

SKILLS-FIRST: WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR MY ORGANISATION?

CHARTING OUT POSSIBILITIES FOR A VIRTUOUS ECOSYSTEM



Defining skills



A learned and applied ability that **uses one's knowledge effectively in execution or performance**



Identifying possession of skills is not enough; it is about the **successful application of knowledge** to solve problems and deliver outcomes



Applying requires **continued learning** as the effective application of abilities demands constant development of one's abilities

Why do skills matter now?



- **AI** is both enabling as well as requiring employers to redesign processes towards greater productivity
- Amid geopolitical and economic risks, focusing on skills over roles **enables flexible talent deployment and reduces concentration risks**
- **Ageing societies and generational shifts** nudge employers to focus on skills
- **Growing demand and willingness to pay** for artisanal, technical, and craft skills

What should employers build internally?

Skillset

How is the organisation's demand for skills evolving? What skills does the employee need to develop and deepen over time?

Mindset

How can the organisation re-envision how talent is seamlessly connected to work based on the skills they have (rather than the jobs they are in)? How do we create a mindset of continuous upskilling and reskilling with employees?

Toolset

What tools and resources can the organisation provide to enable the seamless development of employees and their application of skills to work?

Availing resources and opportunities

at workplaces to deploy and hone skillset-mindset-toolset.

Create a virtuous cycle where monetary rewards are a natural consequence of continued pursuit of skill development and excellence.

Six gaps to close on the journey to skills-first

Investment in skills competes with business costs

💡 **OCBC (Singapore)** uses the **MOBI platform** to match employees with their career interest areas based on skill fit, not job history.

Skills do not reflect the evolving needs of the business

💡 **Prince's Landscape** created a **"horticultural specialist"** role that blends technical, client-facing, and leadership skills to elevate trade work.

People processes overlook skills; specificity of skills needs context

💡 **IBM, Dell, Google, and Unilever** use performance credentials, real-world assessments, and AI tools to surface skills beyond degrees.

Educators and employers are in their own silos

💡 **Cleveland STARs** removes degree filters and co-develops skills pathways with employers, colleges, and workforce boards.

Skills are rarely linked to rewards

💡 **Cragar Industries** ties **20 to 40 percent of compensation** to demonstrated skill proficiency within operations, production and supply chain teams. Performance reviews incorporate learning milestones.

Companies are not maximising the skills available

💡 **Grab's GROW platform** promotes internal gigs and mentoring to help employees reveal and develop skills beyond their job roles.



KEY QUESTIONS FOR EMPLOYERS

- How are you integrating skills with your business strategy? Does business strategy drive skills development, or is business strategy shaped by skills available, or both?
- Have you designed your people processes and systems to uncover skills and accelerate the flow of skill-related signals across the organisation?
- How are you influencing the skill development of talent prior to your hiring?
- How are you incentivising continued skill development across your workforce?



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