

# The Shift to Skills: What's Driving Employers to Hire Differently

After years of workforce disruption, employers are rethinking what it means to hire well. They're increasingly open to skill-based hiring, but change takes more than good intentions. This fact sheet highlights what employers believe, what's holding them back, and what supports them in taking the next step.



## Employers Are Looking for Growth-Oriented Team Members

Today's employers are looking beyond technical know-how. They want team members who can adapt, collaborate, and grow with their organizations. Skills matter—but so does mindset, maturity, and the ability to work well with others.

*“The credentials, the education, the years of experience, that’s an easy find. **But the soft skills, the ability to express empathy, to be an advocate for your team, to have great communication skills, and to be driven by wanting to be successful within yourself, as well as your team, make the best candidate.**” —Hiring Manager*

*“As long as a person is teachable, there are a lot of skills you can teach someone. **We need a personality that works with the team, looking at emotional intelligence and leadership type.**” —Hiring Manager*

More than

**75%**

of hiring managers think skill-based hiring is good for finding candidates with technical skills and soft skills alike.

## Unspoken Norms Still Drive Decisions

Even when hiring managers support skill-based hiring in theory, many hesitate to act because they're unsure how others—peers, leaders, or clients—will perceive the change. Without clear internal support for using skill-based hiring, sticking to traditional proxies for success, like a college degree, feels safer.

**4 in 5**  
hiring managers

Are likely to hire candidates without a degree if they demonstrate proven skills. Agree that skill-based hiring could be good for their company.

Yet hiring managers are hesitant to use skill-based hiring because they aren't sure what leadership, clients, and colleagues will think.

*"I have to be concerned with how my clients will look at it. My clients are paying big bucks and looking for at least two degrees. And if [we hire] someone who has a high school degree, I don't think it will go over well. I know you don't need a college degree to do some of the jobs, but I'm afraid of what the client will think and selling this person to a client."* —Hiring Manager

Real-world examples, from stories to outcome data from other businesses, make employers feel more confident that a non-degree pathway can bring benefits to their business.

What would you need to see or hear to feel confident that education pathways could provide real benefits to people, businesses, and society?

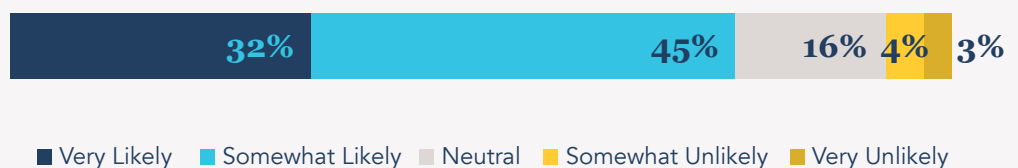


## Employers Are Ready—But Fear the Risk

Without clear ways to evaluate skills, hiring managers lack the confidence to use skill-based hiring, even when they're motivated to change. Tools and frameworks can help close the gap between belief and action.

More than three-fourths of hiring managers are willing to advocate internally to adopt skill-based hiring.

How **likely or unlikely** are you to advocate within your company for adopting skill-based hiring?



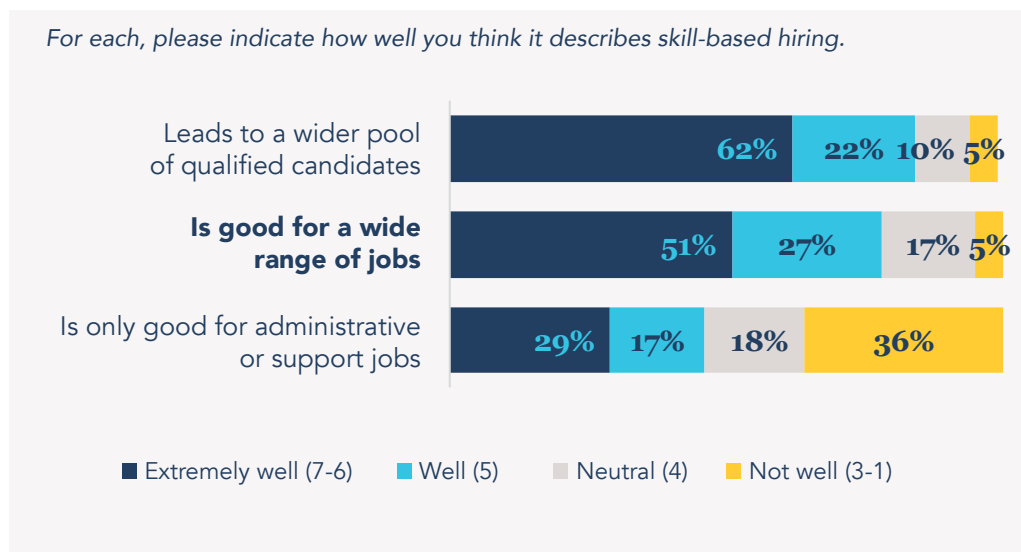
**But without a good understanding of how to assess candidates, some hiring managers are concerned about the personal risk involved in doing things differently. Uncertainty about how to assess a candidate is the top barrier to skill-based hiring (though it's fairly low all around).**



## Skills-Based Hiring Can Complement, Not Compete With Current Hiring Practices

Employers often see skill-based hiring in extremes—only for low-skill roles or impossible for high-credential jobs. They are also hesitant to embrace skills-based hiring when they think they would have to abandon their tried and true ways of hiring. But when framed as a “both/and” strategy—an additive approach for how they hire for many types of jobs—it helps them see the benefits of using skill-based hiring. They understand that strong teams are built by expanding, not narrowing, the pool of promising candidates.

**While some (46%) think skill-based hiring is only good for administrative or support jobs, up to 78% think it's good for a wide range of jobs.**



*“I love the strategy. **It’s not an either/or.** I’m looking at skill-based hiring as a default part of the hiring process, but people typically have a degree to signal they have value in the higher education pathway programs.”*  
—Hiring Manager

*“In addition to the traditional college degree, finding non-traditional candidates who have developed these skills in other capacities, [such as] apprenticeships, internships, on-the-job learning, etc., needs to be our next step. **“Both/and” is doable.**”* —Hiring Manager

## **To take the next step in using a skills-based hiring approach, employers need:**

**To see a strong business case:** What is the return on investment? How does it help recruitment and retention? Does it make hiring faster or easier? How long does it take for new hires to contribute?

**Guidance on how to assess skills:** Share straightforward steps employers can take, including reviewing portfolios, conducting hands-on exercises, role-playing, or administering competency tests.

**Advice about talking to colleagues** about skill-based hiring and making the transition. Hearing from other companies who have used skills-based hiring—and hearing about the specific steps they took to implement it—is incredibly persuasive.