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HR Strategies For Adopting A Skills-Based Hiring Model

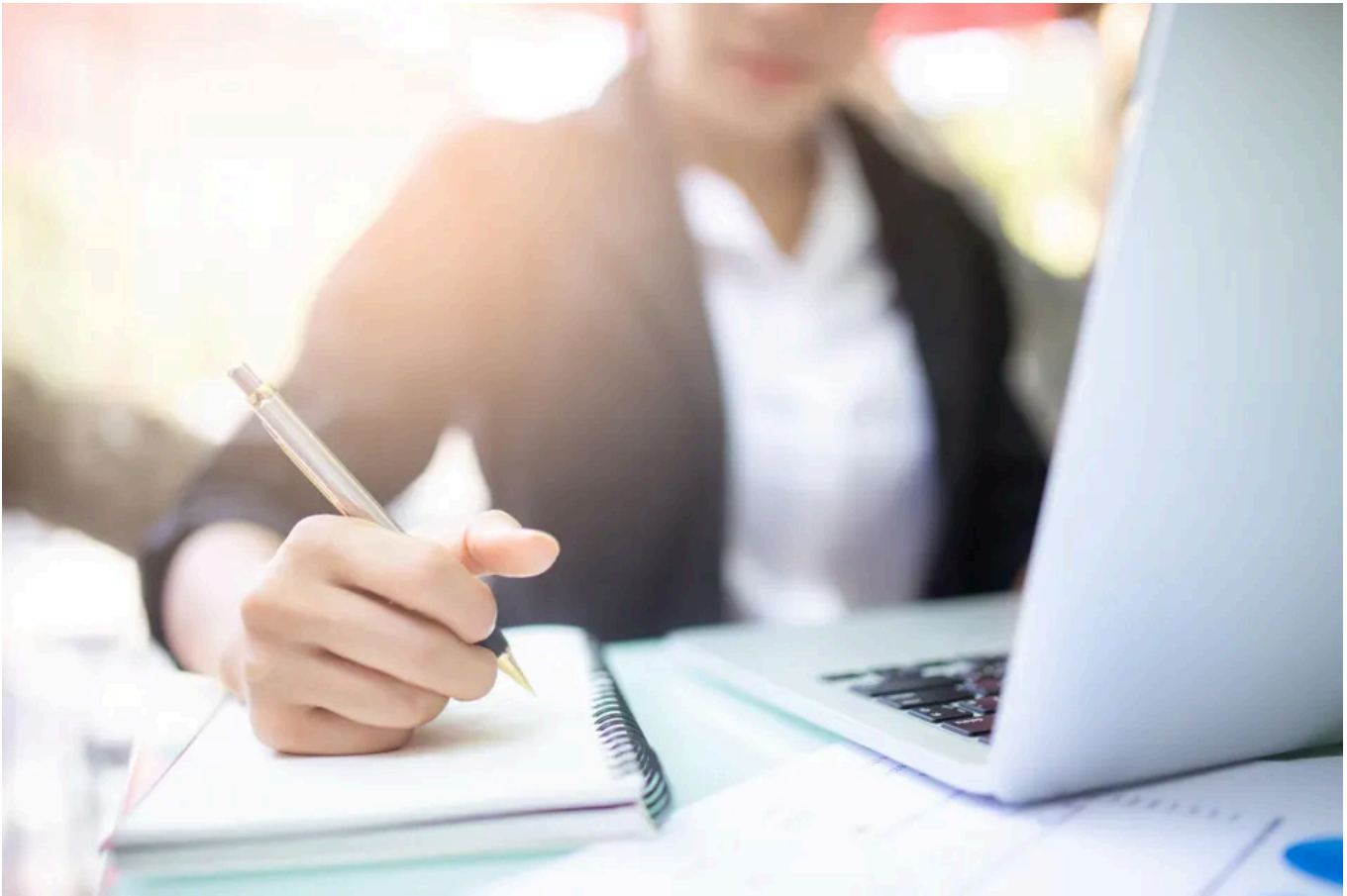


By **Expert Panel**[®], Forbes Councils Member.

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As roles evolve faster than traditional credentials can keep up, more organizations are rethinking how they define and assess talent. Skills-based hiring offers a way to widen talent pools, reduce bias and better align people with the work they'll actually perform. However, companies must rethink job descriptions, update hiring systems and equip managers with new tools to evaluate real capabilities.

To guide this transition, [Forbes Human Resources Council](#) members share practical strategies for implementing skills-based hiring across roles, systems and assessments. When executed well, a skills-first approach helps organizations hire more effectively and build a workforce ready to adapt and grow.

1. Use Paid Work Trials

A solid strategy is to use paid work trials. They force companies to rethink jobs around real skills instead of vague credentials. Job descriptions get clearer because they focus on the work someone will actually do. Systems shift to evaluate outputs, not backgrounds. Assessments become practical tasks that show how a candidate thinks, collaborates and delivers. - [Simina Simion, Uptempo](#)

2. Define Behavioral And Technical Competencies

Competency-based hiring involves defining behavioral competencies aligned with organizational values so all new hires are assessed on how well they can embody and live those values, and accordingly can thrive within the organizational culture. Alongside this, technical competencies ensure the company selects talent with the right knowledge, skills and abilities to perform the role effectively. - [Helal Hamdanieh, PwC](#)

3. Simplify And Standardize Skill Requirements

Create a list of requirements, keeping it simple and easy to use. Then update the job description to focus on what someone can do, not just where they have worked. Your systems should support this shift—use tools that let you tag roles with required skills and run assessments that test real ability. When candidates are evaluated on capability instead of titles, you open the door to stronger talent and more diverse backgrounds. - [Smiti Bhatt Deorah, AdvantageClub.ai](#)

4. Secure Leadership Buy-In Early

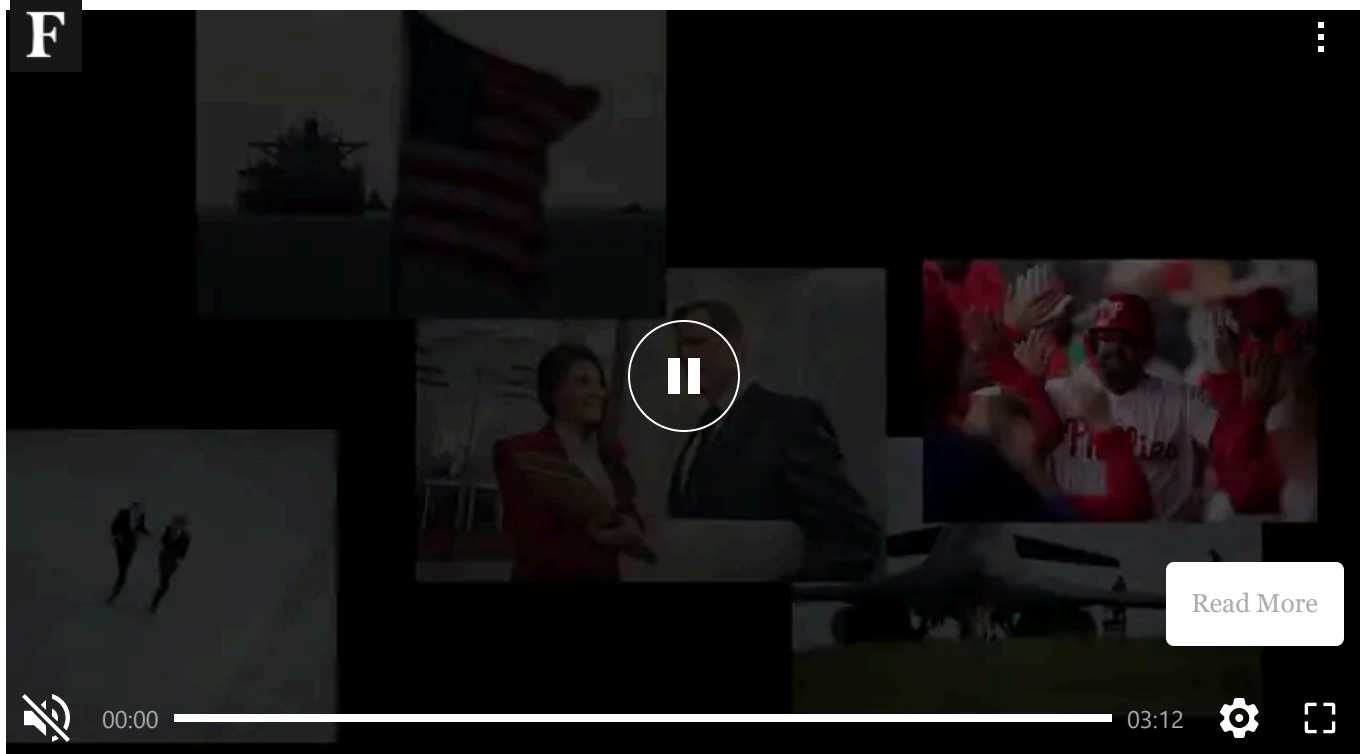
Making the jump to skills-based hiring begins with systems and strategy, but ultimately, it requires a culture shift on the part of the organization. To make the change successful, HR needs total buy-in from the leadership team; otherwise, the initiative will start and stop with their efforts. Talk about the business benefits of skills-based hiring before taking any other steps. - [Stephanie Manzelli, Employ Inc.](#)

[Forbes Human Resources Council](#) is an invitation-only organization for HR executives across all industries. *Do I qualify?*

5. Create A Skills Map

More than anything, this is about mapping skills to the work that needs to be done. Job descriptions should always lead with these specific skills requirements rather than formal qualifications. At the interview stage, hiring managers must then be prudent in assessing and verifying the applicant's skills proficiency, using both

traditional tests as well as AI-enabled role play simulations. - [Nelson Sivalingam, HowNow](#)



6. Train Hiring Teams To Assess Skills

While applicants adjusting how they present themselves is a piece, it's even more important that the hiring team be trained on how to assess a candidate for skills. The typical résumé is designed to show experience, not skills. The hiring manager needs to know the right questions to ask to pull the skills off the paper and ensure they're making a smart hire. Many aren't trained on this, leaving a gap. - [Nicky Hancock, AMS](#)

7. Put On A Skills-First Lens

The two most common techniques we have seen work well for companies that have successfully transitioned to skills-based hiring are: 1. rewriting job descriptions through a skills-first lens (for example, removing unnecessary barriers like degree requirements) and 2. evaluating prospective employees on demonstrated abilities and skills versus relying on what they say they can do on their résumé. - [Josh Millet, Criteria](#)

8. Audit Top Performers And Pilot Assessments

Start with a skills audit of top performers to ID what drives success. Then pilot AI-powered tools that screen candidates with skills assessments and scenario-based tests that measure real competencies, not just résumé claims. Phase the rollout: test on two to three roles, measure quality of hire and retention, then scale across departments. A data-driven approach reduces bias and reveals overlooked talent. - [Lynne Marie Finn, Broadleaf Results](#)

9. Hire For Learnability And Adjacent Skills

Skills-based hiring requires a mindset change across the organization. Job descriptions should focus on skills required rather than tasks to be performed. Hiring managers should focus on the skills of an individual and, more importantly, the ability to learn new skills. They must identify adjacent skills and "learnability" of an individual rather than looking for an exact skills match or degrees. - [Tan Moorthy, Revature](#)

10. Embed Skills Across Hiring Systems

Weave skills into the hiring processes without disregarding other important aspects, like educational background and work experience. Update your human capital management system to spotlight key skills that drive performance and communicate the advantages—personalized development and flexible career growth. Once understood, incorporate skills into job descriptions, job postings and assessments. - [Julia Brandon, Lenovo](#)

11. Make Skills And Gaps Transparent

One strategy is to make skills—especially emerging skills, skill gaps and skill demand—transparent. A skills-first culture starts by making everyone aware of the skills that are needed (and to support the skill acquisition required to fill the gaps). - [Jeff Bergin, General Assembly](#)

12. Start Small With Skills-Based Changes

Organizations don't need to dismantle existing systems to embrace skills-based practices. Simple changes like adding critical skills to job postings or introducing skills-based interviews to the hiring process shift the spotlight from degrees and experience to what truly matters: capability. These shifts expand traditional talent pools, reduce bias and deliver lasting impact to the organization. - [Jennifer Rozon, McLean & Company](#)

13. Align Job Descriptions With Behavioral Demands

Identify what the role actually requires, not just a carbon copy of all your top performers' qualities. Map critical tasks to behavioral and cognitive capabilities needed for success. Assess candidates against those capabilities rather than years of experience or degree pedigree. Rewrite the job description language to match its behavioral demands, such as venturesome or analytical. - [Matt Poepsel, The Predictive Index](#)

14. Establish A Common Skills Language

A skills-based hiring model succeeds only when the organization defines a common skills language, a shared architecture of critical, emerging and adjacent skills, which is integrated into how work is designed and how talent is evaluated. A unified skills architecture is able to help unlock mobility, broaden talent pools and hire with greater precision and equity. - [Britton Bloch, Navy Federal](#)

15. Use Workforce Analytics To Define Success

Adopting a skills-based model starts with workforce analytics. Study your top performers to identify the competencies that truly predict success, then rewrite job descriptions around those skills. Update hiring systems and assessments to measure those skills directly. When data defines what matters, companies hire more effectively and fairly while reducing bias and widening access to talent. - [Dr. Timothy J. Giardino, myWorkforceAgents.ai](#)

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