



THE SKILLS INTELLIGENCE REPORT

Workforce intelligence shaping the future of skills, talent, and organizational readiness.

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FROM HEADCOUNT PLANS TO SKILLS PLANS

Most workforce planning still starts with approved positions, vacancy counts, and budgeted labor dollars. That is fine for budgeting. It breaks down the moment leadership asks the harder question: does the organization actually have the capabilities to execute the strategy? The answer is often unclear even when the headcount plan is fully funded.

Organizations that outperform translate strategy into capability demand, compare it to real internal supply, and decide where to hire, redeploy, reskill, redesign, or automate. The good news is that the work has gotten dramatically faster: capability mapping that once consumed years of internal effort can now be anchored in skills in a matter of weeks. This issue is about what that shift makes possible — and, new this month, what it looks like to interrogate a workforce directly through Liquid Insights™.

Traditional planning treats the role as the unit of planning. But titles are too blunt for modern decisions. Two people with the same title can hold very different skills, two teams can hire for the same capability under different labels, and adjacent internal talent stays invisible when the organization looks at jobs instead of skills.

THE MISTAKE TO AVOID FIRST

The loudest AI narrative says to hollow out the entry level — automate the early-career roles and bank the savings. That is the most expensive mistake available right now. Entry roles are where the talent pipeline begins; remove the bottom and there is nowhere to source the next layer of leaders. The right sequence is to put a skills system in place first, see clearly which roles can actually be automated and which still need human judgment, and make the change with information rather than with the headline.



- Which three to five priorities will create the biggest capability demand over the next 12 months?
- Where do adjacent internal skills already exist, even if the role structure hides them?
- Which gaps should be solved by hiring, and which by reskilling, mobility, or redesign?
- Which roles should be managed as skill portfolios rather than fixed job definitions?



CASE STUDY – ONE FOUNDATION, MANY DECISIONS

A large enterprise of roughly 4,000 roles anchored its existing workforce in skills — the roles it already had, skilled and connected into pathways, with no reorganization required. The point of the engagement was not a single report. It was that once the workforce was anchored in skills, one system began answering very different questions for very different teams. That is the shift worth noticing. The same foundation served planning, hiring, talent management, learning, and rewards — each from the lens that team cares about.

Function	What the skills foundation surfaced
Workforce Planning	A capability gap opening between projected demand and current supply over the next 12–18 months
Talent Acquisition	More senior openings fillable from within — internal fill rate up, time-to-fill down
Talent Management	Hundreds of ready-now successors made visible, and the critical roles still thin on bench
Learning & Development	Which skill investments move the needle most (gap weighted by importance), not just popular courses
Total Rewards	Where pay was — and was not — aligned to scarce, high-value skills

None of these required a separate tool, a separate data pull, or a separate consulting project. They came from one skills layer, read five different ways.

WHAT LIQUID INSIGHTS™ MAKES POSSIBLE

Liquid Insights™ is the layer that lets a leader interrogate that foundation directly. It is not a dashboard to read; it is a workforce you can question. A leader narrows to the part of the organization they own, asks in plain language, and **Scout** — our workforce intelligence assistant — answers from the live skills model and shows the calculation behind the answer.

Two things make it different. Every number is inspectable: click any metric and Liquid Insights™ opens the roles, assumptions, and math behind it. And it is deterministic — ask the same question twice and you get the same answer, because it runs on a governed skills ontology and proprietary pipelines, not a model improvising from a prompt. For decisions about pay, mobility, and transition, that reproducibility is the difference between an interesting chart and a defensible decision. Because it sits on one skills model, the same system serves every team that touches the workforce — each arriving with a different question:

Team	The question they bring to Liquid Insights™
Workforce Planning	Where will demand outrun supply, and what do we do about it?
Talent Acquisition	Which of these openings can we fill from within?
Talent Management	Who is ready now, and which critical roles have no successor?
Learning & Development	Which skills are actually worth investing in this year?
Internal Mobility	Which moves are realistic, and which save the most?
Total Rewards	Is our pay aligned to the skills that are genuinely scarce?
Skills Council	What is the shape of our skills graph — strategic, emerging, automatable?

The interaction is the same everywhere. A talent leader asks which senior openings can be filled internally; **Scout** returns the candidates by skill-match, then shows exactly how the match was scored. The next question — who is one development step away, what that step is, what it costs — is one question further, and every answer shows its work. That is the shift the vision calls for: ask the next question, not read another dashboard.

CAREER HIGHWAYS SKILLS INSIGHTS – WHAT THE SKILLS GRAPH IS SHOWING

This is a recurring decision signal, not a trends corner. As the install base grows it will report the same instruments issue over issue so leaders can watch them move. This month's read from the canonical skills architecture:

- **The graph is dense enough to be trustworthy.** In the workforce above, roughly 1,355 canonical skills are in active use across about 4,000 roles, connected by close to 77,700 role-skill links. That density is what makes every downstream answer — pay, mobility, planning — possible.
- **AI exposure is real but bounded.** About 121 roles carry 40% or more automation exposure: a clear, finite set to redesign, not a mandate to cut broadly. The signal is precision, not panic.
- **Value concentrates in a small strategic core.** Roughly 47 capabilities are designated strategic and 38 emerging skills are tracked (up 12 year over year). These are where pay, retention, and development attention belong.
- **Within-title differences matter more than most pay systems recognize.** Two people in one role family can command very different market value depending on their skills — so skills should drive both pay differentiation and pathway design.
- **Some skills are transition signals, not premium targets.** Routine, high-exposure work is where to redesign and reskill, not where to layer on premium pay.

LEADERSHIP QUESTIONS

- Where are headcount plans hiding capability gaps that matter more than the number of approved positions?
- Which of our most important roles should be managed as skill portfolios rather than static jobs?
- Where can internal mobility or reskilling outperform external hiring on cost and speed?
- Which capabilities are gaining strategic value, and which are becoming transition signals?



WHAT'S NEW FROM CAREER HIGHWAYS

- **Liquid Insights™:** leaders can now interrogate a workforce through **Scout** and see the calculation behind every number, with deterministic, reproducible answers.
- **One foundation, many lenses:** the same skills model now serves planning, hiring, talent management, learning, mobility, and rewards from a single source.
- **Speed to value:** capability mapping that once took years is landing in weeks.

If this issue reflects challenges inside your organization, Career Highways can anchor your existing roles in skills and turn that foundation into clearer planning, hiring, mobility, learning, and pay decisions — and let you ask the next question yourself. This is a workforce intelligence conversation, not a demo request.



Learn more at CareerHighways.com