IBM Report on Skills Transformation in the Workplace

According to [IBM](#), soft skills are the most durable with the longest half-life. They explain the following:

### Short-lived

### Long-lasting

#### Perishable skills

< 2.5 years

Specific technology skills that are updated frequently, organization-specific policies and tools, and specialized processes can be classified as perishable skills.

#### Semi-durable skills

2.5 – 7.5 years

These tend to be those frameworks with base sets of knowledge from which field-specific technologies, processes, and tools arise.

#### Durable skills

> 7.5 years

They constitute a base layer of mindsets and dispositions. They include soft skills like effective communication and leadership, which are more foundational in nature.



“If you look at what’s happening right now, it’s not just that things are changing. It’s the speed of the change. AI is accelerating. Skills are evolving. Trust between employers and candidates is being tested. And many organizations are still operating with systems built for a different era.

There’s a concept from futurist Ira Wolfe called the pace paradox. Twenty years ago, the amount of change that happened over five years now happens in about one year. And soon, what used to take five years could happen in a matter of months. That’s the compounding effect we’re living in.

So you can’t lead by looking backward. You can’t rely on how you’ve always hired or how you’ve always done things. The shelf life of a skill is shrinking. Technology is improving daily, and standing still isn’t an option anymore.

Though the goal isn’t to replace people with technology. It’s to replace tasks so people can be more strategic, more human, and more connected. But that requires systems built for flexibility, not rigidity.

The pace isn’t slowing down. If you’re building for the future of work, you have to build for continuous evolution.”

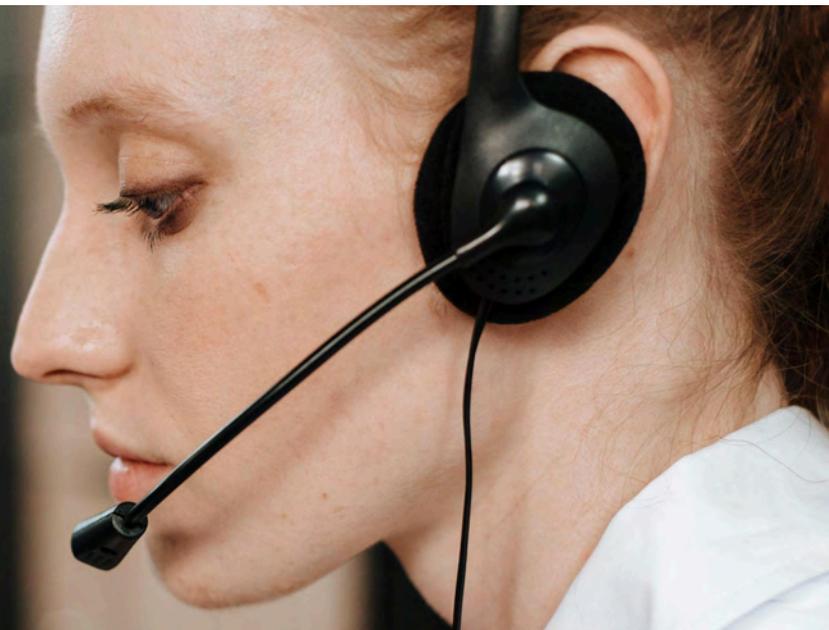
**Jason Putnam**  
CEO, Vetty

## Rapid Technology Adoption

AI and automation are rewriting the workplace. AI is transforming both high-skill and frontline work. Gartner predicts that by 2030, 80% of project management tasks will be eliminated by AI-driven automation. Similarly, MIT economist Daron Acemoglu estimates that automation has already accounted for 50–70% of changes in the U.S. wage structure over the past four decades. The impact is not evenly distributed:

- In manufacturing, robotics continues to replace repetitive manual tasks.
- In customer service, AI chat systems filter or resolve simpler requests.
- In knowledge work, AI now drafts content, summarizes documents, and writes code.

This has two implications for CHROs. The first is that skills, for every role, are changing more frequently. The second is that employees can certainly transition into new roles, but only if their skills are known and verified.



## Uneven Demography

Population aging, regional youth surpluses, and migration patterns are reshaping workforces. OECD data shows that by 2030, one in six workers in advanced economies (North America, Europe, East Asia) will be over 55. By contrast, India will provide one-quarter of the global workforce by 2030. On the other hand, climate disruption could displace up to 216 million people by 2050, reshaping labor distribution. The result is an uneven global talent map, with skill shortages in some regions and oversupply in others.

Verification becomes the **universal translator** across job families and regions. By standardizing skill verification at the global level, large enterprises can face these challenges head-on and:

- Mobilize talent across geographies
- Tap into new labor markets
- Build globally-consistent hiring criteria
- Identify regions with trainable talent pools

In other words, skill verification is an asset in uncertain times to convert demographic risk into opportunity.

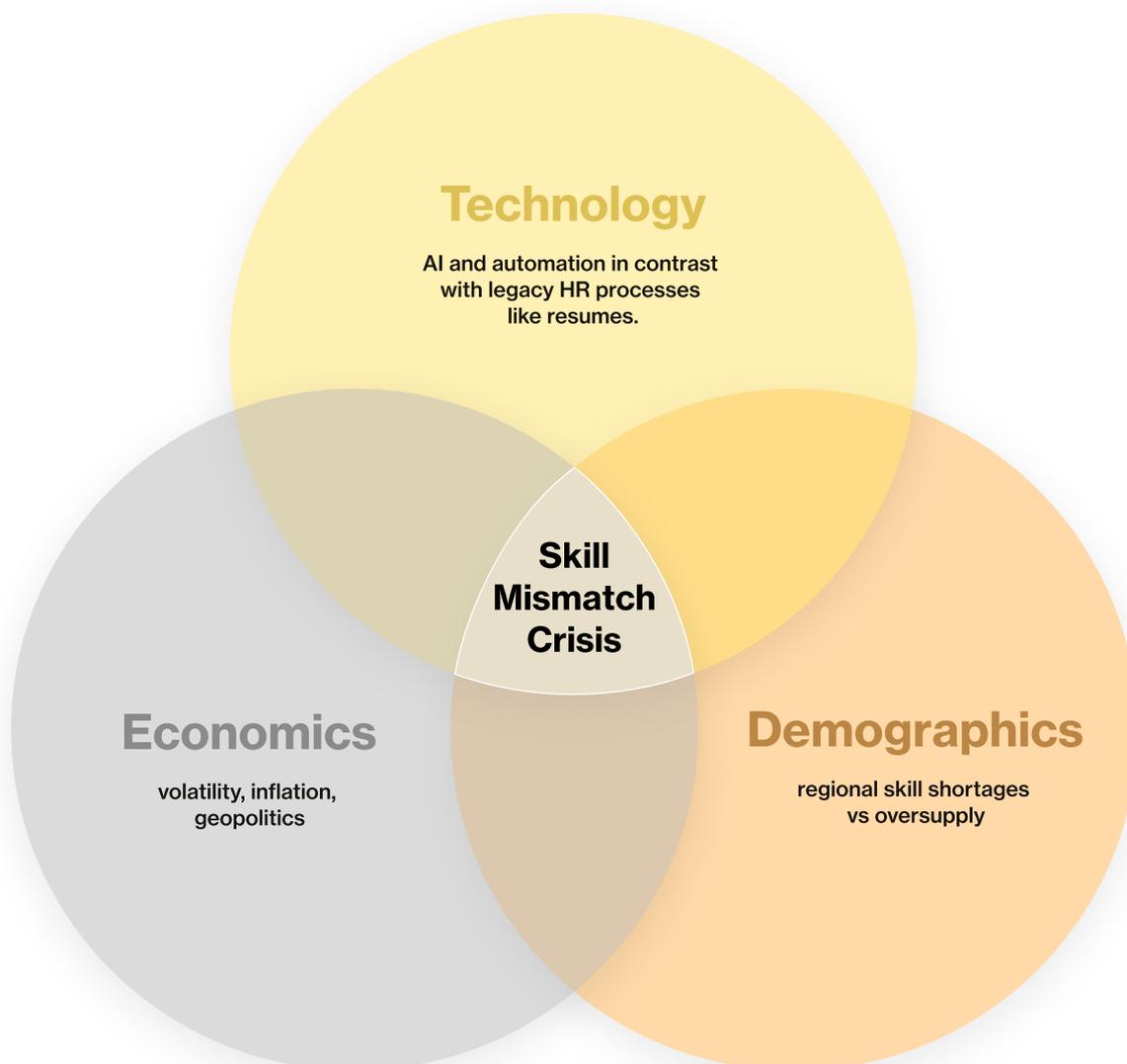
## Uncertain Economy

The IMF has repeatedly emphasized that the world has entered an era of “chronic economic turbulence” driven by:

- inflation
- supply chain shocks
- geopolitical instability
- rapid technological cycles
- climate-related disruptions

In this environment, skills visibility is a competitive advantage. For example, Deloitte reports that companies with strong internal mobility retain employees twice as long as those without. Similarly, companies with strong internal mobility are four times more likely to outperform competitors financially. Yet mobility breaks down when skills aren't visible, measurable, and comparable.

Rapidly changing skills, uneven demographic patterns, and economic volatility combined create a labor market where traditional job-based systems collapse. WEF warns explicitly that job titles and resume keyword matching are no longer effective indicators of capability.



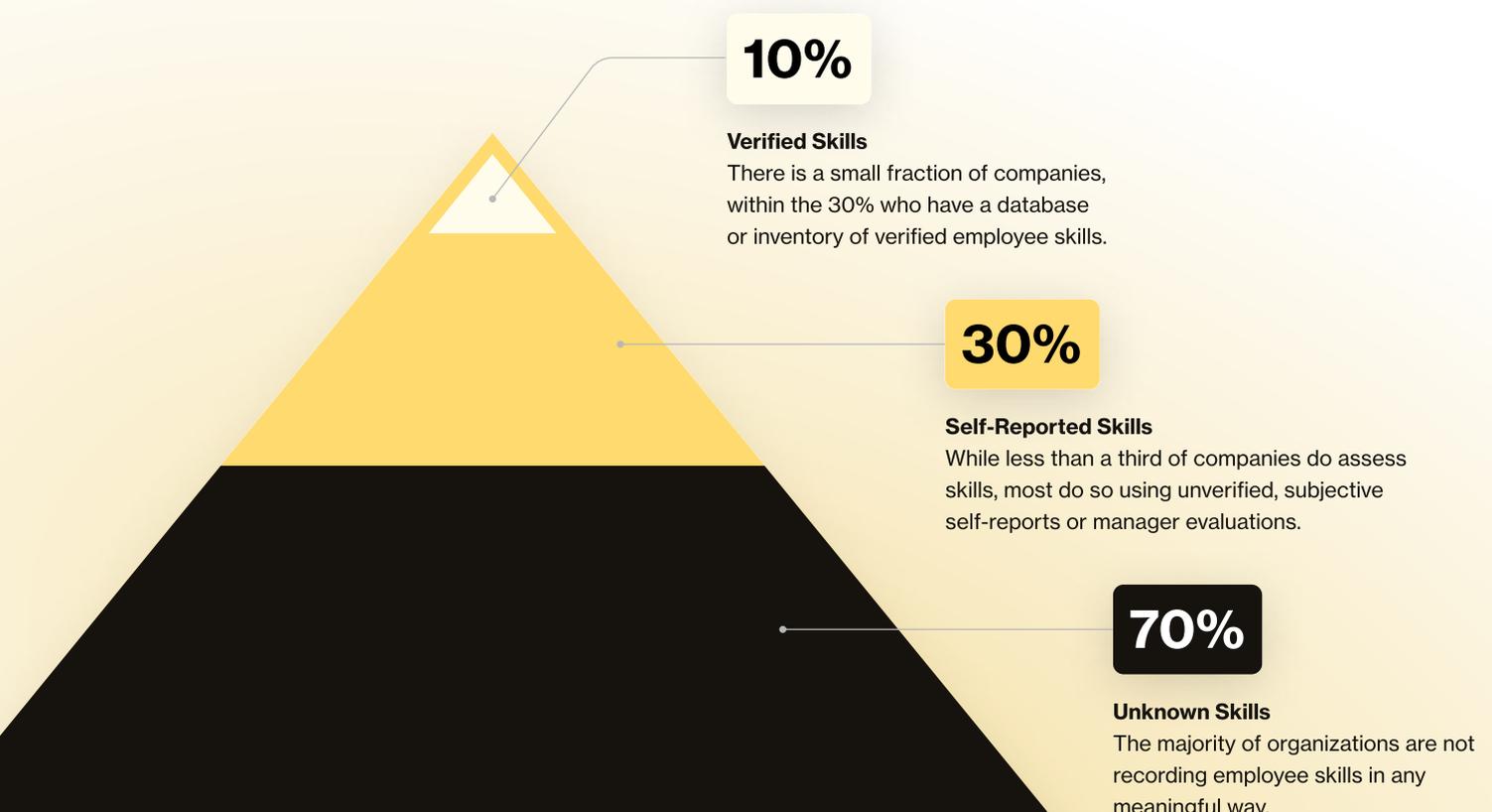
# Skill Verification Is the Next Urgent Frontier for CHROs

In a 2021 study, just 10% of organizations had a database or inventory of verified skills. That number is likely a bit higher today, given the popularity of skills-based hiring; however, the latest Skills Snapshot Survey from Mercer reported that only 30% of businesses are using skills assessments, and out of those who are 69% are self-reported or managerial reported, which is subjective. More alarming is the fact that this means 70% of organizations are not even evaluating employee skills.

Skill verification is the practice of confirming, measuring, and validating what employees can actually do. By measuring what skills candidates possess, hiring teams can solve several foundational problems at once:

- Normalizing language across global business units
- Reducing bias by shifting decisions from pedigree to proof
- Opening previously invisible talent pools
- Accelerating internal mobility and redeployment
- Enabling data-driven workforce planning
- Creating resilience during technological disruption

Most importantly, skill verification gives CHROs a real-time, organization-wide, evidence-based map of capabilities.





Skills-first approaches have the potential to create the most inclusive labor markets in modern history, but without verification, skills-first is just a slogan.

Large enterprises, particularly those with 50,000+ employees, face a unique challenge because any skills that are verified are typically scattered across siloed systems. For example, a 120,000-person company could easily have:

- 2,000 job titles
- 400 job families
- 120 competency models
- 12 regional HR teams
- Multiple HRIS/LMS/ATS systems inherited through acquisitions

This fragmentation makes skills nearly impossible to track consistently, leaving CHROs flying blind. Adding to the complexity, skills are defined differently across regions, and different types of skills may be valued more than others depending on the department.

One business unit may require a degree in computer science, even though it does not guarantee the ability to train machine learning models or deploy cloud-native systems, for example. Similarly, a business degree does not guarantee leadership skills, communication skills, or strategic problem-solving.

Jobs have become more complex. Skills have become more granular. A phenomenon known as the atomization of work. Skill-supported job tasks, not roles, now define capability, and organizations are lacking the means to verify these accurately and at scale. Skill verification gives CHROs the clarity needed in a task-based economy. Without verification, employees inflate skills, managers misjudge skills, job fit is inaccurate, and learning investments miss the mark.

# Understanding Skill Verification

Skill verification is the validated measurement of a specific skill. Not whether someone says they can do it, but whether they demonstrate it consistently within a standardized, repeatable process. Skill verification, despite its rise in prominence, is often misunderstood and sometimes oversimplified.

## Traditional Skill Verification Mechanisms

Skill verification in large enterprises should rely on rigorous, systematic, evidence-based methods for determining what people can actually do, under real conditions. However, organizations have traditionally “verified” skills through proxies like the following:

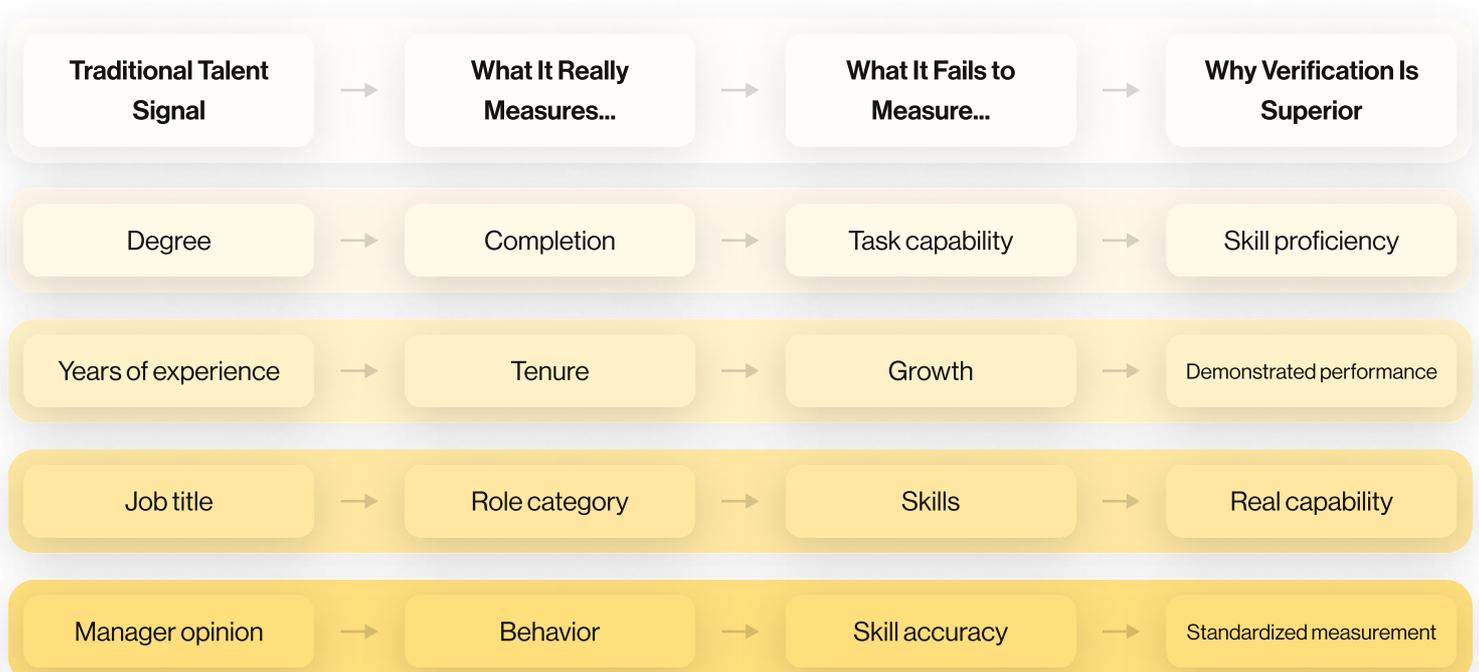
- A degree
- Years of experience
- Job titles
- Managerial impressions
- References
- Professional certifications
- Self-evaluation

But as MIT’s David Autor has consistently noted, most credentials fail to certify capability. That is, a degree shows that someone was admitted, attended, completed coursework, and graduated. It does not guarantee they can perform specific tasks at a defined proficiency.

A résumé says even less. This leaves organizations, especially large global enterprises, making talent decisions based on signals, not evidence. CHROs are relying on skill assumptions rather than true verification.

Skills verification needs to be based on performance measures and supported by multiple forms of evidence, like assessments, simulations, data from work systems, and digital credentials from recognized providers.

## Verification Versus Assumption





# The Building Blocks of Skill Verification

LinkedIn research shows that skills-first hiring expands talent pools by up to ten times for certain roles. Companies such as Google, IBM, Deloitte, Walmart, and Accenture have removed degree requirements for thousands of positions.

But skills-first hiring only works when those skills are verified, not self-declared. A verified skills dataset enables demand forecasting, automation impact modeling, redeployment planning, and regional workforce optimization.

## Block 1

### Skills Taxonomy (the language)

Once an organization is set on becoming skills-based, they need to decide which skills it needs to assess and measure per role in the company. This is the organization's unique skills taxonomy.

Taxonomies can be comprised of hard skills, soft skills, or both.

If the half-life of technical skills is less than two years, whereas soft skills have a half-life of greater than seven years, then it's in every organization's interest to measure these to build resilience in times of change.

While soft skill taxonomies are recommended, there are many different skills models for employers to leverage, including:

- The WEF taxonomy
- Skills-first organization taxonomies
- Industry or job-specific frameworks and skillsets
- Proprietary frameworks



"A high-performing organization builds a standardized, structured approach to identifying skills proficiency anchored by a clearly defined skills taxonomy. That taxonomy becomes the 'big anchor': the foundational starting point for strategic workforce planning, targeted hiring, meaningful development, and succession aligned to business goals. The real differentiator, however, is governance. An integrated model sponsored by the CEO that aligns stakeholders to show the true value of elevating sustained organizational success."

**Corey Shaw, Founder**

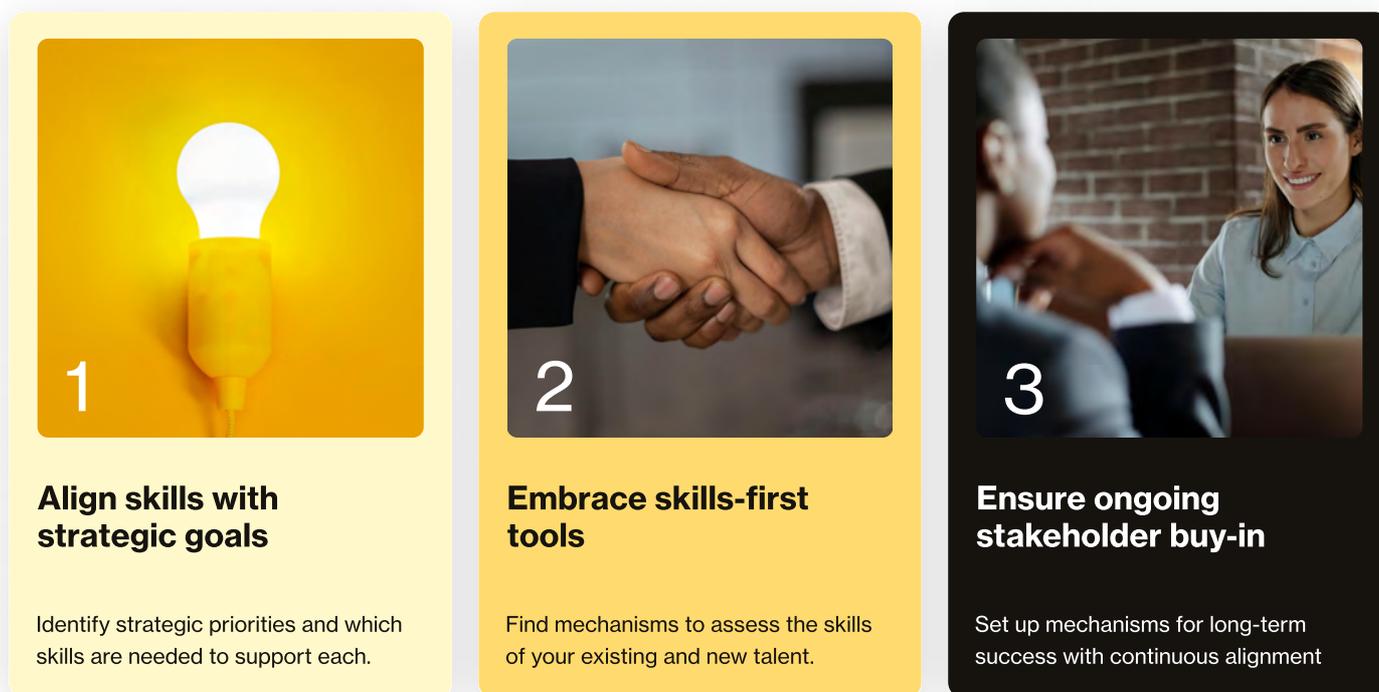
Founder, North Star Talent

These models are well-researched, but at the role level, they may not necessarily be the unique recipe of skills that lead to performance in every organization across every industry.

To build the most effective skills-first organization, skills need to be tied to performance, tying key skills to strategic objectives. The [WEF Taxonomy Adoption Toolkit](#) recommends the following three steps, while promoting stakeholder alignment:

1. Adopt skills-first principles by forecasting talent needs now and down the line, and how they'll support strategic priorities
2. Find mechanisms to assess skills on your current talent and the hires that will be made for the future workforce needed
3. Set up mechanisms for long-term success with continuous alignment

## Global Skills Taxonomy Adoption Roadmap



Employers are encouraged to benchmark their top performers using verified skills verification methods (discussed in the next Building Block) as a straightforward means for determining the top skills needed in an organization.

While solutions need to be simple for employers to leverage them, the key to any taxonomy's success is alignment. Without a common taxonomy, verification is fragmented.



“The future of hiring and talent development won’t be built on resumes or self-assessments; it will be built on truth. We see time after time with our customers, when enterprises validate skills through performance-based assessments and finally measure what matters, they can connect hiring decisions to strategic outcomes. Recruiting becomes an engine for business growth.”

**Stephane Rivard**  
CEO, HiringBranch

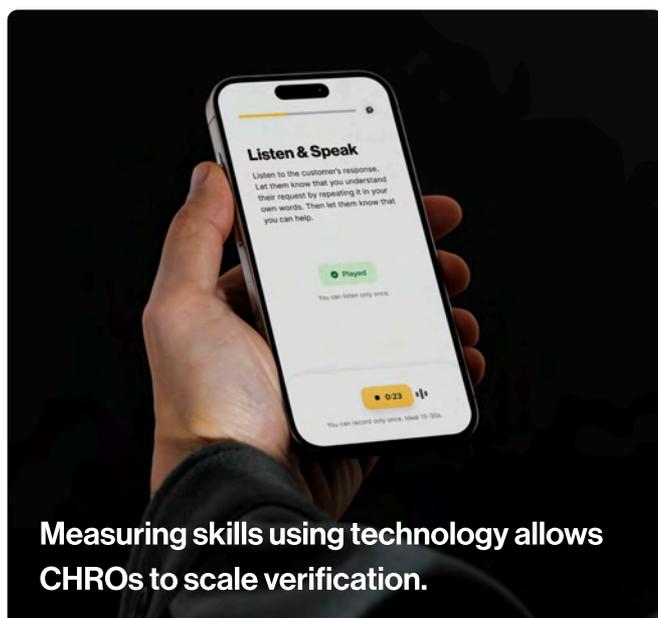
## Block 2

# Verification Mechanisms (the tools)

Skills verification methods must be scientific, predictive, and performance-based. Without these pillars, employers and organizations may revert to self-reported and other unreliable means of collecting skill data about their workforce. Consider that 7 out of 10 employees are either overestimating or underestimating their skills. Even evaluations used in professional settings, like personality interviews, can be misused in hiring situations as a way to assess an individual's soft skills.

The success of a skills-first strategy depends on reliable and repeatable mechanisms for verification that can be scaled. From this perspective, verification in its entirety can become a toolkit. Each mechanism can serve different use cases. For example, if the skill is:

- Soft Skills: Use scientific, predictive, performance-based soft skill assessments
- Technical: Use work samples, coding tasks, simulations
- Customer-facing: Use scenario-based evaluations, roleplay recordings
- Safety-critical: Use certified assessments, compliance tests
- Knowledge-based: Use structured assessments, written samples
- Transferable (communication, reasoning): Use validated situational job simulations
- Managerial: Use case studies, leadership simulations



## Notes on Skill Measurement Type:

Employers don't always have to choose between many types of assessments. Some of the best assessments combine the evaluation of soft skills, customer-facing skills, transferable and managerial skills, while others can be customized to the employer's needs.

Verification measures become the spine of the modern workforce model. Each high-impact organizational capability depends on it. Below are samples of verification mechanisms used by the most advanced global enterprises.

### Screening Simulations & Job Trials

Employees or candidates perform tasks in sandbox environments, in realistic simulations, or via interactive video-based scenarios. These produce performance-based evidence demonstrating how a candidate will perform once in the job. If they have the skills pre-hire, they are likely to display these consistently on the job as well.

### Work Sample Tests

Common in technical and digital roles, tests often include coding challenges, debugging tasks, data analysis projects, and content creation exercises. Work samples have the highest predictive validity of job performance according to [Frank Schmidt and John Hunter's](#) meta-analysis of 85 years of hiring research. However, these tests typically measure hard skills, while we know soft skills are more closely tied to career success.

### Structured Assessments

There are a range of structured skill assessments including interactive assessments, cognitive ability tests, situational judgment tests (SJTs), and technical assessments. These must all be validated for fairness.

### Performance Data from Real Work Systems

Typically used post-hire, real work data becomes compelling evidence of skill when analyzed responsibly. Examples include sales performance, QA metrics, customer feedback, productivity systems, CRM data, code repository contributions (GitHub, internal repos), and collaboration metrics.

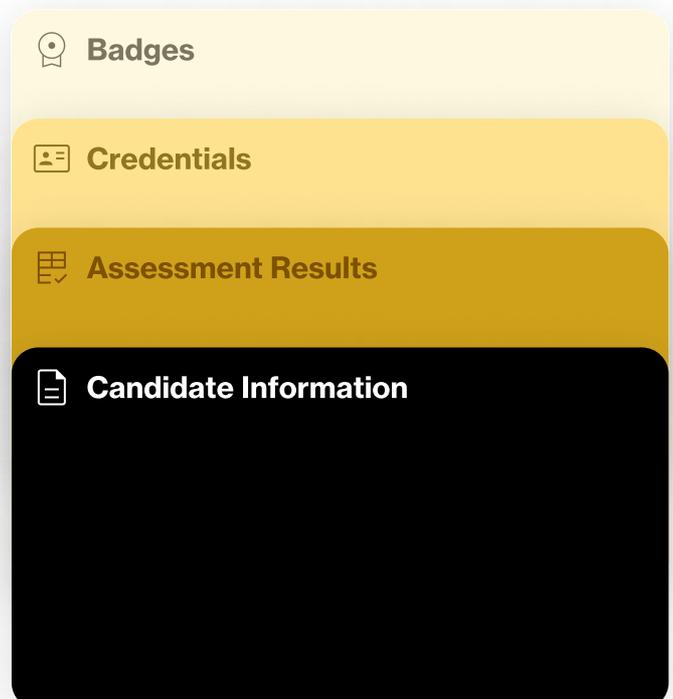
### Third-Party Certifications (selectively useful)

Some certifications are useful to reliably validate skills. Consider AWS Cloud Practitioner, PMP (Project Management Professional), Cisco CCNA, or a Google Data Analytics Certificate. It is important to note that many certifications do not measure hands-on capability, may be outdated, and could be too theoretical.

### Digital Credentials (the fast-rising category)

Digital training is one of the fastest-rising categories. Vendors such as ResumeWallet, Credly, Coursera, IBM SkillsBuild, and Microsoft Learn issue digital, verifiable skill badges with metadata. Badges could include information like the issuing body, date earned, expiration, and more. Digital credentials are expected to become interoperable “skills passports.” The European Union is already [piloting this concept](#) and Singapore has a [SkillsFuture passport](#).

The rise in “portable” credentials is interesting to help with the standardization of global skill verification and transfer. Workers may eventually own a portable, interoperable skills record across employers. If they did, and the methods used to create the passport were scientific, predictive, and performance-based, it would allow CHROs to verify skills instantly, reduce hiring friction, trust third-party credentials, accelerate mobility, and onboard talent faster.



Skills are the new unit of work, but only if they are captured as data. Verification only creates value if the data is structured, stored centrally, and interoperable.

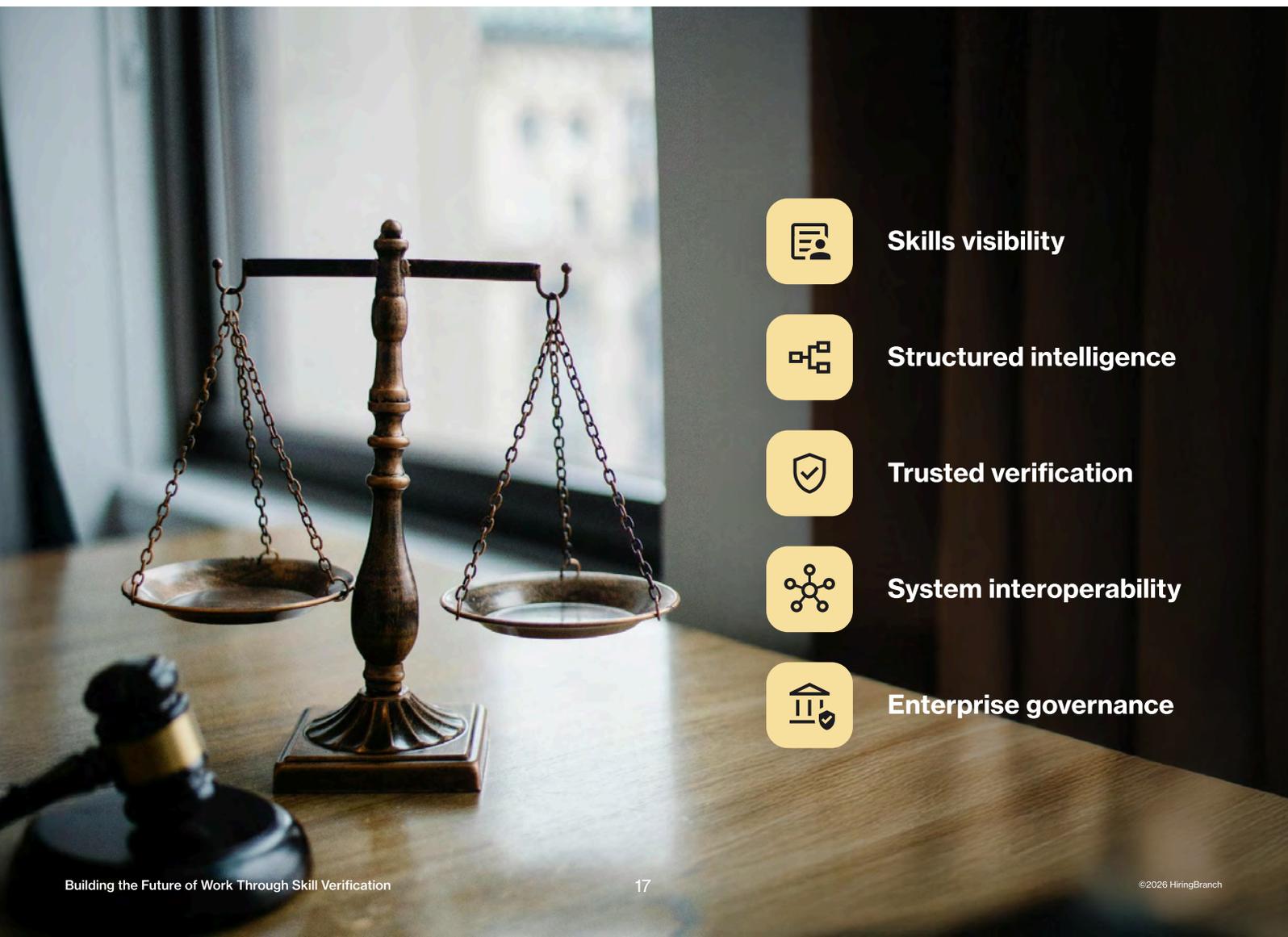
Data architecture should also consider governance policies and practical applications inside analytics dashboards. Enterprise mechanisms to store skills as structured data have to reflect these considerations, and bring an interoperable format to life, meaning:

- integrating with an HRIS and/or ATS
- connecting to talent marketplaces

- matchmaking employees to opportunities
- informing workforce planning
- guiding learning investments (LMS/LXP integration)

A dedicated team may be required to manage global skills architecture across large organizations.

Beyond infrastructure and storage, teams have to monitor data integrity. Skills evaluation systems can unintentionally replicate bias without representative validation samples, accessibility standards, ongoing auditing, and demographic fairness checks.



**Skills visibility**



**Structured intelligence**



**Trusted verification**



**System interoperability**



**Enterprise governance**



"Verifying skills at the top of our hiring funnel helped us reduce attrition to a low 10%. The downstream benefits of skills hiring is incredible."

**Veronique LeCasse**

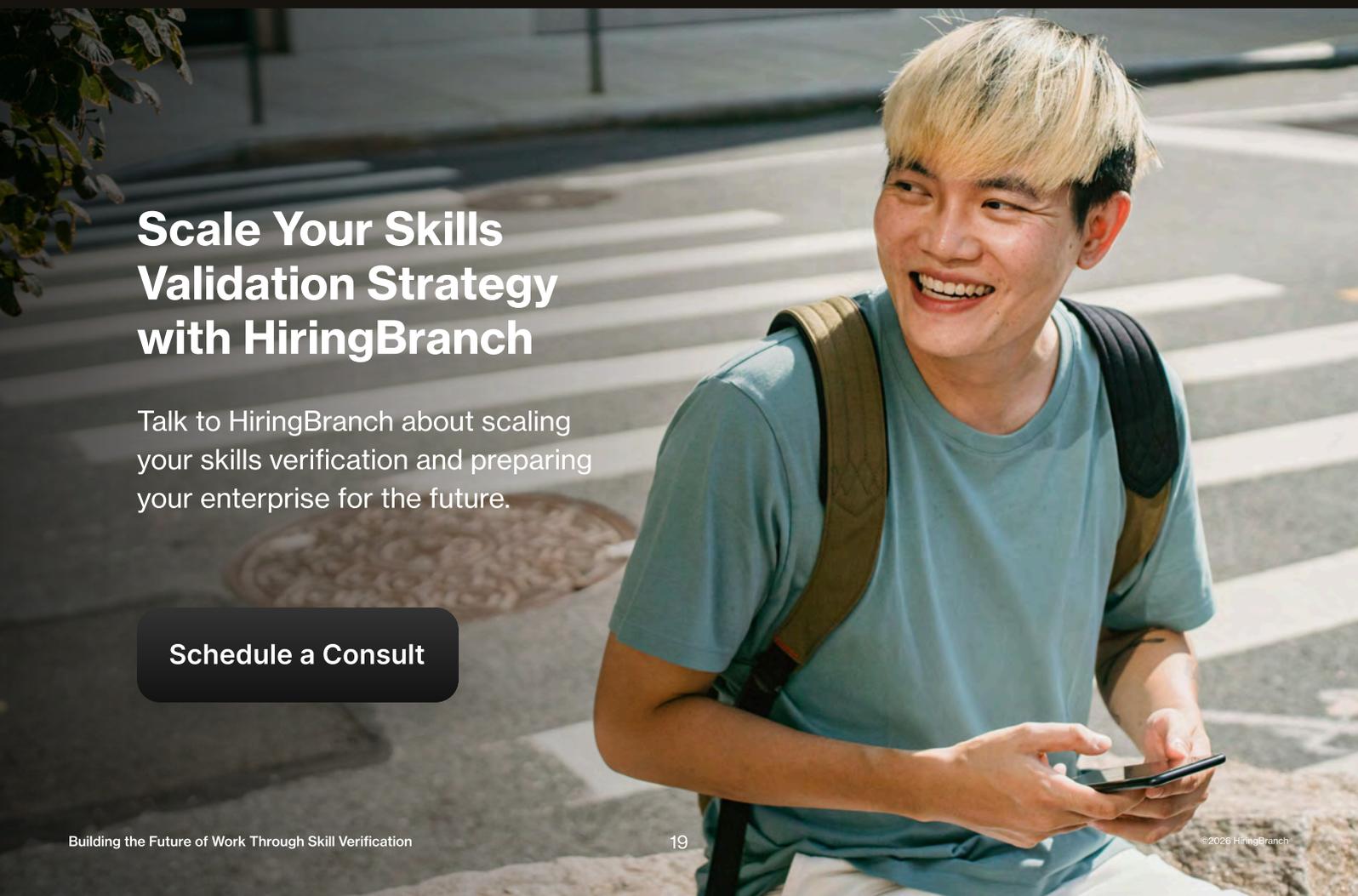
Senior RTO Manager, Bell  
HiringBranch Customer

# Global Telecommunications Company Validates Frontline Soft Skills to Funnel Metrics, Including Attrition

In contact centres, turnover is a constant challenge, often exceeding 40% for frontline roles. Candidate skills are difficult to assess quickly, and hiring decisions are typically subjective. To solve this, global telco company Bell implemented HiringBranch assessments to evaluate role-specific soft skills accurately.

The output, at a global scale, has been significant. Day one, candidate quality has improved, recruiters cut phone screens, and one year later attrition reached an all-time low rate of 10% by day 90.

They are able to gather performance data and feed that back into the other departments to improve talent decision-making. Bell can see direct relationships between recruiting efforts and successful training. Cross-functional teams can make global conclusions on performance from pre-hire to on-the-job because everything is data-driven. Using soft skill assessments, Bell is now able to proactively identify the right talent with precision. They have visibility on candidate fit, skills gaps, and role matching.



## Scale Your Skills Validation Strategy with HiringBranch

Talk to HiringBranch about scaling your skills verification and preparing your enterprise for the future.

[Schedule a Consult](#)

# Implementation Checklist for Skill Verification Programs

## Phase 1 – Design

- Consider a suggested taxonomy

---

- Evaluate internal skills (assess high-performing employees) and compare to suggested taxonomy

---

- Select verification methods for skills selected in key roles

---

- Identify pilot groups in upcoming hiring processes to evaluate for these skills

---

- Define success parameters and governance model

## Phase 2 – Pilot

- Run assessments of new candidates

---

- Evaluate fairness

---

- Measure employee performance on the job compared to those hired without skills evaluation

---

- Collect employee feedback

---

- Map verified skills of successful new employees back into hiring and firm up taxonomy

## Phase 3 – Scale

- Integrate into ATS, HRIS, LMS

---

- Train managers

---

- Roll out communications

---

- Publish internal dashboards

## Phase 4 – Sustain

- Schedule re-verification cycles

---

- Monitor for adverse impact

---

- Update taxonomy annually

---

- Track business outcomes



# The Future Belongs to Organizations That Unlock the Full Potential of Their People

Identifying skill gaps is impossible in global organizations without verification. Labor market inefficiencies stem from insufficient visibility into workers' skills, misaligned demand signals, and a lack of standardized data. We have the tools to transform labor markets, but we lack the data infrastructure to match workers to the right jobs efficiently.

The future of work is unfolding faster than anyone predicted. Automation, AI, demographic shifts, and economic volatility are reshaping global labor markets. Skill verification emerges as a means to reduce risk in uncertain times and build a strategic advantage.

In the next decade, CHROs will be the architects of organizational resilience. Their mandate will shift from administering HR processes to orchestrating global talent ecosystems. And this can only be done with a foundation of standardized, verified skills. The organizations that will thrive are the ones that truly understand what their people can do... often for the first time.

# From Skills Assumptions to Skill Verification

[Learn More](#)



**babl**