

# Rebalancing the Talent Equation

*The Case for Skills- and Aptitude-Based Hiring Practices*



## A Fresh Approach to Finding Talent

Human resource professionals and hiring managers are always focused on finding the right person for their open position—someone who brings the talents and experience needed to allow their employer to thrive. But despite HR’s best efforts, this is no easy task in the best of times, and today’s tight labor market has made the search for qualified talent even harder. The U.S. unemployment rate hit a 53-year

low in January 2023, as U.S. job openings surged past 11 million, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

This is a moment of great opportunity for HR professionals to take a fresh approach to evaluating talent and inviting those who have the skills and aptitudes to succeed, but who lack a two- or four-year degree, to join their teams. All it requires is a commitment to fresh thinking and some support from those with experience in tapping talent based on everything a person brings to their job.

## What's Driving This New Approach to Hiring

- ▶ Nearly 2 in 3 (64%) HR professionals [report](#) that finding and recruiting talent with the necessary skills will be a top priority for their organization in 2023.
- ▶ The [U.S. Department of Labor](#) puts the cost of a bad hire at up to 30% of the employee's wages for the first year. For some companies, the cost of a bad hire can [be as high as \\$240,000](#).
- ▶ Nearly half (46%) of U.S. organizations are experiencing workforce disruptions because of a shortage of available workers (according to forthcoming SHRM research).



## The Benefits of Looking Beyond the Resume

Many employers today consider only what's on an individual's resume, which represents just a small slice of their life, experiences and skill sets. Without further analysis to go beyond what's on paper, human resource professionals and hiring managers are getting a limited view, looking through a filter that reveals only certain aspects of a person.

However, the potential of an individual is more than this incomplete view. The full spectrum of a person's gifts, talents and aptitudes—which they bring into the workplace whether accounted for in hiring or not—can make workplaces better.

An individual may have skills not learned through a traditional degree path. They may have gained cognitive abilities, such as abstract thinking and deductive reasoning, that make them ideally suited for a job. We all have talents and skills that cannot be easily measured, certified or documented.



# A Framework for Whole-Person Hiring

The SHRM Foundation, the Charles Koch Foundation and additional thought partners have developed a three-part framework to help human resource professionals and hiring managers take a “whole-person” approach to their work, one that considers the unique skills and gifts individuals bring to the workplace.

**95%** of executives and HR professionals [say](#) individuals with only credentials earned outside of traditional pathways perform the same as or better than individuals with only traditional degrees.

## Skills-Based Employment Practices:

By widening the recruitment process to consider the [full set of competencies](#) that candidates bring to the job, including and beyond those ascribed to traditional degrees, HR professionals and hiring managers can spot, attract and prepare talented and qualified candidates for key open positions, then advance them along career pathways. Competencies outside of traditional degrees can include any credential, micro-credential, industry or professional certification, apprenticeship, or badging that represents one’s skill level within a particular field.

**Aptitude Assessments:** The objective of an aptitude evaluation is to assess an individual’s

innate abilities, potential for learning and problem-solving skills that are critical for success in a particular job

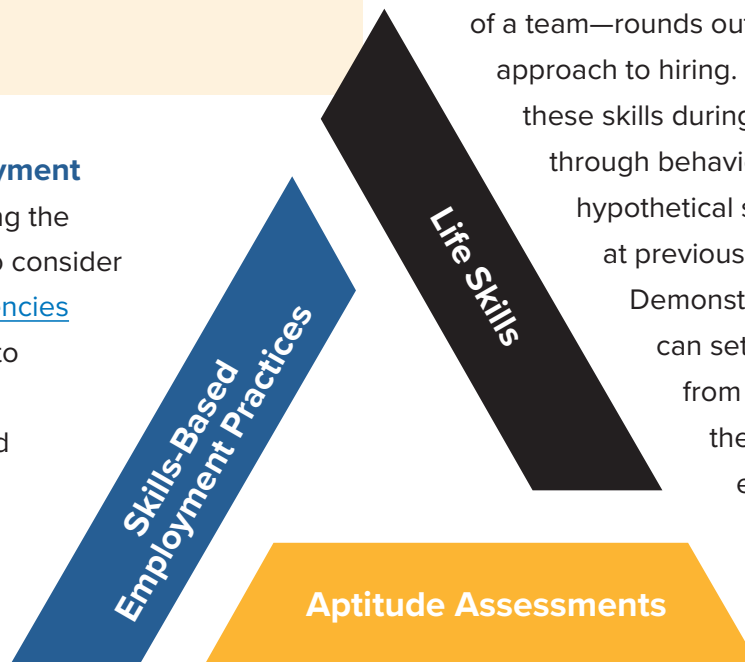
or career. The assessment results can help HR professionals and hiring managers make informed hiring decisions and can help predict a person’s success in a particular job.

**Life Skills:** Taking account of a job candidate’s [life skills](#) (also known as soft or durable skills)—such as the ability to effectively communicate, problem-solve, manage time and work as part of a team—rounds out the whole-person approach to hiring. Employers may assess these skills during the interview process, through behavioral questions and hypothetical scenarios, or by looking at previous work experiences.

Demonstrating strong life skills can set a candidate apart from others and show that they have the ability to effectively handle the everyday challenges and responsibilities of the workplace. Additionally, life skills can

help employees adapt to new situations, work well with others and contribute to a positive work environment, making them a valuable asset to an employer.

One [study](#) found that cognitive ability explains, on average, **42%** of job performance.



**7 out of 10** of the most requested skills in job postings are [durable skills](#).

## Making the Commitment

While we encourage every organization to use this framework to solve the talent equation in a way that works for them, a few common factors can help propel the effort. It starts with leadership, including a commitment from executives to take a new look at how they seek out, evaluate and prepare their workforce. It then takes a concerted effort by managers to re-examine open positions and clarify the skills and gifts actually required for success, rather than the traditional list that often starts with a college degree and similar job experience.

It also takes a willingness by HR professionals to learn from others and put what they learn into action. The good news is that rethinking the talent equation is already paying off for employers, communities and the economy every day. In an environment where the talent gap may only widen, taking a whole-person approach to hiring can turn the numbers around and fuel growth while enriching the diversity of the workplace.

We invite employers of all sizes and in all sectors to explore the solutions available to them, and we are here to support you in this vital work.



## Discovering Top Talent

Considering the whole person in hiring can help employers better reach the millions of American workers who have experiences, skills and personal qualities not captured on a traditional resume, but who could succeed if given a chance. Yes, traditional talent pools will continue to play a role in closing the talent gap, but consider those standing quietly at the ready. For example:

- ▶ Many military veterans gained their skills outside of the traditional job path but have a wealth of experience and leadership abilities that will allow them to flourish.
- ▶ Sixty-one percent of Americans over age 25 do not have a bachelor's degree, although many of them have worked in positions that prepared them intellectually and professionally for a move up.
- ▶ An estimated 80 million U.S. adults—nearly 1 in 3—have a criminal record, and many of these individuals are talented and motivated to give their all to help an organization succeed if given a chance. [SHRM research](#) found that 81% of business leaders believe workers with criminal records perform their jobs the same as or better than workers without criminal records.

## Ready to Start?

*The SHRM Foundation is ready to help you drive change in your organization. Click [here](#) to get started.*