hilighter

LEADERS & BUSINESS OWNERS 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

Published by SkillsBoard SAS, developer of hilighter. Free to read, print and download, no registration.
November 6, 2026 · Version 1.0
Read online: https://www.hilighter.io/guides/from-jobs-to-skills

How to use this edition

Start with Chapters 1, 2, 7 and 8. Select a business-critical pilot without creating an HR department.

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.

Term	Definition
Learning organization	An organization that routinely discovers, shares, applies and improves knowledge in its work.
Skills-based	A decision approach that considers demonstrated capabilities alongside the requirements of work, rather than relying only on job labels or credentials.

Chapter 1: Connect skills to outcomes

Why this matters

A skills project without a business problem quickly becomes an expensive inventory. Begin with two measurable outcomes: faster service, safer delivery, less dependence on key people, higher quality, stronger mission impact or better adaptation to AI. Interview the people who actually deliver the work. Ask what regularly slows them down and what must change in the next 12 months.

How to run it

1. Write down the organization's top three outcomes for the next year, including at least one customer, service or mission outcome.
2. For each outcome, list the work that determines it; separate a task (what people do) from the skills (what makes the task reliable).
3. Choose a pilot group that owns one important workflow; prefer committed managers and accessible evidence over a fashionable department.
4. Assign one sponsor, one operational owner and at least one employee voice. Agree what will stop or be simplified to create time for learning.
5. Set a starting baseline, target, review date and explicit scope. Declare what the pilot will not do.

Workshop prompts

- If this succeeds in 90 days, which observable business result will improve?
- Which work depends on knowledge held by just one or two people?
- Who may be excluded unless they are invited to shape the pilot?

Adapt it to your organization

- Small business: focus on the single workflow that creates the most rework.
- Nonprofit: state the mission outcome and service-user protections.
- Business unit: obtain authority to run a pilot without waiting for an enterprise-wide framework.

Illustrative example

A 35-person maintenance company chooses first-time repair quality rather than "digital transformation". Its pilot covers six field technicians and one dispatcher. It measures repeat visits, demonstrates troubleshooting

tasks and trains backup coverage.

Common failure to avoid: Do not start by mapping every employee or by using AI forecasts as certainty. Keep the first pilot narrow enough for a manager to support.

What to measure: Baseline and change in workflow quality, service continuity, number of critical roles with an owner and weekly learning time protected.

Deliverable and exit test: A one-page charter stating outcome, pilot team, sponsor, two metrics, employee involvement and review date.

Worksheet 1.1: Business-outcome charter

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
Business or mission problem	_____
Who is affected and how	_____
Baseline evidence (date and source)	_____
One 90-day target	_____
Critical tasks behind the outcome	_____
Sponsor and employee voice	_____
One thing we will stop doing	_____

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

Worksheet 1.2: Pilot-selection decision

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
Candidate team or workflow	_____
Importance to organization (1–5)	_____
Manager commitment (1–5)	_____
Ability to observe results (1–5)	_____
Workload and inclusion risks	_____
Chosen pilot and reason	_____
Review or stop condition	_____

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

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 7: Lead the change and protect trust

Why this matters

Skills-based transformation changes everyday authority: employees gain a voice in what they can demonstrate, managers must give feedback, and leaders need to protect time for development. It will fail if employees see the initiative as hidden downsizing, if managers feel judged or if data rights are vague.

How to run it

1. Write an honest statement of purpose: what the program is for, what it is not for, and which decisions remain human.
2. Appoint an accountable sponsor and a small working group including management, workforce representatives and, where relevant, volunteers.
3. Explain what data is recorded, who can access it, how long it is retained and how employees can correct records; seek legal and worker-representation review as appropriate.
4. Train managers in evidence-based conversations, inclusive feedback, and how to discuss an unknown skill without discouraging people.
5. Make learning and improvement visible through monthly demonstrations, questions and course corrections; do not hide failures.

Workshop prompts

- Which employee concerns are reasonable and how will we address them?
- What happens if a manager and employee disagree about a skill?
- What time and support have leaders genuinely allocated?

Adapt it to your organization

- Small business: the owner can sponsor; a manager runs the pilot.
- Nonprofit: involve safeguarding and worker / volunteer voices.
- Business unit: communicate clearly with HR and employee representatives.

Illustrative example

A social-service director tells staff that the pilot does not automate employment decisions, publishes the access policy and holds an open Q&A before collecting evidence.

Common failure to avoid: Announcing a "skills revolution" without employee participation, privacy rules or managerial capacity damages trust.

What to measure: Participation, trust feedback, manager coaching practice, unresolved corrections and accessibility of learning.

Deliverable and exit test: A signed change charter, stakeholder map, communication plan and clear accountability model.

Worksheet 7.1: Stakeholder and trust 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
Group affected / voice needed	_____
Expected benefit and concern	_____
What data may be processed	_____
Who can access and correct it	_____
Communication and consultation action	_____
Responsible leader	_____
Feedback / escalation route	_____

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

Worksheet 7.2: Manager learning ritual

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
Meeting or 1:1 cadence	_____
One skill to practice this month	_____
Feedback question based on observed work	_____
Peer learning or coaching slot	_____
Time to protect	_____
How improvements will be recognized	_____
Escalation for unfairness or overload	_____

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

Chapter 8: Measure outcomes, improve and scale

Why this matters

If the scoreboard counts only courses and profile completions, the transformation may look successful while work stays unchanged. Separate activity measures from evidence of improved capability and actual organizational outcomes. Review results with staff, compare against the baseline and keep learning costs visible.

How to run it

1. Set a short balanced scorecard: one outcome measure, one capability measure, one participation/fairness measure and one workload measure.
2. Record baseline and data source before interventions; avoid inventing precise attribution to learning from a small pilot.
3. Run a 30-, 60- and 90-day review. Ask what changed, what did not, and what unintended harm appeared.
4. At day 90, decide explicitly: scale, revise, pause or stop. Specify which practices can be copied and which require local adaptation.
5. For the next year, assign ownership for skills framework updates, onboarding, manager training, data review and recurring checks of new technology and work.

Workshop prompts

- Can we show changed work outcomes, not only more recorded skills?
- Whose voice is missing from the results?
- Is maintaining the process proportionate to its value?

Adapt it to your organization

- Small business: keep at most four measures.
- Nonprofit: measure service-user outcomes as well as volunteer participation.
- Business unit: check consistency without claiming enterprise-wide representativeness.

Illustrative example

A 70-person operations team sees fewer repeat escalations after a skills pilot but also higher manager workload. It simplifies evidence reviews before expanding to the next team.

Common failure to avoid: Do not advertise statistical causality from a tiny, self-selected pilot or publish cross-company rankings from inadequate samples.

What to measure: Business outcome trend, evidence-based coverage, time to proficiency, participation equity, manager workload and monthly review completion.

Deliverable and exit test: A 90-day evidence summary, scale/no-scale decision and a 12-month ownership roadmap.

Worksheet 8.1: Balanced scorecard

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
Business or mission outcome + baseline	_____
Capability / evidence indicator	_____
Learning application indicator	_____
Fairness and access indicator	_____
Time / administrative burden	_____
Source and cadence	_____
Owner and decision threshold	_____

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

Worksheet 8.2: 90-day decision review

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
What improved with evidence	_____
What failed or was not used	_____
Unexpected employee concerns	_____
Cost and managerial workload	_____
Keep / change / stop decisions	_____
Next team and prerequisites	_____
Sponsor decision and next review	_____

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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