



The skills imperative

Rethinking learning, recognition,
and workforce strategy





39%

of core workforce skills
will change by 2030.*



* World Economic Forum, Future of Jobs Report 2025





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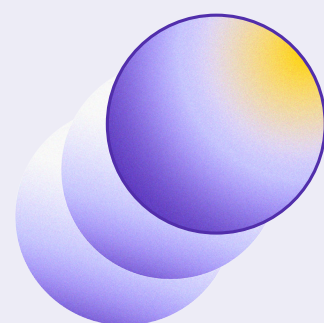
The future belongs to organizations that can see skills clearly, develop them continuously, and put them to work with confidence.”

Billy Grieco
Product Management Lead for Credly



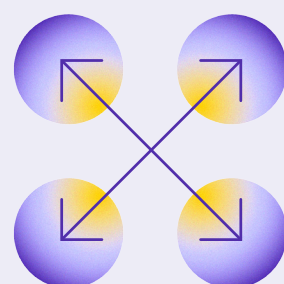


Executive summary



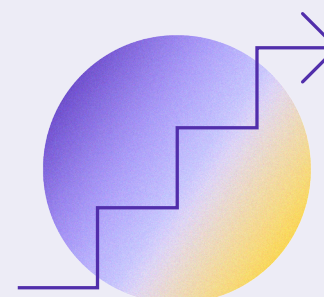
Change

Work is changing faster than the systems built to support it. Technology, economics, and job design are all shifting at once, and the skills people need are shifting with them.



Skills

The World Economic Forum’s *Future of Jobs Report 2025* projects that 39% of core workforce skills will change by 2030, and 59% of workers will need training or reskilling to stay relevant. Nearly two-thirds of employers already name skills gaps as their biggest barrier to transformation.



Learning

A skills-based approach built on continuous learning, verified capability, and clear workforce visibility is how organizations keep up.

Methodology

This paper draws primarily from the World Economic Forum’s *Future of Jobs Report 2025*, along with broader research on workforce transformation, skills-based talent strategies, and learning innovation.

Statistics cited throughout reflect global employer survey data and projections published by the World Economic Forum.

The purpose of this paper is not to predict a single workforce future, but to examine the skills trends and organizational shifts shaping workforce strategy today.

This paper covers:

- 1 Why skills-based learning is accelerating.
- 2 Where traditional credentialing falls short.
- 3 Why verifiable, skills-based recognition matters now.
- 4 How to build a workforce that’s transparent and adaptable.





A workforce defined by change

AI, automation, and digital infrastructure keep rewriting how work gets done and which skills matter. By 2030, the World Economic Forum projects:

- **22%** of jobs will be redefined.
- **170 million** new roles will emerge, while **92 million** disappear.
- **Demand will surge** for AI, data, and technology skills.

Nearly 40% of core skills are on pace to change. What people learned five years ago won't carry them through the next five. Workers have to keep adapting, and organizations have to keep evolving what their workforce can do.





From jobs to skills

Job titles, degrees, and years of experience used to be enough. They gave employers a shorthand for capability – imperfect, but workable.

That shorthand is breaking down. Work is more interdisciplinary, more dynamic, and more dependent on a mix of technical, cognitive, and human skills than any title can capture.

A skills-based model changes what organizations measure:

- Talent is defined by what people can do.
- Roles map to skills and tasks.
- Learning ties directly to outcomes.
- Workforce decisions run on skills data.

The question employers ask is changing too. It used to be “*What degree does someone hold?*” Now it’s “*What can they do, and how do we know?*”





Learning that doesn't stop

Front-loaded education followed by decades of application no longer holds up. Learning now has to be:

- **Continuous** rather than episodic.
- **Focused** on specific outcomes.
- Built into the **flow of work**.

Half of all workers are already in some form of training or reskilling program, according to WEF – a signal that lifelong learning has moved from ideal to expectation.

But investment alone doesn't prove impact.

Learning is happening across every industry. Whether it shows up in hiring, mobility, or workforce planning depends on whether those skills can be seen, verified, and acted on.





Why skills are still hard to see

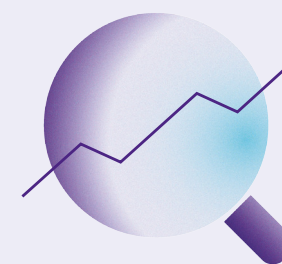
Even as organizations invest in skills, most struggle to see what they actually have. Common friction points:

- Skills are defined and measured differently across systems and teams.
- Learning outcomes aren't consistently assessed.
- Capabilities stay buried in résumés, job descriptions, and disconnected tools.
- Employers lack a shared way to interpret and compare skills.

That gap shows up at every stage of the talent lifecycle.

Hiring leans on proxies. Internal mobility stalls. Workforce planning runs on incomplete data. Employees can't clearly articulate what they know how to do.

Skills are getting built. They're just hard to find.





Recognition in a skills-based economy

Traditional qualifications were built for a slower-moving world. Degrees and certifications still matter, but on their own they:

- Reveal little about specific competencies.
- Capture a point in time, not ongoing growth.
- Struggle to keep up with how fast skills evolve.

Newer credentialing approaches are built for the way work actually moves:

- Granular recognition of specific skills.
- Verified evidence of learning.
- Portability across roles, employers, and platforms.

Trust and clarity are the currency of a skills-based economy. Employers need confidence that a claim reflects real capability. Individuals need a credible way to show what they can do.





Building the infrastructure

Isolated initiatives don't add up to a skills strategy. What organizations need is connected infrastructure across four areas:

- 1 Definition**
A consistent skills language that ties capability to verified data.
- 2 Development**
Learning built around real workforce needs.
- 3 Validation**
A trusted way to verify and recognize skills as they're earned.
- 4 Activation**
Applying that data to workforce planning, L&D, upskilling, and skills-based hiring.

When these four areas connect, leaders can see current capability, spot gaps early, align talent to strategy, open more equitable paths to opportunity, and match people to the work in front of them.



Implications for leaders

- 1 Definition**
Create a shared language for skills across talent, learning, and workforce planning initiatives so decisions are based on consistent data rather than disconnected definitions.
- 2 Development**
Align learning investments to capabilities the organization needs most and create clear pathways for ongoing skill growth.
- 3 Validation**
Ensure skills are backed by trusted evidence so learning achievements can be understood and acted on with confidence.
- 4 Activation**
Apply verified skills data to workforce planning, internal mobility, recruitment, and strategic talent decisions.





What this means for leaders

Organizations that treat skills as the operating system of their workforce will move faster than those that don't. Four priorities stand out:



Build continuous learning into the workflow
Outcomes have to be measurable and verifiable.



Move to skills-based talent models
Shift the frame from qualifications to capabilities.



Make skills visible
Invest in the systems and standards that turn skills data into decisions.



Tie learning to business outcomes
Development is a strategic investment.



Leadership responsibilities in a skills-based organization

CHROs

Lead the shift toward skills-based workforce strategies by aligning talent decisions with verified capabilities rather than traditional proxies alone.

CLOs

Ensure learning investments build skills most relevant to organizational priorities and produce outcomes that can be measured, recognized, and applied.

CTOs

Create the systems, integrations, and data infrastructure needed to make skills visible and actionable across the organization.

CEOs

Champion a culture of continuous learning and ensure workforce capability remains a strategic priority connected to long-term business goals.





How Credly turns skills into trusted signals

Credly by Pearson helps organizations turn skills from a concept into verified, actionable data.

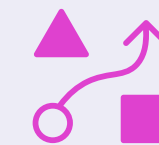
Every credential issued through Credly is backed by evidence, mapped to a common skills language, and recognized across the world's largest connected credential network.

The four elements of a skills infrastructure – definition, development, validation, activation are where Credly does its work:



Definition

The Pearson Ontology and Credly's skills detail pages give skills a shared, normalized language.



Development

Organizations can create and issue badges that recognize their internal learning as portable, externally validated proof of skill.



Validation

Credly Workforce surfaces verified credentials earned across the Credly network, so employers see ongoing learning beyond their own programs.



Activation

Credly Workforce shows the skills of connected employees, so leaders can spot trends, close gaps, and match people to the work in front of them.

Credly isn't where a skills strategy starts. It's what makes the strategy most visible, credible, and useful.

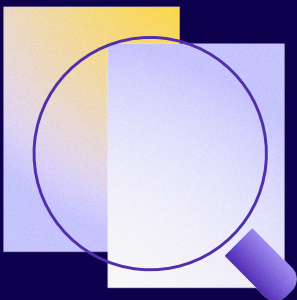




Conclusion

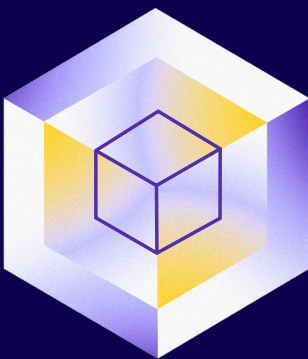
From skill development to skill confidence

Static roles and single-track careers are giving way to a skills-based view of work. Success now depends on how well people and organizations can build, verify, and apply skills over time.



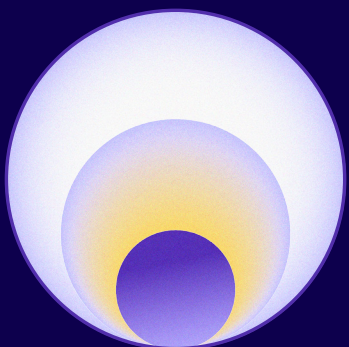
Two ways

That takes two things at once: giving individuals real ways to develop new skills, and giving the talent ecosystem confidence in the skills they've earned.



Intersection

Digital credentialing sits at that intersection. It connects learning, verified skills, and workforce opportunity in a way résumés and static records can't.



Clarity

The organizations that lead the next decade will be the ones that see their skills clearly—what they have, what they need, and how to close the distance between the two.

Skills are becoming the foundation of workforce strategy. Seeing them clearly and acting on them is what will separate the organizations that adapt from the ones that fall behind.





Learn more about Credly by Pearson

Organizations are rethinking how they identify, develop, validate, and activate skills. See how Credly by Pearson helps make skills visible, verifiable, and actionable across the workforce.

Learn more

