Lexonis

White paper

Using Skill-based Job Profiles to Transform Talent Management

Focus on the skills required for success in a job to make better hires, improve engagement, and build your workforce of tomorrow.



Introduction

Skill-based job profiles are integral to Talent Management because they provide a clear performance roadmap for employees, managers, and Human Resources. Skill-based job profiles clearly articulate the skills and levels of proficiency that an employee needs to demonstrate for successful performance in their job. Consider how all the key stakeholders benefit when job descriptions are well-designed using skill profiles:

- For employees, they set the stage for what is required of them, how their contributions align with organizational goals, and provide a roadmap for development and career progression.
- For managers, they provide tangible, measurable criteria to assess and manage performance and what to focus on when coaching and developing their team members.
- For HR teams, they set the foundation for Talent Management.

Think of it this way, if you were designing software, you would start by creating a clear specification of the functionality required for the software to fulfill its purpose successfully. Why would you do less in articulating and documenting the specifications for successful performance in a job or role? When all roles are accounted for, the resulting specification provides a roadmap for hiring, developing, and retaining talent that will fuel a business's current and future success.

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Why Now?

Skill-based job profiles are not new. Most organizations have been wrestling in some way or another to capture the critical skills needed for jobs across their organization for decades. However today, the need is more acute.

- Due to rapidly changing technology and digitization, the days when past job experience sufficed as a reliable indicator of present or future success are gone. Organizations cannot rely on someone having done a job in the past or a degree to find someone to do it today. This is where up-to-date and dynamic skill-based job profiles become instrumental. They become the code for deciphering an organization's talent – who to hire, how to value talent, which capabilities to develop, and more.
- Increasing numbers of organizations are focusing on hiring for skills not degrees or other qualifications. There has been a paradigm shift from education to skills, this is popularly known as skills-based hiring. Some organizations that traditionally required bachelor's degrees for certain roles have now eliminated these requirements to increase their recruitment pool and create a more diverse workforce.
- Workers are looking for more than a salary from an organization. They target organizations that proactively provide career development and advancement opportunities.
- Finally, the tenure of jobs is changing. The idea of a lifetime job is quickly becoming a memory as employers move to more dynamic work models that include increased use of contract workers and full-time employees dynamically taking on project-based assignments versus fixed roles.

These factors are intensifying the need for up-to-date, flexible skill-based job profiles and in many cases, they have made the old methods for developing them outdated.

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Breaking Down the Barriers to Skill-based Job Profiles

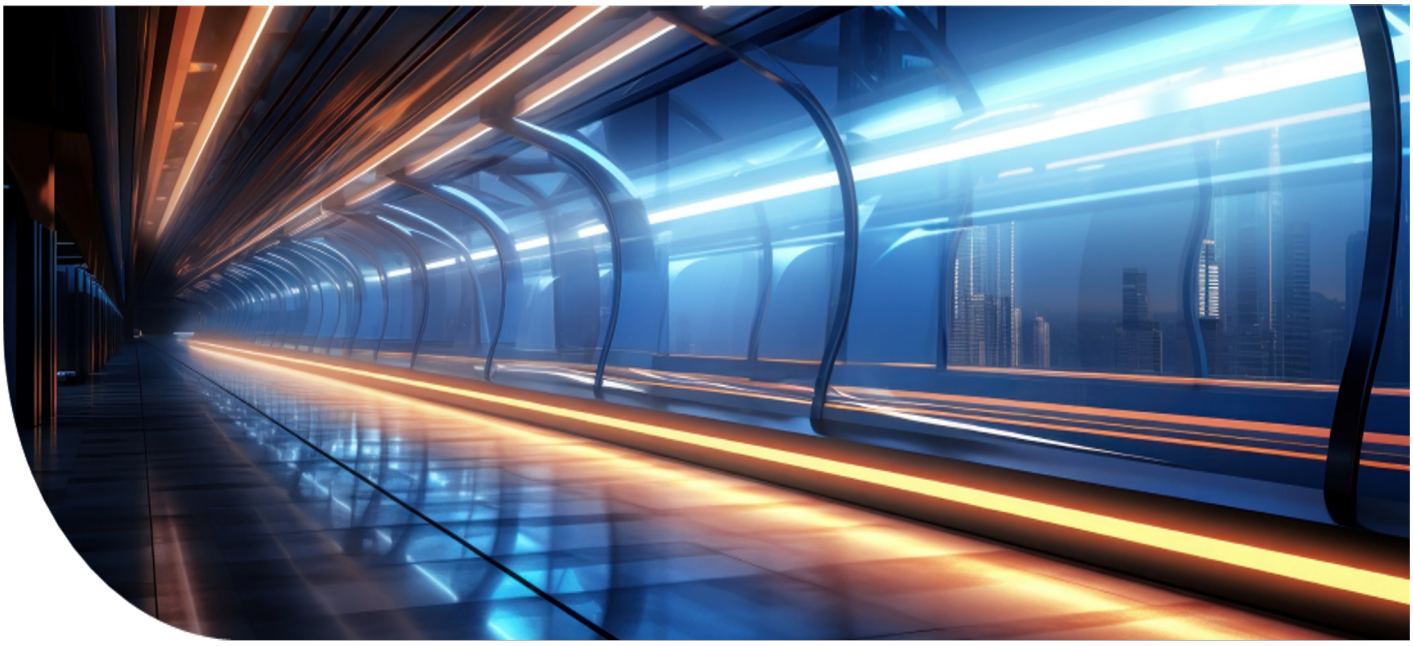
Historically, to create skill-based job profiles an organization would combine the use of job analysis interviews with soliciting input from managers to:

1. Identify the key responsibilities of the job.
2. Break down responsibilities into tasks.
3. For each task, identify the enabling skills.

It may sound easy enough, but anyone who's ever taken on this thankless task can tell you that the mechanics of gathering input, analyzing responses, drafting skill definitions and building consensus around these outputs takes months or longer for a single job.

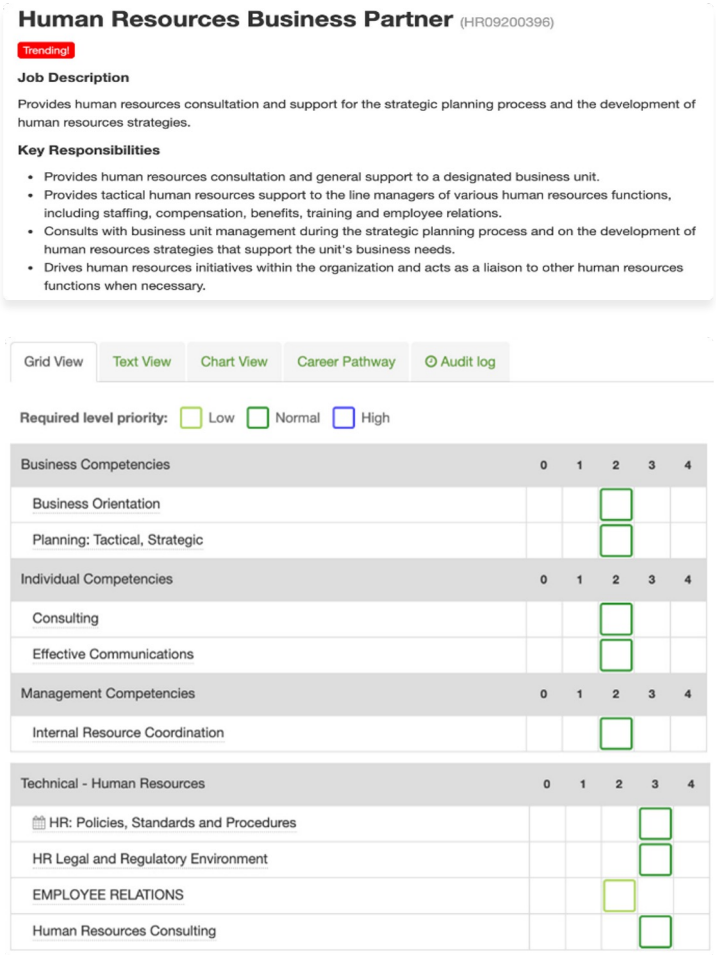
Fortunately, new solutions have emerged. Software pre-loaded with job profile libraries, skills frameworks, and advanced technology enabled with AI are transforming the process and giving organizations the tools to be more agile and move quickly.

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Skill-Based Job Description Libraries

A skill-based job description library is a database of preconfigured job description templates that include skills profiles that are informed by research, including job market data. These commercially available job libraries, like Lexonis' are used as a starting point and greatly reduce the time required.



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Figure 1

Each skill-based job profile found in such a library serves as a template that can be customized to the unique requirements of an organization. The templated descriptions and responsibilities can be tailored to reflect the specifics of the role in an organization. Skills can be added, removed, modified and calibrated to reflect how they apply in the organization.

Having these templates effectively changes the role of HR and managers from "creators" to "critiques", which most people are more comfortable with and acts as an accelerator for the entire job description creation process. Furthermore, well-structured and consistent job descriptions make it easier to review, organize, and manage the organization's job architecture.

Skills Framework

A skills framework or skills taxonomy is a database of skill definitions that provides the content for well-designed skill-based job profiles. They establish a consistent language for describing and measuring skills across an organization. Typically, these frameworks use a hierarchical structure to divide skills into categories and sub-categories. The skill categories or groups are based on simple similarities between skills. For example, the programming skill 'Python' may sit under a sub-category called 'Programming' which sits under a sub-category called 'Technology Skills'.

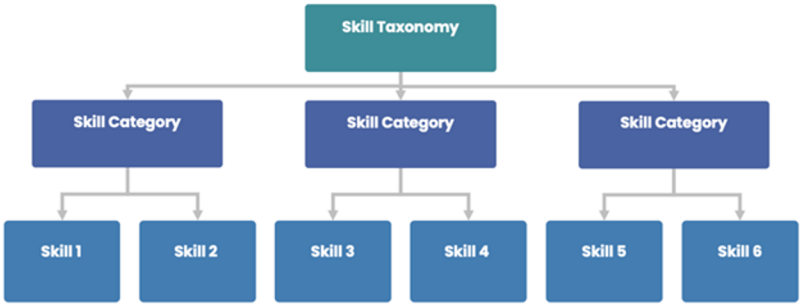


Figure 2

Using a skills framework versus writing unique skill definitions for each role creates a shared language for skills across the organization ensuring that skills are consistently defined and measured across jobs, job families, and the organization

Using a skills framework versus writing unique skill definitions for each role creates a shared language for skills across the organization ensuring that they are consistently defined and measured across jobs, job families, and the organization. It is also a significantly more efficient approach than drafting definitions from scratch.

For effective job profiling, skills need to be well-defined. They need to be transformed from labels into descriptions that can later be observed, measured and developed. A clear description of a skill will include a continuum of proficiency levels. These proficiency levels (see Figure 3 for an example) should include evidence indicators expressed as action-verb statements. Action verbs are better suited for assessing whether a person has demonstrated a skill at a specific level or not. For each role, a proficiency level is selected to define the desired skill level within that role; this helps to clearly articulate which skills and proficiency levels are necessary for successful job execution.

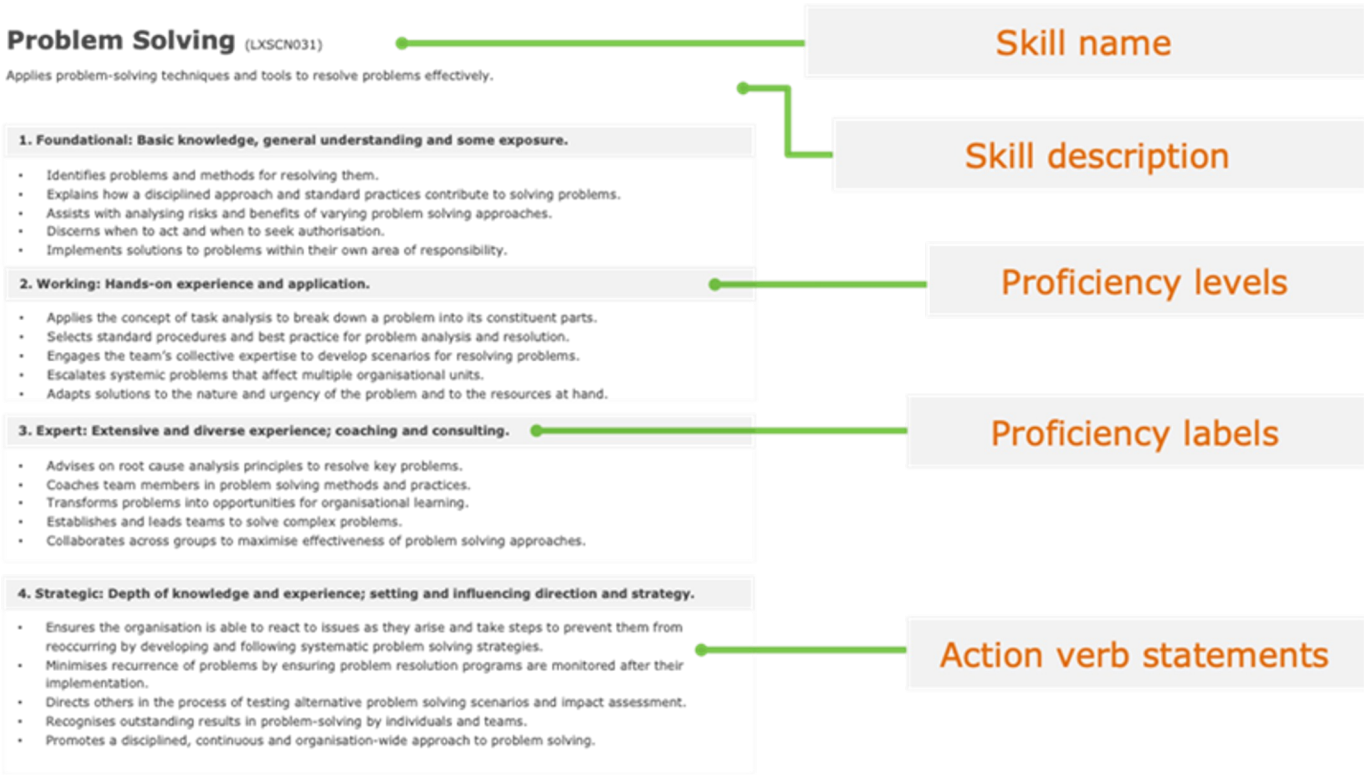


Figure 3

Developing a concise and consistent list of skills for an organization, that can be applied across functional areas of the organization, is the critical foundation of skills-based Talent Management. We can use these skills for various Talent Management practices, including:

- Getting the most benefit from the learning and development budget by identifying skill gaps, and reskilling/upskilling employees so that they can be effectively deployed in different parts of the organization.
- Building succession and development plans that address the needs of the organization, provide operational robustness and contribute to successful business performance.
- Developing and publishing career pathways that can be shared with employees to provide them with a vision of how their career aspirations can be met within the organization, leading to improved retention and attraction rates.

Skills Management Platform

Even with the infrastructure provided by a skill-based job profile library supported by a skills framework, managing a robust database of skills data, customizing job profiles and turning them into skill-based job profiles specific to an organization requires a significant amount of communication, analysis, and reporting. A robust platform becomes critical. Drafting, reviewing, updating, and maintaining job profiles and descriptions in tools such as Microsoft Excel and email can be an administrative nightmare for even a small organization. For an organization of several thousand employees and hundreds of roles and skills to align, it can quickly become a barrier to success.

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This is where platforms such as the Lexonis' one have become instrumental to the process. They provide tools to easily edit a job profile, map skills and gather input from managers and other stakeholders. In Figure 4 below, you can see how feedback from multiple reviewers is collected so that an HR Business Partner can easily review it and update the job profile through one interface.

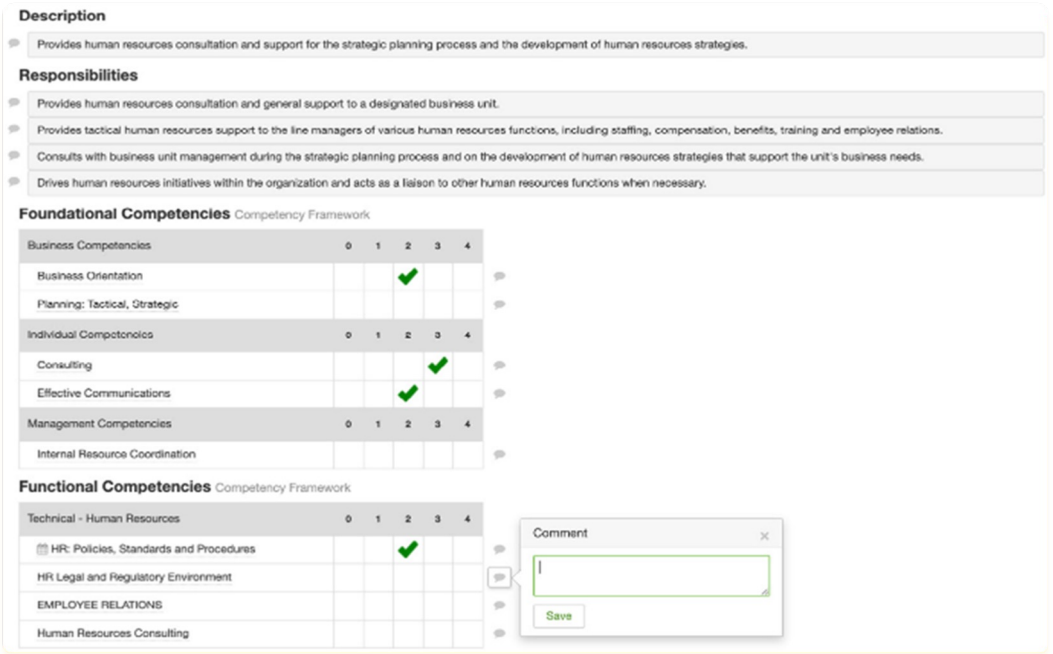


Figure 4

AI-Insights to Close Any Gaps

No matter how comprehensive a skills matrix or how large a library of job profiles is, there will always be gaps and historically that can set an organization back to doing things the "old" way. There is good news. Generative AI has started to change the story. With the help of AI, a platform, like the Lexonis' one, can generate a job profile or skills definition from scratch with just a few prompts. The AI takes the best of what already exists and merges that with external inputs to create the needed content – be it a job description, list of responsibilities, or associated skills that can be tailored to the needs of the organization.

With all of these elements working together, the "old way" of creating skills profiles is radically transformed enabling even a large organization to have an initial set of skill-based job profiles in just a few months. Of course, the pace of change is not slowing down, so these same tools can be leveraged to continuously gather input and update job profiles, so they stay in step with the change.

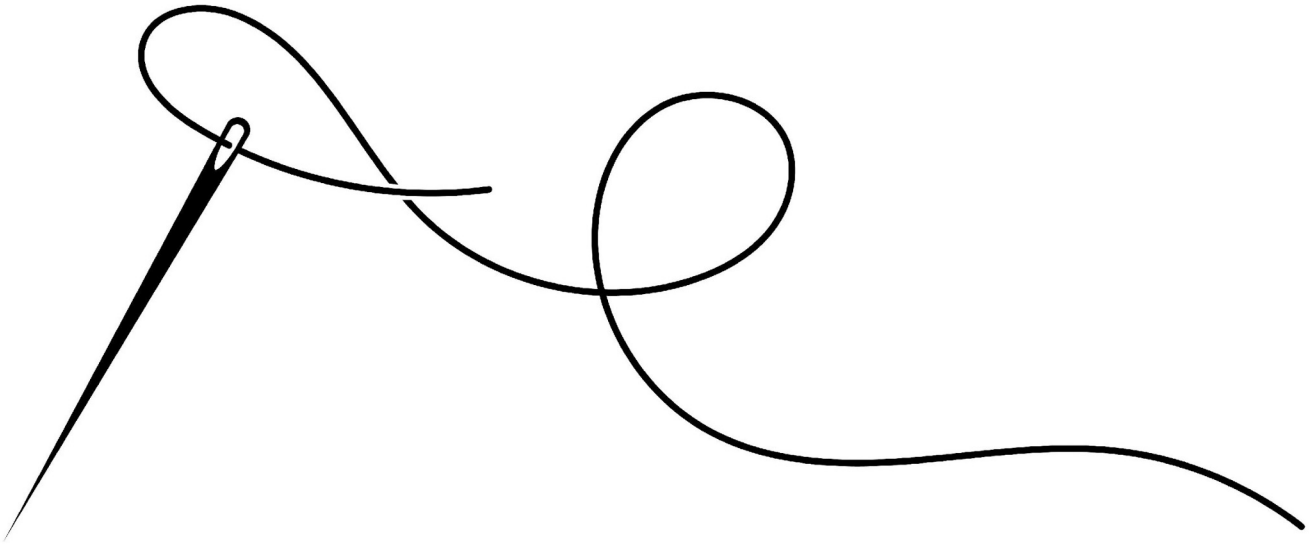
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Applying Skill-based Job Profiles Across Talent Management

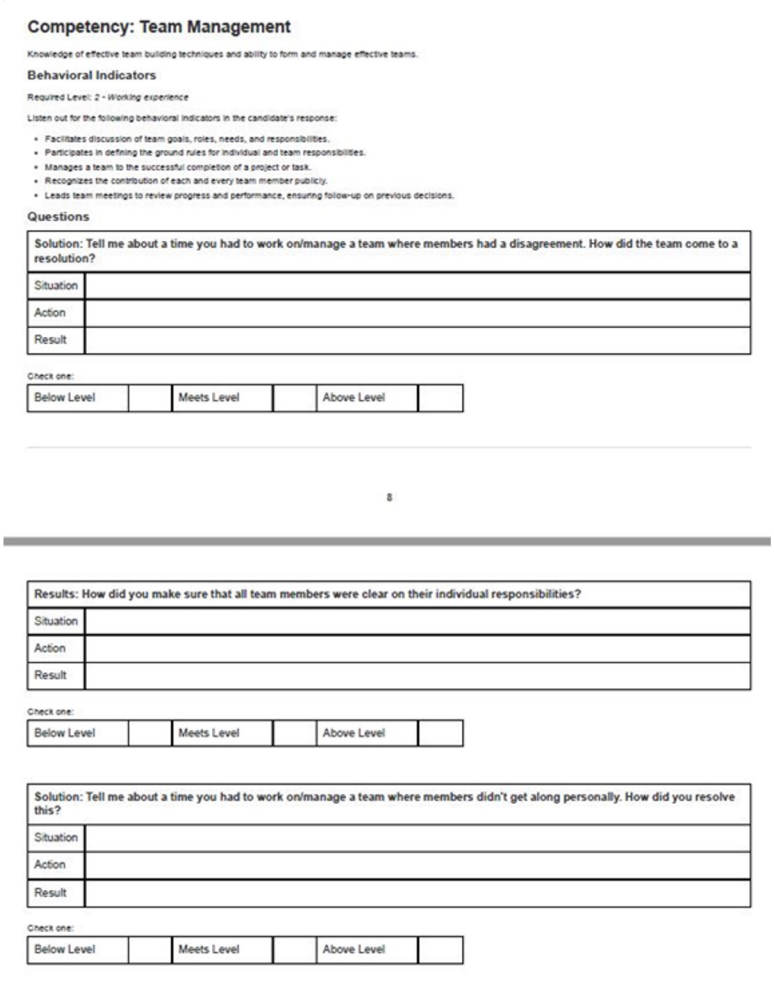
Skill-based job profiles themselves are somewhat inert. The real value of skill-based job profiles is realized when they are leveraged across Talent Management initiatives. Job skill profiles create a shared language for defining capabilities that drive performance in an organization and a system of measurement to quantify an individual's and the organization's strengths and weaknesses against those capabilities. Talent Management is how that insight is acted upon. The following section considers how job profiles can be used across six Talent Management practices.

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Hiring and Recruiting

With job profiles in place, skills, not education, experience, or relationships, become the primary evaluation criteria for hiring. Such an approach leads to a broader applicant pool and reduces the risk of bias in the hiring process. Skills are used to evaluate candidates with tools like the skills-based interview guide below.



Competency: Team Management

Knowledge of effective team building techniques and ability to form and manage effective teams.

Behavioral Indicators

Required Level: *2 - Working experience*

Listen out for the following behavioral indicators in the candidate's response:

- Facilitates discussion of team goals, roles, needs, and responsibilities.
- Participates in defining the ground rules for individual and team responsibilities.
- Manages a team to the successful completion of a project or task.
- Recognizes the contribution of each and every team member publicly.
- Leads team meetings to review progress and performance, ensuring follow-up on previous decisions.

Questions

Solution: Tell me about a time you had to work on/manage a team where members had a disagreement. How did the team come to a resolution?	
Situation	
Action	
Result	

Check one:

Below Level		Meets Level		Above Level	

8

Results: How did you make sure that all team members were clear on their individual responsibilities?	
Situation	
Action	
Result	

Check one:

Below Level		Meets Level		Above Level	

Solution: Tell me about a time you had to work on/manage a team where members didn't get along personally. How did you resolve this?	
Situation	
Action	
Result	

Check one:

Below Level		Meets Level		Above Level	

Figure 5

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Learning and Development

According to Training Magazine, companies spend an average of just over $1,200 per employee on learning and development (L&D). That would mean that an organization of 5,000 employees invests approximately $6 million per year on learning and development.

Where does that money go? How are priorities set? How does the organization know that L&D investment has made a difference to business performance? These are examples of the types of questions that L&D leaders are constantly challenged with. The CEO of such an organization has a right to know where their $6m is going!

A skill-based approach provides the organization's L&D function with the tools to answer such questions and to target learning based on skill and competency gaps. Rather than responding to the loudest stakeholder or being pulled into an endless string of critical needs, L&D leaders can filter out opportunities and guide investment to the skills the organization has quantitatively identified as a gap and prioritize accordingly.

For individual employees, the result of a skill-based approach is potentially more impactful. While employees generally call for more resources and time for their development, they often do not know what they want or need. When organizations invest in learning and development in a top-down manner, it is often greeted with outright cynicism. Job-related skill gap analysis and articulated career pathways provide the context employees are looking for on their personal development journey. Performance development dialogue and the creation of personal development plans (PDP) are driven by quantitative data and provide employees with a sense of being cared for and invested in.

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Internal Talent Marketplaces

One of the most powerful yet overlooked opportunities is for companies to develop employees through on-the-job experience. This includes assignment-based projects and temporary roles that provide employees with the opportunity to stretch their existing skills, develop new ones and gain exposure to different functions and aspects of the business. Using skills to define roles can help tap into unknown talent and open opportunities for employee development. By promoting a skill-based approach and using skills as a currency for mobility across the organization, it is possible to surface someone from a different part of the organization as a good fit for a new opportunity. Such an approach also encourages employees to volunteer for new opportunities that will help them develop the skills that they need for their career development. Talent Marketplaces, fueled by skills data, are making these types of experiences more commonplace.

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Career Pathways

A key part of employees feeling engaged is having clear visibility of their development opportunities. Building skill-based career pathways showing employees the progression possible in their organization helps employees see where their career is going**.** Skills play a pivotal role in creating career pathways within a company by serving as a thread that connects the skills required in one to job to the skills required for another. Once this is visible to employees, they can see which jobs best align with their current skills and act to close any gaps.

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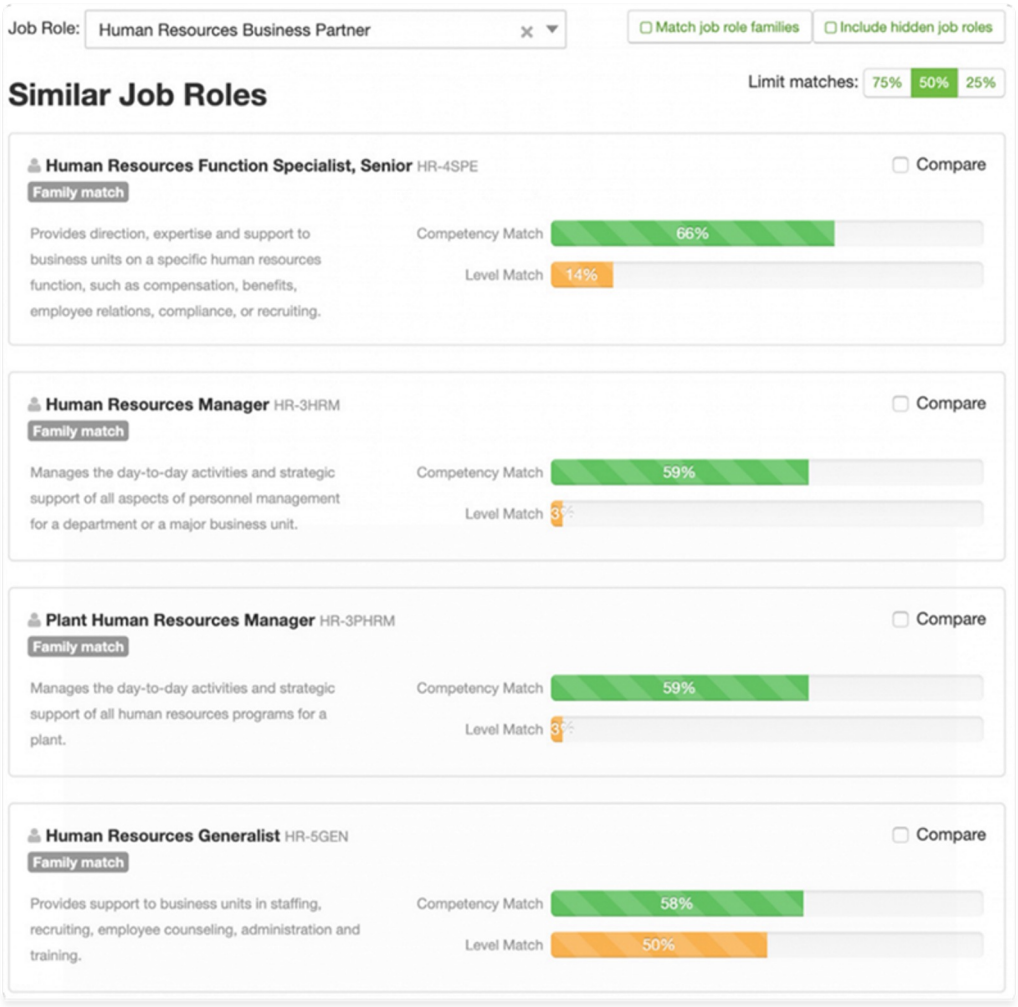


Figure 6

Succession Planning

As with hiring, by focusing on skills and not just education or experience in a prior role as the primary evaluation criteria to identify future leaders, a broader candidate pool emerges, and the risk of bias is reduced. With skills data available, the development path and key milestones for progressing an employee as a leader become more visible and transparent. Workforce skills intelligence data can help the organization make well-informed decisions on building or developing future leaders based on their skills.

Compensation and Rewards

Skill-based compensation and rewards is an approach based on the skills of an employee and the value of those skills to the organization in contrast to typical criteria such as their title, their place in the hierarchy and employment duration. Many organizations struggle to justify higher compensation for high-demand and low-availability skills and the unfortunate result is the loss of critical, hard-to-find talent.

A skill-based compensation and rewards approach makes the criteria behind each decision fairer, more transparent and clearer to all employees. Such an approach also has the potential to make the organization more competitive in the labor marketplace because compensation reflects the value of prospective employees' skills rather than trying to fit them into traditional pay grades.

Performance Management

By integrating skills data into performance management, the entire process becomes clearer and more objective. Employees are eager for tangible feedback that they can act on. Skills data that provides a clear definition of a skill and the expected proficiency level for a current or desired role moves a performance conversation from abstract, subjective feedback to focused, tangible feedback that an employee and manager can act on together.

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Conclusion

In conclusion, job descriptions and skill-based job profiles that are used to create them, are a fundamental component of modern Talent Management, providing clarity and structure for employees, managers, and HR professionals alike. By defining job responsibilities and the essential skills required for success, job profiles offer a comprehensive roadmap for personal development, performance management, and career progression. They also facilitate more objective and efficient hiring, learning and development, career pathways, succession planning, and compensation practices.

There is an increasing shift to make skill-based job profiles the centerpiece of writing job descriptions. Modern tools and platforms, including AI, significantly streamline the creation and maintenance of these profiles, enabling organizations to remain agile and responsive to change.

A well-implemented skills framework provides consistent language and measurable criteria across the organization, fostering a shared understanding of the capabilities that drive performance. By integrating skills data into various Talent Management practices through job profiles, organizations can make more informed decisions, reduce bias, and enhance transparency, ultimately driving business success.

The importance of skill-based job profiles in creating job descriptions will only increase. Organizations that embrace this approach will be better equipped to attract, develop, and retain the talent necessary to thrive in a competitive and ever-changing landscape. Skill-based job profiles are not just a tool for managing talent; they are the foundation for building a resilient and future-ready workforce.

Lexonis skills platform

Lexonis Essentials helps you build, customize, and manage all the elements of your skills frameworks and job profiles while leveraging the power of AI.

Lexonis TalentScape includes all the capability of Lexonis Essentials but also adds powerful assessment and analytics capability to quantify and act on individual and organizational skills gaps.

Lexonis is an IBM Business Partner and supplies the IBM Talent Framework Library; Lexonis is also a SFIA Accredited Partner.



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About Lexonis

Lexonis helps organizations world-wide implement successful Talent Management. With over 25 years' experience, the Lexonis team delivers skills frameworks, consulting services and technology that help organizations understand the skills they have and how best to develop and deploy them. Typical outcomes include identifying skill gaps and learning needs, creating career development paths and reporting on workforce capability analytics.

Lexonis' AI-powered software, skills frameworks (including the IBM Talent Framework, SFIA and Lexonis' own), and 3000+ draft job descriptions give both employees and the organization the tools to identify and assess the skills critical to their current and future success in a fraction of the time of historical approaches.

Contact Lexonis to start understanding, developing and better deploying the skills in your organization.

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