

From skills mapping to real capability

How to connect assessment, development and recruitment to the work an organisation needs done.

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Start with work, not a list of courses

A skills inventory becomes useful when it is tied to outcomes. Begin with the work an organisation must deliver over the next twelve to twenty-four months: new services, safer operations, digital change or a stronger customer experience. Identify the critical tasks within that work, the level of performance each task requires and the evidence that someone can perform it.

The World Economic Forum's Future of Jobs Report 2025 identifies skills gaps as a major barrier to business transformation in its employer survey. The practical implication is that capability planning cannot sit apart from strategy. It must show where today's workforce can deliver, where it needs development and where specialist hiring or partners are necessary.

- Choose three to five critical workflows or roles.
- Describe observable performance at foundation, proficient and expert levels.
- Distinguish essential skills from credentials used as convenient proxies.

Assess fairly and with evidence

Self-ratings provide a starting conversation, but they are not enough to make staffing or investment decisions. Combine them with work samples, scenario-based assessment, supervisor observation and relevant performance data. Digital tools can help organise this evidence, identify patterns and make follow-up assessment more consistent. They require human review, clear criteria and an opportunity for people to challenge an inaccurate result.

A skills-first approach, examined in OECD research, asks organisations to recognise demonstrated capability alongside formal qualifications. That matters when talent comes from different career paths. It can widen access without lowering standards, provided assessments reflect the actual work and are checked for fairness.

- Use the same role criteria for internal and external candidates.
- Tell people what is measured and how results will be used.
- Review whether assessments predict real performance over time.

Build pathways that change performance

A course is an input. Capability is the ability to perform a task reliably in context. Blend short learning modules with practice, coaching, job aids and feedback from real work. Technical skills may require simulations or supervised practice. Leadership and customer-facing skills benefit from scenarios and discussion. In safety-sensitive contexts, assessment must confirm performance against operational standards.

A process-improvement lens helps here. ASQ describes DMAIC as a structured method for improving existing processes. The same discipline applies to learning: define the performance gap, measure it, understand its causes, improve the work and check whether the gains remain. If the obstacle is a broken system or unclear authority, training alone will not fix it.

- Assign a line manager or coach to each pathway.
- Schedule practice in the real work, not only a classroom.
- Measure quality and error reduction after learning, not only attendance.

Decide what to develop, hire or source

No organisation can build every specialist capability internally at once. Use the evidence from skills mapping to make explicit choices: develop people for recurring core work, recruit where capability will be needed for years, and bring in project specialists when a time-limited need requires immediate depth. Consider knowledge transfer so that outside expertise leaves the internal team stronger.

A ninety-day start can produce a useful baseline: map one critical workforce, run consistent assessments, pilot two development pathways and compare options for urgent skills gaps. Maintain the map as roles change; an annual spreadsheet is rarely enough to support an active transformation.

- 30 days: map priority work and define role standards.
- 60 days: assess a representative group and validate the results.
- 90 days: launch targeted development and close urgent gaps.

What this means for clients

Le Chene joins consultancy, people development and specialist recruitment so clients can act on the capability picture rather than simply produce one.

Further reading

World Economic Forum, Future of Jobs Report 2025

OECD, Empowering the Workforce in the Context of a Skills-First Approach (2025)

ASQ, The DMAIC Process

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