



From Insights to Action: Communicating Career Pathways With Confidence

Pathways and Workforce Funders

MAY 2025

Table of Contents

3 About This Toolkit

4 Methodology

5 Audience Insights

6 Aspirational Communication Model

7 Audience Insights Formula for Learners

26 Audience Insights Formula for Employers

43 Aspirational Narrative: Learners

44 Narrative Framework

45 Unique Value Proposition

46 One-Minute Message

48 One-Minute Message, Annotated

49 Winning Words

51 Strategic Stories

53 Proof Points

54 Content Examples

56 Messaging Quick Checks

57 Aspirational Narrative: Employers

58 Narrative Framework

59 Unique Value Proposition

60 One-Minute Message

61 One-Minute Message, Annotated

62 Winning Words

64 Strategic Stories

66 Proof Points

67 Content Examples

69 Messaging Quick Checks

About This Toolkit

This communications toolkit is designed to help organizations and advocates effectively engage learners and employers regarding the value of career education and training programs as well as skill-based hiring. It offers research-backed messaging that reflects what people care about most—and what motivates them to take action. These messages don't just describe the benefits of pathways programs, they also help audiences see these options as relevant, accessible, and worth pursuing.

The guidance in this manual is grounded in science-based communication practices and shaped by extensive research, including a landscape analysis of messaging in the field and media, a nationally representative survey with message testing, roundtable discussions with learners and employers, and a series of pulse surveys.

How to Use This Toolkit

This toolkit offers adaptable, ready-to-use messages, language, and themes to support outreach, engagement, and storytelling. Use them to strengthen your communications—whether you're writing a social post, developing a presentation, or talking with partners and stakeholders. The messages are designed to be flexible; feel free to use them as written or tailor them to fit your audience and voice.

Methodology

The insights and messages in this manual were developed based on 18 months of research, which included the following:

A Narrative Landscape Analysis and Research Review to synthesize the existing narratives, research, and tools for communicating about pathways programs, as well as the most prominent and promising messaging from the field.

11 In-Depth Interviews with leaders who work in the field to better understand the successes and challenges that they face when communicating about pathways programs.

A Nationally Representative Message-Testing Survey to measure general awareness of, attitudes about, and actions taken regarding education pathways, motivators and barriers to pursuing pathways programs, the most effective language and messages for discussing pathways with the American public, and how to better engage Americans around these programs.

10 In-Depth Interviews with Employers Who Use Skill-Based Hiring to explain why they began using this approach, what barriers they had to overcome, how they evaluate candidates, and tools or resources they believe would be helpful in motivating other employers to adopt skill-based hiring.

Nine Roundtable Discussions with Learners to discuss their aspirations for the future, how education pathways can contribute to that future, their main concerns associated with pathways, and the language that makes education pathways more resonant and more accessible. This included three groups of high school students, three groups of learners who have not attended postsecondary education, and three groups of learners who have completed a pathways program.

Three Roundtable Discussions With Employers Who Do Not Yet Use Skill-Based Hiring to explore their attitudes about—and motivations and barriers to using—skill-based hiring, to revise and iterate on our messaging ideas, and to provide insights that can help shape communications tailored to their unique needs.

Two Rapid Message-Testing Surveys with Learners and Employers to test working language, concepts, and ideas as we developed the final narratives.



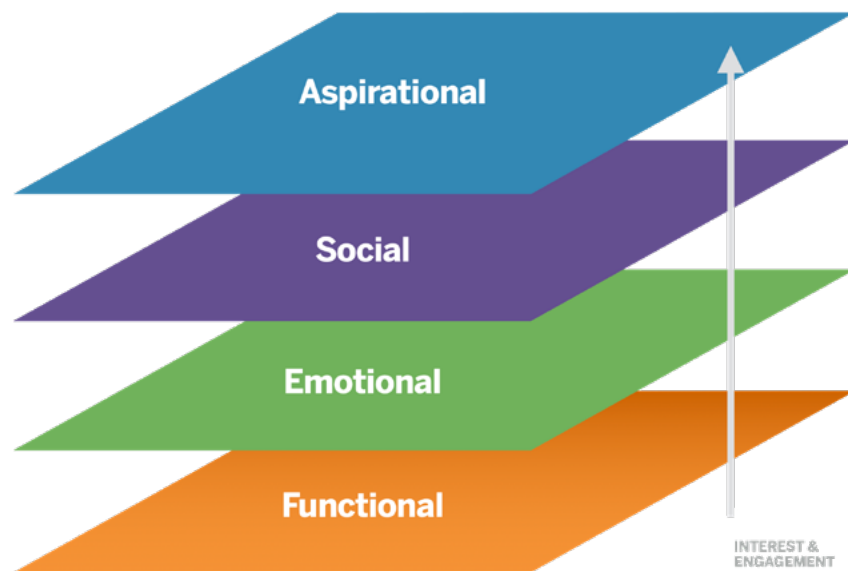
Audience Insights

Aspirational Communication Model

Our messaging is informed by the Aspirational Communication Model, which provides a science-based framework to help communicate with maximum motivating power.

Drawing from motivational, cognitive, and social psychology, the model suggests that you achieve greater levels of interest and engagement when you connect with people on multiple levels: appealing to their hopes and values (**aspirational**), putting people in the picture (**social**), speaking to both the heart and the head (**emotional**), and offering benefits that people understand and value (**functional**).

Our communications research and development explored questions such as these:



Aspirational: What do learners want for their educations and futures? What do employers want for their companies?

Social: What personal traits and values define the people who choose career education and training programs and those who support them in their journey? What personal traits and values define employers who hire candidates for their skills, not just their degrees?

Emotional: How do audiences feel about career education and training programs? How might those feelings motivate them to engage or prevent them from engaging? How do employers feel about skill-based hiring? What's motivating or hindering their use of skill-based hiring?

Functional: How well do audiences understand career education and training programs and skill-based hiring? What do audiences need to know to get them to increase engagement?

These four insights serve as key levers to motivate young learners (ages 14–24) and employers to consider career education and training programs and incorporate skill-based hiring practices. By understanding the mindsets of our audiences, we can communicate more effectively about our mission and inspire broader support for our work.

Audience Insights Formula—LEARNERS

Seeking Security and Meaning

Young learners are redefining what it means to succeed. Raised amid uncertain and unpredictable times, they're making decisions about their careers and lives that offer both security and meaning. They're looking for a lifetime of meaningful work.

From "For Someone Else" to "For Me"

Young learners often see the value of non-degree pathways—for someone else. Limited exposure and assumptions about who these programs are for can hold them back, until they hear from peers like them who've succeeded, and realize, "this could be for me, too."

Fast Track, Deep Impact

Young learners see pathways as a practical option, but those who have completed a pathways program experience deep personal growth—gaining confidence, clarity, and purpose. With just a little information, those who have not completed a program quickly begin to believe in pathways programs and to view them as transformational, not just transactional.

Buildable Path to College and Career

Without a clear understanding of the types of programs available or the careers they can lead to, young learners may feel either locked into college or uncertain about their future. Showing them that nondegree pathways are flexible, buildable routes to a wide variety of real careers helps them see these options as a smart and relevant choice for any learners looking to jumpstart their career.

Seeking Security and Meaning

Young learners are redefining what it means to succeed. Raised amid uncertain and unpredictable times, they're making decisions about their careers and lives that offer both security and meaning.

Why It Works

The lives of today's young learners have been shaped by instability—pandemics, economic uncertainty, and the rise of AI. In response, they're seeking security, purpose, and a sense of control over their futures. Unlike the previous generation that pursued high-risk, high-reward paths, today's young people are making early, intentional decisions to pursue careers that are stable, practical, and future proof. They're looking for a lifetime of meaningful work.

Their aspirations—homeownership, financial independence, meaningful work—are grounded, not idealistic. While some may assume that missing the college experience is a barrier to pursuing pathways, many young people are much more focused on getting started on their path to a stable job and life. Hardworking and ambitious on their own terms, they're drawn to faster, more practical paths to a life that feels steady and meaningful.

In Their Own Words

“ I can picture myself having **a family and a house**, going to college to get my job, and maybe extra school.
—High School Learner

“ [I'd like to] work in a firm like Boeing as a biomedical engineer. As for location, it depends on which state pays more. I want to **get married, have kids, and have dogs**. —Young Adult, No Postsecondary Experience

“ [I want to] still [live] in California, **[be] married, own a home, and have cats**. As far as schooling, I have GenEd done, and I am going to go into specific classes for my major in addiction studies. I want job stability. I want that in my future, that's a big thing. Going to school has helped me feel like I have **a stable way of getting that**. Owning a home—in an indirect way, helps me feel successful. —Young Adult, Completed Pathway Program

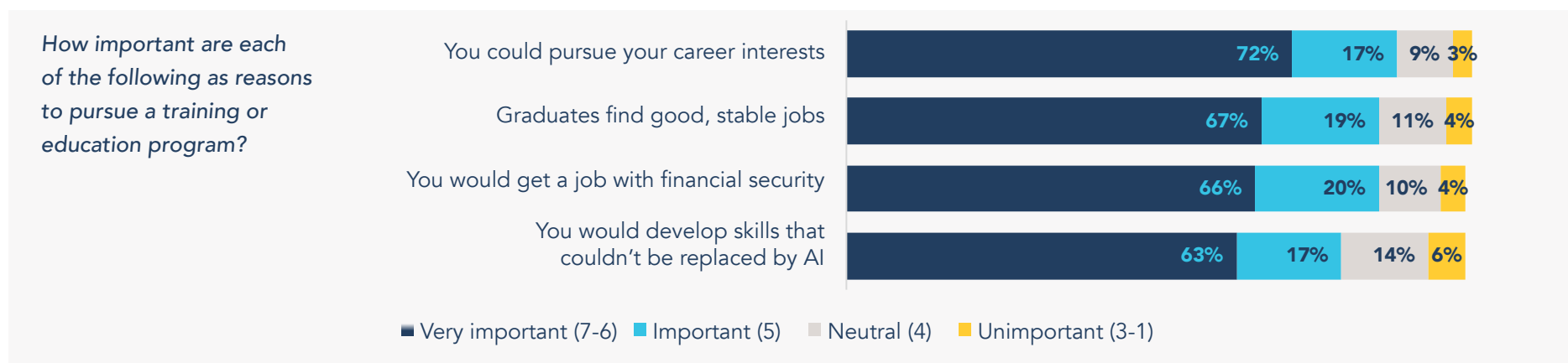
“ [I worry about] **jobs taken over by AI**. Traditional trade jobs are safer from that perspective.
—Young Adult, No Postsecondary Experience

Data

Learners feel that being happy, being financially stable, and pursuing their passions and interests are the top factors that lead to a meaningful life—much more so than being wealthy, finding a dream job, or being seen as a leader.



Learners are seeking training and education that provide stable and secure jobs aligned with their interests.



From “For Someone Else” to “For Me”

Young learners often see the value of non-degree pathways—for someone else. Limited exposure and assumptions about who these programs are for can hold them back, until they hear stories from peers like those who have succeeded, and realize, “this could be for me, too.”

Why It Works

Non-degree pathways spark real interest among young learners, but exploration is often limited by social norms and narrow exposure from the people and institutions around them (such as family, friends, and school). For many, college still dominates as the default track, making noncollege routes outside of it feel unfamiliar.

While learners often see pathways as valid—even admirable—they often associate them with “someone else,” such as students pursuing trades or those who don’t fit the traditional academic mold. Some also worry about how their families or friends might perceive a noncollege route. In most cases, though, parents simply want what’s best for their child, regardless of the form that takes.

Still, a quiet bias toward what’s familiar lingers. Stigma doesn’t often present as open resistance, but it subtly shapes perceptions and can dampen curiosity or motivation to explore.

What shifts perceptions the most is personal storytelling. When young people see relatable success stories and quotes—especially from their peers—they begin to see pathways as real, relevant, and achievable for themselves.

In Their Own Words

“ I feel like [these programs are for] kids that—**no offense—care less about schoolwork**, and they just want to experience the real world and what it has to offer. —High School Learner

“ My mom wants me to go to college, but she’s also open if I go for a different route and do something different. But I feel pressured [to] go to college, [even though] I don’t really know if I wanna go. —High School Learner

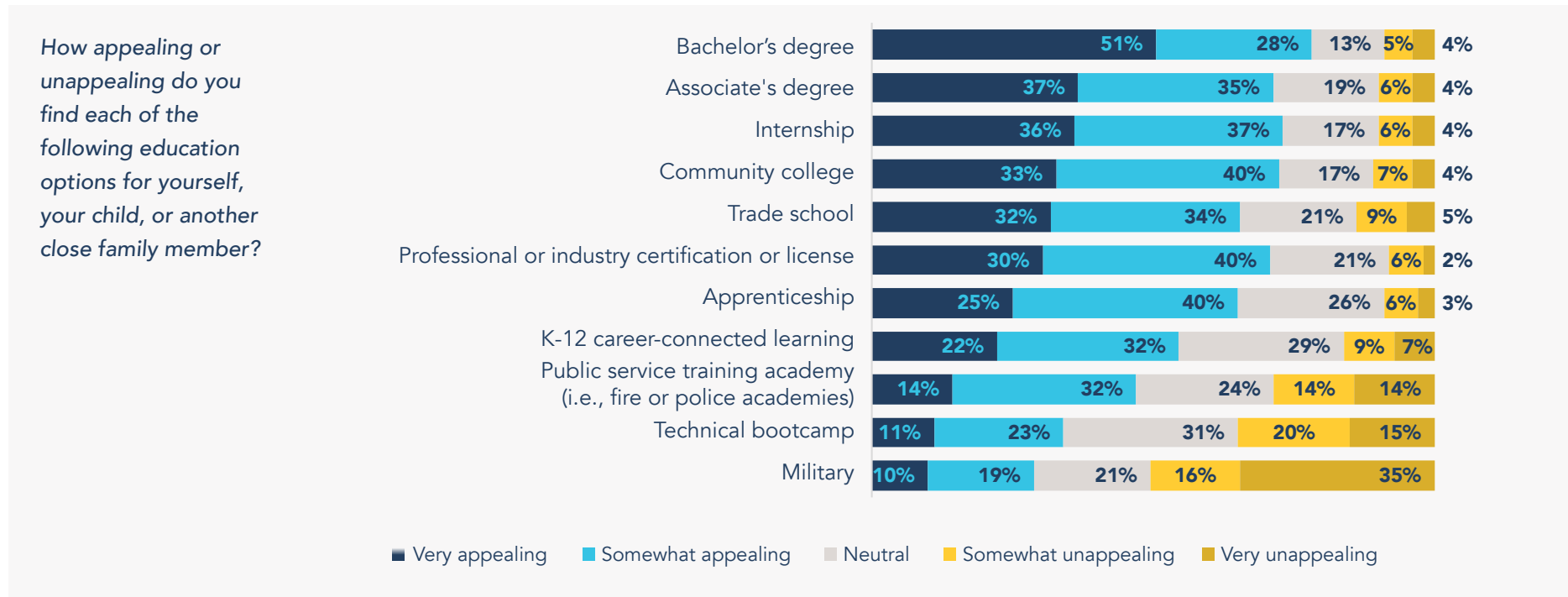
“ [Pathways programs are] for people who are **hands-on**, who **don’t prefer to take the route of going to traditional college**, taking extra classes in something... where you’re trying a craft to go towards. —Young Adult, No Postsecondary Experience

“**Most of my family has gone mostly this route** [of being a nurse], and I am more familiar with this route. [It feels] more attractive to me. —Young Adult, No Postsecondary Experience

“It’s a lot different to see [quotes from] someone who’s actually gone through that kind of schooling to say something opposed to just writing about it...**It feels a lot more meaningful and real.** —High School Learner

Data

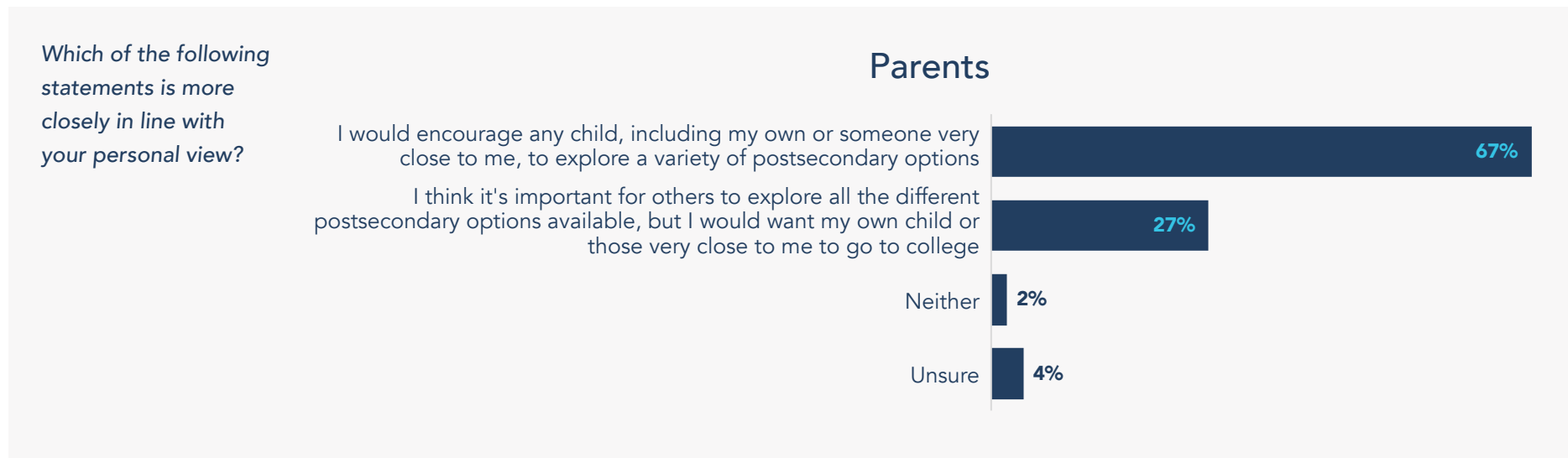
Very high numbers of learners—two-thirds or more—agree that a variety of education options are at least somewhat appealing, but college is much more likely to be cited as “very appealing.”



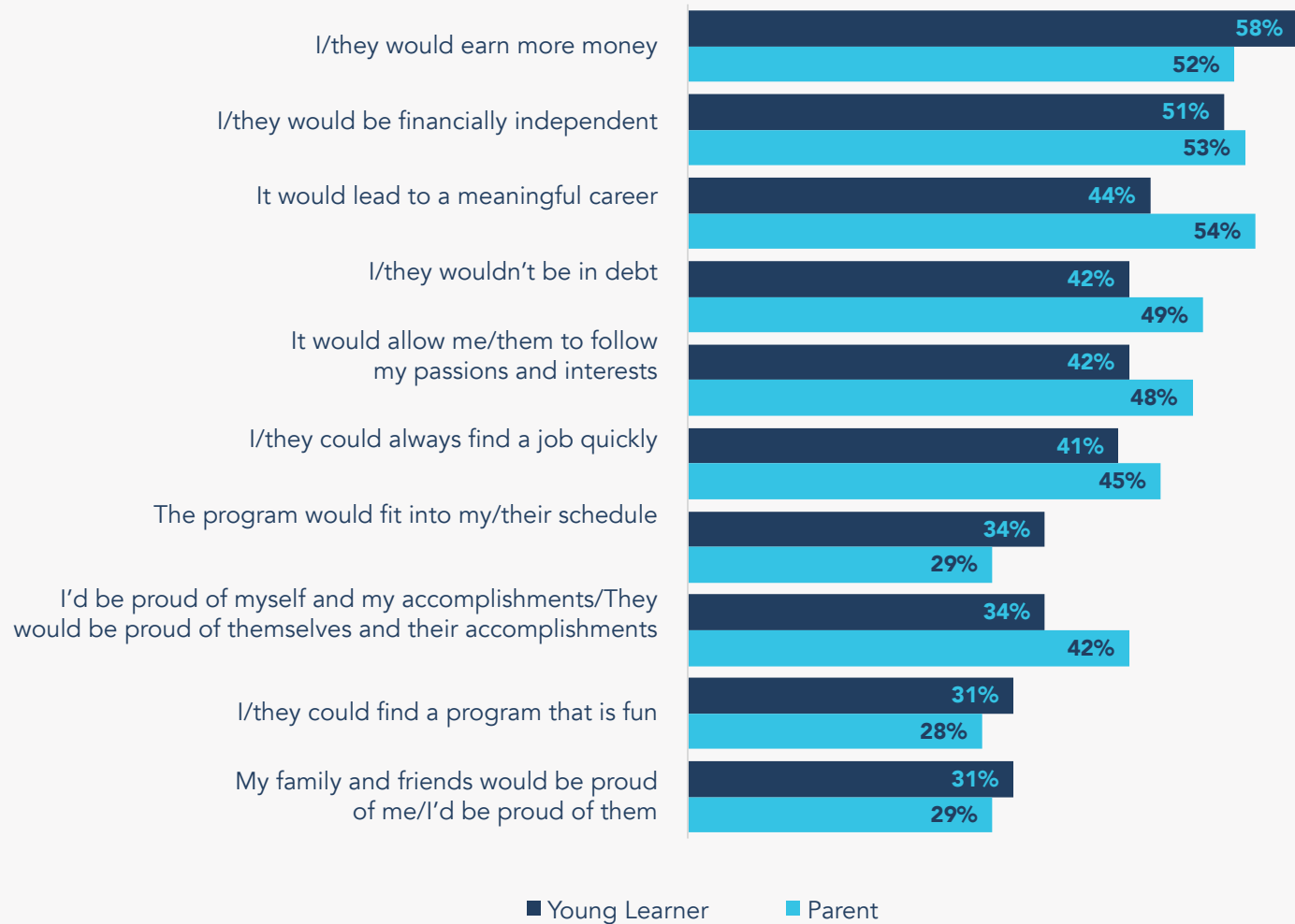
A majority (55%) agree that nondegree pathways programs only lead to vocational and trade jobs. A near majority agree that they are only good for people who don't want to sit at a desk (44%) and don't like traditional school (45%).



However, contrary to a common belief that many parents pressure their children to pursue traditional college paths, our research found that parents want their children to pursue the path that gives them the best life possible.



Please select each of the following that is true for you, personally:
 I would be more likely to explore pursuing career education and training programs other than college for myself if I knew... / I would be more likely to encourage my child to explore career education and training programs other than college if I knew...
 (Top 10 motivators for learners ages 14–24)



Social proof—success stories and conversations with people in their lives who have completed pathways programs—helps learners understand how pathways could be a valuable route.

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

	Learner (14-24)
Real stories from other people who have found successful careers through education pathways	52%
Conversations with someone in your life who has completed an education pathways program and was happy with the result	47%
Real stories from employers who have hired people from education pathways	45%
Data about the career outcomes from education pathways programs, such as average salary increase after completing a program or career growth opportunities	42%
Research about the positive impacts of education pathways on individuals	41%
Practical tools for hiring from education pathways like templates, tools, and action plans	39%
Research about the positive impacts of education pathways on communities and society	38%
Data about business outcomes from businesses who hired from education pathways, such as retention rates or return on investments	31%
Standard quality indicators or other formal stamps of approval for trusted sources	25%
None of the above	4%
Other, please specify	1%

Fast Track, Deep Impact

Young learners see pathways as a practical option, but those who have completed pathways programs experience deep personal growth—gaining confidence, clarity, and purpose. With just a little information, those who have not completed a program quickly begin to believe in pathways programs and to view them as transformational, not just transactional.

Why It Works

Young learners are often drawn to nondegree pathways for practical reasons—they're faster, more affordable, and focused on real-world outcomes. But what's less visible from the outside is how personally transformative these programs can be. What begins as a practical decision often becomes a personal turning point.

Learners who complete pathways programs report not only gaining technical skills but also building confidence, communication abilities, and a stronger sense of self. They feel more secure, more prepared, and more competitive in the job market. These emotional benefits are often visible—learners who have completed pathways carry themselves with poise and purpose, and are seen as more mature and focused than peers who may have followed a traditional college path.

It's not that learners who haven't completed a nondegree pathways program don't believe these benefits are real; it's that they're not top of mind. When these deeper benefits are shared, it's not a big leap for learners to recognize the transformation and understand the value. It's this emotional impact—beyond the speed or affordability of these programs—that can shift a pathways program from “just an option” to “the right choice.”

In Their Own Words

“ I feel like these programs are more hands-on and for **fast-track** learners ... instead of going to a four-year college and getting the same experience in a longer time period. —Young Adult, No Postsecondary Experience

“ It provides **a focused, accessible way** to gain valuable skills and credentials that can significantly improve your job prospects, career advancement opportunities, and overall earning potential, even without a full degree. —Young Adult, Completed Pathways Program

“ I view them as **stepping stones**. Having a small experience helped build my confidence and gave me something to put on my resume. The next experience was more competitive and more related to what I wanted to do. By the time I applied for full-time positions, I had more experience than just classes, which helped **set me apart from other applicants** for my current job and taught me stuff along the way. —Young Adult, Completed Pathways Program

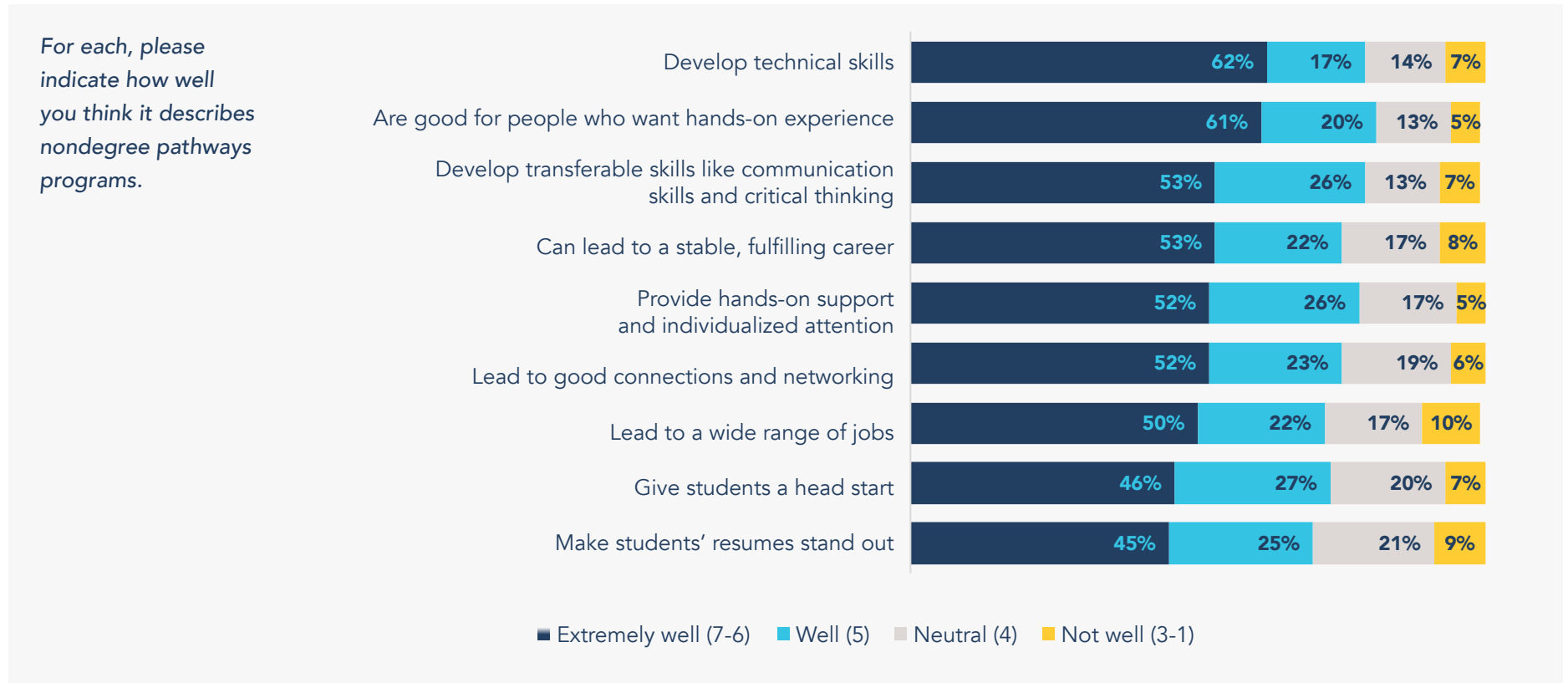
“ Trade school [gave me] an **overwhelming amount of support and a huge community**. The teachers that taught me [made me feel that] it’s doable. It is just **very reassuring** and makes me **feel confident** in my vision and my dream. —Young Adult, Completed Pathways Program

“ Because I think that in many cases, college degrees are unnecessary, and quite frankly overrated. **Someone who began developing skills right out of high school might have more of a proven track record** than someone who spent four years in school learning things that might be unnecessary for the job. —Hiring Manager

“ We have found that many **college graduates are less motivated to perform well** than [the] non-college educated. —Hiring Manager

Data

The top-of-mind benefits that learners most readily associate with pathways are more practical, including developing technical skills and getting hands-on experience. Yet, young learners still find transformative benefits—developing soft skills, getting good connections, and getting a head start—very believable.



Buildable Path to College and Career

Without a clear understanding of the types of programs available and the careers they can lead to, young learners may feel either locked into college or lost regarding their future. Showing them that pathways are flexible, buildable routes to a wide variety of real careers helps them view nondegree pathways as a smart and relevant choice for any learner looking to jumpstart their career.

Why It Works

When young learners hesitate about nondegree pathways, they typically fall into one of two mindsets; they're either determined to go to college and don't see pathways as part of that journey, or they feel overwhelmed and uncertain about where to start. In both cases, there's limited awareness of the types of pathways programs available and what they can actually lead to.

Many college-bound learners view pathways and college as an either/or decision—college as the aspirational route and pathways as a practical fallback. But in reality, learners who complete pathways often use them as a complement to college—gaining skills before, after, or alongside a degree. At the same time, learners who feel lost benefit from seeing that nondegree programs can stand on their own or be paired with other programs later in life, offering a clear, efficient route to high quality, often surprising careers—without getting locked into one career too early.

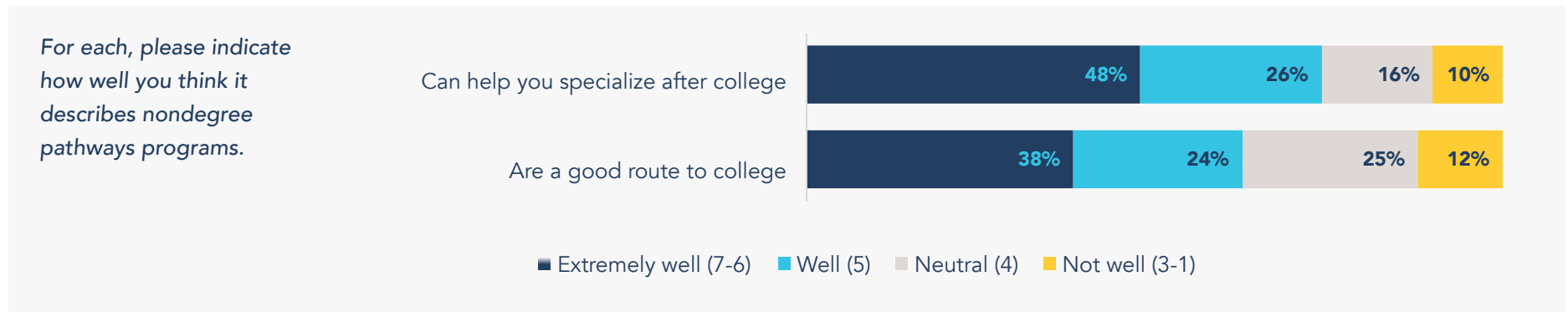
While most learners are familiar with traditional trade and vocational programs, few have a clear understanding of the full range of pathways options—or the variety of careers they can lead to. This lack of exposure creates two major knowledge gaps: (1) a disconnect between what learners think pathways offer and the real, often aspirational opportunities they unlock; and (2) a gap between what feels appealing and what feels personally accessible. This may lead learners to overlook pathways programs—not because of disinterest, but because they don't realize what's possible.

When learners are introduced to the breadth of careers accessible through pathways, their interest increases. But curiosity alone isn't enough; they need help taking the next step. Clear, actionable guidance, paired with tangible outcomes examples, make the path feel less overwhelming and more attainable. When learners understand exactly how to get started and where it can lead, pathways begin to feel less like a fallback and more like a smart, flexible, and buildable path to a fulfilling career.

In Their Own Words

- “ I have already **zoned in on what I want** to do with my life and **what degree I need**. —Young Adult Learner
- “ It was surprising to me. I wasn’t expecting that you wouldn’t have to go to college for all of the medical field. It’s **eye opening that there are so many more possibilities** to get those [careers]. —High School Learner
- “ I didn’t know you could get a certificate [for Paramedic]. **I thought you had to get a bachelor’s** and be in medicine or something. —Young Adult, No Postsecondary Experience
- “ I would want to know **how to get started** with education pathways and **how to get in touch with contacts** to learn more. —Young Adult Learner

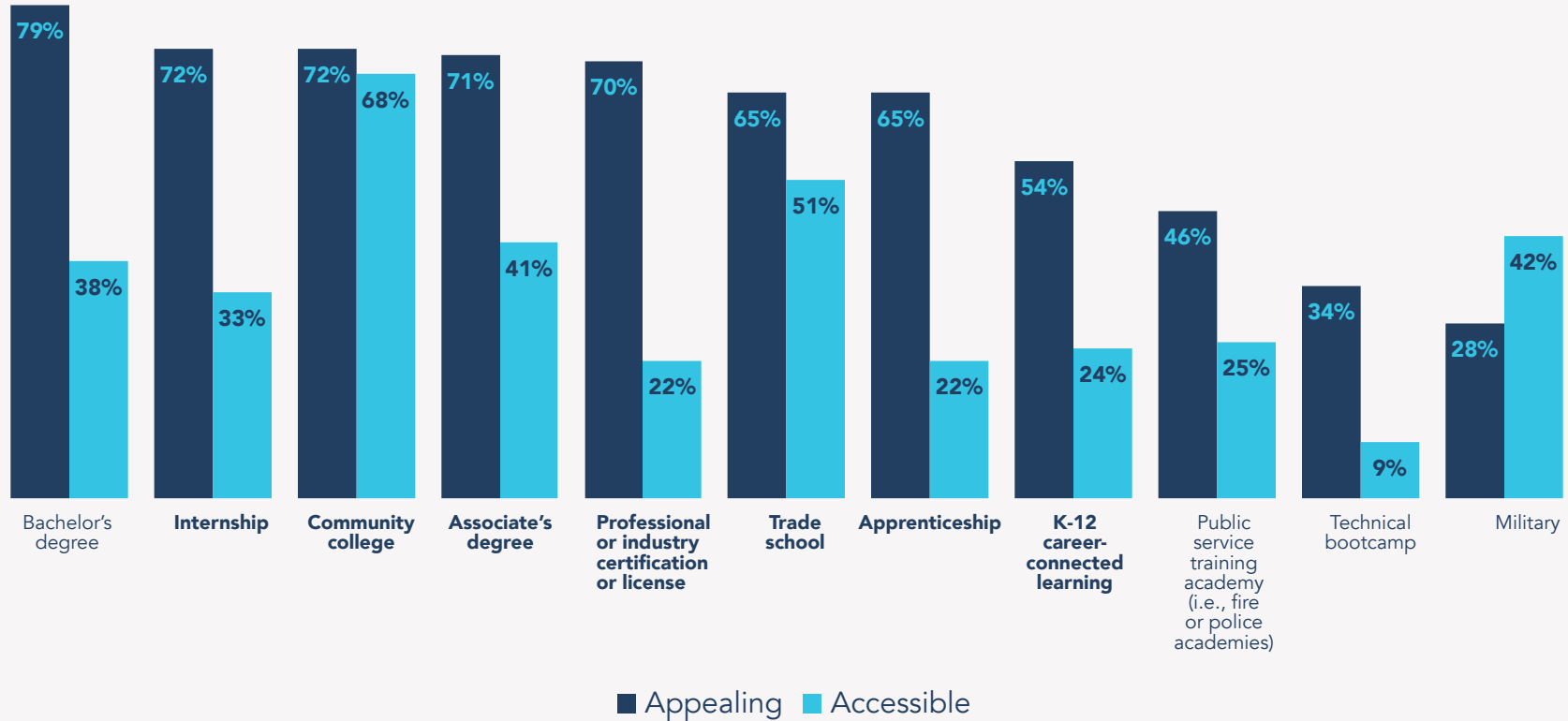
While most learners agree that these programs can help you specialize after college, the idea that they could help you get to college is less understood, with nearly 40% indicating that they don’t know or don’t believe that these programs are a good route to college.



Learners find many different pathways appealing. However, many don't understand what's easily available and accessible to them.

How **appealing** or **unappealing** do you find each of the following education options for yourself, your child, or another close family member?

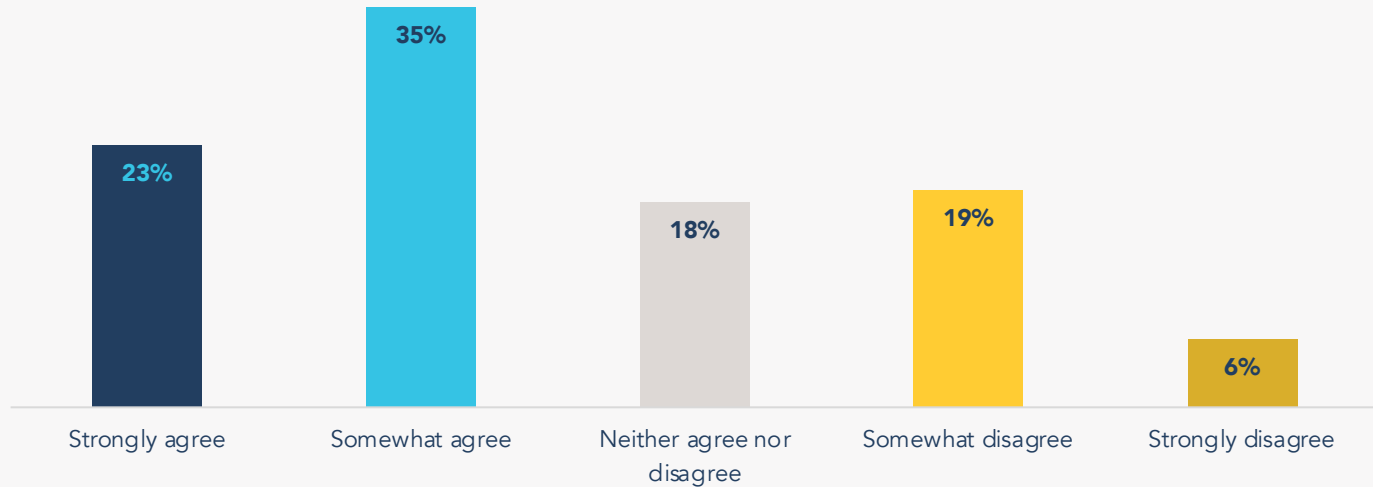
Which of the following education options do you think are **easily available and accessible** to you, your child, or another close family member?



Despite high interest, many don't know how to get started; less than a quarter agree that they know how to begin exploring their options. Providing practical details about the kinds of programs they can complete, the careers programs lead to, and detailed information about costs, program lengths, where to find information, or how to speak to someone directly can help them see a path for themselves.

Based on what you know about nondegree pathways, how much do you agree or disagree with the following statement:

I know how to get started exploring nondegree pathways programs.



“ I would want to know **how to get started** with education pathways and **how to get in touch with contacts** to learn more. —Young Adult Learner

“ I would need to know **how to find and apply** to these programs. —High School Learner

“ How much would it **cost**? Would it all be worth it in the end? —High School Learner

Audience Insights Formula—Employer

Seeking Stability, Collaboration, and Growth

After years of workforce disruption, employers are drawn to candidates who bring more than just technical ability; they want teammates who are adaptable, communicative, and committed for the long haul.

The Weight of Unspoken Bias

Although employers believe that skill-based hiring can lead to more experienced candidates and stronger teams, uncertainty about others' perceptions and a lack of clear leadership support lead many to default to hiring candidates with college degrees. Demonstrating that skill-based hiring has strategic value and has worked for others helps make the case for change.

Readiness to Act Tempered by Concerns of Risk

Employers say they're willing to do the work to incorporate skill-based hiring practices and not hire solely based on degrees, but they fear the personal risk of getting it wrong. Without clear tools to assess skills, championing skill-based hiring can feel risky.

Complement to Current Hiring Practices

Without a clear understanding of the types of programs available or the careers they can lead to, young learners may feel either locked into college or uncertain about their future. Showing them that nondegree pathways are flexible, buildable routes to a wide variety of real careers helps them see these options as a smart and relevant choice for any learners looking to jumpstart their career.

Seeking Stability, Collaboration, and Growth

After years of workforce disruption, employers are drawn to candidates who bring more than just technical ability; they want teammates who are adaptable, communicative, and committed for the long haul.

Why It Works

Employers today aren't just hiring for technical skills; they're investing in people who can grow with their company. After years of workforce disruption, high turnover, and hiring challenges, they're prioritizing long-term potential, reliability, and team fit over pedigree.

The new ideal isn't a superstar with an ego and a sterling academic record; it's the grounded, growth-oriented team player who listens well, communicates clearly, shows up consistently, and contributes to a culture of collaboration. Employers are drawn to candidates who are adaptable, coachable, and values aligned—people who not only want to succeed themselves but also want to help others grow.

Soft skills like communication, problem solving, a strong work ethic, and a solutions-oriented mindset are not a “nice to have”—they're essential indicators of long-term success. Employers aspire to build workplaces that are not only high performing but also human centered, driven by trust, growth, and shared success.

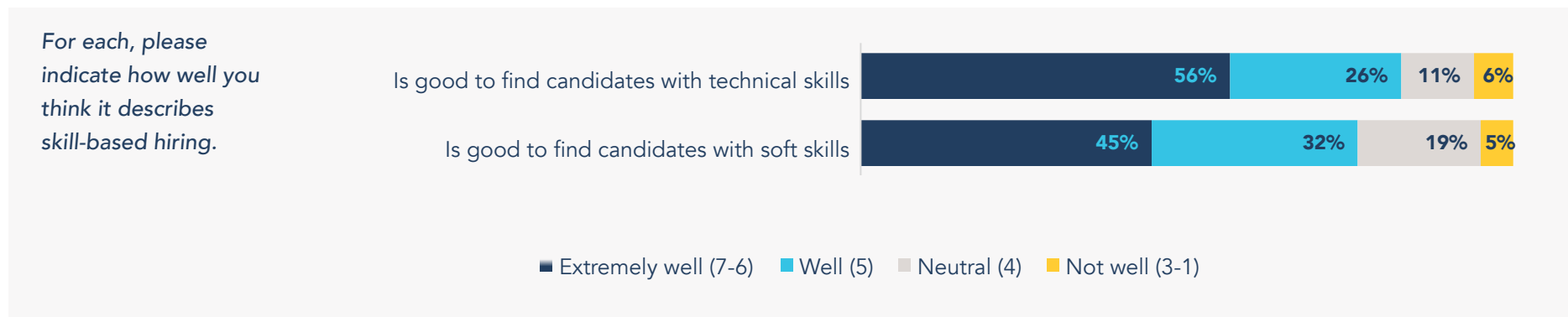
In Their Own Words

- “ “ *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**.*
- “ “ *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.*
- “ “ ***The ability to communicate** the most complex issues in the simplest terms is important.*
- “ “ *People who are able to have an **open mind, be patient, and work well under pressure**.*
- “ “ *A good team member is someone who **works hard and has integrity**.*

Most hiring managers say that finding employees with long-term growth potential is important.



More than 75% of hiring managers think skill-based hiring is good for finding candidates with technical skills and soft skills alike.



The Weight of Unspoken Bias

Although employers believe skill-based hiring can lead to experienced candidates and stronger teams, uncertainty about others' perceptions and a lack of clear leadership support lead many to default to hiring candidates with college degrees. Demonstrating that skill-based hiring has strategic value and has worked for others helps make the case for change.

Why It Works

Employers often express support for skill-based hiring, believing that skills and lived experience matter more than degrees. They see it as a way to build a stronger, more well-rounded workforce with diverse skills and perspectives. But in practice, many still default to traditional degree requirements—not out of habit, but because of unspoken pressure to follow the norm.

Even when hiring managers personally value demonstrated skills, uncertainty about how others—especially clients and leadership—will perceive non-degree hires creates hesitation. Without clear top-down support or reassurance that clients are aligned, hiring based on solely on skills feels risky. In this environment, bias doesn't have to be loud to be powerful—it operates quietly, reinforcing the status quo.

Many employers see strong potential in candidates who do not have degrees. But belief alone doesn't drive change—**social proof does**. Real-world examples from companies that have successfully implemented skill-based hiring—especially those that demonstrate measurable business benefits such as improved return on investment and faster access to quality candidates—build confidence and make the shift feel practical rather than risky.

To accelerate adoption, employers need more than permission. They need support: clear messaging, practical tools, leadership buy-in, and peer success stories that position skill-based hiring not just as the right thing to do, but also as a smart and strategic business move.

In Their Own Words

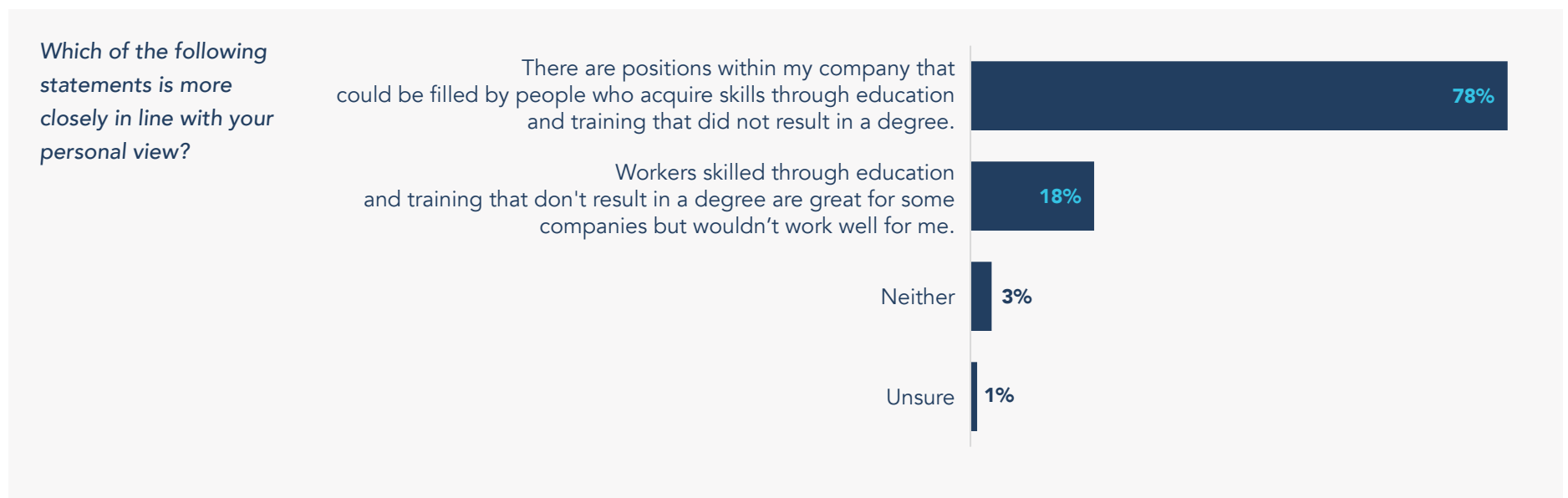
“ “ *There are areas where skill-based training would be really helpful. Because there are challenges with finding skilled people; **they can have the degree, but they don't have the skills** or the capacity to learn the skills sometimes.*

“ “ *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 [I'm] selling this person to a client.*

“ “ *I get a lot of pushback from other leaders in my industry, because I'm in the university system, they're so big on [college] credentials and where individuals went to school.*

“ “ *[This is a] business case. Increasing employee retention rates or longevity of employees, or company revenues, I mean, all of those things are business cases for me. Those would be impressive.*

Four in five hiring managers agree that skill-based hiring could be good for their company.



Around 40% of hiring managers believe that skill-based hiring will be questioned by clients, leadership, or other people in the company; another quarter are uncertain.

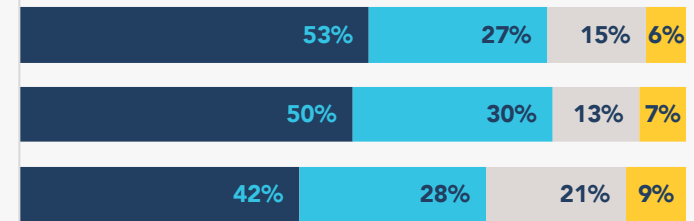


In order to hire a candidate without a degree, hiring managers want to know the business case—they can fill positions faster, save time and money, and that others have found success in skill-based hiring as well.

How important is each of the following reasons to adopt skill-based hiring?

Use a scale from 1 to 7, where “7” means “Very important,” “1” means “Very unimportant,” and “4” means you feel completely neutral.

Your company would fill positions faster
Your company would save time and costs that would otherwise be spent training people for these skills
You heard from leaders of other companies who had success with skill-based hiring



■ Very important (7-6) ■ Important (5) ■ Neutral (4) ■ Unimportant (3-1)

Readiness to Act Tempered by Concerns of Risk

Employers say they're willing to do the work to move beyond degrees, but they fear the personal risk of getting it wrong. Without clear tools to assess skills, championing this change can feel risky.

Why It Works

Hiring managers increasingly believe in skill-based hiring. They're ready to move beyond degrees as a default and to advocate for new ways of evaluating talent.

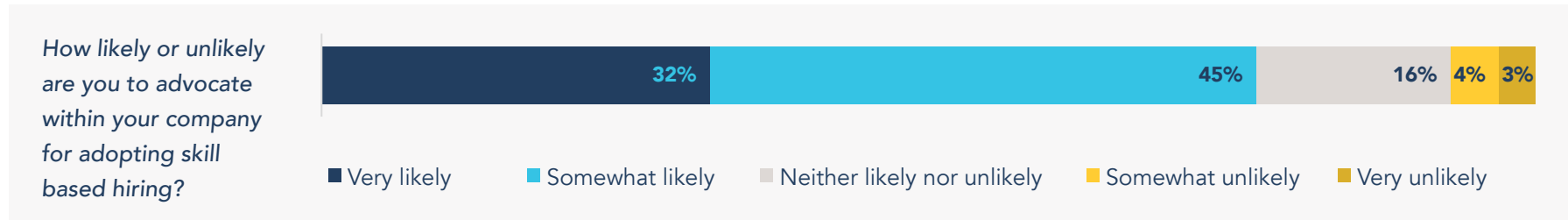
However, without the familiar signal of a college degree, some feel uncertain about how to assess whether a candidate truly has the right skills or experience. Hiring someone without a degree feels riskier—not just for the company, but also for the hiring manager personally. A bad hire could reflect poorly on their judgment, making the stakes feel even higher. There's a growing desire to lead the way in skill-based hiring, but it's tempered by the fear of getting it wrong without the traditional guardrails.

Tangible tools and clear frameworks for evaluating skills can help ease that pressure, giving hiring managers the confidence to follow through on what they already believe is the right direction.

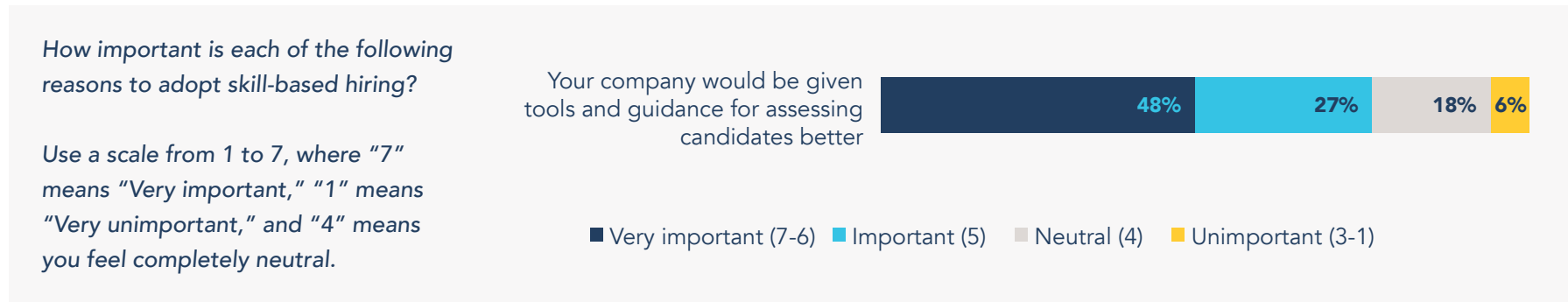
In Their Own Words

- “ “ *I would advocate [for skill-based hiring] because the cost of getting a higher education outweighs the benefits in today's economy. I still owe student loan debt.*
- “ “ *I think the biggest justification not to move in that direction unfortunately, and it doesn't stick, is that's just the way we've always done things.*
- “ “ *You know, there's an old saying, nobody ever got fired for buying IBM.*
- “ “ *How would we be able to know that this will get us qualified candidates and successful employees down the road? **Because if it doesn't, the risk is on me as the organization,** the risk is not necessarily as much on the provider of a skill-based approach.*

More than 75% of hiring managers are willing to advocate internally for adopting skill-based hiring.



To take the next step, most hiring managers must have clear tools to assess candidates.



Complement to Current Hiring Practices

Employers often view skill-based hiring in extremes—that is, as only applicable for low-skill roles or impossible for high-credential jobs. Reframing it as a flexible and additive approach for many types of jobs helps them understand that strong teams are built by expanding, not narrowing, the pool of promising candidates.

Why It Works

Views that limit skill-based hiring to extremes—as only suited for low-skill roles such as groundskeeping or administrative support or as incompatible with high-credential professions such as doctors or engineers—leave many employers struggling to fully embrace it. This all-or-nothing mindset creates unnecessary resistance and limits adoption.

In reality, skill-based hiring is already occurring in many companies, but it isn't always labeled as such. Hiring managers routinely look for experienced candidates, regardless of where or how they developed their skills.

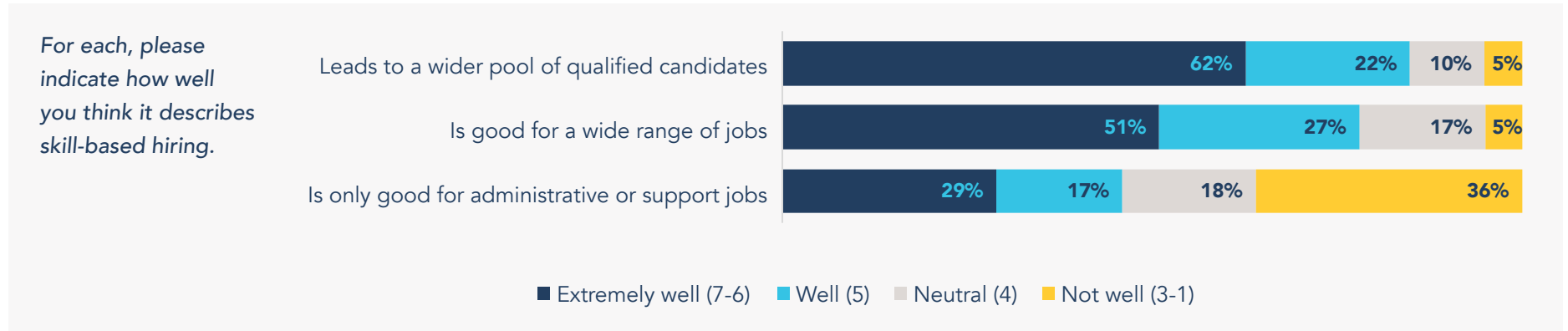
Framing skill-based hiring as a flexible, additive approach rather than as a replacement for college degrees helps employers see its potential across a wide range of roles, especially those that fall between entry-level and highly specialized professions. It's not about choosing between degrees and skills; it's about expanding the lens through which talent is recognized and hired.

Conversations about skill-based hiring help employers start identifying where it already exists within their organization and where it could be scaled. When positioned as a practical solution to workforce challenges—not as a radical overhaul—employers become more receptive. Skill-based hiring isn't viewed as a silver bullet, but rather as a valuable, scalable strategy to build stronger, more diverse teams. Importantly, it should not be framed in opposition to degree-based hiring; doing so can trigger unnecessary defensiveness and resistance among hiring managers.

In Their Own Words

- “ Because we are hiring people to do certain sorts of trade skills. Like we have **custodians, painters, carpenters, electricians**. I mean, they don't need an undergraduate degree.
- “ Suppose you wake up in the morning feeling terrible and you rush to the hospital, **would you want to have a diagnosis by someone who didn't go to medical school?**
- “ They're not the same. **It's going to depend on which job**. If it's an accountant, they need the proper certifications, education, and on-the-job experience. If it's someone more clerical, I do not require a college degree.
- “ When we initially started talking, I was thinking specifically of positions like the police department, facilities management [like a] water treatment plant, and those types of positions that already require certifications and apprenticeships. But the more we started talking about it, **I could see how we could expand it to some other areas** on my campus. I wouldn't see that we could expand it broadly, but there are pockets on campus that I think that we could do it.
- “ 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 pathways programs.
- “ In addition to the traditional college degree, finding nontraditional candidates who have developed these skills in other capacities, apprenticeships, internships, on-the-job learning, et cetera, needs to be our next step. **“Both/and” is doable.**

After gathering a bit of information about skill-based hiring, most believe it helps identify a wide pool of candidates for a variety of jobs, but nearly half still think it may only be suitable for administrative or support jobs.





Aspirational Narrative

Introduction to the Narrative Framework

Our message is organized in a simple but powerful Narrative Framework, based on multicultural studies, motivational psychology, and other fields of research. This framework reflects a common way that people across many cultures think about the world and communicate their ideas.

It creates a complete, coherent narrative that motivates people to support this work by putting our audience in the role of the protagonist, so they “see themselves” reflected (**people**). The **goals** are their aspirations, and the **problems** are challenges or needs they face in realizing those aspirations. The **solutions** are the things we do to meet those needs and help people achieve their goals. The **call to action** creates a sense of urgency and tells people what actions they can take.



Engaging Learners



Narrative Framework for Engaging Learners



People: Ambitious People Ready for the Next Step

Millions of **hardworking, ambitious** people are **ready to build** careers they can be proud of.



Goal: A Career That Fits—and a Future They Can Count On

People want jobs that match their **interests**, meet **real-world needs**, and bring **stability** to their lives and families.



Problem: The Path is Powerful—If You Know It's There

People understand the value of education and training, but they don't always see how it connects to the life they want. Many of them don't know about all the **options available**, or how much the **right program** can **change their future**.



Solution: Career Education That Works—For Life

Career education and training programs can help. These **fast, affordable** options open doors in **tech, health care, skilled trades, the arts, and more**. They offer **hands-on experience, job-ready skills**, and **respected credentials** at any stage of life. These programs fit learners' lives, build their confidence, and connect them to strong, lasting careers.



Call to Action: Ready for What's Next? This Is Where You Start

Fast, flexible training helps people take the next step with clarity and confidence.

Unique Value Proposition: Career Education and Training Programs

Career education and training opens the door to opportunity—fast.

These flexible, affordable programs offer hands-on experience, job-ready skills, and credentials that count. Whether someone is just starting out or looking to level up, career training helps them gain confidence, build momentum, and connect to meaningful careers in fields like tech, health care, the arts, the skilled trades, and more. It's not just a practical step, it's a personal turning point.

One-Minute Message

The One-Minute Message is a concise, compelling version of your Narrative Framework that can be delivered in about 60 seconds. It's designed to grab attention, build relevance, and spark interest—whether you're speaking with a learner, an employer, a partner, or a policymaker about education and training programs or skill-based hiring.

It's not a script; it's a foundation. Use it to guide conversations, shape presentations, or align your materials. Whether you're engaging stakeholders, reaching out to prospective learners, or making the case to employers, this message helps you communicate in a way that's focused, relevant, and motivating.

One-Minute Message for Engaging Learners

Millions of hardworking, ambitious people are ready to build careers they can be proud of. They want jobs that match their interests, meet real-world needs, and bring stability to their lives and families.

They understand the value of education and training but they don't always see how it connects to the life they want. Many learners don't know about all the options available, or how much the right program can change their future.

Career education and training programs can help. These fast, affordable options open doors in tech, health care, skilled trades, the arts, and more. They offer hands-on experience, job-ready skills, and respected credentials at any stage of life. These programs fit learners' lives, build their confidence, and connect them to strong, lasting careers.

Fast, flexible training helps people take the next step with clarity and confidence.

One-Minute Message, Annotated

LEARNERS

Millions of hardworking, ambitious people are ready to build careers they can be proud of. They want jobs that match their interests, meet real-world needs, and bring stability to their lives and families.

They understand the value of education and training but they don't always see how it connects to the life they want. Many learners don't know about all the options available, or how much the right program can change their future.

Career education and training programs can help. These fast, affordable options open doors in tech, health care, skilled trades, the arts, and more. They offer hands-on experience, job-ready skills, and respected credentials at any stage of life. These programs fit learners' lives, build their confidence, and connect them to strong, lasting careers.

Fast, flexible training helps people take the next step with clarity and confidence.



People:
**People Ready for
the Next Step**



Goal:
**A Career That Fits—and a
Future They Can Count On**



Problem:
**The Path is Powerful—If
You Know It's There**



Solution:
**Career Education That
Works—For Life**





Call to Action:
**Ready for What's Next?
This Is Where You Start**



Winning Words

Winning Words are crafted to evoke emotional responses and to be easily understood, allowing people to easily retain and repeat them. You can use them in almost any context to tell the story of our work.

Winning Words—Learners

NARRATIVE FRAMEWORK	SAY THIS	NOT THAT	WHY IT WORKS
 <p>People: People Ready for the Next Step</p>	<p>Ambitious</p> <p>Hardworking</p> <p>Ready to build/for the next step</p>	<p>Confused</p> <p>Indecisive</p> <p>Struggling</p> <p>At-risk</p> <p>Nontraditional students</p> <p>Unmotivated</p>	<p>This language highlights learners’ drive, not their deficits. It centers their ambition, momentum, and potential—creating respect and resonance.</p> <p>Avoid terms that frame people by what they lack or imply they’re exceptions to a norm.</p>
 <p>Goal: A Career That Fits—and a Future They Can Count On</p>	<p>Career</p> <p>Fits</p> <p>Interest</p> <p>Real-world needs</p> <p>Stability</p> <p>Families</p> <p>Future they can count on</p>	<p>Alternative path</p> <p>Entry-level work</p> <p>Low-wage work</p>	<p>Learners want purpose and security—not just any job, but a career that feels right and lasts. These words validate their aspirations.</p> <p>Avoid language that feels limiting, transactional, or suggests compromise.</p>

NARRATIVE FRAMEWORK	SAY THIS	NOT THAT	WHY IT WORKS
 <p>Problem: The Path is Powerful—If You Know It's There</p>	<p>Path is powerful</p> <p>If you know it's there</p> <p>Can't see the connection</p> <p>Options</p> <p>Available</p> <p>Right program</p> <p>Change their future</p>	<p>Lack information</p> <p>Wrong choice</p> <p>Off-track</p>	<p>This framing respects learners' decision-making and acknowledges systemic gaps. It shines a light on what's missing, not what's wrong with the individual.</p> <p>Avoid condescending or blame-oriented phrasing.</p>
 <p>Solution: Career Education That Works—For Life</p>	<p>Career education and training programs</p> <p>Works for life</p> <p>Fast</p> <p>Affordable</p> <p>Tech</p> <p>Health care</p> <p>Skilled trades</p> <p>Arts</p> <p>Hands-on experience</p> <p>Job-ready skills</p> <p>Respected</p>	<p>Alternative to college</p> <p>Second chance programs</p> <p>Basic skills</p> <p>Low-cost education</p>	<p>This language positions career education as a smart, respected option that delivers real value. It reflects the diversity of fields and outcomes while affirming learners' confidence and capability.</p>

NARRATIVE FRAMEWORK	SAY THIS	NOT THAT	WHY IT WORKS
 <p>Solution: Career Education That Works—For Life</p>	<p>Credentials Confidence</p> <p>Connect</p> <p>Lasting</p>	<p>“For people who aren’t college material”</p>	<p>Avoid terms that sound like lesser substitutes or reinforce stigma.</p>
 <p>Call to Action: Ready for What’s Next? This Is Where You Start</p>	<p>Ready</p> <p>What’s next</p> <p>Fast</p> <p>Flexible</p> <p>Start</p>	<p>It’s now or never</p> <p>Stop wasting time</p> <p>Fix your future</p>	<p>This language emphasizes readiness and momentum, meeting learners where they are.</p> <p>Avoid shame-based or urgency-over-substance messages that can feel judgmental or dismissive.</p>

Strategic Stories

A Strategic Story is an example drawn from real people, programs, or workplaces that brings the Narrative Framework to life. It puts a human face on the message, illustrating key themes—such as ambition, impact, or transformation—in ways that facts alone can't.

Use the Narrative Framework to craft Strategic Stories:

Learners' Strategic Stories Framework



Ambitious People Ready for the Next Step

Paint a picture of who the learner is and what their interests are—in a relatable, vivid way



A Career That Fits—And a Future That Lasts

Show how they want not just jobs, but meaningful lives and stable futures



The Path is Powerful—If You Know It's There

Capture the uncertainty they feel when opportunities aren't visible or well understood. What hesitations did they have?



Education That Works—For Life

Share the impact: How education and training programs opened doors, fit into their lives, and gave them skills and confidence.



Ready for What's Next? This is Where You Start

Show learners taking the first step—choosing a path that matches their interests and sets them up for success

Strategic Story: Learner

Jordan's Path to a Hands-On Career



Jordan, 17, always loved working with his hands. Growing up in Milwaukee, he spent weekends fixing bikes and helping his uncle with home repairs. He knew he wanted a career where he could build things, but he wasn't sure how to get started, or if there was even a clear path for someone like him.

At school, the pressure to go to college was everywhere and that was all many of his classmates were planning. Jordan started to wonder—would he have real career options without a degree?

He set up a meeting with his school counselor to see what they had to say. His counselor introduced him to a pre-apprenticeship program in construction and skilled trades. At first, he hesitated.

He worried about whether the program would actually lead to a job. But after meeting program graduates and seeing how they had built successful careers, he decided to take a chance.

In his program, Jordan helped frame a house and worked directly with the project manager to lay out an electrical plan. Seeing it all come together, he was hooked! By graduation, Jordan had a direct path into a paid apprenticeship, putting him on track for a well-paying, in-demand career.

Now, he's learning from experienced electricians and earning while he trains. Looking back, he's grateful that his school counselor connected him with a program that provided firsthand, real-world experience, giving him a head start on his future goals. For Jordan, this isn't just a job—it's the first step toward owning his own business one day.

Proof Points

The statements below provide compelling evidence for our audiences about the real-world benefits and effectiveness of career education and training programs. They reinforce why these approaches work, build confidence in the outcomes, and help move people from awareness to action. Unless otherwise noted, data is from the 2024 Hattaway Communications survey.

For Learners

- **Most Hiring Managers Are Highly Supportive of Education and Training Programs**
90% of hiring managers have a positive view of career education programs.
- **Employers Are Actively Looking for Skilled Talent**
82% of hiring managers would be likely to adopt a skills-based hiring approach if their companies were to remove degree requirements from their job listings.
- **Career Pathways Build Real Satisfaction and Success**
84% of learners who completed a nondegree education or training program are satisfied. Satisfaction rises to 92% for those who earn a certification or credential.
- **Americans Respect and Recommend Education Pathways**
85% of Americans view education pathways favorably, and 86% would recommend certifications or apprenticeships to others close to them.

Content Examples

The One-Minute Message can be the basis to create all kinds of content; sample posts for you to use as models are outlined in the following section.

Facebook Post

Pathways
Today 10:00

"I used to fix bikes and help my uncle with repairs on the weekends. I liked building things—but I didn't think it could be a real career. College wasn't the right fit, and I didn't know what my options were.

Then my school counselor told me about a pre-apprenticeship in the skilled trades. I took a chance—and now I'm earning while I train as an electrician. I'm on my way to a career I'm proud of, and someday, I want to run my own business."

Jordan, 18 | Milwaukee, WI

Programs like Jordan's help learners gain real-world skills, earn respected credentials, and build lasting careers—without college being the only option.

#CareerTraining #PathwaysThatWork
#FutureReady #SkilledTrades #Apprenticeship



You and 99 others 100 Comments

Like Comment

LinkedIn Post

Pathways
2 days · 🌐

Not sure if college is for you? You're not alone.

But there are exciting opportunities available that help you build the life you want. Today's career education and training programs offer fast, flexible options to build real skills in health care, tech, the arts, and more.

Whether you're getting started or starting over, you can find a path that works for your life—and leads to a career you're proud of.

Because you deserve a future you can count on. Find out more at (insert link to your program)

#CareerEducation #NextStep #TrainingThatWorks
#PathwaysThatPayOff



120k

Recommend Comment Share Send

Website or Brochure Boilerplate

Our programs are built for people who are ready to take the next step—whether you're just out of high school or looking to jumpstart your career.

With fast, affordable training that leads to respected credentials, you'll gain the skills and confidence to connect with meaningful, lasting work in growing fields like tech, health care, skilled trades, and more.

SMS / Text Message Outreach



PATHWAYS

9m ago

Hey [First Name], ready for a job that fits your life?
Our career training programs help you build skills for a job you'll be proud of—fast.

Click here to learn more → [link]

Messaging Quick Checks

Does Your Messaging Move Learners to Action?

When you're talking to learners, every word counts. The right message doesn't just inform—it inspires confidence, shows what's possible, and helps people take the next step toward a career they're proud of.

When learners see real options that fit their lives, they lean in.

Before you share your materials, use this checklist to make sure you're putting your best foot forward and help move learners from interest to action:

LEARNER MESSAGING CHECKLIST

- **Show real choices, not just one path**
Highlight a variety of programs and careers—health care, tech, skilled trades, and more—that connect to different skills, passions, and goals.
- **Be as specific as possible**
Names of programs, types of credentials, examples of career paths—specifics make the future feel real and reachable.
- **Link programs to real-world outcomes**
Don't just talk about the training. Show what it leads to: real skills, respected credentials, and good jobs.
- **Talk about time, cost, and flexibility upfront**
Reinforce that these programs are fast, affordable, and designed to fit real lives—not just full-time students, but people balancing work, family, and responsibilities.
- **Help learners see themselves**
Use relatable success stories, inclusive language, and real examples to show learners that pathways aren't just for "someone else"—they're for people like them.
- **Tell success stories that feel personal and possible**
Share stories of learners who have completed the program and are building careers they're proud of. Make the path feel personal, credible, and achievable.
- **End with a clear, confident call to action**
Make it easy for learners to take action. Include direct guidance on how to learn more, sign up, or get support, and show that help is available at every step.

Engaging Employers



Narrative Framework for Engaging Employers



People: Hiring Managers Looking for Proven Performers

Hiring managers know that building strong teams starts with finding the right people. They take pride in **spotting talent, making smart choices,** and **helping** their **teams succeed.**



Goal: Build Strong, Reliable Teams That Grow with the Company

Hiring managers want teams that **work well together, trust each other,** and **grow stronger over time.**



Problem: Good Candidates Passed Over—Key Jobs Stay Empty

But today's hiring often focuses on **formal credentials,** like a college degree, because they are easier to compare than **skills** and **experience.** Because of this, **strong candidates can be missed,** and **important jobs stay open longer** than they should.



Solution: Skill-Based Hiring Helps Employers Find Great Talent, Faster

Skill-based hiring offers **another way.** It emphasizes what truly drives success: a person's experience, **abilities,** and **motivation,** which all translate into **job-ready skills.** And **it works.** Employers across the country are using skill-based hiring and are finding candidates who can **contribute** from day one.



Call to Action: The Right Skills—The Right Hire

By focusing on skills and experience—**not education alone**—companies can find more **qualified people** and create teams built for **long-term success.**

Unique Value Proposition: Skill-Based Hiring

Skill-based hiring helps employers find strong candidates, faster.

By focusing on what people can do, not just where they've been, employers uncover talent with proven skills, drive, and the ability to grow. Many are already using elements of this approach—reviewing portfolios, assessing real-world experience, or considering certifications. Skill-based hiring brings clarity and structure to these instincts, helping employers fill roles faster, improve retention, and build stronger teams with confidence.

One-Minute Message for Employers

Hiring managers know that building strong teams starts with finding the right people. They take pride in spotting talent, making smart choices, and helping their teams succeed.

They want teams that work well together, trust each other, and grow stronger over time.

But today's hiring often focuses on formal credentials, like a college degree, because they are easier to compare than skills and experience. Because of this, strong candidates can be missed, and important jobs stay open longer than they should.

Skill-based hiring offers another way. It emphasizes what truly drives success: a person's experience, abilities, and motivation, which all translate into job-ready skills.

And it works. Employers across the country are using skill-based hiring to make better decisions and build stronger, more reliable teams.

By focusing on skills and experience—not education alone—companies can find more qualified people and create teams built for long-term success.

One-Minute Message, Annotated

Employers

Hiring managers know that building strong teams starts with finding the right people. They take pride in spotting talent, making smart choices, and helping their teams succeed.

They want teams that work well together, trust each other, and grow stronger over time.

But today's hiring often focuses on formal credentials, like a college degree, because they are easier to compare than skills and experience. Because of this, strong candidates can be missed, and important jobs stay open longer than they should.

Skill-based hiring offers another way. It emphasizes what truly drives success: a person's experience, abilities, and motivation, which all translate into job-ready skills.

And it works. Employers across the country are using skill-based hiring to make better decisions and build stronger, more reliable teams.

By focusing on skills and experience—not education alone—companies can find more qualified people and create teams built for long-term success.



People:
**Hiring Managers Looking
for Proven Performers**



Goal:
**Build Strong, Reliable
Teams That Grow
With the Company**



Problem:
**Good Candidates
Passed Over—Key
Jobs Stay Empty**





Solution:
**Skill-Based Hiring Helps
Employers Find Great
Talent, Faster**



Call to Action:
**The Right Skills—The
Right Hire**

Winning Words — Employers

NARRATIVE FRAMEWORK	SAY THIS	NOT THAT	WHY IT WORKS
 <p>People: Hiring Managers Looking for Proven Performers</p>	<p>Hiring managers</p> <p>Spotting talent</p> <p>Making smart choices</p> <p>Helping their teams succeed</p> <p>Proven performer</p>	<p>Rigid</p> <p>Unaware or out of touch</p> <p>Stuck in old ways</p>	<p>This language shows respect for the hiring managers’ role, instincts, and pride in building strong teams.</p> <p>Avoid language that implies blame or frames them as part of the problem.</p>
 <p>Goal: Build Strong, Reliable Teams That Grow With the Company</p>	<p>Build</p> <p>Reliable</p> <p>Teams that work well together</p> <p>Trust each other</p> <p>Grow stronger over time</p>	<p>Reduce turnover at any cost</p> <p>Fill jobs</p>	<p>This language focuses on relationships, trust, and team growth—what hiring managers care about most.</p> <p>Avoid transactional, cold terms that treat people as interchangeable or disposable.</p>
 <p>Problem: Good Candidates Passed Over—Key Jobs Stay Empty</p>	<p>Good candidates</p> <p>Passed over</p> <p>Key jobs empty</p> <p>Missed opportunities</p> <p>Formal credentials</p> <p>Skills</p> <p>Experience</p> <p>Important jobs</p> <p>Stay open longer</p>	<p>Lazy screeners</p> <p>Broken hiring system</p> <p>Failure</p> <p>Bias</p> <p>Outdated hiring practices</p>	<p>This framing names the issue without blaming the people involved. It draws attention to the consequences—missed talent, unfilled roles—while offering a constructive path forward.</p> <p>Avoid language that vilifies or sounds accusatory.</p>

NARRATIVE FRAMEWORK	SAY THIS	NOT THAT	WHY IT WORKS
 <p>Solution: Skill-Based Hiring Helps Employers Find Great Talent, Faster</p>	<p>Skills-based hiring</p> <p>Helps</p> <p>Employers</p> <p>Find great talent</p> <p>Faster</p> <p>Another way</p> <p>Abilities</p> <p>Motivations</p> <p>Job-ready skills</p> <p>It works</p> <p>Contribute from day one</p>	<p>Overhaul</p> <p>Risky</p> <p>Stop hiring people with degrees</p> <p>Replace</p>	<p>This language emphasizes what matters most to hiring managers: performance, readiness, and real value.</p> <p>Avoid language that feels extreme, combative, or anti-institutional.</p>
 <p>Call to Action: The Right Skills—The Right Hire</p>	<p>Right skills</p> <p>Right hire</p> <p>More qualified people</p> <p>Long-term success</p>	<p>Hire differently or fall behind</p> <p>Give people a chance</p> <p>Settle</p>	<p>This call to action reinforces what hiring managers want: qualified people who will succeed on the job. It affirms that skills-based hiring expands, not lowers, standards.</p> <p>Avoid language that sounds dismissive of education or implies employers must choose between fairness and performance.</p>

Employers' Strategic Stories Framework



Hiring Managers Looking for Proven Performers

Show hiring managers as careful, committed leaders who are trusted to build strong teams



Build Strong, Reliable Teams That Grow with the Company

Highlight the kinds of team members and skills they're looking for in a new hire—and how they contribute to long-term company success



Good Candidates Passed Over. Key Jobs Stay Empty.

Capture the frustration of missing out on strong candidates and the the impact of unfilled jobs



Skills-Based Hiring Helps Employers Find Great Talent, Faster

Tell success stories where skills-based hiring helped them find standout employees—and the impact that's had on the bottom line



The Right Skills. The Right Hire.

Show how shifting the focus to skills unlocks better candidates, faster decisions, and strong teams ready to succeed

Strategic Story: Employers

Marcus's Hiring Challenge: Finding More Great Candidates, Faster



Marcus is a hiring manager at a growing logistics company in Atlanta. Like many in his field, he was struggling to fill critical roles fast enough. His team had always required a college degree, but fewer applicants were meeting that bar, and unfilled positions were slowing operations and raising costs.

Over coffee with a friend at another logistics firm, Marcus heard about a different approach: skills-based hiring. His friend's company had dropped unnecessary degree requirements, and the results were striking—faster hires, stronger retention, and a more diverse talent pool.

Marcus took a closer look. The data showed the following:

- **Time to hire dropped by 30%**—without the bottleneck of degree screening.
- **Retention improved**—hires with hands-on skills stayed longer.
- **Performance was strong across the board**—no drop-off between degree-holders and others.
- **The talent pool grew**—thanks to outreach to technical schools, apprenticeships, and veterans.

Marcus didn't want to throw out what worked, but he saw an opportunity to strengthen their process. With leadership's support, they piloted a skills-first approach. They rewrote job postings to focus on what the job really required and added practical assessments to evaluate candidates.

The impact was immediate. Hiring sped up. New hires ramped faster. And strong candidates who might've been overlooked were now thriving on the job.

For Marcus, this wasn't a radical shift. It was a smart addition—one that gave his company more ways to find the talent they needed to grow.

Proof Points

The statements below provide compelling evidence for our audiences about the real-world benefits and effectiveness of skill-based hiring. They reinforce why these approaches work, build confidence in the outcomes, and help move people from awareness to action. Unless otherwise noted, data are from the 2024 Hattaway Communications survey.

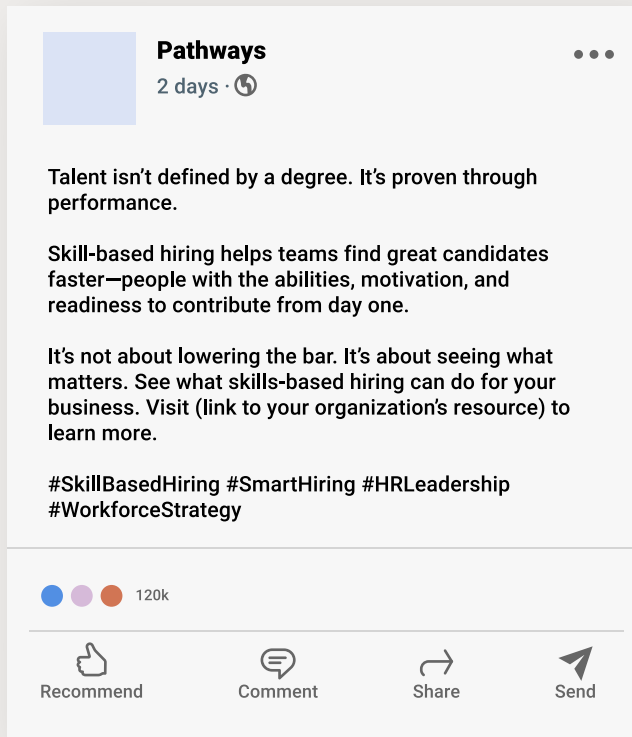
For Employers

- **Employers See Significant Benefits From Using Skill-Based Hiring**
61% say younger hires are better prepared, 57% say employees have stronger technical skills, 55% find employees more adaptable, and 54% note a larger, more qualified talent pool. (Advance CTE, Shifting the Skills Conversation)
- **Apprenticeship Programs Are a Smart Investment**
A 2020 North Carolina study found that every \$1 invested in apprenticeships generated \$1.70 in value, driven by higher productivity and worker retention. (Apprenticeship NC, 2020 Survey Report)
- **Employers Are Ready to Hire Skilled Talent**
82% of hiring managers are likely to adopt skill-based hiring if their companies were to remove degree requirements from their job listings.
- **Skills-Based Hiring: A Growing Trend to Find Top Talent**
A recent survey found that 37% of white-collar hiring managers said that their company had already adopted skills-based hiring, another 23% said they were considering making the transition, and an additional 26% said they might make the transition in the future.

Content Examples

The One-Minute Message can be the basis for creating all kinds of content; sample posts for you to use as models are outlined in the following section.

LinkedIn Post



Pathways
2 days · 🌐

Talent isn't defined by a degree. It's proven through performance.

Skill-based hiring helps teams find great candidates faster—people with the abilities, motivation, and readiness to contribute from day one.

It's not about lowering the bar. It's about seeing what matters. See what skills-based hiring can do for your business. Visit (link to your organization's resource) to learn more.

#SkillBasedHiring #SmartHiring #HRLeadership #WorkforceStrategy

120k

Recommend Comment Share Send

Twitter/X Post



Pathways @pathways **Subscribe**

“Skills First: Rethinking Hiring to Build Stronger Teams”

Join us for a live panel with hiring leaders who've adopted skill-based practices—and seen the results.

Details:
📅 Thursday, June 6
🕒 12 p.m. ET
💡 Hear how employers are:
- Finding qualified candidates faster
- Reducing turnover
- Building diverse, high-performing teams

👤 Featuring:
• Marcus A., Logistics Manager, Atlanta
• Tasha B., HR Director, Healthcare Group
• Moderated by: Pathways and Workforce Funders

#SkillBasedHiring #WorkforceDevelopment #HRLeadership #StrongerTeams



2:00 PM • Jun 01, 2025 • 200.1K Views

991 1,581 9,867 90

Job Description Boilerplate



At [Company Name], we're building a team of problem-solvers, doers, and collaborators.

We value real-world skills and experience—whether gained through education, work, or life. If you're a proven performer ready to grow with a team that trusts and supports each other, we want to hear from you.

Email Template to Employer Partners

New Message — ×

From Pathways <pathwaysemployers@pathways.com>

To  John Doe ×  Hanna Bell ×

Cc Bcc

Subject Ready to Rethink Hiring?

We know how hard it is to fill key roles with people who can contribute from day one. That's why more employers are turning to skill-based hiring—focusing on real-world abilities, not just credentials.

We'd love to help you explore what that could look like in your organization. Let's talk about how you can find great talent, faster—and build teams that grow stronger over time.

Messaging That Moves: Helping Employers Say “Yes” to Skill-Based Hiring

Does Your Messaging Move Learners to Action?

Effective communication helps employers embrace skill-based hiring with clarity and confidence.

When engaging employers, your message should do more than explain—it should validate their instincts, address their concerns, and show that skill-based hiring is a smart, achievable step they can take now.

Employers are ready for better solutions. The right message shows them it’s within reach.

Before sharing your materials, use this checklist to make sure you’re helping employers move from interest to action:

EMPLOYER MESSAGING CHECKLIST

- **Show skill-based hiring as a smart, proven strategy**
Present compelling evidence and data about the success of skill-based hiring. Link it to results employers care about: stronger hires, faster time to fill, better retention.
- **Share relatable success stories from the field**
Feature stories of real companies and hiring managers who made skill-based hiring work—especially showing the simple steps they took, how they gained buy-in internally, and the outcomes they achieved.
- **Focus on the skills—and the people—they want**
Connect skill-based hiring to the full range of qualities employers seek: dependability, growth mindset, collaboration, and communication. Make clear that it’s about building stronger teams, not just filling open roles.
- **Lower the emotional barrier to change**
Position skill-based hiring as a way to hire with more confidence, not more risk. Emphasize how focusing on real skills gives hiring managers clearer, more reliable signals when making decisions.
- **Make it feel doable—starting now**
Highlight practical, actionable steps employers can take immediately—like adjusting job descriptions, using work samples, or prioritizing certifications and real-world experience. Show that small shifts can unlock big results.
- **Offer simple tools or supports**
Whenever possible, point to practical resources: templates for skill-based job postings, sample assessments, and guides for evaluating experience. Reduce friction and make it easy to take the next step.



HATTAWAY
COMMUNICATIONS