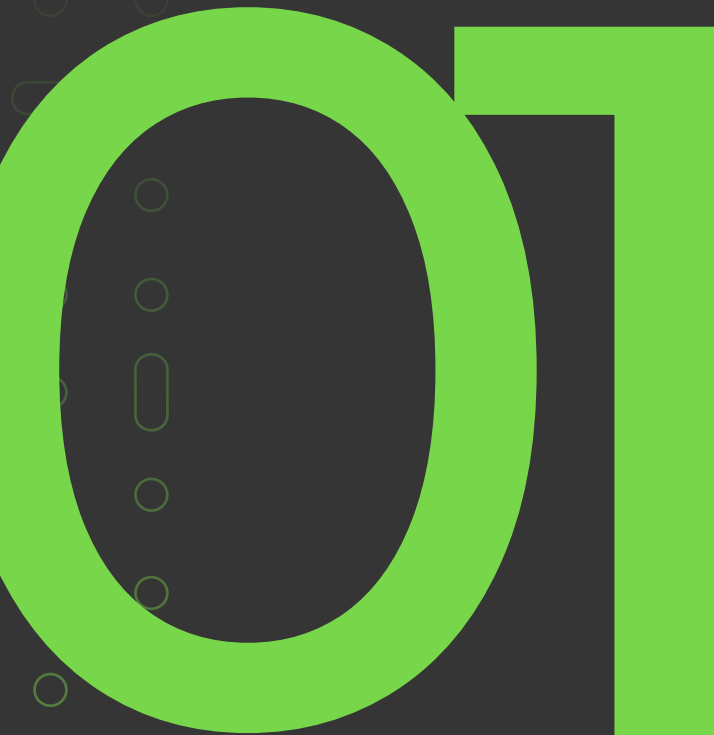# Stay Ahead in 2025

Five Expectations of Your Existing and Future Workforce

SHL.

01

Keep us growing or we'll keep moving: career development is key

Employees want opportunities to grow without having to jump ship. They expect clear paths for career development and upskilling.

Understanding the expectation

"The generations coming into the workforce now have a different worldview and a different definition of success." – Forbes

Job hopping is on the rise, especially among Millennials and Gen Z, who now make up over half of the workforce. Why? It's not because people enjoy job hopping.

Many employees prefer to stay with their current employer, provided they see a clear future there. We are seeing an increasing interest in employees looking for lateral moves within their organizations rather than solely pursuing upward progression. This shift reflects a desire for broader skill development, diverse experiences, and recognition of capabilities beyond job titles.

Almost a quarter of workers say they leave because they don't see opportunities for career progression, while 83% are actively seeking advancement. Today's employees are eager to grow, develop, and learn new skills, and if they don't find those opportunities in their current roles, they'll look elsewhere. The message is clear: for companies to retain top talent, they need to create clear career paths and invest in ongoing upskilling and development opportunities.
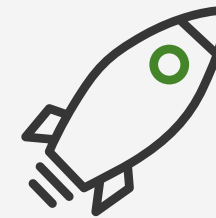
83%
of workers are actively seeking advancement

Edelman, 2023

"When people feel empowered and engaged, and they have autonomy in their job, and they feel they can affect their work environment, they're not going to quit. They're going to love it. They're going to feel like this is their company."

Josh Bersin

How organizations can step up

Aim for employee activation

"Activated employees are emotionally connected to their work, their peers, and the overarching goals of the organization. They aren't just working for a paycheck or promotion. They are invested in the success of the team and the organization." Forbes

Job hopping is both an opportunity and a curse for employers. For leaders, the challenge is twofold: attracting workers who are looking for growth, and giving existing employees compelling reasons to stay, or in other words, activating them.

There isn't just one way to activate employees. It's a complex task to get the balance right and it takes a company-wide culture shift to do so. You need to connect with employees on a deeper level to activate their natural, innate human motivation for excellence and achievement. Tap into every team member's intrinsic motivation and emotional engagement.

One place to start is by measuring and recognizing employee skills and potential, which will in turn allow you to support their personal and professional development and career pathing, in other words, investing in their future.

Begin with understanding employees' longer-term, transferable skills—adaptability, problem-solving, collaboration—and use that insight to design personalized development plans. It's not just about promotions; it's about creating a workplace where employees feel their potential is recognized and nurtured. By offering clear growth paths and investing in each employee's future, organizations can build long-term loyalty and reduce the risk of seeing their best talent walk out the door.

It's never too early to start thinking about retention – it could even come into your hiring decision. 41% of organizations said that some of their candidates resigned in their first 12 weeks. So, it's not just about looking at whether someone could do the job and their potential, but also about prediciting who will stay at the company to reach their fullest potential.
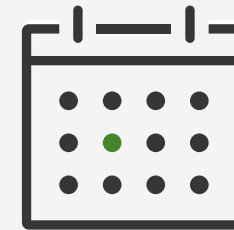
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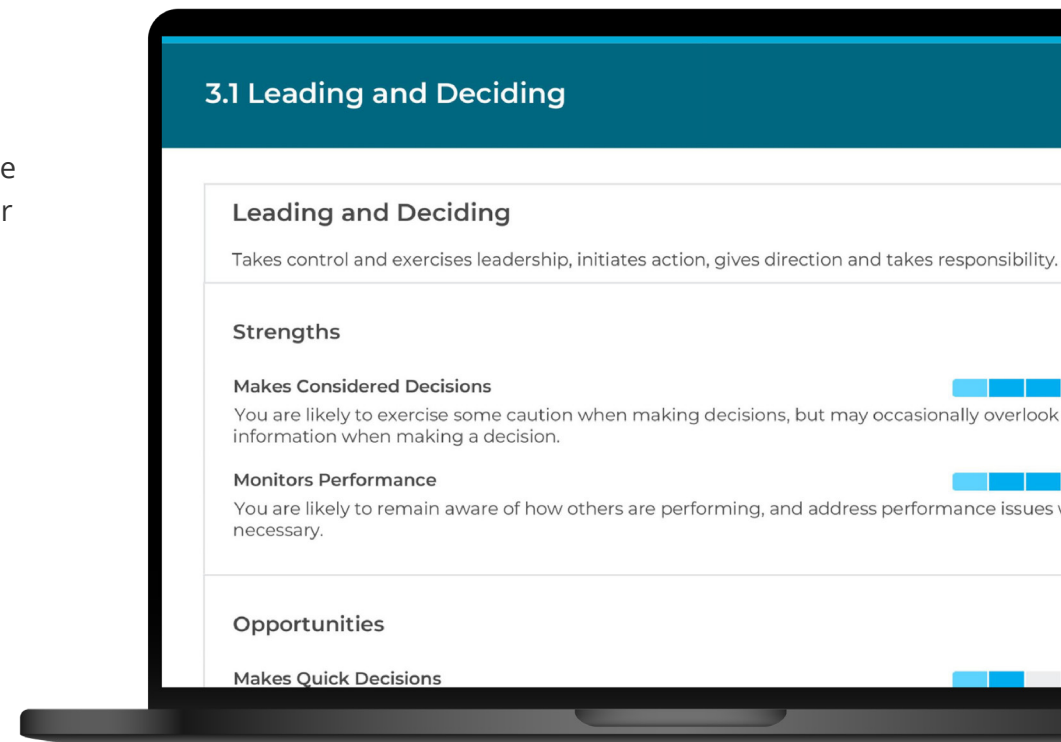
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SHL's solution to drive results
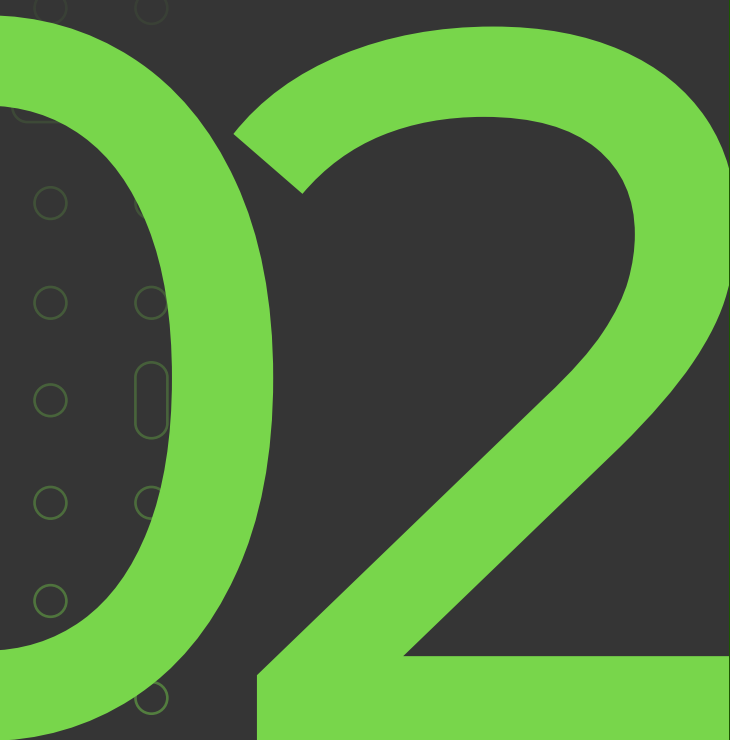
Map development at scale

Identify development gaps in your workforce using our Skills Development Solution, or reuse data collected from your hiring process to show employees where they can grow and utilize skills outside of the role they were hired for. When employees receive their personalized development report, they know their skills and potential have been recognized, and can use the insights to have meaningful career conversations. Clear, actionable feedback that nurtures their future can help activate and engage your workforce in a truly meaningful way.

Skills Development Solution

Empower employee growth with personalized strengths and development insights.

Learn more

3.1 Leading and Deciding

Leading and Deciding

Takes control and exercises leadership, initiates action, gives direction and takes responsibility.

Strengths

Makes Considered Decisions
You are likely to exercise some caution when making decisions, but may occasionally overlook information when making a decision.

Monitors Performance
You are likely to remain aware of how others are performing, and address performance issues necessary.

Opportunities

Makes Quick Decisions

Value our humanity:
We have skills that can't be replicated by AI

In the face of Generative AI and automation, employees want to be seen for their human traits, and be valued and nurtured.

Understanding the expectation

As AI and automation become more prominent in workplaces, employees are eager to be valued for their uniquely human skills—their empathy, creativity, adaptability, and critical thinking.

While AI handles data analysis and automation with ease, it's the behavioral skills that drive innovation, foster collaboration, and ultimately build the culture of an organization. In a world that is increasingly focused on AI, traits like emotional intelligence and complex problem-solving are becoming even more valuable. The ability to connect with others, think critically, and adapt to change, gives people an undeniable edge that technology can't replicate.

Employees seek assurance that as workplaces evolve, their potential will be recognized and nurtured, and they will be supported in developing the human skills that fuel both individual and organizational success.
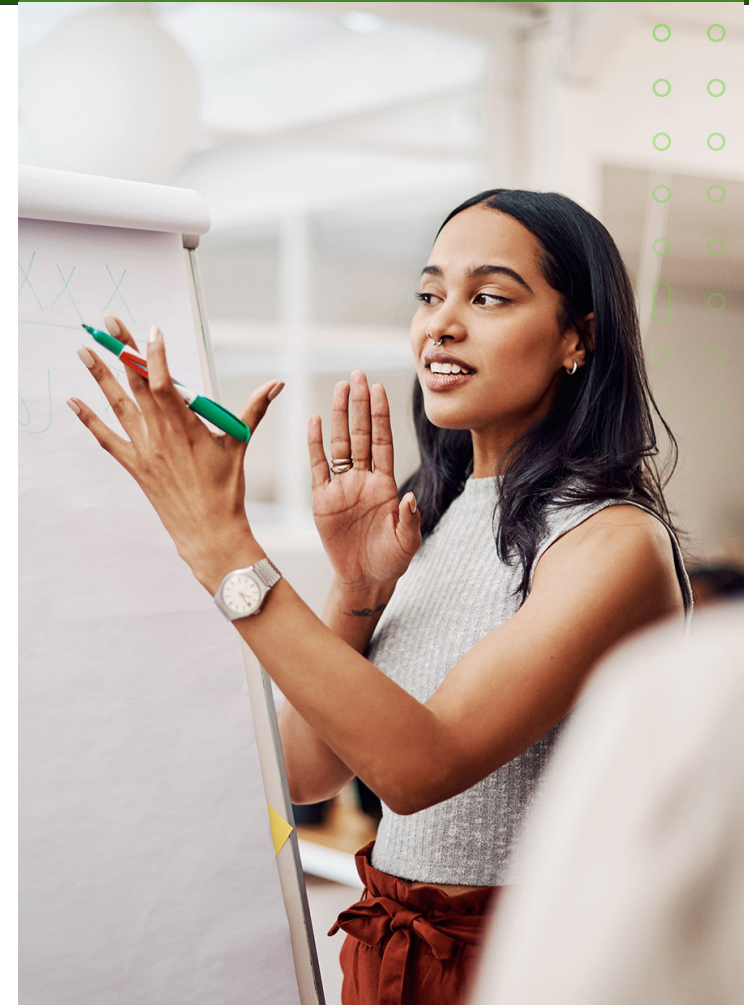
How organizations can step up

Champion human potential

To meet employees' desire for more human-centered roles in an increasingly AI-driven workplace, organizations must gain a deeper understanding of their workforce's behavioral skills and future potential. This goes beyond simply matching people to tasks based on current capabilities—it involves anticipating each individual's growth trajectory and responding to change with agility.

When an organization can clearly identify the strengths and areas for growth within its workforce, it can make data-driven decisions about mobility and development. But bear in mind that <u>not all data is created equal</u>—knowing what data you have, why you have it, how it is gathered, and what it reveals, is key to using it effectively. Accuracy is crucial; leaders need confidence that their data is objective, fair, reduces bias and alleviates any legal or ethical concerns.

Objective talent assessments can provide these insights, uncovering valuable skills that employees might not realize they have, while fostering trust through transparency. Open communication like, 'we see these skills in you and want to build on them to help you advance into X role,' or 'we recognize your development needs here and are committed to supporting your growth,' demonstrates a genuine commitment to employees and their career paths.

By adopting a proactive, personalized skills-based approach to role evolution, organizations gain a competitive edge by staying agile and responsive to future needs—whether that involves empowering employees to embrace new, AI-enhanced responsibilities or helping them develop additional skills that lead to further opportunities within the organization.

SHL's solution to drive results

Scientifically measure human skills

"Our research shows that assessing candidates on behavioral skills—including critical thinking, collaboration and adaptability—more accurately predicts an individual's performance and potential at work." Dr. Marais Bester, Senior Consultant at SHL

Each of SHL's hiring solutions include Job-Focused Assessments, which are designed not only to analyze existing skills but also to predict where employees can grow and thrive in the future. They focus on real human potential and are backed by scientific rigor.

Hiring Solutions

Measure human skills and potential with our suite of hiring solutions available for all job levels.

Learn more

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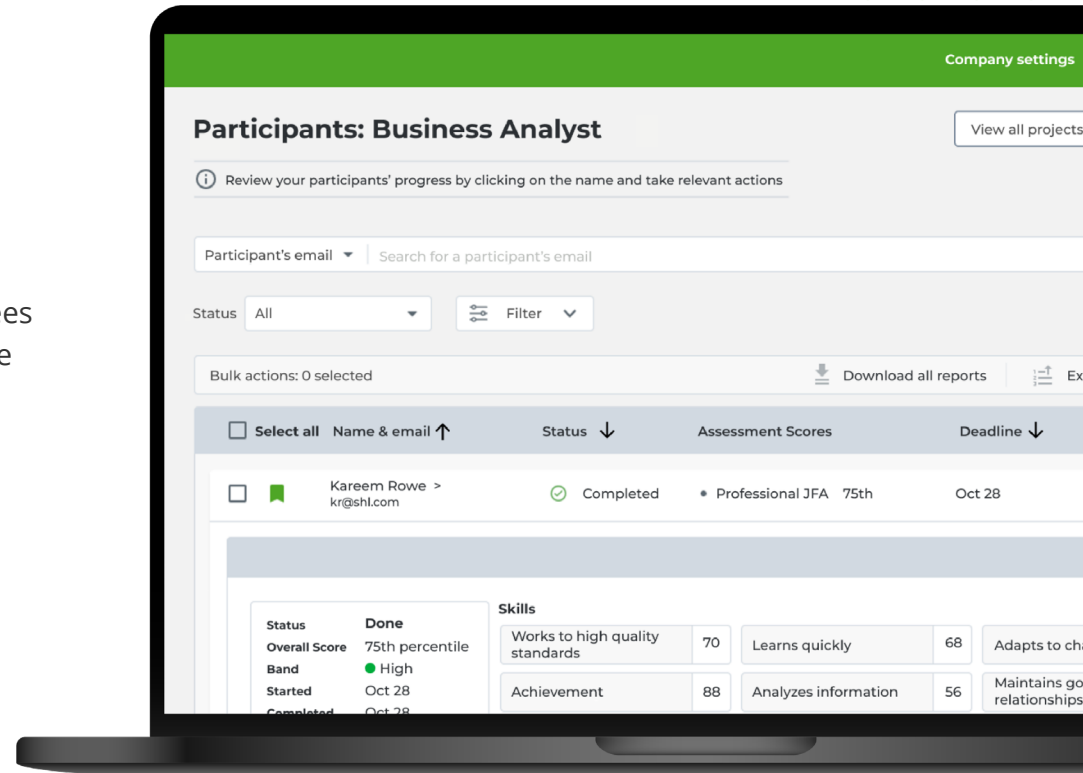
Make fairness visible:
We need to trust how decisions are made

For employees, trust comes from transparency. They want to see how talent decisions are made and feel confident that the process is fair and objective.

Understanding the expectation

Trust and transparency around fairness aren't just organizational ideals—they're at the core of employee expectations today. For many workers, fairness is about knowing that talent decisions are made with integrity, clear criteria, and a process that minimizes bias and that everyone can believe in.

Over half (53%) of U.S. workers consider a company's commitment to DEI (diversity, equity, and inclusion) crucial when choosing an employer. For Gen Z and Millennials, the significance is even greater, with 77% and 63%, respectively, identifying DEI as a key factor in employment decisions. Yet, despite DEI's importance to the workforce, only 29% of employees feel their organizations have recently increased DEI efforts in a meaningful way.

Today's employees expect companies to 'walk the talk' by demonstrating real, measurable progress in DEI initiatives. This means providing transparency around criteria and steps behind talent decisions, and making equity and fairness visible in every organizational action. Trust is built when companies go beyond statements, embedding fairness deeply into decision-making and workplace culture.

53%
of U.S. workers consider a company's commitment to DEI crucial when choosing an employer.

Eagle Hill Consulting

How organizations can step up

Make fairness and transparency core to every talent decision

Building trust in fairness requires commitment to DEI at every stage of the employee lifecycle. DEI should not be a separate initiative or KPI, but a seamless element of the company culture and decision-making process from the first interaction. When employees see DEI as an intrinsic organizational value rather than a business strategy, it shows authentic commitment to inclusion.

Creating an inclusive hiring and promotion process means intentionally prioritizing fair decision-making. This includes using objective assessments based on job-relevant criteria, structured interviews, and diverse hiring panels to reduce bias. Skills-based hiring can further expand access to underrepresented talent by focusing on job-related abilities rather than traditional credentials. This shift toward evaluating candidates on what they bring to the role right now, not just their past achievements, helps create pathways to employment that haven't always been accessible to them.

"Atypical candidates feel less likely to be included when given a company statement with a business case for diversity instead of one with a simpler acknowledgment of its importance."

Aneeta Rattan,
Associate Professor of Organizational Behaviour

Transparency is key too. Today, 80% of workers say they want a better understanding of how decisions are made within their organization. Being transparent about the purpose—whether for career progression, mobility, or development—builds trust and shows respect for employees' aspirations.

Achieving equitable talent decisions across the employee lifecycle calls for structured, data-driven methods that actively guard against the biases human interactions can bring—especially in interviews. By enhancing consistency in interview scoring, engagement, and structure, organizations can improve hiring experiences and establish fair, reliable processes that reinforce trust with candidates for the long term.

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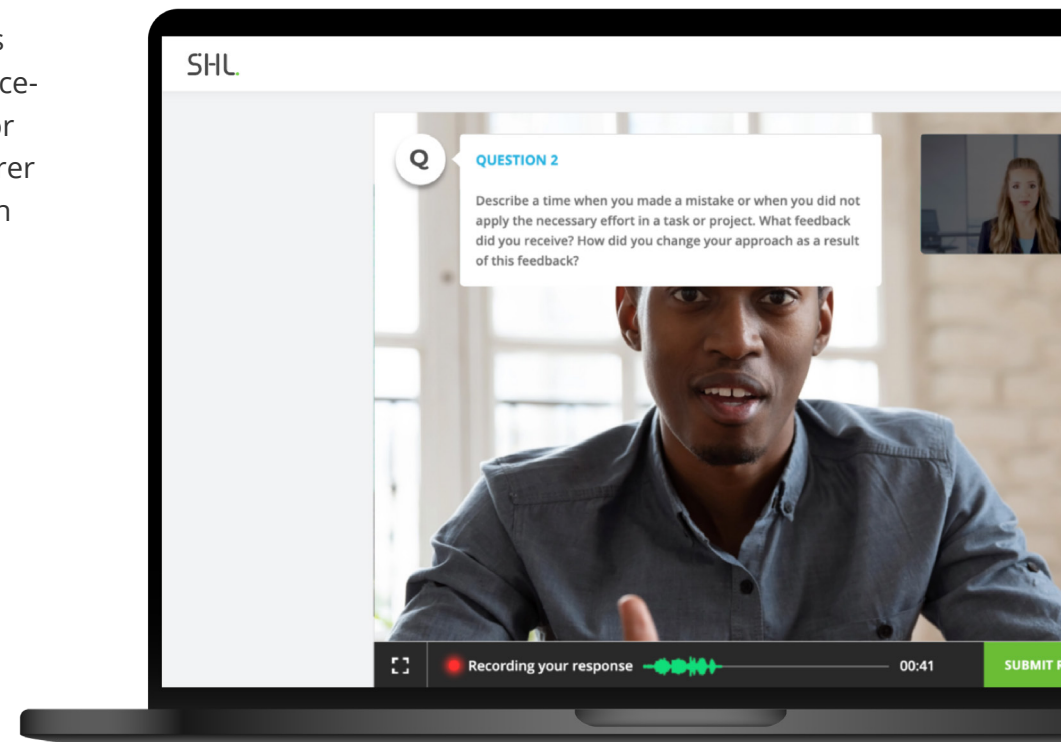
Slack

SHL's solution to drive results

Make fairness visible in hiring...

In addition to the objective job-focused assessment offered as part of every hiring solution, SHL's Smart Interview suite establishes a foundation of fairness and clarity at the hiring stage by equipping interviewers with job-specific, science-backed questions and scoring guides tailored to the skills and criteria critical for each role. This approach promotes consistent, transparent evaluations and fairer hiring decisions. By incorporating input from multiple interviewers, the solution integrates diverse perspectives, creating a more balanced view that minimizes individual biases and supports inclusive outcomes. Additionally, SHL offers interview analytics to help interviewers refine and continuously improve their approach, further enhancing the quality and fairness of the hiring process.

Interview Solutions

Interview candidates remotely, and reliably score, shortlist, and secure candidates based on true potential.

Learn more

SHL.

Q

QUESTION 2

Describe a time when you made a mistake or when you did not apply the necessary effort in a task or project. What feedback did you receive? How did you change your approach as a result of this feedback?

● Recording your response 00:41 SUBMIT

SHL's solution to drive results

...and beyond

Beyond hiring, SHL's solutions carry this commitment to fairness, accessibility, and inclusion throughout talent management processes. Our solutions surface "hidden gems" within your organization—those who may have been overlooked previously but have the potential to thrive in new roles. By identifying this often-untapped talent, SHL empowers you to cultivate a more inclusive approach to internal mobility and career development.

Talent Management Solutions

Bring unrivalled objectivity and accuracy to every talent management decision. Create a single source of multi-purpose, objective talent data.

Learn more

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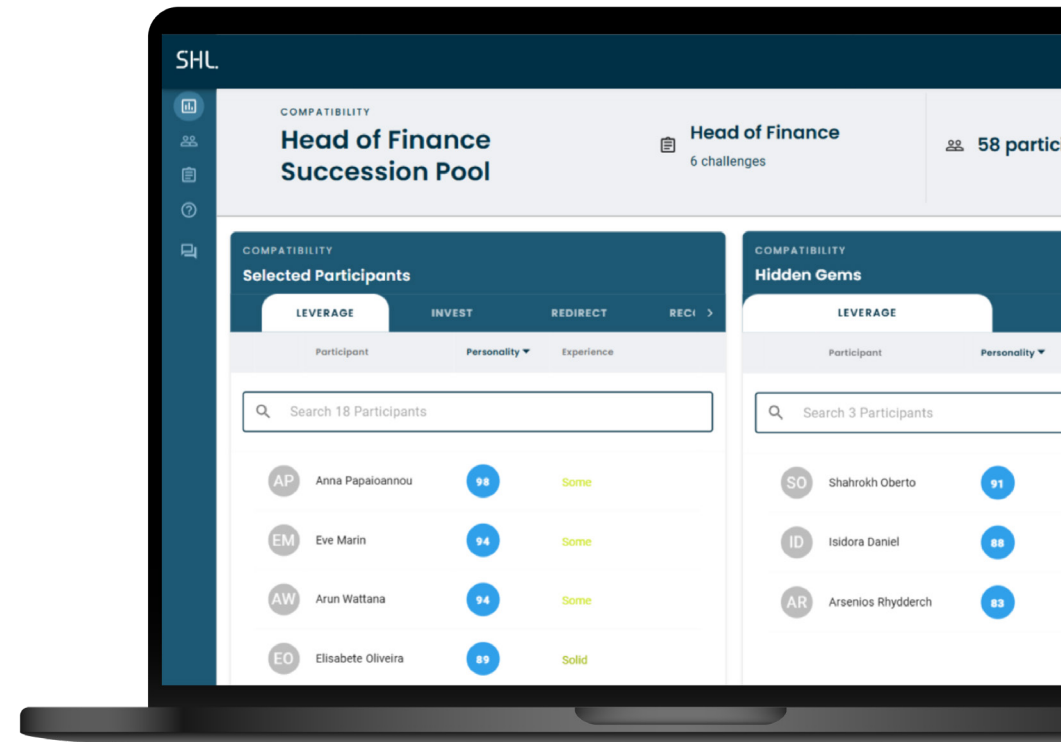
Help us adapt:
Change is constant and tiring, we need support

As roles and workplaces evolve, employees expect their employers to support them through transformation, helping them build resilience and agility.

Understanding the expectation

Employees today are in a constant state of adaptation, where the next change often arrives before the last one is fully in place. This relentless pace of transformation takes a toll, with 73% of employees impacted by frequent changes reporting moderate to high stress levels. It's not just that changes are happening quickly—they're happening continuously, without an end in sight.

The impact is clear. Every HR leader in a recent survey reports that employees are struggling with change fatigue, and studies show that workers left feeling unsupported during transformations are 54% more likely to look elsewhere for stability. Those who stay often find themselves disengaged, at risk of burnout, and struggling to keep up.

This makes support, transparency, and a real sense of agency essential to helping employees feel in control of their work environments, rather than just caught in the slipstream of change.

54%
of unsupported employees are more likely to look elsewhere for stability.

Gartner

How organizations can step up

Identify skills that drive change-readiness

Organizations must create an environment where employees feel supported in times of change, equipping them to adapt rather than simply managing transitions.

To start, identify your change champions and consider whether they have the skills to guide others. Building agility and resilience across the organization means developing the right skills to carry people through. SHL's latest research on essential skills to succeed through transformation highlights qualities like "motivates and empowers others," "gains agreement," and "demonstrates empathy". These people-centric qualities foster a culture that encourages employees to invest in change and support each other through it.

Assessing these skills also helps organizations determine where they may need to build or enhance capabilities, aligning support systems to strengthen resilience and agility. By taking a proactive approach, organizations can create a workforce prepared to embrace change, which in turn fosters a smoother, more sustainable journey through transformation.

"If you think about this world where we do have a highly activated workforce, and people are coming to work with their full selves – we now work in companies where people come to work and they tell you I'm not feeling well today; I have anxiety; I didn't get a good night's sleep last night; I'm not making enough money... How do you react to that? That's a new skill too – your level of empathy and willingness to tolerate, and be more forgiving of people."
Josh Bersin at SHL Virtual Summit

Additionally, with the changing makeup of the workforce—more Gen Z employees entering and Gen X leaders rising—organizations have the opportunity to offer personalized experiences that resonate with each generation. Gen Z employees, for instance, are positioned to drive technological innovation, quickly embracing new tools and AI advancements. With an objective understanding of each individual's strengths, managers and HR teams can craft personalized employee experiences to develop and empower individuals, fostering motivation and engagement throughout transformation efforts.

SHL's solution to drive results

Pinpoint change champions

To support organizations through change, SHL's Skills Development Solution offers a skills-based talent audit, providing detailed insights into workforce readiness for transformation. This audit uses data-driven methods to identify skill levels across individuals, teams, departments, and the entire organization, pinpointing existing capabilities and highlighting any gaps.

The audit can reveal employees with the human-centric skills vital for leading effective change, such as empathy, influence, and motivation. Leaders who inspire and guide others while fostering a collaborative atmosphere can shift change from a top-down mandate to a process that feels inclusive and supportive. Engaging these individuals builds organizational readiness, creating an environment where employees feel connected and engaged throughout transitions.

Skills Development Solution

Identify key transformation skills and strengthen your workforce for ongoing change.

Learn more

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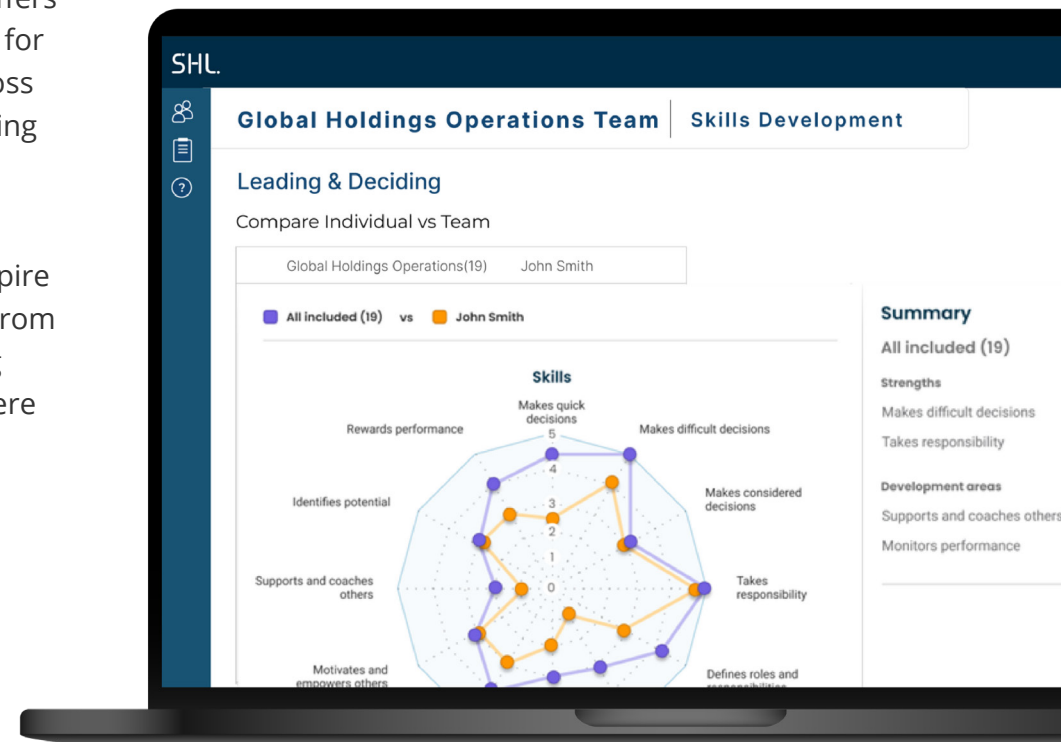
Equip us for the future:
We expect to evolve with AI

AI is transforming jobs, and employees expect the training and support to stay relevant and use AI to enhance their work.

Understanding the expectation

AI is transforming jobs across nearly every industry, and employees expect their organizations to support them in navigating these changes. With AI tools now accessible to many, the demand for AI skills is surging. In fact, 66% of leaders say they prefer candidates with AI skills, and 71% would rather hire a less experienced candidate if they are AI-proficient.

When it comes to existing workforces, 75% of knowledge workers are already using AI at work, yet only 39% of companies are currently providing training on AI literacy. The misalignment between expectation and training poses risks, as roles evolve and new responsibilities emerge.

For employees in their early careers in particular, AI proficiency can mean greater opportunities for growth, with over three-quarters of leaders stating that early-career professionals who are skilled with AI will likely be given increased responsibilities. As the role of AI continues to expand, the need for employee support, skill development, and role adaptability has never been more critical.

75%
of knowledge workers are already using AI at work.

yet only
39%
of companies are currently providing training on AI literacy.

How organizations can step up

Prepare employees to partner with AI

As AI redefines work, employers have an opportunity—and a responsibility—to equip employees with the skills to leverage it effectively. The vast majority of roles will be augmented, not replaced, by AI, with AI making some tasks easier while introducing new complexities.

LinkedIn research shows that nearly 68% of the fastest-growing job roles in the U.S. didn't exist two decades ago. In fact, skills needed for these evolving roles could change by 68% by 2030, largely due to AI.

To thrive in this new environment, employees need clear training on using generative AI tools responsibly. Without the right guidance, these powerful tools can be misused, leading to ineffective or even damaging outcomes. By investing in both AI tools and training, organizations empower employees to stay agile, relevant, and productive.

For organizations, the benefits of AI go beyond productivity—it's also about keeping teams inspired and ready for the jobs of tomorrow.

SHL's solution to drive results
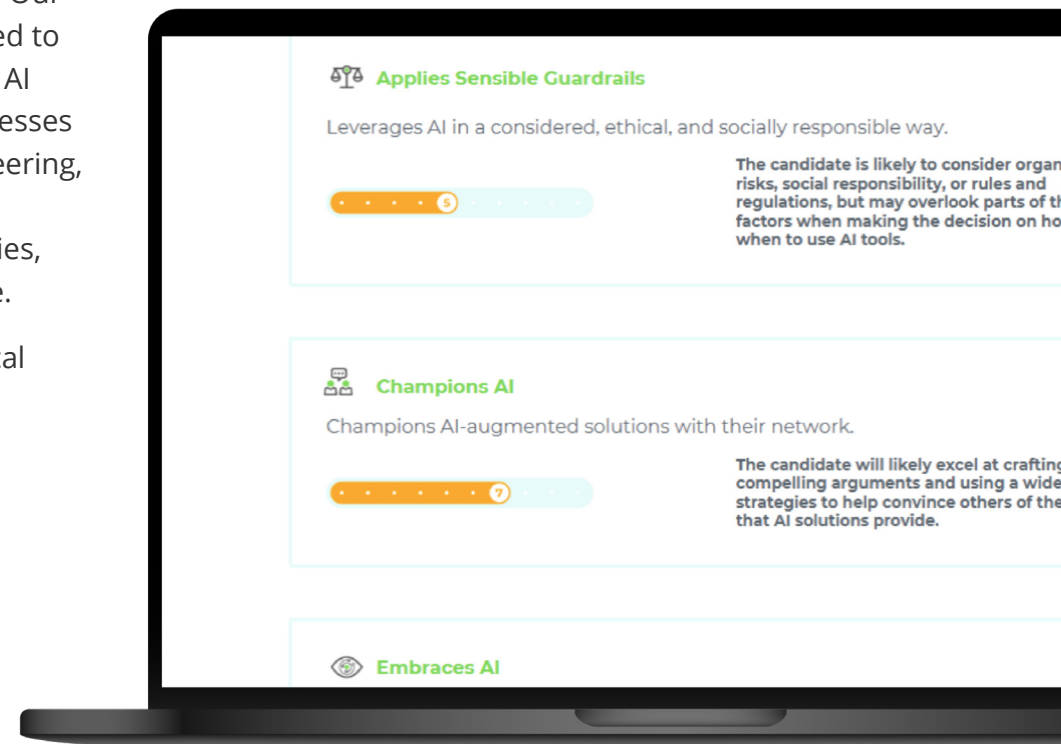
Assess and develop AI-ready skills

At SHL, we recognize the behavioral skills required to truly embrace AI at work. Our AI Skills Assessment can be added to any of our hiring solutions, and is designed to measure seven critical skills, classified into two broad areas: AI Interaction and AI Enhancement. AI Interaction skills allow employees to understand how AI processes information and how best to engage with it. These skills include prompt engineering, strategic thinking around AI applications, and identifying opportunities for AI integration. Meanwhile, AI Enhancement skills focus on uniquely human qualities, such as ethical judgment, complex problem-solving, and emotional intelligence.

These skills ensure that AI solutions are applied thoughtfully, maintaining ethical standards and incorporating the nuanced contexts AI may overlook.

Get in touch

Speak to one of our experts about any talent challenges you are facing today and see what SHL can do to help.

Contact us

⚖️ Applies Sensible Guardrails

Leverages AI in a considered, ethical, and socially responsible way.

5

The candidate is likely to consider organ... risks, social responsibility, or rules and regulations, but may overlook parts of th... factors when making the decision on ho... when to use AI tools.

👥 Champions AI

Champions AI-augmented solutions with their network.

7

The candidate will likely excel at crafting compelling arguments and using a wide... strategies to help convince others of the... that AI solutions provide.

👁 Embraces AI

SHL brings powerful and transparent AI technology, data science, and objectivity to help companies attract, develop, and grow the workforce they need to succeed in the digital era.

We empower talent strategies to unlock the full potential of your greatest asset—people.

SHL.