

Part 1

SHL Skills
Development
Series

Beyond Guesswork: Effective Skills Audits for Today's Talent Challenges

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Skills are the foundation of a competitive, agile workforce — yet many organizations are operating in the dark when it comes to workforce capabilities. This knowledge gap costs real money: misaligned hiring, wasted L&D budgets, and top talent walking out the door.

A skills audit delivers the insights you need. But most organizations hit the same roadblocks.

These are four common challenges, and how to overcome them.

Challenge #1

No shared language for skills

Challenge #2

Siloed and outdated skills data

Challenge #3

Critical human skills are overlooked and undermeasured

Challenge #4

Measuring skills without linking to business needs



Challenge 1

No shared language for skills

Here's the hidden problem behind every failed skills audit: your teams are speaking different languages. HR calls it *communication*, engineering calls it *stakeholder management*, and sales calls it *client relations*; but they're describing the same core capability.

Without a shared skills framework, even sophisticated measurement systems produce incomparable data.

And here's the kicker: this isn't just an HR issue. Building a common language for skills requires executive sponsorship. Without leadership alignment, frameworks stall in pilot mode or get diluted across departments. When leaders champion a unified approach, it signals that skills are a strategic priority, not just an operational fix.

Only **19%** of HR leaders say they have a clear, organization-wide skills taxonomy



Challenge 1

The fix:

Connect your frameworks

- Align your existing competency model (if you have one) with a set of behavioral skills that define what success looks like in more specific terms

Say it the same way

- Describe skills using simple and objective language that is relevant across all roles, job levels and contexts

Get leaders on board

- Secure executive buy-in to embed the framework into strategic planning, not just HR processes

Organizations
with a shared
skills framework
bring products
and services to
market **20% faster**



Challenge 2

Siloed and outdated skills data

You've solved the language problem. Now face the data issue. Your recruitment team has skills data. L&D has different skills data. Performance reviews capture something else entirely. And some of the data was gathered five years ago.

The result? Nobody has the complete picture, and critical decisions get made on guesswork. Without integrated data, you can't see the full picture of workforce capabilities or make confident, evidence-based talent decisions.

70% of organizations say they don't have a single, reliable source of skills data



Challenge 2

The fix:

Make it someone's job

- Define a clear process and assign accountable owners for running regular skills audits so data actually stays current

Put it all in one view

- Create a central repository where data from hiring, reviews, and learning flows together for a single, reliable picture

Open the doors

- Give HR, managers, and business leaders cross-functional access so silos disappear, and collaboration can thrive

Companies
with integrated,
up-to-date skills
data are **2.5x**
more likely to
deploy talent
effectively



Challenge 3

Critical human skills are overlooked and undermeasured

Technical skills get all the attention. Python proficiency, Salesforce certification, and project management methodology—easy to spot, simple to verify. But here's what actually determines success: adaptability when projects pivot, collaboration when teams clash, problem-solving when nothing goes as planned.

These human capabilities drive performance, yet most organizations have no reliable way to measure them.

84% of hiring managers and employees say soft skills are essential for success in today's workplace, especially as technology and AI reshape job roles

Forbes. 84% of Workforce Insists Job Candidates Must Demonstrate Soft Skills, 2024



Challenge 3

The fix:

Measure soft skills

- Use science-backed assessments that measure human skills as objectively as technical ones

Think beyond the role

- Focus audits on durable skills that translate across roles and survive technological change

Spot the success factors

- Target the human capabilities your top performers consistently demonstrate

Organizations that prioritize human skills are **2.5x** more likely to grow roles and capabilities aligned with future business needs



Challenge 4

Measuring skills without linking to business needs

Skills audits without strategic purpose are expensive surveys. You'll know exactly how many people have "excellent communication skills", but have no idea if those are the skills you need to hit next quarter's goals or launch next year's product.

When measurement isn't tied to strategy, it becomes compliance theater instead of competitive advantage.

Only **26%** of HR leaders say their skills strategy is aligned to business priorities



Challenge 4

The fix:

Lead with strategy

- Start with strategy: what capabilities will you need in 12-18 months, not just today?

Zero in on business gaps

- Focus on gaps that directly impact revenue, growth, or competitive positioning

Turn audits into action

- Connect every skills audit to L&D initiatives at individual, functional and organizational levels

Organizations
that align
workforce skills
with strategy are
63% more likely to
achieve business
goals



Build a smarter foundation for workforce growth

Skills audits aren't just HR hygiene, they're a strategic lever for business performance. When you understand what your workforce is truly capable of, you can align development with business goals, strengthen career pathways, and close capability gaps before they become costly risks.

These four challenges represent some of the most pressing barriers, but every organization will encounter its own mix. With a consistent, data-driven approach to skills measurement, you'll be better equipped to adapt, invest wisely, and build a workforce that's ready for whatever comes next.

See your skills. Own your strategy.

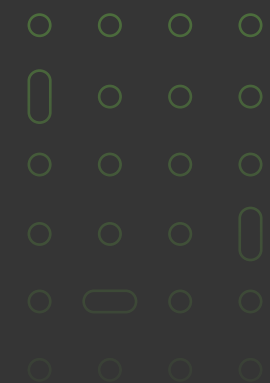
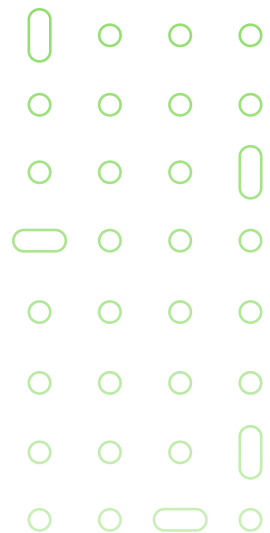
SHL's Skills Development solution delivers fast, data backed insights into workforce capabilities—helping you measure the right skills and identify gaps.

[Learn more](#)

Measured your skills. What now?

Turn insights into impact with targeted development. Download our guide on **Effective upskilling & reskilling** to learn how to create skills-based development plans that engage employees and close critical gaps.

[Download now](#)



SHL brings powerful and transparent AI technology, data science, and objectivity to help companies attract, develop, and grow the workforce they need to succeed in the digital era.

We empower talent strategies to unlock the full potential of your greatest asset—people.



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