CHAPTER 3

Adopting Skills-Based Hiring
Skills-based hiring represents a shift away from traditional hiring practices, which use education, previous employers, years of experience, and job titles as indicators of a job candidate’s capabilities, toward practices that focus intentionally on the specific skills needed to do the job. This orientation broadens and diversifies the pool of candidates for a position because skills-based hiring opens job opportunities to workers who have cultivated transferable skills through relevant experience in other roles and fields. In particular, skills-based hiring opens the doors to workers who are skilled through alternative routes rather than a bachelor’s degree—ST ARs. ST ARs are a vast, skilled, diverse, and often overlooked pool of talent that make up half the workforce.¹

Implementing skills-based hiring requires specific, targeted adjustments to your hiring practices, from how you write your position descriptions to how you screen, interview, and assess candidates. Each step will require intentional action and questioning of longstanding institutional habits. Leadership teams, recruiters and hiring managers will likely have to reexamine deeply held beliefs about how to assess talent. All must be committed to making the necessary investments in time and training to retool documents, procedures, and practices and align incentives to support the transition to new ways of thinking and doing.

The return on these investments in skills-based hiring extends far beyond the hiring process. With larger, more diverse pools of applicants and more effective candidate assessment, employers can expect to see an increase in the quality of new hires, as well as improvements in productivity, employee engagement, and retention.²,³ In addition, the focus on skills serves to clarify the responsibilities and expertise needed for each position, which in turn can inform stronger onboarding plans and performance management. New hires join the organization with a clearer picture of what is expected of them as well as a roadmap for their professional development that allows their skills to be leveraged and developed beyond their current position. Those are the benefits to keep in mind as you do the work necessary to succeed with skills-based hiring—and the evidence you can share as you make skills the new currency in your hiring and organizational culture.

¹ Opportunity@Work defined and described ST ARs as a talent category in our foundational report Reach for the ST ARs.
² Research shows that hiring for skills is 5x more predictive of job performance than hiring for education and 2.5x more predictive than hiring for work experience
³ As much as 80% of employee turnover results from bad hires, an expensive and time-consuming problem that plagues companies of all sizes.
A Step-by-Step Guide to Implement Skills-Based Hiring

1. Identify Job Skills and Write Skills-Based Position Descriptions
2. Expand Sourcing to Include All Qualified Candidates
3. Evaluate and Select Candidates Based on Skills
4. Refine Onboarding to Maximize New Hire Success
5. Align Learning & Development to Support Ongoing Professional Development
A good skills-based position description gives a clear picture of the role’s responsibilities and the skills needed to meet them. This focus on responsibilities (like project management or customer service) over requirements (like degrees or years of experience) gives the HR team and hiring managers the latitude to think more broadly about the candidates who are capable of succeeding in the role. It also allows for potential candidates who have developed relevant skills in other industries, jobs, or life experiences, to see themselves in the role. This level of clarity provides a solid foundation for communicating goals and performance expectations to the new hire.

### What Is a Skill?

A skill, according to Merriam-Webster, is “a learned power of doing something competently.” When employers talk about skills, they refer to a range of capabilities, including:

- Technical or job-specific skills and knowledge such as budgeting, programming, copyediting, or typing
- Interpersonal or self-management skills such as teamwork, relationship building, time management, and problem-solving
- Personal traits deployed on the job such as creativity, initiative, and adaptability

Skills-based hiring recognizes that skills deployed in one job can be transferred to another job.

### Manage the change by selecting target roles for STARs hiring.

Moving from traditional to skills-based job descriptions may feel daunting given the necessary shifts in mindset and procedures. Consider starting small, with a few roles, to develop processes and train staff.

*Chapter 2 of this playbook, “Defining a STARs Hiring Strategy,” walks through a process for selecting target roles that open the most opportunities for STARs and are thus well suited to skills-based hiring. Specifically, Step 3: Select Target Roles explains how to identify roles that are high-need and have proven pathways that can be leveraged to facilitate STARs hiring. This section also offers an alternative approach for new or new-to-world roles where pathways have not yet been defined and roles can be crafted to create new opportunities for STARs in the organization.*
A Traditional Position Description Often...

Focuses on historical requirements to qualify for the job

Prioritizes credentials, including degrees, as a proxy for skills

Does not give a clear picture of job tasks and goals

Provides a long list of requirements with no prioritization

Over-indexes on years of experience in the consideration of job fit

Includes technical terms, jargon, or other language that discourages non-traditional applicants

Unintentionally excludes STARs from applying

Is a static document that rarely changes

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A Skills-Based Position Description Instead...

Focuses on responsibilities and tasks necessary to do the job

Prioritizes specific skills, which can be gained in many ways

Provides a robust description of specific job tasks, goals, and performance metrics

Differentiates between required and preferred skills

Focuses on type of experience and acquisition of skills in the consideration of job fit

Uses easy-to-understand, inclusive language to invite broad engagement

Is intentionally reviewed and revised to eliminate biased language

Makes explicit that jobs are open to STARs

Is regularly reviewed by the manager and/or person in role for accuracy

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Developing a skills-based position description may sound simple, but it requires some analysis to identify the specific skills needed to be successful in the job. Too often, busy hiring managers simply copy from an existing job description without doing that analysis. Start with a critical look at responsibilities of the role and how they may be changing over time.⁴

To begin, articulate the five to 10 core responsibilities and tasks of the role. Specifically, how does the person in this role spend their day, week, or month? What must they accomplish? Using the inputs listed below, you should be able to write a position summary and list of tasks for the role. This allows potential candidates to evaluate their own skills for the job and make a case that they have transferable skills or relevant experience from another role or field. Several resources already available in your organization offer a great starting point:

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⁴ Data from LinkedIn shows the skill sets for jobs have changed by around 25% since 2015. By 2027, this number is expected to double. LinkedIn members added 286 million skills to their profiles in 2021, up 22% compared to 2020. More than 40% of companies on LinkedIn rely on skills to search and identify job candidates.
• **Start with what you have.** The current position description is a good place to start this exercise, but it must be evaluated critically to add missing information and context for the role. Does it really reflect the day-to-day responsibilities and tasks of the role? What has changed about the role since the description was last reviewed?

• **Consult your experts.** The manager and those currently succeeding in this role have the most in-depth understanding of the job and can provide critical input on what the role currently entails and how it may be changing. What do they see as key tasks and outcomes? Equally important, how do they see these changing in the future? Interview and shadow these employees, and be sure to have them review your final product for omissions or corrections.

• **Articulate priorities for the role.** If you use key performance indicators (KPIs), objectives and key results (OKRs), or other performance management approaches, make sure the list of responsibilities refers to those metrics and the intended outcomes of the person’s work.

Next, identify the five to 10 key skills needed to perform those core responsibilities. Use the list of responsibilities to brainstorm the skills needed to accomplish them. Consider both occupational skills (technical skills and subject matter expertise) as well as foundational skills (interpersonal and general workplace skills). You may want to refer to a skills taxonomy or online skills tool (O*Net is a popular example in the US) that maps common job titles to skills to provide food for thought for this assessment. Once you’ve brainstormed a full list of skills, rank them with the eventual goal of narrowing the list to the five to 10 most critical skills. Here are several tips on building a meaningful list:

• **Be specific.** Describe with as much precision as possible the nature of the skill needed for the job. For example, “communication skills” is vague, while “ability to present to large audiences” or “ability to communicate the value of a product to diverse customers” provides more information about the nature of the skill needed. Name the context for the skill. Rather than “customer service,” consider “supporting customers in a...”

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**Example: The Core Responsibilities of a Staff Accountant**

**Position Summary**

The Staff Accountant performs professional accounting work for a nonprofit organization with 100 employees. This includes the maintenance and review of financial records, preparation of reports and financial statements, and other standard accounting tasks.

**Key Responsibilities**

- Perform monthly cash applications and balance sheet reconciliations
- Manage the Accounts Payable Function to ensure invoices are processed timely and accurately
- Prepare monthly journal entries and account reconciliations
- Support the finance department on account research and financial reporting
- Support legal and tax compliance requirements
retail environment” or “making business-to-business sales.”

- **Focus on differentiators.** Consider what is unique to the job to identify skills that differentiate this role from other roles. Name the technical skills and subject matter expertise that are must-haves to do the job, but be sure to consider variations of those skills that can be learned quickly in-role. When naming interpersonal skills, focus on the most relevant. For example, teamwork skills may not be relevant to a team of two, but being a self-starter may be critical.

- **Factor in learning.** As you identify key skills, keep in mind that workers learn a lot on the job, and many specific aspects of your business can be learned relatively quickly. Focus on the skills that the new hire will need on day one to start the job. For example, a staff accountant must have baseline accounting skills, but you can be flexible about the specific accounting software that candidates have used in the past. Presumably, if they have used one system, they can learn another.

- **Prioritize the most important skills.** It is important to differentiate between required and preferred skills and to prioritize them carefully. Required skills include abilities and expertise that must be present on day one to perform essential tasks; they cannot be learned during a reasonable orientation period. Preferred skills can be learned during onboarding or early in tenure, and are more aligned with non-essential tasks. Ranking these skills is important because you will eventually need to get to a manageable quantity for use in a job posting: include no more than four-to-six required and three-to-four preferred skills there.

When you have articulated the necessary skills with this kind of specificity and clarity, you will most likely find that you do not need to specify a degree requirement or credential.

Finally, translate the elements of your position description into an effective job posting. A job posting is a separate document written for an external audience with the specific goal of attracting qualified applicants. You will use the summaries of responsibilities and skills in the position description to inform your job posting (and, later on, to develop interview questions, assessment rubrics, and performance management targets). You may be surprised to realize the simple adjustments you can make to your old job postings to significantly increase the pool of qualified applicants. They include removing certain traditional elements, and adding or revising others. Here are several tips for building an effective skills-based job posting:

**Example: Skills, Knowledge, and Expertise for Accounting position**

- Technical accounting skills, i.e., reconciling, completing journal entries, maintaining the general ledger
- Experience in Sage Intacct or similar accounting and reporting system
- A working knowledge of Microsoft Excel or Google Sheets
- Comfortable in a fast-paced environment with daily deadlines
Identify Job Skills and Write Skills-Based Position Descriptions

- **Remove unnecessary degree, credential, and work experience requirements.** Skills-based hiring makes it very clear if these requirements are truly necessary. Once you’ve identified the specific responsibilities and skills of the role, ask yourself this question: *Are there other ways for people to learn the skills needed for this job?* In most cases, you will find that the answer is yes and that removing these unnecessary barriers opens the door to many qualified, and previously overlooked, candidates. Avoid statements like “bachelor’s degree or equivalent practical experience.” While this is a step in the right direction in that it acknowledges that alternative pathways for skill development exist, it suggests a bias toward a college degree that will deter some qualified applicants.⁵

- **Be clear, concise, and simple.** Remove redundancies and extraneous information that distract from your core needs. The ideal posting is under 300 words. It should be scannable and optimized for reading on a mobile device. Job seekers spend an average **14 seconds** reviewing a job post before deciding whether to apply.⁶

- **Include all relevant information.** While simplicity is essential, it should not be achieved at the expense of the critical information a candidate needs to determine their interest and fit for the job. Job postings attract more diverse candidates when they demonstrate transparency and offer full information. In addition to the information discussed above, an effective job posting should include salary, benefits information, and other elements of the employee value proposition (such as remote flexibility and training opportunities) that would be meaningful to target applicants.

**61% of survey respondents ranked compensation as the most important part of a job description.⁷**

- **Write for everyone.** In addition to checking for and eliminating biased language (including gender-coded, racist, ageist, or ableist wording that may dissuade candidates from non-traditional and underrepresented backgrounds), you should eliminate industry jargon that may deter applicants who have transferable skills but don’t share your vocabulary. Tools that scan job postings to identify biased language and suggest alternatives are available online.

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⁵ IBM offers [advice for building a new taxonomy of skills](https://www.ibm.com) that minimizes bias for privileged backgrounds.

⁶ LinkedIn offers [concrete advice](https://www.linkedin.com) on writing effective job postings.

⁷ This job description [heatmap](https://www.heatmap) shows what candidates really care about.
Case-in-Point: Dropping Degree Requirements at Penguin Random House

In 2016, Penguin Random House joined the skill-based hiring movement by dropping degree requirements for all roles excluding those that required specific certifications or licensure. The move was spurred by a recognition that to stay competitive, they needed to creatively look for new talent pools. Before dropping degree requirements across the board, Penguin Random House tested the practice through a series of pilot programs. Through one pilot, Penguin Random House removed references to degrees for entry-level marketing positions and added a creative thought exercise to the selection process. They found that STARs performed equally as well as candidates with degrees and chose to fill 50% of their open positions with STARs.

In scaling the movement to drop degrees, Penguin Random House worked with HR leaders to change long-held perceptions of STARs and expectations for selection criteria. HR Director Neil Morrison explained their approach: “It’s like having a running race; we’re simply inviting more people to enter the race. If a grad is the fastest, they’ll still win. It’s widening the entry list that matters.” Today, skills-based hiring is ingrained in the culture at Penguin Random House. The company actively highlights the many roles, responsibilities, and departments that are open and available to STARs in their recruitment materials.

See Appendix A for a sample job posting that reflects skills-based hiring principles, as well as instructions and a template for creating skills-based job postings for your own organization.

Additional information on hiring at Penguin Random House can be found here.
A skills-based job posting signals your specific needs to potential candidates, but it is only effective if they see the role and apply for it. It is critical to advertise your job so that it reaches all candidates with relevant skill sets.

Traditional sourcing tends to focus on college recruitment, industry job boards, and large job aggregators, as well as talent in similar companies. Skills-based hiring goes beyond these common sources to widen the talent funnel and open access to the talent they often overlook. This includes the vast, diverse pool of STARs, more than 30 million of whom are positioned to take on higher-wage positions, today.

Once you understand the skills you need, and recognize that those skills exist in a wide range of workers and jobs, there are several ways to expand your access to talent—and increase your workforce diversity at the same time. Expanding your sourcing to reach a broader pool of talent requires making targeted adjustments to common sourcing practices based on a new set of hiring priorities and assumptions.

*First, think creatively about jobs with similar skills.* Skills-based hiring is based on the transferability of skills, which allows for a broader set of feeder jobs for your roles. Consider, for example, the customer service representative. Companies will tend to source for this role from call centers or customer service operations in their industry. But the same essential skills of communication, persuasion, negotiation, and a service orientation can be found in the hospitality industry among hotel clerks and waiters as well as in retail service roles. Thinking beyond common feeder jobs requires some imagination and data.

- *Understand there are many roles in the labor market with similar skill requirements that create natural pathways to mobility.* Skills are the currency of the labor market, and the majority of candidates for roles are sourced from other roles with similar occupations. Data about the skills needed for individual jobs is available from a number of sources. For example, the Department of Labor’s O*NET and BLS occupational profiles are readily available resources, while Lightcast provides data for a fee. Opportunity@Work’s [Stellarsight](#) is an interactive tool designed to help employers and job seekers identify viable job pathways with data on the job skills, skills similarity across jobs, and common skills-based job pathways.

### Traditional Sourcing Often...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relies on a standard set of legacy sources</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assumes candidates will come from the same or similar jobs in businesses in the same field or industry</td>
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<tr>
<td>Involves minimal analysis of the talent pipeline to understand the effectiveness of individual sources</td>
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</table>

### Skills-Based Sourcing Instead...

| Takes a comprehensive view of the workforce ecosystem and recruiting landscape and expands talent sourcing to include new pipelines |
| Looks for candidates with similar skill sets in many different jobs and across industries |
| Carefully analyzes the performance of the talent pipeline within the context of specific hiring and diversity goals |
Adopting Skills-Based Hiring

Section

Expand Sourcing to Include All Qualified Candidates

• Recognize that low wage does not mean low skill. Millions of workers in low-wage jobs today have the skills to transition to jobs that pay significantly more if they were given the opportunity. Our analysis of low-wage jobs identified hundreds of low-wage early career jobs that require the same critical skills as middle- and even high-wage jobs. Workers in these roles demonstrate critical skills like service orientation, social perceptiveness, and time management on the job and could deploy these skills in new contexts.10 Consider which of these roles could be feeder roles for your openings.

• Use data from your own hiring. Consider the jobs that you have sourced from in the past. What is the most common feeder role? Identify the elements of that role that make it a good feeder position and think about what other roles have similar characteristics. Look for less common feeder roles and think about how you might expand sources from these less common but proven roles.

Second, expand sourcing to attract a more diverse pool of candidates. The recruiting world is in a period of rapid innovation and has seen the development of many new products and platforms to support outreach efforts. Further, innovative partnerships can support your sourcing efforts.

• Employ a wide range of sourcing tools. In addition to the common sourcing mechanisms like LinkedIn and Indeed that most companies use, consider the many specialized job boards that focus on specific fields, regions, and populations (including veterans, women, ethnic and other minorities, and refugees, among many others), as well as online communities that support diverse job seekers. Posting on those that best align with your skills needs takes minimal effort and can yield many new candidates that you’d otherwise miss.

• Consider new and more diverse providers of talent development. Many large businesses have robust campus recruiting programs, but skills-based hiring opens the door to partnering with more diverse institutions focused on preparing talent, including community colleges, bootcamps, technical programs, and other training providers. These organizations are often eager to align their services with local employer needs to facilitate job placement for their participants.

• Build partnerships with local employers and workforce development entities. There are others in your community and region who share your goal of filling jobs. Defining your jobs in terms of skills will likely reveal that there are other employers in your area with large numbers of workers whose competencies meet your needs. Consider how you could work together for mutual benefit. Further, local employment programs and established agencies can connect you to their clients, who may not be engaged in more traditional recruiting channels. They can offer valuable insights into the interests of alternative candidates.

• Strategically engage your employee network. Targeted referral programs can encourage current employees to connect you to viable STAR candidates in their networks. Such programs

Consider Opportunity@Work’s Stellarworx.org, a free platform specifically designed to connect STARs to interested employers.

8 Blair, Peter et al. “Skills, Degrees and Labor Market Inequality.” NBER working paper.
9 We explain this skills similarity concept in detail in our foundational report, Reach for the STARs.
create engagement for current employees and help to establish the skills-based hiring mindset in your company culture. Your employees can be a great source of feedback on potential biases or weaknesses in the hiring process. For potential candidates, these programs provide a personalized introduction to an organization they might not have otherwise considered and establish your credibility as a skills-based organization.

Third, create new points of entry and mobility in your organization. With a bit more effort, you can develop a coordinated approach to engaging not only job-ready talent but also those who are prime candidates for tailored training.

• Leverage work-based learning options. Internships, apprenticeships, and other work-based learning programs are excellent ways to identify and nurture talent for specific skills needs, and can often be developed with the assistance of local training providers and other intermediaries. Educational organizations and other talent developers, as well as community-based organizations, can provide a pipeline of potential talent for “learn and earn” pre-employment and role-specific training programs.

• Increase internal mobility. Internal mobility programs can serve to build on the skills of existing employees who have known capabilities. Traditional sourcing often overlooks internal employees with skills well suited to the roles you are trying to fill. Consider the proven internal talent at your disposal and take the opportunity to offer these valuable members of your team opportunities for advancement or transition.

Finally, hold yourself accountable. Set goals and use data to hone your sourcing strategy. Organizations pay too little attention to who is applying and how they are progressing through the hiring process. Evaluate your historic applicant pool. Where are there gaps? Targeted analysis of the data you have, and additional surveys of current staff and candidates, can be helpful in clarifying your current sourcing dynamics.

Skills-Based Hiring Increases Racial Diversity in Your Workforce

In our research report, Navigating with the ST ARs, we demonstrate that ST ARs make skills-based job transitions as they navigate the workforce. Some ST ARs are able to make transitions on job pathways that offer upward mobility; however, these pathways do not provide equitable opportunities for all ST ARs. Black and Hispanic ST ARs have less mobility on these pathways than their white counterparts. When employers use skill-based hiring practices to eliminate barriers to entry for ST ARs, they open access to millions of Black and Hispanic ST ARs, increasing the diversity of candidates in their talent funnel.

Our Spotlight on Black ST ARs shows that two-thirds of all Black workers are ST ARs and that more than half of all Black ST ARs work in 25 jobs. Sourcing intentionally from those jobs opens access to millions of Black ST ARs.
Moving from Traditional Sourcing to Skills-Based Sourcing

STOP... • Limiting outreach to traditional sources that offer a homogenous talent pool

BEGIN OR CONTINUE... • Understanding and exploring the broad range of backgrounds, experiences, and jobs that can prepare applicants for the position, far beyond just similar roles and industries
• Adding new platforms and partners aligned with your skills needs to broaden your talent funnel
• Leveraging your internal talent pipeline
• Using targeted referral programs to engage the current workforce
• Considering investments in targeted training programs and approaches
• Collecting and analyzing your sourcing data (by talent pool and in real-time) to identify areas of improvement
• Setting goals for diverse hiring

How to Expand Your Sourcing

- Previously untapped recruiting platforms
- More diverse education institutions
- Workforce agencies
- Regional and online training providers
- Expanded talent pool
- Traditional recruiting sources
- Expanded talent pool
- Pre-employment and role-specific training programs
- Local networking / affinity / community groups
- Internal candidates
- Referral programs and Employee Resource Groups

More diverse, productive workforce
A larger pool of high-potential candidates should yield more successful, efficient hiring outcomes. Those outcomes require a candidate evaluation process that assesses and validates the skills you need in a robust and unbiased way. Skills-based hiring enables you to focus on an applicant’s skills over any other proxy for success in the role, and there is a range of tools that you can use to reliably validate those skills. From pre-employment testing to a more standardized, intentional approach to screening and selection, approaching evaluation with a skills-based mindset will help you to confidently narrow the field of applicants.

First, establish screening practices that focus on skills and minimize the unconscious biases that can remain unchecked in traditional hiring practices. Systemic bias leads to unequal outcomes in the labor market for workers of color, women, and other marginalized groups. Actively addressing this head on requires awareness of this problem and concerted efforts to shift behavior. This unconscious bias can be harmful to hiring efforts, especially when our goal is to focus on skills and attract more diverse candidates. Addressing the unconscious bias of individuals is challenging, but there are ways to change your systems to minimize its role in hiring decisions.

- Check your applicant tracking system (ATS) filters. Once you’ve rewritten position descriptions that remove unnecessary requirements, be sure to remove the automated ATS filters that reflect these requirements—a simple step that’s easy to overlook. Any remaining filters should align with

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Traditional Evaluation and Selection Often...</th>
<th>Skills-based Evaluation and Selection Instead...</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fails to identify specific skills needed and uses degrees as a proxy</td>
<td>Prepares all recruiters and hiring team members with a clear understanding and prioritization of the skills needed for the job</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does not adequately prepare members of the hiring team to identify the skills needed for the role</td>
<td>Uses behavioral questions and skills assessments to objectively measure skills proficiency</td>
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<tr>
<td>Over-indexes on cultural fit</td>
<td>Seeks cultural add</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Takes an unstructured approach to interviews that can lead to inconsistency</td>
<td>Employs a skills-based interview guide</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fails to standardize candidate evaluation metrics and methods</td>
<td>Implements standard evaluation rubrics to ensure fairness and consistency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fails to build awareness of, and counter, unconscious bias with those involved in the hiring process</td>
<td>Counteracts unconscious bias with intentional process elements and awareness-building efforts</td>
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</table>

There is a vast body of work on implicit or unconscious bias. UCSF’s Office of Diversity and Outreach provides a useful summary of the science behind it, with strategies for mitigation and additional resources.
your new skills-based qualifications, and a deep dive into your systems to ensure that this is the case is a critical first task.

- **Review resumes with a focus on skills.** Resumes are highly imperfect and inconsistent, but they remain a deeply embedded part of the hiring process and therefore need to be screened with an intentionally clear and structured approach. There are several ways to maximize the focus on skills and minimize bias in this part of the process:

  - Create a standard set of questions and criteria, derived from the key skills identified for the job, against which to evaluate the resume. Provide an explicit scoring rubric that allows you to compare candidates objectively against these criteria.

  - Mask basic profile information like name, gender, and address in initial resume screenings. All of these details have nothing to do with skills and can trigger unintentional bias that leads to unfair outcomes.

  - Use a diverse review team that provides multiple perspectives. Have several people from different roles and backgrounds screen resumes for advancement in the hiring process.

- **Use skills assessments to clearly identify if candidates possess critical skills.** If skills are the main driver of your hiring efforts, it is only logical that they should also be at the forefront of the screening process. Many providers now offer general and bespoke tools to assess both technical/occupational skills (for example, coding tests) and foundational/soft skills (for example, cognitive and behavioral assessments). When carefully vetted and chosen, these assessments can be an extremely efficient way to gain immediate insight into a candidate’s skills – and save valuable time in the hiring process by quickly identifying those who underperform on the basis of your prioritized skills.

- **Create job simulations that allow candidates to demonstrate the required skills.** Another way to validate a candidate’s ability to do the job is to give them the opportunity to demonstrate the skills you’ve identified in action - by emulating the experience of working on the job during the hiring process. Job simulations have the dual benefit of allowing you to understand exactly how a candidate would perform in the role and allowing candidates to get a realistic preview of the role to assess whether or not it aligns with their expectations. Job simulations can take many forms, the nature of which will determine at which point in the hiring process (earlier or later) they make the most sense. See Appendix B for a list of the types of simulations you might use in candidate screening, as well as some important tips on using them most effectively.
Evaluate and Select Candidates Based on Skills

Job Simulations: The Advantages of Showing Versus Telling

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Standard Interview Question</th>
<th>Scenario-Based Simulation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Senior DevOps Specialist</td>
<td>Tell us about your experience as a DevOps Specialist.</td>
<td>A non-technical stakeholder asks you what is meant by XYZ application architecture and why we need it. Please record an audio of yourself explaining this to the stakeholder and outline 2-3 benefits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Product Manager</td>
<td>Tell me about a time when XYZ happened. How did you deal with it?</td>
<td>Our engineering team has been working toward the big release of a new tool. The planned release date is tomorrow, but there are still a number of bugs in it. What would you do?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salesperson</td>
<td>Tell us about a time when you had to sell a product you knew little about.</td>
<td>Please give us a five-minute sales pitch selling our product to us.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marketing Analyst</td>
<td>Explain a time when two key stakeholders had opposing views on a campaign. What did you do?</td>
<td>You have run A/B testing for a campaign and there is no significant difference in the results. The CEO likes one campaign but the COO prefers the other. Run us through the conversation you’d have, and how you’d get to a decision.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Analyst</td>
<td>Tell us an experience you’ve had with analyzing data in the past. What was your process?</td>
<td>Please take the next 15 minutes to analyze the following data. Once complete, talk us through your findings and observations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customer Service Assistant</td>
<td>What tactics do you use to calm an angry customer?</td>
<td>You have to say “no” to an angry customer who has requested XYZ. How did you handle the situation in order to preserve the relationship?</td>
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</table>

Next, conduct skills-based interviews. The interview portion of your process deserves special attention. Organizations frequently rely on an unstructured interview process that is not focused on skills and that represents a missed opportunity to gather valuable information about applicants. With skills-based interview practices, you can improve the fairness and consistency of your candidate assessments, maximize the quantity of useful insight collected, and combat the unintentional bias that often works against a more diverse applicant pool of candidates whose backgrounds may differ from those who are evaluating them. Develop an explicit protocol that focuses on candidate skills including:

- **Interview guide.** An outline of questions to be asked of all candidates that evaluate each required skill. Focus each question on one skill at a time, and (as with the job posting) limit the list of skills you are assessing to those deemed most important. It is better to ask follow-up questions for a smaller number of skills than to try to cover more skills in a short period of time. Use behavioral and situational questions that allow a candidate to highlight their skills in the way that fits best with their experience - and prepare interviewers to be open to where and how skills are acquired. De-emphasize personal background and interests that are not relevant to skills. Before implementing
Adopting Skills-Based Hiring

Evaluate and Select Candidates Based on Skills

Your guide, test it on diverse employees to identify any potential weaknesses or biases.

- **Evaluation rubric.** The companion to an explicit interview guide is an explicit evaluation rubric. It should outline the skills on which you are evaluating candidates, and provide clear criteria, benchmarks, and measures to assist interviewers in assessing candidate responses. Use a numeric system that allows for consistent analysis, but also leave room for interviewers to add comments on why they chose the score they did. Advise interviewers to evaluate candidates on the desired results and impact of each skill, rather than the methods they used to achieve them. Finally, ensure that interviewers do not compare notes before completing the interview or the evaluation, to avoid external influence and bias.

- **Mechanisms to ensure inclusivity, diversity, and accessibility.** There are several ways to ensure a process that is welcoming to, and inclusive of, a more diverse candidate pool. Target and measure the composition of your interview pool; seek to include multiple viable candidates from the new talent pools you are targeting (including STARS). Employ a diverse interview team that includes individuals from different backgrounds and roles in your organization; this works to combat bias and signals your commitment to diversity to candidates. Ensure that the logistics of the interview process - from the physical space to scheduling times and locations - can accommodate the needs of all promising prospects.

Finally, use your hiring data to continuously improve your screening and interview processes and remove bias from your hiring decisions. Systemic bias impacts opportunities in the labor market in a number of ways that can be difficult to detect. Candidates in your hiring pipeline have all made their way through the labor market based on the advantages and disadvantages that accrue based on gender, race, ethnicity, physical health, wealth, and more. Overcoming these invisible and unintended barriers may be one of the biggest challenges you work to adopt a skill-based process.

Use hiring data to see how you are doing. Look to see if diverse candidates are applying for your job and that candidates of diverse backgrounds are having equitable experiences and outcomes. Where you see disparities, look for ways to address them. Recognize that there will be an ongoing need for training, awareness, and analysis to continuously build an unbiased skill-based process.

### Moving from Traditional Evaluation and Selection to Skills-Based Evaluation and Selection

**STOP...**
- Using automated filters that don’t reflect skills
- Using unstructured interview and evaluation methods that promote inconsistency and reinforce bias

**BEGIN OR CONTINUE...**
- Putting skills at the center of all parts of the evaluation and selection process
- Standardizing and de-biasing the resume review process
- Employing skills assessments and job simulations to validate job skills
- Using a standard skills-based interview guide and evaluation rubric
- Fielding diverse screening and interview teams
- Preparing participants in the hiring process to minimize bias
Skills-based hiring sets up effective onboarding by allowing onboarding activities to start as soon as the new and nontraditional hires can get the job.

Effective onboarding increases productivity by over 70% and new hire retention by 82%.¹²

Targeted adjustments to your onboarding process are a great way to jumpstart a positive new employee journey. There are several ways to better meet the needs of more diverse hires and leverage valuable information from the skills-based hiring process to put them on a path to greater satisfaction, performance, and retention.

The key to an effective skills-based onboarding process is recognizing that onboarding does not end on Day 1. Consider onboarding and orientation to be a year-long process that begins upon the offer of employment and continues through the first year. Best-in-class onboarding programs start with maximizing the Day 1 experience by attending to as many administrative details as possible before it even begins. They also create a series of intentional touchpoints throughout the first year that allows new employees to easily digest information and remain connected to support and training as they build a solid foundation in their new environment. Well-planned onboarding programs pace the delivery of strategic content over a longer period to make it more impactful and manageable, and they create multiple opportunities for diverse hires to build strong connections in the organization.

Before new hires arrive, give them a picture of what to expect.

### Traditional Onboarding Often...
- Focuses on compliance and HR issues only
- Is exactly the same for every employee
- Ends after a day or a week

### Skills-Based Onboarding Instead...
- Focuses on setting up the new hire for success across the spectrum of their experience (role and responsibilities, belonging, growth and development)
- Can be tailored to the individual needs of the position and employee
- Extends throughout the first year to provide continued engagement and support
- Includes connection to ongoing professional development and opportunities for internal mobility
- Incorporates regular assessment of progress, the celebration of successes, and the solicitation of feedback

¹² In this report on the cost of a bad hire, the Brandon Hall Group cites the value of strong onboarding.
• *Share practical information to give them confidence about getting started.* New candidates, especially those coming from varied backgrounds or dissimilar environments, are likely to have more questions about your organization than you realize. You can quell new hire anxiety by orienting them to the company and sharing, in advance, some general information on what (and who) they can expect when they arrive. This information should be targeted and brief; it often includes things like a team introduction, to give them a sense of their immediate organizational structure, and a summary of workplace norms (dress code, working hours, etc.), to put them at ease about basic logistics as they get started.

• *Make a human connection.* Nontraditional new hires are especially comforted by words of welcome, support, and advice from team members. Assign a buddy or mentor, connect them to group chats and other digital communications their team depends on to stay connected, and make them aware of resources they can access for insight and coaching. If your organization does not have a distinct mentoring or coaching program, consider building one—or, at a minimum, include the importance of mentorship and coaching in your training and communications with hiring managers. Throughout their first weeks and months on board, provide the new hire with opportunities to integrate into the organizational community and build a sense of belonging. These efforts have outsized importance for diverse employees who will benefit from the extra support when joining what may be a particularly new and different environment.

*Over the first month of employment,* as the new hire assumes their new responsibilities, maintain a steady conversation about current and future expectations as well as about the overall context of the work.

• *Clarify expectations and objectives.* Clearly review the new hire’s role and specific responsibilities and objectives to ensure that there is a full and mutual understanding of the job ahead, and begin the discussion of longer-term objectives over the 1-, 3-, 6-, and 12-month time horizon. There is a ramp-up to full productivity in any job and clarifying specific goals and performance indicators can help new employees to monitor their own progress and take accountability for developing the most effective strategies for reaching them.

• *Initiate and roadmap training and professional development.* Determine the specific training regimen optimal for each new hire and provide a clear schedule and expectations about how and when that training will be accomplished. The skills-based hiring process offers evaluation materials that can highlight and prioritize exactly what a new hire may need to optimize their performance. Use this information to guide the training regimen you create for each employee, and continue to focus on prioritized skills to guide your decisions.

• *Offer exposure beyond their immediate group and responsibilities.* It is helpful for new employees, especially those who may be joining from another function or industry, to be exposed to activities outside their job’s immediate scope within their team and across the organization more generally. Include them in meetings, calls, and events that can build their base of knowledge. The hiring manager should be closely involved in arranging these opportunities. Gaining a foundation of understanding beyond their specific functional purview provides valuable perspectives for future collaboration, problem-solving, and advancement.

*Over the first year of employment,* continue to support the new hire and broaden their learning opportunities.
Refine Onboarding to Maximize New Hire Success

- **Provide inspiration and highlight growth opportunities.** Demonstrate your organization’s support for continued growth and learning and educate new hires on their opportunities for internal mobility. Providing more than an overview on these topics can be overwhelming to a new employee at the start, but once they settle into their role you can extend the onboarding process (and keep employees engaged) by sharing information on the breadth of roles at the company, the skills required for those roles, and how those skills can be acquired. You can also highlight optional professional development resources that indicate your desire to support their advancement and career development as well as stimulate greater loyalty and retention.

- **Broaden training discussions.** Organizations that embrace skills-based hiring are beginning to incorporate skills-based career progressions into employee professional development plans; such plans outline potential future roles at the company based on interests and transferable skills, and they establish a strategy for developing additional skills needed through training modules, job shadowing, and other appropriate development steps.

- **Assess progress and celebrate success.** It’s not uncommon for close attention to a new hire’s progress to begin to wane after a few months. This can have dangerous results, and it’s important to carve out time to regularly and carefully review performance and revisit goals with the new hire and the hiring manager. Check in with their mentor or buddy for additional feedback on their socialization and integration into the company. This data is extremely valuable in the refinement of future skills-based hiring and onboarding. When a new hire has excelled after the first 6-12 months, recognize and celebrate that success; the encouragement provided by employee recognition efforts is central to satisfaction and retention.

- **Collect feedback and continuously improve the onboarding process.** Collecting new hire feedback should start on Day 1 and be a consistent part of the onboarding process, including at pivotal junctures for diverse new hires. Most new hires have a sense of whether they want to stay at the organization in the first three-to-six months. For this reason, a 90-day check-in is critical, and the insights provided through regular feedback loops (scheduled throughout the first year) can point you to necessary adjustments that will further improve the onboarding experience. Regular surveys should also include hiring managers who can advise you on ways new hires could be better prepared during the onboarding process.
Moving from Traditional Onboarding to Skills-Based Onboarding

STOP...
- Focusing only on compliance and HR
- Using a one-size-fits-all approach
- Limiting onboarding to a day or week

BEGIN OR CONTINUE...
- Handling logistics and paperwork before Day 1
- Sharing relevant information that gives your new hires confidence and context before they arrive
- Making human connections and reinforcing mentorship, coaching, and buddy relationships
- Clarifying objectives and goals for the job at the start
- Providing opportunities for broad organizational exposure and socialization
- Educating new employees about growth and advancement opportunities
- Creating a training roadmap and professional development plan that encourages internal career progression
- Regularly collecting feedback, assessing progress, and celebrating success
- Continually revising and improving the onboarding process
Skills-based hiring and the orientation it engenders can be naturally broadened to encompass intentional skill development for all workers. Having clarity on the skills required for success focuses your learning and design (L&D) efforts. It will also increase the likelihood that your employees understand what it takes to thrive in their jobs. This focus helps employees work towards that target, as well as aim for future roles that may interest them. That clarity will increase the engagement and retention of your workforce.¹³

There are two important ways to begin aligning your L&D programs to your skills-based approach, letting you enjoy the benefits of higher engagement, retention, and internal mobility for your workforce.

Start building a flexible, customizable L&D program. Using the skill-based lens you’ve developed, create modular training programs that target the critical skills you need. Clarify the occupational and foundational skills that are valuable to your workforce today—and those it will need tomorrow. Once you understand your needs, you can identify the right resources with which to build a strong L&D program. Choose training options that align with your organization in terms of content, structure, and culture, as well as your appetite to implement them.

Be sure your programs can be delivered in a variety of formats to meet the needs of diverse employees, and determine the most effective ways to communicate opportunities and drive engagement.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Traditional L&amp;D Often...</th>
<th>Skills-Based Onboarding Instead...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Isn’t aligned with future skills needs</td>
<td>Targets the future needs of the organization and the needs of individuals to promote internal mobility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is inflexible and homogenous</td>
<td>Is offered in a flexible and customizable way that meets the needs of diverse employees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isn’t built to facilitate diverse employee schedules and needs</td>
<td>Enables employees to work around their schedules</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doesn’t provide real-time opportunities for skills applications</td>
<td>Incorporates opportunities to apply what is learned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suffers from low engagement and inadequate planning</td>
<td>Activates peer learning and ongoing support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is measured by completion of learning units</td>
<td>Is measured by outcomes and both individual and organizational advancement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lacks consistent feedback and continuous improvement</td>
<td>Collects and responds to intentional feedback mechanisms</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

¹³ LinkedIn’s 2020 Global Talent Report stresses the importance of employee experience and internal mobility to talent retention.
Align Learning & Development to Support Ongoing Professional Development

L&D platforms and content libraries should be easily accessible and navigable, and all programs should include built-in ways to test employee skills and knowledge acquisition. Make it possible for employees to carve time out of their work schedules (rather than their personal time) to participate, and assist employees with real-time opportunities to implement what they’ve learned. Integrate informal and peer learning opportunities that stimulate greater engagement and accountability.

Create a culture of learning by intentionally building development frameworks for all employees. Every employee should have a career progression plan that gives them a tangible sense of the skills and competencies they will need to grow within the company, and how they can acquire them. Customized career tracks are built around the interests and skills of each individual with the involvement of their managers, who also play an important role in coaching and encouraging their participation. Manager engagement and buy-in are critical; building a skills-based L&D mindset will help to overcome the resistance that some managers have to internal mobility programs that they perceive as poaching “their” talent. The more a manager understands the value of these programs, the more they will provide the essential support needed by their employees.

Once you’ve established a strong, skills-based L&D program, the opportunities to thoughtfully develop your workforce and support advancement and internal mobility initiatives will be numerous. Consider this example:

**Case-in-Point: Delta Adopts a Skills-Based Hiring Approach**

In 2020, Delta removed unnecessary degree requirements as part of their commitment to be an anti-racist and anti-discrimination organization. One year later, 94% of the non-executive jobs that were filled by external candidates did not require a degree. In 2022, Delta removed the college degree requirement for pilots. Delta has also pledged to fill 25% of corporate and management positions with internal customer-facing employees.

Delta’s internal apprenticeship program gives employees the opportunity to work full time in an immersive “earn while you learn” program where they learn about roles in revenue management, IT, finance, and human resources. In addition, their Analytics Academy, designed in partnership with Georgia State University, provides a diverse pipeline of candidates for operational roles in analytics. Employees remain in their jobs while taking a three-semester course with GSU. Graduates receive a certificate from GSU and Delta as well as a guaranteed interview for a full-time analytics role. Taken together, these initiatives show how an employer can take a skills-based approach at every stage of the hiring and onboarding process.\(^\text{14}\)

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\(^{14}\) Delta shares highlights [their skills-based approach](#) as part of its corporate messaging.
Align Learning & Development to Support Ongoing Professional Development

Moving from Traditional L&D to Skills-Based L&D

STOP...

- Investing in L&D that is not aligned with business objectives and employee needs
- Using resources or an approach that is not aligned with the realities of your employees’ schedules and needs
- Measuring L&D success by learning unit or program completion only

BEGIN OR CONTINUE...

- Building a program focused on the future needs of the organization and aligned with the profile and potential of your organization and employees
- Adopting a customizable approach that facilitates broad engagement
- Creating an intentional communications plan to increase participation
- Incorporating real-time opportunities to apply what they learn
- Building career progression plans for all employees that clearly outline the potential for internal mobility
- Training managers to embrace the advantages of comprehensive L&D and internal mobility
- Measuring L&D success by outcomes related to individual and organizational advancement
- Collecting feedback on L&D programs and basing continuous improvements on this input
Skills-based hiring requires a mindset and processes that allow you to attract diverse talent based on the common denominator of skills, rather than excluding diverse talent based on imprecise proxies for those skills.

It requires adjustments across the entire hiring process, but its precision in identifying, engaging, and rewarding talent on the basis of their actual skills— and its resulting impact on multiple measures of performance—can’t be overstated.

It’s time to start adopting skills-based hiring, and the need to continually review and revise skills-based hiring processes is ongoing. As you dive into skills-based hiring, remember its many dependencies and adjacencies in the organization—and don’t overlook the importance of internal education and consensus building to support your implementation. Once it takes hold, it will stimulate meaningful impact well beyond HR.
In the succeeding chapters of this playbook, we will talk in greater depth about specific hiring mechanisms that can play an important role in STARs hiring and your skills-based hiring strategy. The strengths that result from leveraging these options will not only enrich your organizational practices and culture— they will impact the broader workforce and community, and catalyze others to invest in smarter, more effective, and inclusive talent strategies.

*Future chapters of the Playbook will provide more detailed guidance and case study examples on the following topics:*

- Internal sourcing
- Internships
- Apprenticeships and work-based learning
- Contract-to-hire
- Vendor contracting
As your organization shifts toward a skills-based hiring approach, you will begin to implement specific, targeted adjustments to your hiring practices. One of these shifts will be in how you write your job postings.

This packet contains three documents to help you build a job posting based on skills rather than pedigree. By highlighting the necessary skills of job candidates, you will attract more STARs to your organization and build a more robust and diversified employee base.

Remember that a job posting is different from a job description. A job description is a much shorter document that is archived for HR. The following documents are intended to help you build a stellar job post, which includes other aspects about your organization’s overall mission and responsibilities, along with the necessary skills and benefits associated with the specific job for which you are hiring.

This packet includes the following:

1. Instructions: The seven-step process for building a SBH job posting.
2. Job Posting Sample: A skills-based hiring job posting for a Senior Customer Success Manager.
3. Job Posting Template: A place for you to input information and build a job posting that will attract more STARs.
Instructions

1. **Description of organization,** including its mission and goals, at the beginning or end of the job posting.

2. **Essential information about the job** that is scannable and optimized for reading on a mobile device. Include the following essential information in a way that a candidate can easily find while quickly scrolling (change the coloring, format, put the information on a bar to the side of the main text, or make this into a list):
   - Job level
   - Department
   - Reporting relationships
   - Salary range
   - Accommodations
   - Hybrid/Virtual/In-person

3. **Easy-to-find “Apply Now” button.** Note that a good skills-based job posting invites immediate engagement. Typical applicants only spend 14 seconds on average when they decide whether to apply. The application process should be made to look simple rather than tiresome to attract a broader range of candidates.

4. **Job Summary,** including the job title, role expectation, and department within the first sentence. Keep this summary to about 300 words, and be sure to include location and remote/hybrid status.

5. **Key Responsibilities.** List out responsibilities for the role—and be sure to avoid jargon when writing these!

6. **Skills, Knowledge, Expertise,** along with a statement that encourages applicants to apply even if they do not meet all criteria. Explicitly state that a degree is NOT required, and identify the skills that you’re looking for instead of the experience. Note: We encourage you to avoid “Experience,” and focus more on “Expertise.” If you are compelled to write that the candidate needs “5 years of experience,” ask yourself why they need that specific experience for that amount of time. Are you looking for knowledge and expertise when it comes to this experience? As a skills-based posting, you will want to avoid these arbitrary temporal marks of experience and focus instead on the specific skills needed to be successful in the job.

7. **Work Environment and Benefits.** Remember that candidates will judge a company culture based on the benefits offered. Ensure EEO statements, at the very least, are present.
Do's and Don'ts

✔ Do explicitly state that a degree is NOT required; simply removing the degree requirement is not enough.

✔ Do use concise language.

✔ Do a final run through a gender bias decoder to ensure gender neutral language. You can also run the language through other tools to check for plain language and readability.

✔ Do focus on “expertise.”

❌ Do not focus on “experience.”

❌ Do not use industrial jargon that is specialized for a small pocket of employees.
SAMPLE: Senior Customer Success Manager

Don’t meet every single requirement? Studies have shown that women and people of color are less likely to apply to jobs if they don’t meet every single qualification. At O@W, we are dedicated to building a diverse, inclusive and authentic workplace, so if you’re excited about this role but your past experience doesn’t align perfectly with every qualification in the job description, we encourage you to apply anyway. You may be just the right candidate for this or other roles.

Job Summary

The Senior Customer Success Manager will lead a team of Customer Success professionals to establish, nurture, and grow customer relationships. They will do this by supporting and driving their success via measurable outcomes through their use of Opportunity@Work’s suite of products and services.

The ideal candidate will bring a customer-centric mindset that combines strategic thinking and strong interpersonal and communication skills. They will need to be skilled in leveraging data to problem solve and identify growth opportunities across customers.

The Senior Customer Success Manager will report to the Senior Director of Customer Experience. This is a remote role and can be based anywhere in the United States.

We encourage people who have experience with three of the five key responsibilities to apply.

Apply Now!

Department
Customer Success and Delivery

Employment Type
Full Time

Location
United States

Workplace type
Fully remote

Compensation
$95,000 - $116,000 / year

Reporting To
Senior Director, Customer Success
Key Responsibilities:

- Support, manage, and develop a remote team of Customer Success Associates by:
  - Serving as a trusted partner
  - Supporting the team’s professional development and upward mobility
- Develop customized success plans that accelerate adoption and provide the customer with a path to achieve desired outcomes
- Execute an outcomes-based strategy with customers to ensure the successful onboarding, adoption, retention, and expansion of assigned accounts
- Anticipate, identify, and forecast risk and growth opportunities within your assigned customer segment
- Demonstrate a consultative customer approach, through a deep understanding of customer and business needs
- Assist with issue escalation and solution planning in partnership with other key cross-functional teams

Skills, Knowledge, and Expertise

- STARs (workers Skilled Through Alternative Routes) are encouraged to apply; a 4-year degree is not required for this role.
- Familiarity in Customer Success, supporting a software tool or portfolio of products and services, preferably within a start-up environment
- Proficiency in CRM Tools (Salesforce preferred)
- Strong interpersonal & relationship building skills, with proven experience in developing and growing customer relationships
- Strong project tracking skills, experience in successfully managing multiple priorities and accounts
Work Environment:

The physical demands described here are representative of those that must be met by a colleague to successfully perform the essential functions of this job. Reasonable accommodations may be made to enable individuals with disabilities to perform the essential functions.

While performing the duties of the job, the colleague will be required to meet the demands of the following requirements: sit, stand, talk, and hear.

Healthcare: We pay 100% of your medical, dental, and vision coverage and 50% of the premium for your spouse and dependents.

Retirement: We match 4% of your salary (up to a maximum of $5,000) annually and will contribute an additional 1% of your paycheck, even if you don’t contribute.

Accommodations: Accommodations are available for applicants with disabilities in all phases of the application and employment process.

Parental Leave: To help support new parents in the workplace, we offer 12 weeks of paid parental leave.

Flexible Work Schedules: We offer flexible schedules and locations; the majority of our staff work from home. Our policies and norms around work schedules are a recognition that we care about work outcomes over time spent at the office.

Professional Development: We believe that developing our team members’ skills is a pathway to accomplishing our mission. To this end, we offer you $1,000 annually for the professional development opportunities of your choice.

About: Opportunity at Work

Opportunity@Work is a nonprofit social enterprise with a mission to increase career opportunities for the 71 million adults in the US who do not have a four-year college degree but are Skilled Through Alternative Routes (STARs).

For STARs, the American Dream has been fading due in part to an “opportunity gap,” in which access to the good jobs required for upward mobility often depends less on people’s skills and more on whether and where they went to college, who they know professionally and socially, or even how they look.

We envision a future in which employers hire people based on skills rather than their pedigree. We are uniting companies, workforce development organizations and philanthropists in a movement to restore the American Dream so that every STAR can work, learn and earn to their full potential.
JOBS POSTING TEMPLATE: Job Title

Include a short blurb to encourage candidates to apply even if they don’t feel they meet every requirement. This is an opportunity to highlight that your organization is excited to hire STARs because you are dedicated to building a diverse, inclusive, and authentic workplace.

#HASHTAG TO ENCOURAGE ENGAGEMENT

Job Summary (300 words)

The first sentence will include the job title, expectation, and department. Paragraph 1 will disclose the key components of the role. The summary will be about 300 words.

Paragraph 2 will focus on what an ideal candidate will bring to the job. This will disclose some of the key skills needed for the job.

Paragraph 3 will disclose who they will report to, and ensure the location and remote/hybrid status are clearly stated. This will be the shortest paragraph.

Apply Now! (Embed Link)

Essential information about the job will go here.

Include:
- Department
- Employment Type
- Location
- Workplace type
- Compensation
- Reporting To

Include a sentence here that encourages applicants to apply even if they do not have experience with all responsibilities.
Key Responsibilities:

This section will be about 5 bullet points. Keep language concise, and avoid industrial jargon.

Sample skills-based verbs to use in this section:

- Support
- Manage
- Develop
- Execute
- Anticipate
- Identify
- Demonstrate
- Assist

Skills, Knowledge and Expertise

Build on the skills that a candidate will need on day one of the job to be successful. Keep language concise and avoid industrial jargon. Make a point about hiring STARs and emphasize that a 4-year degree is not necessary for the role.

Include bullet points of necessary skills that are specific to the open role as well as soft skills. Identify the skills that you are looking for rather than the experience.

We encourage you to avoid “Experience,” and focus more on “Expertise.” If you are compelled to write that the candidate needs “5 years of experience,” ask yourself why the candidate needs that specific experience for that amount of time. Are you looking for knowledge and expertise when it comes to this experience? As a SBH posting, you will avoid these arbitrary temporal marks of experience and focus instead on the specific skills needed to be successful in the job.

- STARs (workers Skilled Through Alternative Routes) are encouraged to apply; a 4-year degree is not required for this role.
- Advanced knowledge in [skill].
- Proficient in [skill].
- [Soft skill]
- [Soft skill]
**Work Environment:**

Include your EEO statements, benefits, and physical demands of the job. Try to keep this section succinct and organized; candidates will judge a company culture based on the benefits offered, but also skim through this section.

*Healthcare:* [1-2 sentences]

*Retirement:*

*Accommodations:*

*Parental Leave:*

*Flexible Work Schedules:* [Include information about whether this is a remote/hybrid/in-person position.]

*Professional Development:*

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**About: [Your Organization]**

Include a short description of your organization, its mission, and goals. It will be anywhere from 1 to 3 paragraphs.
Guidance on Skills Assessments and Job Simulations

You have a range of job simulation tactics to assess candidate skills. Your goal is to create a challenge that reflects tasks and conditions the candidate will experience on the job.

Some simulation exercises are best during initial candidate screening, to validate specific skills quickly, such as:

- **Work sample simulations**: A work sample assessment asks the candidate to complete (often with advance preparation, which can also assess the ability to perform tasks remotely or without supervision) a very job-specific, real-world task or experience that replicates the actual role (for example, making a product pitch as a sales representative). This type of simulation tends to be highly predictive given its direct alignment with job responsibilities.

- **Situational judgment tests**: Situational judgment tests offer fictitious scenarios and ask a candidate to choose from a series of potential responses to gauge judgment and decision-making behavior.

Some simulations are more appropriate during later stage interviewing, often with the involvement of existing team members, such as:

- **Role-playing simulation**: This might take the form of a group interview where candidates are asked scenario-based questions as a team or individually (generally geared toward soft skills like collaboration and communication); a presentation on a specific topic (generally geared toward hard skills related to job tasks); or mock crisis management scenarios (generally geared toward understanding a candidate’s conflict resolution and behaviors under pressure).

- **In-basket simulation**: In-basket simulations are similar to work sample simulations in that they mimic the responsibilities of the actual job, but they tend to be more focused on administrative skills like decision-making, time management, organization, and delegation. (For example, an in-basket simulation might ask you to review a series of documents and outline your approach to solving a problem, setting priorities, delegating responsibility, and measuring success.)

As you develop and deploy your job simulations, keep the following good practices in mind.

- **Use them early in the vetting process**: Some hiring processes leave skills assessments to the end, which can waste your time with candidates who could have been identified as a poor fit earlier in the hiring cycle. It is generally wise to use assessments early in the screening process to maximize their benefit in increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of your process. Likewise, some organizations include information about the assessment in the initial job posting, which runs the risk of turning off applicants and is also not recommended.

- **Carefully vet assessment mechanisms from outside vendors for quality and fit**: The range of assessment providers has grown tremendously in recent years and, as with any other external tool that you choose to use in your hiring efforts, careful research, review, and comparisons should be conducted. In addition to assessing these tools for their general quality, methodology, and content, it is important to choose those that offer the closest alignment with your values and skills.
• *Test with successful in-role employees.* One of the best ways to measure the effectiveness of any assessment or simulation is to test it on current employees performing the job. If they do not ace the assessment or have criticisms of the experience based on its alignment with the role they perform, do not use it on applicants.

• *Keep them brief.* Initial candidate screening assessments should not be so time-consuming that they dissuade engagement in the hiring process. Target assessments that take no more than 15 minutes of the candidate’s time, especially at the early stages of the screening process.

• *Establish evaluation metrics.* Like any other part of the hiring process, if you do not approach assessments with a clear definition of minimum proficiency and a clear process for evaluating results, you risk that their use will become inconsistent and ineffective. Create and disseminate a guide for evaluating your assessment and simulation results with everyone involved in the hiring process.

• *Ensure legal compliance.* All assessments should be checked for compliance with your legal team before implementation. SHRM provides a useful tool for considering the efficacy and legality of pre-employment tests, and the EEOC offers explicit guidance and procedures with regard to the use of tests in the employment process.
## Common Hiring Biases

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bias</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Similarity Bias</td>
<td>We want to work with people like us.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affinity Bias</td>
<td>We are drawn to those with whom we have things in common.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overconfidence Bias</td>
<td>Subjective confidence overtakes objectivity, allowing us to believe we’ve done enough (enough work to hire diverse candidates, enough due diligence, etc.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Halo/Horns Effect</td>
<td>We anchor ourselves on one positive or negative trait, allowing it to overshadow all other traits.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conformity Bias</td>
<td>The bandwagon effect: we value consensus over individual judgment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confirmation Bias</td>
<td>We try to confirm initial impressions (from a resume or other information).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leniency Bias</td>
<td>We forgive negative qualities in an applicant due to our own insecurity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contrast Bias</td>
<td>We rate candidates vs. other recent candidates rather than on the basis of their skills. (Common in group interviews, resume reviews, or immediately successive interviews)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affect Heuristics</td>
<td>We use unconscious mental shortcuts to assess candidates - often falling prey to common stereotypes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choice-Supportive Bias</td>
<td>We view past choices as more positive than they may actually be, potentially reinforcing hiring weaknesses.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: [https://vervoe.com/hiring-bias-types/#similarity-bias](https://vervoe.com/hiring-bias-types/#similarity-bias)
About Opportunity@Work

Opportunity@Work is a nonprofit social enterprise with a mission to increase career opportunities for the more than 70 million adults in the U.S. who do not have a bachelor’s degree but are Skilled Through Alternative Routes (STARs). For STARs, the American Dream has been fading due in part to an “opportunity gap,” in which access to the good jobs required for upward mobility often depends less on people’s skills and more on whether and where they went to college, who they know professionally and socially, or even how they look. We envision a future in which employers hire people based on skills rather than their pedigree. We are uniting companies, workforce development organizations, and philanthropists in a movement to restore the American Dream so that every STAR can work, learn, and earn to their full potential.

Visit us at www.opportunityatwork.org.