hilighter

HR & L&D EDITION

From Jobs to Skills

The practical guide for building a skills-based learning organization

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90-day plan and 12-month roadmap

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Read online: https://www.hilighter.io/guides/from-jobs-to-skills

How to use this edition

Start with Chapters 2, 3, 4 and 5. Provide fair processes and easy-to-run learning routines.

Choose one real business challenge and one pilot team. Work through Chapters 1–8 in order for the first pilot, or jump to the chapters suggested by the optional 12-question check. Use a 60–90 minute workshop per chapter, assign an owner, and revisit your decisions every month. Complete the templates with real evidence - not aspirational statements.

Five operating principles

1. Begin with business outcomes and meaningful work, not a giant skills catalogue.
2. Define observable capabilities and validate evidence; do not confuse course attendance with skill.
3. Build psychological safety: employee development is not covert surveillance or an automated ranking.
4. Make learning happen in work, with support from managers, peers and accessible opportunities.
5. Start small, measure changes in work quality, and iterate before scaling.

Boundaries and safeguards

This is an educational method, not a legal, psychometric or compliance certification. Respect local employment and data-protection law, consult workers and their representatives where required, and keep legally mandated qualifications when safety or regulation requires them. AI suggestions are hypotheses for human review - not proof of competence.

Working definitions

Term	Definition
Job / role	A bundle of responsibilities; roles change as work changes.
Skill	An ability to perform a meaningful task in a defined context.
Proficiency	How independently and reliably a skill can be demonstrated.
Evidence	An observable work product, demonstration or other relevant proof.
Learning organization	An organization that routinely discovers, shares, applies and improves knowledge in its work.

Term	Definition
Skills-based	A decision approach that considers demonstrated capabilities alongside the requirements of work, rather than relying only on job labels or credentials.

Chapter 2: Understand how the organization works today

Why this matters

A learning organization cannot be built from an idealized process chart. Map where roles, skills and learning are currently defined: hiring, onboarding, work assignments, supervision, reviews and informal knowledge sharing. People often know much more than records suggest, while managers may assume that training equals proficiency.

How to run it

1. Hold short interviews with leaders, two managers and representative workers or volunteers. Ask for concrete recent examples of errors, handoffs and learning moments.
2. Audit the smallest existing set of materials: job descriptions, onboarding instructions, certificates, evidence of work, process metrics and learning resources.
3. Mark what is known, unverified, contradictory or missing. Avoid assigning a performance label to individuals.
4. Identify three recurrent friction points: a bottleneck, a skill bottleneck, and an access problem for learning.
5. Choose a baseline that does not require new surveillance or collection of unnecessary personal information.

Workshop prompts

- How do people learn a task for the first time?
- How do we know the task was learned?
- Where is knowledge trapped in someone's head or in inaccessible files?

Adapt it to your organization

- Small business: use existing job checklists and short conversations.
- Nonprofit: include staff and volunteers with distinct responsibilities.
- Business unit: review dependencies on central IT, HR and operations.

Illustrative example

A nonprofit community service discovers that volunteers are trained informally, but handovers between shifts are inconsistent. It documents two critical service procedures and introduces a short observed handover checklist.

Common failure to avoid: An audit of process maturity is not a justification for collecting every individual's history or producing a secret "talent ranking".

What to measure: Onboarding time, repeated errors, documentation availability, employees reporting access to learning and role coverage.

Deliverable and exit test: A current-state map with three constraints, existing resources and two baseline measures.

Worksheet 2.1: Current-state audit

Copy and fill in this template during a working session. Name an owner, use verifiable facts and record the next review date.

Prompt / field	Your notes / decision
How roles are documented	_____
How skills are recognized today	_____
Where evidence is stored	_____
How newcomers learn	_____
How managers give feedback	_____
Where learning opportunities are unequal	_____
Three gaps to investigate	_____

Suggested action	Owner	Review date	Evidence / result
_____	_____	_____	_____

Worksheet 2.2: Workflow friction log

Copy and fill in this template during a working session. Name an owner, use verifiable facts and record the next review date.

Prompt / field	Your notes / decision
Work step or handoff	_____
Observed problem and frequency	_____
Consequence for quality / mission	_____
Capability or process root cause	_____
Existing evidence	_____
Low-cost experiment	_____
Owner and review date	_____

Suggested action	Owner	Review date	Evidence / result
_____	_____	_____	_____

Chapter 3: Define a shared, usable skills language

Why this matters

A competency framework must be understandable to the people doing the work. Translate a small number of priority roles into essential tasks, then into skills with definitions and observable proficiency levels. Distinguish skills from tools, personal attributes, credentials and responsibilities. Use simple terms before adopting a sophisticated taxonomy.

How to run it

1. For each pilot role, choose five to ten tasks central to success, including tasks affected by automation, new tools or regulatory change.
2. Translate tasks into six to twelve essential skills per role; combine duplicate labels and explain each in plain language.
3. Define what "supported", "independent" and "advanced" look like in the actual context. Use the same wording for everyone in the role.
4. Check definitions with employees, managers and subject-matter experts; invite counterexamples.
5. Version the framework, give it an owner and schedule its review when work changes. Keep legal qualifications separate.

Workshop prompts

- Could a new employee tell from this definition what good work looks like?
- Does "communication" mean a specific observable action in this role?
- What should change when AI performs part of the task?

Adapt it to your organization

- Small business: keep role definitions to one page.
- Nonprofit: distinguish paid and volunteer tasks and required safeguarding.
- Business unit: reuse approved terminology where it is genuinely useful.

Illustrative example

A customer-support team replaces "excellent communicator" with "explains an issue in plain language, confirms understanding, and documents the agreed next step". Reviewers can now observe the same

behavior.

Common failure to avoid: Beware skill inflation: hundreds of generic labels, inconsistent level scales and "advanced" ratings based solely on seniority.

What to measure: Share of priority roles defined, role profiles reviewed by workers, ambiguous skills removed and time to update a changed role.

Deliverable and exit test: An approved pilot role-to-skills matrix with definitions, examples and a named maintainer.

Worksheet 3.1: Role-to-skills matrix

Copy and fill in this template during a working session. Name an owner, use verifiable facts and record the next review date.

Prompt / field	Your notes / decision
Role and major responsibilities	_____
Critical task / outcome	_____
Essential skill (plain-language label)	_____
What competent delivery looks like	_____
Required proficiency (0–3)	_____
Regulated credential, if any	_____
Reviewer and next review	_____

Suggested action	Owner	Review date	Evidence / result
_____	_____	_____	_____

Worksheet 3.2: Proficiency anchor card

Copy and fill in this template during a working session. Name an owner, use verifiable facts and record the next review date.

Prompt / field	Your notes / decision
Skill and context	_____
Level 1: supported behavior	_____
Level 2: independent behavior	_____
Level 3: advanced behavior	_____
Accepted evidence examples	_____
Potential bias or accessibility concern	_____
Employee and manager sign-off	_____

Suggested action	Owner	Review date	Evidence / result
_____	_____	_____	_____

Chapter 4: Make capabilities visible and trustworthy

Why this matters

An inventory is useful only when people trust it. Self-declarations can surface hidden abilities, but must be complemented by relevant work evidence and fair review. Distinguish "not yet observed" from "unable to do". Establish who may see an employee profile, why it exists, and how errors can be corrected.

How to run it

1. Invite pilot participants to identify capabilities they use in work, projects, community contributions and learning; do not force disclosure of private activities.
2. Choose proportionate evidence: completed tasks, demonstrations, supervisor observations, portfolios, licenses or relevant coursework; record context and date.
3. Give employees a chance to comment or contest manager judgments. Use more than one source where the consequences are significant.
4. Map required-versus-demonstrated coverage at team level first; flag unknown data rather than treating missing entries as zero.
5. Agree access, retention, correction and deletion rules before storing individual records; use only the data needed for development.

Workshop prompts

- What evidence would convince a fair observer?
- Where can someone demonstrate a skill without holding a formal title?
- What mistakes in this record could disadvantage a person?

Adapt it to your organization

- Small business: start with team coverage rather than granular ranking.
- Nonprofit: protect beneficiaries and volunteer privacy in examples.
- Business unit: coordinate access controls with existing policies.

Illustrative example

A project assistant without a formal data role provides a recent dashboard, explains how it was built and receives confirmation of a reporting skill. A lack of evidence for another skill remains "unknown".

Common failure to avoid: Avoid unreviewed AI scoring, permanent labels and automatic decisions about pay, promotion or dismissal based on skills predictions.

What to measure: Percentage of role-critical skills with recent evidence, unresolved disputes, unknown coverage and time spent reviewing records.

Deliverable and exit test: A transparent, rights-aware pilot skills matrix and an agreed process for updating it.

Worksheet 4.1: Skills evidence record

Copy and fill in this template during a working session. Name an owner, use verifiable facts and record the next review date.

Prompt / field	Your notes / decision
Skill and task context	_____
Evidence type and date	_____
Link / description (minimal data)	_____
What can be observed	_____
Suggested level and confidence	_____
Employee comment or correction	_____
Human reviewer and decision	_____

Suggested action	Owner	Review date	Evidence / result
_____	_____	_____	_____

Worksheet 4.2: Coverage and resilience map

Copy and fill in this template during a working session. Name an owner, use verifiable facts and record the next review date.

Prompt / field	Your notes / decision
Critical task / role	_____
Minimum coverage needed	_____
People with validated capability (authorized view)	_____
Unknown or expiring evidence	_____
Single-point-of-failure risk	_____
Backup / development action	_____
Review date	_____

Suggested action	Owner	Review date	Evidence / result
_____	_____	_____	_____

Chapter 5: Turn everyday work into continuous learning

Why this matters

A course catalogue alone does not change a workplace. People learn when new knowledge is applied, rehearsed, supported and reviewed. Create small, repeatable routines inside existing meetings and project cycles. Offer multiple formats so shift workers, part-time staff, remote teams and volunteers can participate.

How to run it

1. Select one high-priority gap connected to a real work task and define a safe opportunity to practice it.
2. Pair learning resources with an application: shadowing, job rotation, coaching, guided practice, peer demonstration or an accessible short lesson.
3. Create a predictable rhythm: a ten-minute retrospective, a fortnightly peer exchange, or monthly demonstration.
4. Ask managers to make time, give specific feedback and remove barriers. Recognize people who teach others.
5. Collect evidence of application after two to six weeks; change the activity if work outcomes do not improve.

Workshop prompts

- Where can practice happen without risking customers or service users?
- Who has access to learning despite shifts, disability, distance or workload?
- What will managers stop doing to protect learning time?

Adapt it to your organization

- Small business: include practice in existing shift handovers.
- Nonprofit: offer asynchronous options to volunteers.
- Business unit: integrate with team rituals rather than adding meetings.

Illustrative example

A 12-person community charity pilots a 15-minute biweekly case review. Staff agree one improvement to volunteer onboarding and check whether handover errors decline.

Common failure to avoid: Do not use course completions, hours watched or certificates as the only signal that a capability improved.

What to measure: Practice opportunities taken, skill demonstrations, learning transfer, participant accessibility and workflow results.

Deliverable and exit test: A learning routine with an owner, an application task, an evidence rule and the next review.

Worksheet 5.1: Learning-in-the-flow experiment

Copy and fill in this template during a working session. Name an owner, use verifiable facts and record the next review date.

Prompt / field	Your notes / decision
Critical skill gap	_____
Real work task for practice	_____
Learning method and accessibility adaptation	_____
Frequency and time protected	_____
Coach or peer supporter	_____
Evidence after 30 days	_____
Continue / change / stop decision	_____

Suggested action	Owner	Review date	Evidence / result
_____	_____	_____	_____

Worksheet 5.2: Individual development agreement

Copy and fill in this template during a working session. Name an owner, use verifiable facts and record the next review date.

Prompt / field	Your notes / decision
Skill to strengthen and why	_____
Current evidence / uncertainty	_____
Specific development goal	_____
Practice assignment and support	_____
Accessibility / time needs	_____
Evidence to review after 30–60 days	_____
Employee choice and manager support	_____

Suggested action	Owner	Review date	Evidence / result
_____	_____	_____	_____

Your first 90 days

Choose one real business challenge and one pilot team. Work through Chapters 1–8 in order for the first pilot, or jump to the chapters suggested by the optional 12-question check. Use a 60–90 minute workshop per chapter, assign an owner, and revisit your decisions every month. Complete the templates with real evidence - not aspirational statements.

Days 1–15: agree

Sponsor, worker input, business challenge, pilot scope, baseline and privacy assumptions.

Days 16–30: map

Critical tasks, five to ten tasks per role, required skills and observable levels.

Days 31–45: evidence

Invite employees; assess available evidence; resolve uncertainty without over-scoring.

Days 46–60: practise

Launch one practical learning routine and protect manager time for feedback.

Days 61–75: decide

Apply the information to one transparent staffing, learning or continuity decision.

Days 76–90: review

Compare with baseline, hear concerns, record overhead, decide whether to scale or revise.

Suggested action	Owner	Review date	Evidence / result
_____	_____	_____	_____

Suggested action	Owner	Review date	Evidence / result
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

12-month expansion roadmap

Months 1–3

Run pilot; fix evidence and governance rules; decide whether to continue.

Months 4–6

Extend to two related teams; train managers; test reuse of skill language; remove duplicate administration.

Months 7–9

Connect onboarding and one staffing or internal-project decision; review equitable opportunity access.

Months 10–12

Update framework for changing work and AI; publish internal lessons; decide next year's priority outcomes.

Proficiency example: common four-level language

- 0 - **Not yet demonstrated:** No usable evidence yet; not a judgement of potential.
- 1 - **Supported:** Can perform the task with guidance or an example.
- 2 - **Independent:** Can deliver the task reliably in a normal situation.
- 3 - **Advanced / enables others:** Handles exceptions and helps others improve their practice.

Your next move

Pick one pilot team, name the accountable sponsor and book the first 45-minute workshop. The outcome of the first month is not a complete taxonomy: it is agreement about the work that matters, which capabilities enable it, and how you will observe progress.

Going further

All 8 chapters, the three examples and every source are in the complete edition and online:

Read online: **https://www.hilighter.io/guides/from-jobs-to-skills**

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