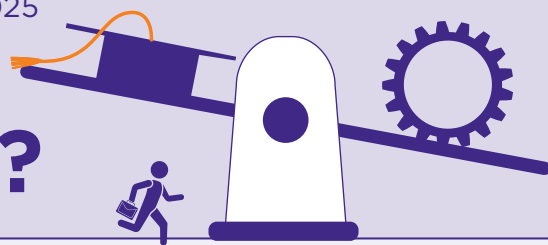


# SKILLS-FIRST: ARE WE THERE YET?



## ► What's holding us back?

Beyond the five structural gaps—signalling failure, coordination deficit, risk asymmetry, measurement gap, and cultural resistance

### Low individual agency

Workers struggle to identify and articulate their own skills

### Internal disconnect

Misalignment between business and HR leaders due to unclear skill priorities and limited HR involvement in strategy

### Resource limitations

Smaller firms lack the capacity for skills-first implementation

### Present bias

Short-term thinking undermines long-term skill investment



## ► Prioritising barriers to address



### Risk asymmetry

Employers are hesitant to upskill employees for fear they may leave; employees are uncertain about the return on their investment



### Signalling failure

Skills are not easily or credibly recognised beyond formal qualifications



### Demand-led shifts

Lack of enterprise-level action, and limited support for individuals navigating life-stage transitions

## ► Promising ideas to translate into action



### Employer-led demo projects

Demonstrate the business value of skills-first hiring and internal mobility



### Alternative skill signalling

Examples include digital portfolios, capstone projects, real-world performance



### Supporting skill articulation for employees

HR teams to support employees in articulating the skills they already possess



### Multi-stakeholder pilots

Co-create solutions with employers, training providers, and public agencies to ensure relevance and impact



### START SMALL, PROVE VALUE

Pilot initiatives should begin with focused, small-scale implementations to demonstrate real-world impact before scaling



## VOICES FROM THE GROUND

### • Skills as a complement

Skills build on—not replace—qualifications.

### • Skills-first driven by urgency

Labour shortages are pushing employers to focus on skills—not just credentials—to widen hiring pipelines.

### • Embrace work-based learning

Strong support for sandbox-style pilots and experiential learning to validate emerging skills in real settings.

### • Build agency from young

Education must nurture curiosity and intrinsic motivation beyond standard assessments.



◀ Scan to view the full roundtable insights

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