

Putting Skills to Work

How to Implement Shared Skill Taxonomies
in Your Organization

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**Skills-First Workforce
Initiative**



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Implementation Playbook: Putting Skills to Work

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Companies are facing unprecedented challenges in talent acquisition, development, and retention. Traditional approaches based on static job descriptions, titles, and degrees are proving insufficient to meet the pace of change in skill requirements and workforce expectations. Skills-based talent management offers an alternative—providing a flexible, high-resolution language for describing work that can adapt as quickly as business needs evolve.

This playbook provides HR leaders with a practical roadmap for implementing shared skills taxonomies within their organizations. Rather than building a skills framework from scratch—a time-consuming and resource-intensive process—our shared taxonomies provide a vetted foundation that can dramatically accelerate time-to-impact. Developed and

rigorously validated across 11 of America's largest employers spanning diverse industries, our taxonomies offer a common language for skills that works across organizational boundaries.

By adopting a staged implementation approach focused on solving concrete business problems, organizations can quickly demonstrate value, build momentum, and establish the infrastructure necessary for true skills-based talent management. The implementation strategies outlined in this playbook have been proven effective across industries and organization sizes. They directly address common barriers to adoption—from securing leadership buy-in to managing technological constraints—and provide tactical guidance for each stage of maturity.

I. WHAT IS A SHARED SKILL TAXONOMY AND WHY DOES IT MATTER?

What is a shared skill taxonomy?

A shared skills taxonomy is a structured, consistent framework for describing work in terms of skills—shared across roles, departments, and organizations. Unlike traditional job descriptions that bundle diverse requirements into opaque titles, a skills taxonomy focuses on the core abilities you need from workers in a given job – lending better insight into what can be observed, assessed, and trained.

The Skills-First Working Group convened 11 of America's largest employers to rigorously vet shared skill profiles for some of the most critical roles in the US economy. The result was a set of skill profiles for each role that include:

- **Top Skills:** Identifies critical capabilities for specific roles based on actual hiring market data and employer input, providing companies with precise terminology for job advertisements and candidate assessments.
- **Prevailing Market Trends:** Analyzes skill demand patterns across industries using publicly available data to highlight which capabilities are growing or declining in importance for each role, and which skills tend to earn a premium in the market.
- **Shared Skill Definitions:** Provides context-specific skill definitions to drive internal alignment on what each skill means, and demonstrates how the same capability manifests differently across various roles.
- **Proficiency Standards:** Establishes consistent skill mastery levels (basic, intermediate, advanced) with clear

behavioral indicators that translate across organizations and industries to clearly define role requirements and assess capability.

Unlike proprietary internal skill models, our shared taxonomy uses common language that can be understood across organizational boundaries. This standardization enables benchmarking, supports talent mobility, and connects internal practices to the broader talent ecosystem.

Why is this important?

The business world is experiencing a fundamental shift in how work gets done and how talent is managed:

- **Accelerating skill shifts:** Over the five-year period from 2017-22, more than a third of the top skills for the average job changed entirely¹. With the advent of GenAI in the workplace, these shifts are bound to happen even faster.
- **Talent shortages:** More than half of HR leaders see skills shortages as a top threat to their business² – clearly signaling that it's not about headcount but the capability of that headcount that are of top concern for business needs.
- **Rising mobility expectations:** Employees increasingly expect clear growth paths that aren't limited to traditional career ladders.
- **Workforce transformation:** Organizations need to rapidly redeploy talent as business priorities shift.

¹ <https://www.burningglassinstitute.org/research/how-skills-are-disrupting-work>

² <https://www.mercer.com/assets/global/en/shared-assets/global/attachments/pdf-2024-2025-mercero-survey-report.pdf>

Traditional approaches to addressing these challenges—where each organization builds its own skill language in isolation—create unnecessary complexity and dramatically slow implementation. Organizations that build proprietary taxonomies typically invest heavily in staff time to develop these resources before obtaining practical value, and the resulting frameworks at times lack internal consistency, external validation, or market alignment.

The extensive validation process among these major employers ensures that these shared skill taxonomies reflect actual work requirements across diverse contexts, use language that resonates with managers and employees, and capture both common patterns and industry-specific nuances.

What this playbook covers

This implementation guide will walk you through:

- How to use our taxonomies to drive adoption across the talent lifecycle
- Practical implementation steps across different stages of organizational skill maturity
- Technology integration strategies for embedding shared skills taxonomies in your HR ecosystem
- Real examples from organizations that have successfully made the shift to skills-based talent management using our shared foundation
- How to build stakeholder support for adopting our shared skills taxonomies.

Throughout, we'll emphasize practical approaches that drive tangible value—because a skills taxonomy is only valuable when it enables better talent decisions.

Skills Taxonomy Implementation Guide

Strategic Roadmap for HR Transformation

1

Making the Business Case

- ▮ Identify urgent business problems like talent shortages, retention issues, or workforce redeployment needs
- ▮ Position skills taxonomy as strategic business capability that drives measurable outcomes
- ▮ Engage business sponsors who experience talent pain and involve stakeholders from TA, L&D, and talent management
- ▮ Execute focused change management by demonstrating clear value to managers and creating visible career paths

2

Implementation by Maturity Stage

Stage 1: Buzzword

Launch targeted pilots using pre-validated skill libraries

Stage 2: Disjointed

Standardize definitions across functions and create governance

Stage 3: Data Without Decisions

Transform skill data into strategic workforce decisions

Stage 4: Strategic Management

Deploy talent dynamically based on capabilities

3

Technology Integration

- ▮ Conduct comprehensive assessment of current HR technology stack for skills integration opportunities
- ▮ Systematically embed shared taxonomy into HRIS, ATS, LMS, and talent management platforms
- ▮ Resolve data integration challenges by mapping legacy terminology to standardized skill definitions
- ▮ Implement pragmatic solutions within existing technology constraints rather than requiring new systems

4

Building Skills-First System

- ▮ Transform talent management using skills taxonomy as foundational infrastructure for all hiring decisions
- ▮ Shift from credential-based hiring to skills-based evaluation prioritizing demonstrated capabilities
- ▮ Build connections to broader talent ecosystem by establishing skills as universal language between stakeholders
- ▮ Focus on making better talent decisions rather than perfect taxonomy implementation

5

Your Next Steps

Immediate Actions

- ▮ Download and review shared taxonomies to understand skill definitions and framework
- ▮ Select high-impact pilot role facing significant talent challenges
- ▮ Collaborate with line managers to validate skill requirements and refine definitions

Success Principles

- ▮ Concentrate efforts on solving one critical talent problem rather than comprehensive transformation
- ▮ Prioritize practical application over theoretical elegance
- ▮ Measure progress through improved talent outcomes, not taxonomy coverage

II. MAKING THE CASE: CATALYZING SKILLS-FIRST CHANGE IN YOUR ORGANIZATION

Start with the business problem

The most successful skills implementations begin not with the taxonomy itself, but with a clear business challenge that skills can help solve. This problem-first approach ensures the initiative delivers tangible value and helps secure the necessary resources and support.

When building support for adopting our shared taxonomy, identify urgent or visible challenges where skills data would make an immediate difference:

- **Talent shortages:** “We can’t find the data scientists we need at the price we can pay, and don’t know where in the organization to look to pull up existing talent.”
- **Retention issues:** “Our best technical talent keeps leaving because they don’t see growth paths.”
- **Redeployment needs:** “We’re shifting business models and need to redeploy 30% of our workforce to new capabilities.”
- **Workforce planning / capability gaps:** “We can’t accurately forecast our future talent needs or gaps, and aren’t confident we’re hiring for the right capabilities.”

For each challenge, you can position implementing shared skill taxonomies as the accelerator that enables faster, more effective solutions:

For talent shortages, pre-validated skill definitions allow you to quickly develop more precise job descriptions, assessment methods, and sourcing strategies based on industry standards – driving alignment across TA, L&D, and the business.

For retention challenges, transparent definitions of the skills workers need in each role can create immediate visibility into growth opportunities across organizational boundaries. If a worker wants to advance, what that will require is clearly stated based on what skills they would need not just in their own firm, but at many of America’s largest employers.

For redeployment initiatives, these skill taxonomies create a clear base from which to define the steady state of work in each role, and identify what changes are needed – whether they are shifts in the skills of workers to bring on new capabilities (such as salespeople moving into a territory management model), or shifts to new roles.

For workforce planning, assess the prevailing market trends for each role. Which skills are growing in demand, and which are falling off? Which skills garner a premium in the market, and which skills show up narrowly in individual roles vs which are transversal across the workforce?

CASE STUDY:

How a Major Retailer Rolled Out Skills to Address Critical Daily Talent Needs

One major retailer began its skills journey by focusing on a practical, high-impact challenge: ensuring the right capabilities were present on the store floor during every shift. Store leaders needed confidence that, no matter the time of day, at least one associate with key skills—like wire cutting or tinting paint—would be available to assist customers and complete critical tasks. By mapping these essential skills and tracking which employees had them, this company was able to optimize shift scheduling and improve service reliability. This clear operational win helped build early buy-in for broader skills-based approaches across the organization.

Frame skills as a business capability, not an HR initiative

Executives care about getting leadership buy-in. Show how improved skill visibility drives tangible outcomes:

- Reduced time-to-market through faster talent acquisition and deployment
- Increased innovation capacity through better skill development and allocation
- Lower talent costs through improved internal mobility and targeted external hiring
- Enhanced business agility through more flexible workforce planning and deployment

When meeting with executives, use specific examples where insight into workers' skills throughout hiring, training, performance management, and staffing could help.

Enlist business sponsors to help define what good looks like

Identify leaders who are feeling talent pain most acutely—they make natural champions for skills-based approaches. Involve them in defining success metrics that matter to the business—not taxonomy coverage, but outcomes like reduced vacancies or faster internal mobility. Give them early visibility into our taxonomy to build understanding and ownership of the approach.

Involve key stakeholders from the start

Identify all the functions that will interact with skills data and ensure representatives are involved early:

- **Talent Acquisition:** Looking for skills to assess and source
- **Learning & Development:** Developing skills through targeted programs
- **Talent Management:** Deploying skills to opportunities and planning for future needs
- **Compensation:** Potentially valuing skills in rewards frameworks
- **HR Technology:** Enabling skills across systems and processes

Decide where to start

When rolling out new features or integrations, starting early is essential.

Successful implementations typically start narrow but meaningful—focusing on high-impact areas where our shared taxonomy can deliver visible value quickly. Early feedback and learnings that focus on a specific area of the business with a clearly defined problem and a faster time to “solution” can build momentum for larger-scale implementations. High-impact business wins over sheer headcount can

help avoid limitations in early adoption and communication.

Start with high headcount roles or functions experiencing significant talent challenges:

- What roles make up the greatest share of your workforce?
- Where is crafting pathways for workers to advance a priority?
- Where is the organization feeling talent pain most acutely?

- Which roles have the greatest impact on strategic priorities?
- Where do you have supportive leaders who can champion the approach?

Set specific, measurable goals for your initial implementation. By starting focused and delivering tangible results, you build credibility and momentum for broader adoption of our shared taxonomy. Each successful application creates advocates who can help expand the approach to new areas.

Skills-First Hiring and Degrees

Skills-First Hiring is generally thought of to describe dropping education requirements from hiring practices where they aren't necessary; prioritizing a candidate's actual capabilities rather than relying on proxy indicators like degrees. However, too often folks ignore the key term in this movement – skill! As part of any skills-first hiring effort, organizations should undertake an analytical exercise to determine where degrees are truly necessary—whether because academic programs are the primary pathway to developing certain specialized skills (as with many healthcare professions), or because of legitimate regulatory and licensing requirements that mandate specific credentials. By questioning degree requirements and instead focusing on the underlying skills – what do candidates need to be able to do to succeed in this role, regardless of how they acquired that skill? – organizations can tap into broader talent pools, create more equitable hiring practices, and develop more precise talent development pathways.

Rolling out changes with managers and employees

Success with skills-based practices requires focused change management targeting both managers and employees. Drive acceptance and adoption by engaging them from the start:

- Speak to self-interest: Show managers from key business lines how a shared understanding of skills will streamline hiring and development; show employees how skills visibility creates clear paths to new career opportunities and recognition.
- Create visible champions: Identify and support early adopters relevant to the priority
- roles who can show practical successes and help make the business case from outside of the HR organization – keep the business lines engaged at each step along the way.
- Avoid competing priorities: Coordinate this work with ongoing talent initiatives to avoid change fatigue and ensure focused attention on skills implementation.
- Measure and celebrate progress: Track adoption metrics (profiles completed, skills-based hires made) and publicly recognize teams showing measurable improvements in talent outcomes.

III. IMPLEMENTATION IN ACTION: USING SKILL TAXONOMIES ACROSS STAGES OF MATURITY

Every organization is at a different stage in their skills journey. Our shared skill taxonomies provide value regardless of maturity level, offering solutions tailored to each organization's current capabilities and challenges. This section outlines how our shared frameworks can accelerate progress across four common stages of organizational skill maturity – though in practice many organizations may fall in between or across multiple aspects of these stages.

- **Stage 1: Skills as a Buzzword** - Organizations recognize that skills matter but haven't implemented any true skills-first practices. Discussions about skills remain largely conceptual, with limited application in talent processes.
- **Stage 2: Disjointed Skills Initiatives** - Organizations have begun implementing skills-first approaches in multiple areas, but these efforts remain disconnected and inconsistent. Different functions develop their own skill frameworks and definitions, creating confusion and limiting scale.
- **Stage 3: Data Without Decisions** - Organizations have implemented consistent skill frameworks and collected substantial skill data, but struggle to translate this information into strategic workforce decisions. They have the "what" but not the "so what" of skills intelligence.
- **Stage 4: Strategic Skills Management** - Organizations fully integrate skills into strategic business planning and execution. Skills become the foundation for how work is organized, talent is deployed, and strategy is implemented.

Stage 1: Skills as Buzzword

Common characteristics:

- Traditional job descriptions focused on years of experience and degrees
- Performance management tied to broad competencies rather than specific skills
- L&D offerings not clearly connected to skill development needs
- Workforce planning and talent acquisition driven by titles rather than capabilities.

How our shared taxonomy creates value:

Our employer-built taxonomy provides an immediate foundation for practical skill application without the time and expense of starting from scratch. For organizations just beginning their skills journey, focused pilots demonstrate value quickly:

- Start with a business-critical talent challenge where skills could provide immediate value – for example, if your company struggles to identifying talent for cybersecurity roles, use this as an opportunity to fix that acute challenge and gain traction.
- Run role-specific pilots using our pre-built skill libraries. Start with the skill profiles we've prepared for each role – they'll save you 90% of the effort compared to starting from a blank sheet. From there you can customize toward exactly what your company needs.
- Position our taxonomy as a risk-free way to test skills-based approaches. Skills rollout efforts can be time intensive and expensive efforts if everything is built from scratch – starting with these tools lowers the cost, and gives a faster path to showing value.

Unlike building a proprietary framework that might never reach implementation, these industry standard resources allow organizations to move directly to application.

Stage 2: Disjointed Skills Initiatives

At this stage, organizations have begun implementing skills-first approaches in multiple areas, but these efforts remain disconnected and inconsistent. Different functions or business units develop their own skill frameworks and definitions, creating confusion and limiting scale.

Common characteristics:

- Multiple skill frameworks exist across talent functions
- Inconsistent skill language between recruitment, L&D, and talent management
- Siloed skill data that can't be easily aggregated or analyzed
- Duplicated effort as each function develops its own definitions

How our shared taxonomy creates value:

Our standardized framework provides a common foundation to align disparate skill efforts, creating consistency without requiring teams to abandon their work:

- Establish each skill taxonomy as the “source of truth” – while different tech platforms or teams may feature different default platforms, the team needs to decide on which skill profile for each role is the core definition used across teams.
- Use these standard definitions to identify and eliminate redundancies – are there skills you are hiring, assessing, or training for that aren't actually critical to the role? Are some of the skills your team is using – for example, “coaching” vs “mentorship”, so

interconnected that it doesn't make sense to assess them separately?

- Create governance mechanisms that maintain alignment across functions – for example by setting up a “skills committee” responsible for alignment, updating, and driving consistency throughout the organization when it comes to skills.

Stage 3: Data Without Decisions

Organizations at this stage have implemented consistent skill frameworks and collected substantial skill data, but struggle to translate this information into strategic workforce decisions. They have the “what” but not the “so what” of skills intelligence.

Common characteristics:

- Skill data exists but isn't connected to business strategy
- Limited integration between internal skill information and external market insights
- Skill data viewed as an HR asset rather than a strategic business capability
- Workforce planning still driven primarily by headcount rather than capabilities

How our shared taxonomy creates value:

Our taxonomy's integration of market data enables meaningful insights about skill availability, growth rates, and where firms are willing to pay more for an emergent or specialized skill set.

Skills data also helps firms identify how people can move within an organization. Skill analyses can rely on this taxonomy's consistent structure to enable precise mapping of current skills against future needs – to inform hiring, training, and worker advancement.

How do I get skills data on my workforce?

When implementing skills-based talent practices, skills leaders face a critical decision point regarding how to gather data on their current workforce capabilities – how should they go about inventorying skills. Most employers go down one of the following paths:

- **Employee self-assessment:** Requiring employees to fill out “skill profiles”, sometimes including assessment activities. This provides highly detailed information about workers’ self-declared capabilities when complete, but often suffers from inconsistent participation rates and potential biases in how people evaluate their own abilities.
- **Manager assessment:** Looking to managers to validate or review skill profiles for their direct reports. This offers valuable perspective from those who observe performance directly but creates significant administrative burden and may introduce managerial biases or knowledge gaps about specialized skills. Organizations should secure Legal/Risk/Compliance approval before implementation and clearly communicate that skill data is intended for development planning and career pathing—not performance management or promotion decisions—to encourage honest self-assessment and manager feedback.
- **Role-based inference:** Using market trend data, career history info, or simply the skills aligned in each role to infer workers’ capabilities. This benefits from minimal direct input required, but sacrifices precision and may miss capabilities developed outside of what the system is using to infer skills.

Some successful organizations ultimately adopt a hybrid approach, using role-based inference as a foundation, supplemented by either workers or managers adjusting the baseline inferred skills associated with each worker. There’s no universally right answer here – but the consistent message from major employers is that there is huge value from understanding the real skills across your workforce.

Stage 4: Strategic Capability Management

At the most advanced stage, organizations fully integrate skills into strategic business planning and execution. Skills become the foundation for how work is organized, talent is deployed, and strategy is implemented. There's a clear platform to draw connections throughout the organization so that skills-focused efforts are coordinated with clear roles for all involved, rather than disparate efforts operating in silos.

Common characteristics:

- Workforce planning driven by capabilities rather than headcount
- Skills serve as common currency across organizational boundaries
- Talent deployed dynamically based on capability needs rather than static roles
- Strategic decisions consider skill implications alongside financial and operational factors

How our shared taxonomy creates value:

The standardized structure of our skill definitions enables precise matching between people and opportunities based on capabilities rather than just experience or titles. Because our framework serves as a common language across organizations, it enables connections to broader talent ecosystems and promotes cross-firm worker mobility; workers can take their skills to new firms and have them recognized, and recruiters can infer the same about candidates in the market.

For example, if your company is looking for network administrators, you don't just need to know what skills to hire for – you need to know where to go looking for candidates those skills. If you know you can rely on a specific credential, or trust the experiences of similar workers at peer firms, you know where you can go recruit; both from existing network administrators in the market, or from occupations with highly overlapping skills, like IT support technicians.

IV. TECHNOLOGY INTEGRATION: EMBEDDING SKILLS IN YOUR HR ECOSYSTEM

This section provides practical guidance for embedding standardized skills data into your HR ecosystem, recognizing that most organizations will need to work within their current technology constraints rather than implementing new purpose-built solutions.

Current State Assessment

Before diving into technology implementation, assess your current systems landscape to understand integration possibilities and limitations:

Evaluate your existing HR tech infrastructure for skills-readiness:

- Which systems currently store or use skill information?
- What skill frameworks, if any, are already in use?
- Where are the most critical integration points for skills data?
- Identify which systems serve as “source of truth” for different data elements
- Create a systems map of skill data flow:
- Document where skill data needs to be created, stored, updated, and consumed
- Map current and desired data flows between systems
- Identify gaps in existing architecture that might hinder implementation

This assessment provides the foundation for a technology roadmap that supports your skills strategy while working within practical constraints. Most organizations adopt a phased approach that strategically integrates skills where they deliver the most immediate value.

Core Systems Integration Strategies

Different HR systems play different roles in a skills ecosystem. Here’s how to approach integration of shared taxonomies with key system types, working within existing technological constraints:

HRIS Systems:

Most HRIS platforms now have some skills functionality, but capabilities vary widely. Options for integration include:

- Using native skills modules where they exist, adapting the shared taxonomy to fit available structures
- Creating custom fields to track critical skills when native support is limited
- Consider where skills relate to other HR data (e.g., positions, training records)

Applicant Tracking Systems:

Connecting shared taxonomies to job requisitions and candidate assessments:

- Tag job postings with standardized skills from the shared taxonomy
- Create structured candidate assessments aligned to required skills
- Enable skill-based searching and matching of candidates where possible

Learning Management Systems:

Aligning learning content with shared skill taxonomies:

- Tag courses and resources with relevant skills and levels
- Create learning paths based on skill progression
- Enable skill gap-based recommendations where possible

Talent Management Platforms:

Incorporating shared taxonomies into performance management and succession planning:

- Base performance criteria on standardized skill definitions
- Track skill acquisition and development in review processes
- Include skill considerations in succession planning and readiness assessments

Data Integration Challenges and Solutions

Skills data often exists in multiple systems with different structures and terminology. Here's how to address common challenges within existing technology constraints:

Handling inconsistent skill terminology across legacy systems:

- Start with high-value use cases rather than attempting complete integration – getting buy-in on priority roles to gain early traction

- Focus on standardizing terminology for new implementations while gradually aligning legacy systems
- Create simple reference guides that help translate between different terms

Approaches for mapping proprietary skill frameworks to shared taxonomies:

- Identify conceptual matches rather than forcing perfect one-to-one mappings
- Focus on equivalence of meaning rather than exact terminology
- Start with the most frequently used skills to deliver quick value

The journey to skills-first talent practices doesn't require replacing your HR technology. By taking a pragmatic approach that works within existing constraints while strategically implementing shared taxonomies where they add most value, organizations can make meaningful progress toward skills-based talent management regardless of their current technology landscape.

V. BUILDING A SKILLS-FIRST SYSTEM, NOT JUST A FRAMEWORK

A shared skill taxonomy isn't the end goal—it's the infrastructure that powers better, faster, and fairer talent decisions. The most successful organizations view skills as a means to transform how they manage talent, not just a new framework to implement. Our shared taxonomy provides the foundation that makes this transformation possible without the significant cost and delay of building from scratch – but the most important thing is for organizations to move toward using skills as the currency for evaluating candidates, rather than ill-fitting proxies like degree attainment or potentially biased heuristics.

The potential for this work doesn't end at the walls of a single company. A national skills-based talent ecosystem would transform how America develops and deploys its workforce. By establishing skills as the common language between employers, workers, and education providers, we could address the persistent mismatches that leave positions unfilled while qualified talent remains undiscovered. Organizations would define work through standardized skill requirements, education providers would align learning directly to market-demanded capabilities, and workers would navigate careers based on validated abilities rather than credentials alone.

A key step to making this vision achievable is through emerging Learning and Employment Records (LERs) and verified digital credentials that create trusted, portable skill profiles. While digital credentialing platforms exist today, realizing this ecosystem requires coordinated decisions around data standards, verification processes, and cross-employer recognition. As more organizations adopt shared taxonomies and support open credentialing standards, we move closer to a future where workers carry verified skill records that travel with them throughout their careers—eliminating information gaps and enabling skills-first hiring at scale.

This shared infrastructure would expand economic mobility while giving businesses unprecedented visibility into available talent. The business impact would be substantial. Companies could quickly identify transferable skills during economic shifts, strategic workforce planning would become capability-focused rather than role-based, and talent deployment would gain precision and agility. This evolution from our current proxy-based system to one where skills serve as the universal currency of opportunity would benefit everyone—reducing hiring costs and time-to-fill for employers, creating clearer advancement paths for workers, and building a more resilient, competitive national workforce.

VI. YOUR NEXT MOVES

Ready to start your skills journey? Here are the critical first steps:

Download our shared taxonomies:

- Access our pre-built skill taxonomies that provide a strong foundation to start from
- Review skill definitions and categories to understand the structure
- Identify areas that may need customization for your context

Pick a pilot role or function:

- Select a high-impact role with clear talent challenges in your company
- Identify the skills from our taxonomy that drive success in these roles
- Implement these skill profiles to drive talent decisions

Start validating with your managers:

- Engage line leaders in confirming skill requirements from our taxonomy
- Test our standard definitions and levels against real work requirements
- Refine based on feedback to ensure relevance and accuracy

Don't boil the ocean:

- Focus on one big talent problem where our taxonomy can unlock a better solution
- Create a minimal viable implementation that addresses core needs
- Expand incrementally based on demonstrated value and lessons learned

Remember that the goal isn't having a perfect taxonomy—it's making better talent decisions. Keep that outcome in focus as you implement our shared framework, and prioritize practical application over theoretical elegance.

Skills Implementation Checklist

Ready to start your skills journey? Here are the critical first steps:

1

Download our shared taxonomies:

- ☐ Access our pre-built skill taxonomies that provide a strong foundation to start from
- ☐ Review skill definitions and categories to understand the structure
- ☐ Identify areas that may need customization for your context

2

Pick a pilot role or function:

- ☐ Select a high-impact role with clear talent challenges in your company
- ☐ Identify the skills from our taxonomy that drive success in these roles
- ☐ Implement these skill profiles to drive talent decisions

3

Start validating with your managers:

- ☐ Engage line leaders in confirming skill requirements from our taxonomy
- ☐ Test our standard definitions and levels against real work requirements
- ☐ Refine based on feedback to ensure relevance and accuracy

4

Don't boil the ocean:

- ☐ Focus on one big talent problem where our taxonomy can unlock a better solution
- ☐ Create a minimal viable implementation that addresses core needs
- ☐ Expand incrementally based on demonstrated value and lessons learned

Keep This in Mind

Remember that the goal isn't having a perfect taxonomy-it's making better talent decisions. Keep that outcome in focus as you implement our shared framework, and prioritize practical application over theoretical elegance.

CASE STUDY:

Full Transformation Journey at Walmart

Walmart has implemented the skills-first taxonomy framework within its job architecture starting with key roles, aligning Core and Role-Specific Skills to Jobs, referred to as success profiles, to bring greater transparency to career opportunities. This framework enables identification of role adjacencies and skill gaps, which inform personalized development pathways using resources from Walmart's content and experiential repository, all mapped to the same skills taxonomy. To further support internal mobility, Hiring Managers leverage skill Specializations to tailor position requirements, while the taxonomy also informs the creation of consistent, skills-based interview guides incorporating the proficiency levels from the taxonomy.

This comprehensive, end-to-end approach strategically supports associates' career growth through structured learning, real-world experiences, and targeted job opportunities. As a result, a culture of growth and excellence is fostered, empowering associates with valuable skills and enhancing readiness for new roles. The organization, in turn, benefits from a robust talent pipeline, increased engagement, and improved operational efficiency.

