



# How to Maximize Your HR Team's Potential

A Guide to Upskilling and  
Reskilling Your HR Team

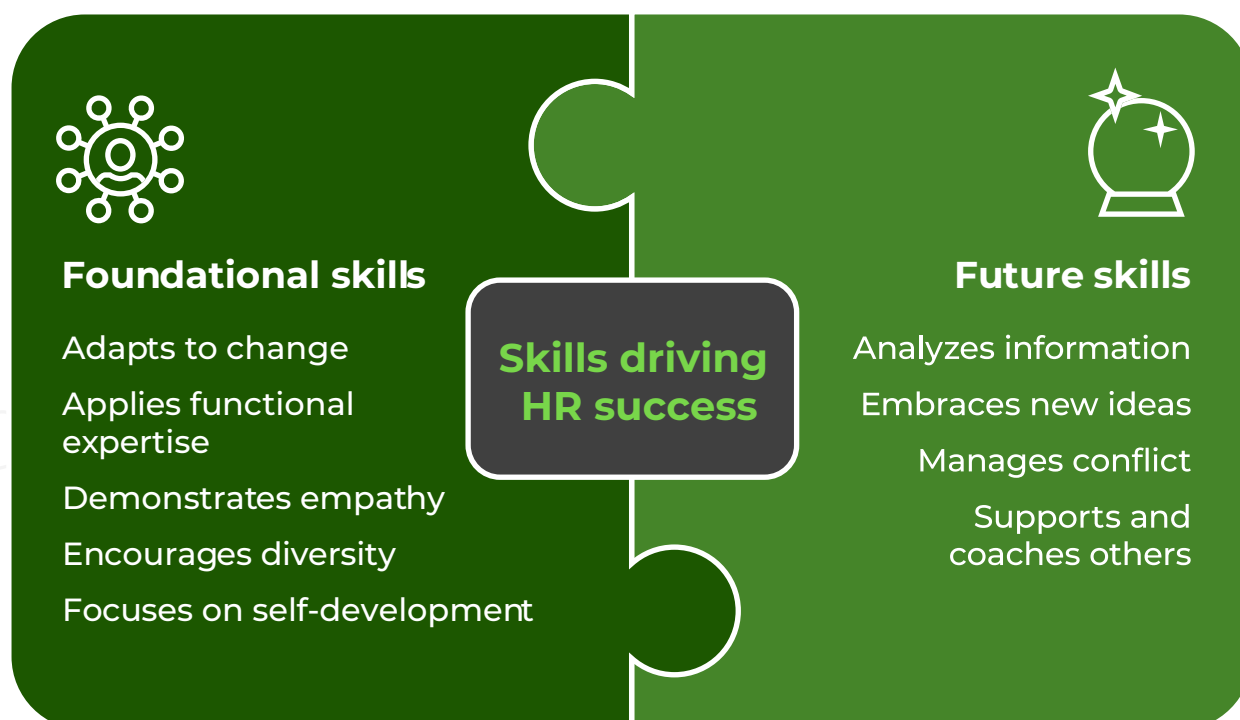
# Introduction

Human Resources is at the heart of every organization, supporting people, building culture, and shaping the future of work. But, as the workplace rapidly evolves, so must the skills that power HR's impact. HR teams must lead by example, constantly adapting and expanding their skills to meet the challenges of an increasingly complex and dynamic environment.

This guide draws on research from [SHL's HR Skills Insights Report](#), which includes objective assessment data from over 5,500 HR professionals and a comprehensive literature review. It covers five foundational behavioral skills that are critical to HR success today, and four future behavioral skills that HR teams will need to succeed long-term.

## Within this guide, you will also find:

- Why HR's growth journey, and these skills matter for HR
- Bitesize tips to help your team develop each of these skills
- A six-step process to close skills gaps through effective upskilling and reskilling





# Why HR's growth journey matters now more than ever

Today's HR teams need a dynamic skill set to lead through uncertainty. Whether it's driving transformation, embracing AI, or responding to shifting employee expectations, HR leaders are being asked to do more and do it differently. To stay ahead, HR must grow, not just in size or systems, but in skills.

That's where upskilling and reskilling come in. Ongoing development of HR personnel is essential for organizations to stay competitive and responsive to change.

**Upskilling** sharpens existing strengths to meet today's demands. It's the process of learning new skills or enhancing existing ones to improve performance or advance within the same job role.

**Reskilling** helps pivot toward new responsibilities and future-focused roles. It involves acquiring entirely new skill sets to be successful when taking on new challenges and operating in different contexts.

Forward-thinking HR teams should integrate both upskilling and reskilling into their development strategies to balance everyday execution with big-picture strategy, from compliance and benefits to culture and change management. This starts with an understanding of what skills drive HR success and the strengths and skills gaps that exist today.

Let's not forget: HR professionals are employees too, not just enabling the employee experience but living it. As work becomes more flexible, fast-paced, and purpose-driven, HR teams must also protect their own wellbeing, career development, and impact.



# Foundational skills that need attention now

Our research identified five skills that have proven to be pivotal to HR success from 2020 through to the present day, and expected to remain critical in 2030. Therefore, these can serve as foundational skills to continuously develop across your teams, regardless of role or level, establishing a firm base for further skills growth.

Below we outline these five skills together with tips to help your team develop them:

Foundational skills	Why It matters for HR	Development tips
<b>1. Adapts to change</b>	Enables HR to remain productive and effectively guide teams through changing environments, structures, and cultures.	<p>Keep your team close to organizational change initiatives and transformation projects to anticipate change and guide stakeholders through challenges ahead.</p> <p>Embed agile talent practices such as skills-based workforce planning, agile performance models, and scenario-based organization design that flex to shifting business needs.</p> <p>Share external trends (e.g., AI, legislation) so the team can better prepare for future challenges.</p>
<b>2. Applies functional expertise</b>	Ensures HR delivers with technical excellence by leveraging technology and using specialist knowledge across the end-to-end employee lifecycle.	<p>Connect your team to training on HR fundamentals and study of ongoing certifications. (e.g., CIPD, SHRM).</p> <p>Prioritize investment in skills that lead to measurable outcomes aligned to broader business goals.</p> <p>Provide opportunities for team members to share their expertise and apply knowledge in different contexts for the benefit of the team.</p>
<b>3. Demonstrates empathy</b>	In increasingly volatile work environments, HR needs to lead the way by showing compassion and providing emotional support to employees within their teams and across the organization.	<p>Encourage 360° feedback for all team members from the wider organization on HR's support during difficult situations.</p> <p>Promote active listening without interruption to demonstrate impartiality and foster trust.</p> <p>Expose the team to diverse employee experiences through shadowing or informal check-ins.</p>
<b>4. Encourages diversity</b>	HR should champion an inclusive workplace throughout the entire employee lifecycle, encouraging sharing of skills and knowledge from a diverse range of people.	<p>Ensure processes and training are inclusive and accessible to all employees, including those from neurodiverse backgrounds.</p> <p>Create a culture of objective decision-making, based on measurable data rather than gut feel.</p> <p>Seek feedback from stakeholders across the organization when creating business processes to ensure buy-in, alignment, and effectiveness.</p>
<b>5. Focuses on self-development</b>	HR personnel should actively participate in a learning culture, seek opportunities to improve their performance, gain experience across HR functions, and identify development needs.	<p>Empower employees with insights into skills they can actively develop. Link these to resources and bite-sized lessons that promote quick learning.</p> <p>Set prescriptive and measurable goals that include and make time to discuss career goals and development plans.</p>

# Tomorrow's HR will be built on these skills

Alongside the five foundational skills, our research identified four additional skills that will help drive HR team success by 2030. This high-level understanding can help your HR team stay ahead of the curve and upskill in areas that are likely to increase in importance as the business evolves. Interestingly, the top two skills in the table below, 'Manages conflict' and 'Supports and coaches others' are also critical today, making them a priority for development as they offer both immediate impact and long-term value.

Future skills	Why It matters for HR	Development tips
<b>1. Manages conflict</b>	As HR's strategic importance increases, the ability to manage disagreements with tact and diplomacy becomes crucial for team harmony, resilience, and business performance.	<p>Encourage experienced colleagues to share techniques they use to de-escalate situations.</p> <p>Embed structured approaches (e.g. mediation frameworks) to resolve workplace disputes.</p> <p>Analyze trends and feedback on conflict to recommend systemic changes in team design, communication flows, or decision rights that address root causes.</p>
<b>2. Supports and coaches others</b>	Alongside self-development, HR must encourage others to pursue development opportunities, provide honest feedback, and share resources to support upskilling.	<p>Equip teams to frame tough feedback around shared goals and future impact, not personal critique. Coaching on what to say, but also how to hold space for discomfort, listen actively, and follow through with support.</p> <p>Ensure your team schedule regular check-ins with stakeholders across the business to discuss priorities, challenges and opportunities to better understand context and what support is needed.</p>
<b>3. Analyzes information</b>	With an abundance of talent data, the ability to combine, interpret, and accurately gather insights to make data-driven decisions is a critical skill for HR professionals.	<p>Train your team on your HR tech to maximize its efficiency, and on how they can leverage AI to improve productivity.</p> <p>Select data analysis tools that enable real-time, holistic views of talent data to encourage data-driven decision-making.</p> <p>Move beyond reporting metrics to uncover patterns, causality, and business impact. Frame insights in the language of business outcomes and turn data into compelling, decision-ready narratives with targeted interventions.</p>
<b>4. Embraces new ideas</b>	While HR must adhere to legal, ethical, and industry compliance—encouraging and capitalizing on innovation, and unconventional thinking in processes and tasks helps support the wider organization.	<p>Explore emerging HR technologies or practices so your team can pilot small-scale experiments to test their impact.</p> <p>Create structures that elevate underrepresented voices, like reverse mentoring, employee-led innovation labs, or inclusive design sprints.</p> <p>Create space in meetings for idea-sharing and challenge the "we've always done it this way" mindset.</p> <p>Recognize and reward employees for sharing innovative ideas to foster a culture of creativity.</p>

# Six steps to upskill and reskill your HR team

With an understanding of the foundational and future skills outlined in this guide, HR organizations can better identify the skills needed to stay competitive and adapt to evolving workplaces. However, truly strengthening HR capabilities and delivering measurable organizational impact requires a structured approach to gain deeper insights and drive continuous reskilling and upskilling.

These six steps provide way to proactively prepare your team for future success by assessing current skills, identifying gaps, and prioritizing development investments—ultimately fostering an engaged, agile workforce ready to meet ever-changing business demands.



## Step 1: Define key job requirements

The first step of any development process should be to thoroughly analyze the job role to identify the essential knowledge, technical and behavioral skills, abilities, and other characteristics (KSAOs).

### Action:

**Conduct a job analysis** using interviews, surveys, and job descriptions. Gather observations and insights from those familiar with the job to ensure your assessment of skills matches the actual job requirements, reflects real job tasks, and is fair and accessible to all. Speed up this process with validated pre-built job profiles with skills already mapped, or with AI tools that can help identify skills from existing job descriptions



## Step 2: Skills-based talent audit

Identify the skills within your existing team with an assessment of current capabilities.

### Action:

**Use validated skills assessments** to scientifically measure your HR team's real skill levels. That means evaluating behavioral skills, including those they have outside of the job they are doing today to gain a real understanding of how your talent is positioned to cope with future business strategies, goals, and business transformation

*"If we want to grow from within to retain talent, fill critical roles faster and support internal mobility, we need more than performance history or tenure. We need to understand the skills people actually have today and how those skills align to the emerging roles"*

**Sara Gutierrez, Chief Science Officer, SHL**





### Step 3: Understand skills gaps

A skills gap occurs when there is a discrepancy between the skills employees currently possess and those required to meet future demands. To ensure that development strategies being put in place are maximally effective, it is crucial to understand where skills gaps exist and how they impact organizational success. This helps quickly close gaps in critical areas.

#### Action:

**Review skills data from objective assessments** to identify strengths and gaps of individuals, teams, and departments. This includes re-using data sourced from hiring so to support onboarding and career development.



### Step 4: Prioritize development focus areas

Whether you're looking to close skills gaps or elevate a team member to a different role, structured development plans should be utilized to enable upskilling and reskilling. The right tools can help your team realize their skills potential, strengths, and development opportunities with feedback that they can turn into actionable steps.

#### Action:

**Empower employees with clear, personalized direction** to evolve their skills in alignment with your organization's goals. Ensure relevant learning resources and support are in place to achieve skills goals. **Target the skills that matter most** based on those that drive success, future needs and how HR is expected to support the wider organization.

*"We are clearly communicating which skills matter the most in AI enhanced workplace and providing our employees with the support of our L&D team to develop them."*

**Sophie Motisi, Skills Strategy Global Lead, JLL**





## Step 5: Form your build or buy strategy

Looking internally at the people you've already invested in before engaging external talent pools saves time and money. Reskilling helps prepare for changing demands by transitioning employees into new roles and developing skills that are increasing in importance, rather than being left with large gaps to fill when new demands arise. This approach helps retain those who are already embedded in the company culture, work processes, and values. Additionally, reskilling contributes to long-term organizational success and employee retention.

### Action:

**Identify employees with the greatest development potential** to grow into critical roles enabling you to make strategic investments in talent development. As business needs evolve and individual skills become clearer, **redeploy talent within HR** to support agility and better role fit.

## How should HR approach upskilling and reskilling differently?

### Upskilling

#### Goal:

Improve performance, future-proof current roles

#### Focus:

Deepening HR domain expertise, building adjacent capabilities

#### Approach

Microlearning, mentoring, on-the-job training, certifications

#### Best for

High-performing employees, evolving job requirements

### Reskilling

#### Goal:

Enable internal mobility, fill skill gaps in new areas

#### Focus:

Developing new capabilities outside of current job to help career or role changes

#### Approach

Formal training programs, job rotations, role-specific learning paths

#### Best for

Redeploying talent, preparing for automation/displacements

*"To build a future-ready workforce, we need clear visibility into employees' true capabilities and potential"*

**Neeta Saggar, Skills Expert, Coca-Cola HBC**





## Step 6: Embed learning as a continuous practice

Continuous learning refers to the ongoing, voluntary pursuit of new knowledge and/or skills. As organizations strive to create more agile workplaces, HR should lead by embedding a culture of learning and cultivating an environment where skill development is valued and encouraged at all levels. This approach helps employees remain innovative, engaged, and able to adapt quickly to change.

### Action:

**Provide opportunities for skills development and encourage employee participation.** Leverage resources by utilizing external partners, offering workshops, and encouraging cross-functional exposure so HR can better understand the challenges and priorities of the other areas of the business they support. It is also important to support the development of resilience and adaptability by offering employee resources, training, and opportunities to practice these skills.

*“Ultimately, the reason people are happy, or they stay engaged and they enjoy working in your company, is usually about growth.”*  
**Josh Bersin, Founder & CEO, The Josh Bersin Company**



# Discover strengths and skills gaps across your HR team

Continuous development is not just an option for HR professionals; it is a necessity. Objective assessment data provides a real-time view of your team's skills, helps identify and close skills gaps, and leverages individual strengths to drive strategic change within the organization. By investing in upskilling, reskilling, and ongoing learning initiatives, CHROs can future-proof their HR teams, ensuring they remain agile and equipped to handle emerging challenges.

## Close skills gaps, open career paths

With **SHL's Skills Development solution**, you can:

- Objectively measure and map 96 behavioral skills with just one 15-minute assessment
- Gain insights into the skills at individual, team, or entire workforce level
- Identify those with development potential to perform the jobs of tomorrow
- Make targeted development investments in your HR team
- Fill critical skills gaps quickly and efficiently with internal talent
- Empower employees to take charge of their learning journey

## Do your team's skills match future needs?

Learn more by visiting  
[shl.com/skillsdevelopment](https://shl.com/skillsdevelopment)



# HR's Journey Toward Meaningful Transformation

HR is central to today's dynamic workplace, sparking transformation at every level. Backed by research from 5,000+ HR professionals, discover how HR's priorities have evolved, which skills matter most at each job level, and the capabilities vital for tomorrow's success.

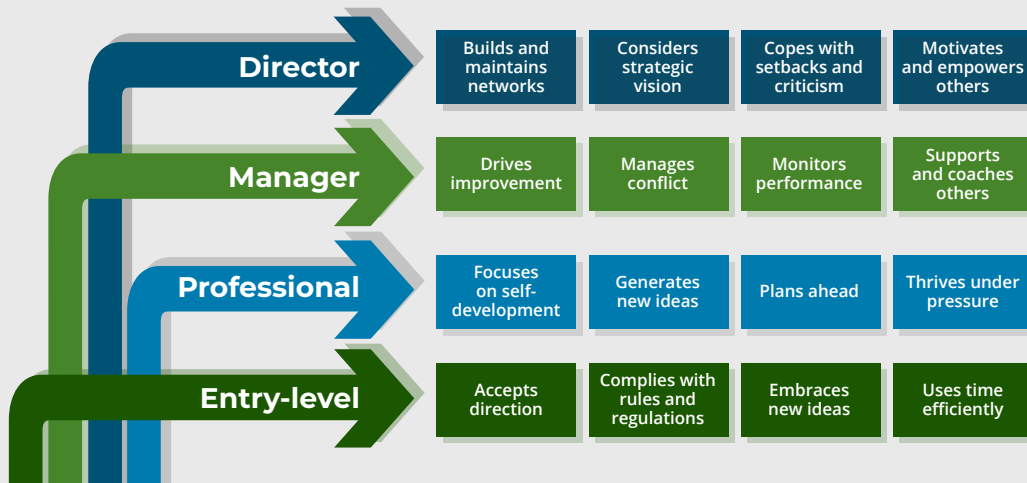
## Mapping HR's evolution

HR remains one of the most complex professions in business, and one that is undergoing constant change.



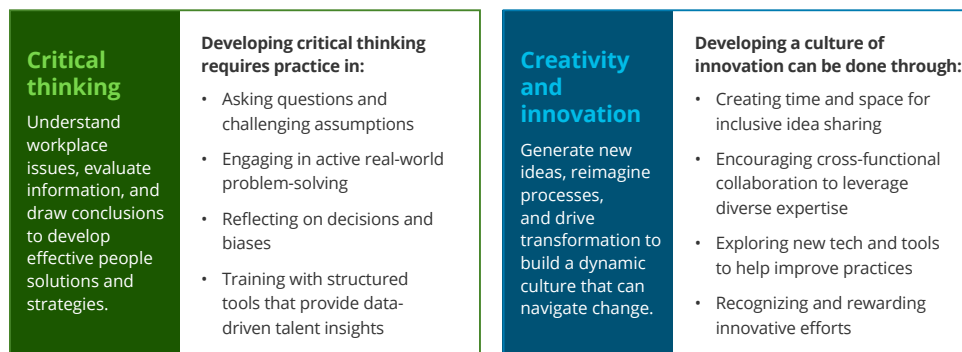
## Skills that shape each job-level

Our research identified four key skills that define success across each job level.



## Future-proofing HR for 2030 and beyond

These two capabilities stood out as essential for HR teams of the future.



SHL

Download our HR Skills Insights Report for a full breakdown of skills needed by job-level, regional differences, and a comparison of skills over time.

Download here >>>



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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