Understanding Skills-First Hiring

Adapting today's recruitment strategy for tomorrow's hire

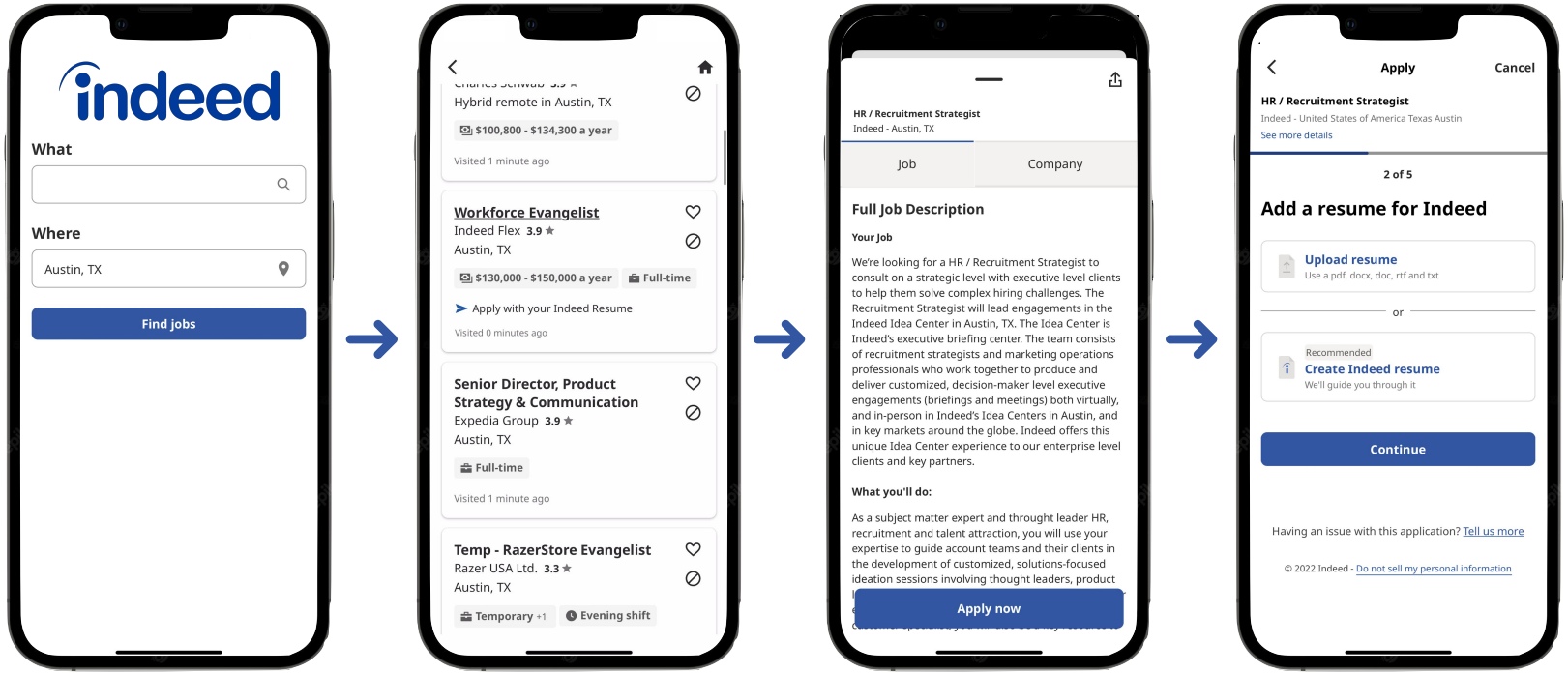
Kyle M.K.
Talent Strategy Advisor

indeed

We help people get jobs.™

The Job Seeker Journey

Walking a mile in their shoes

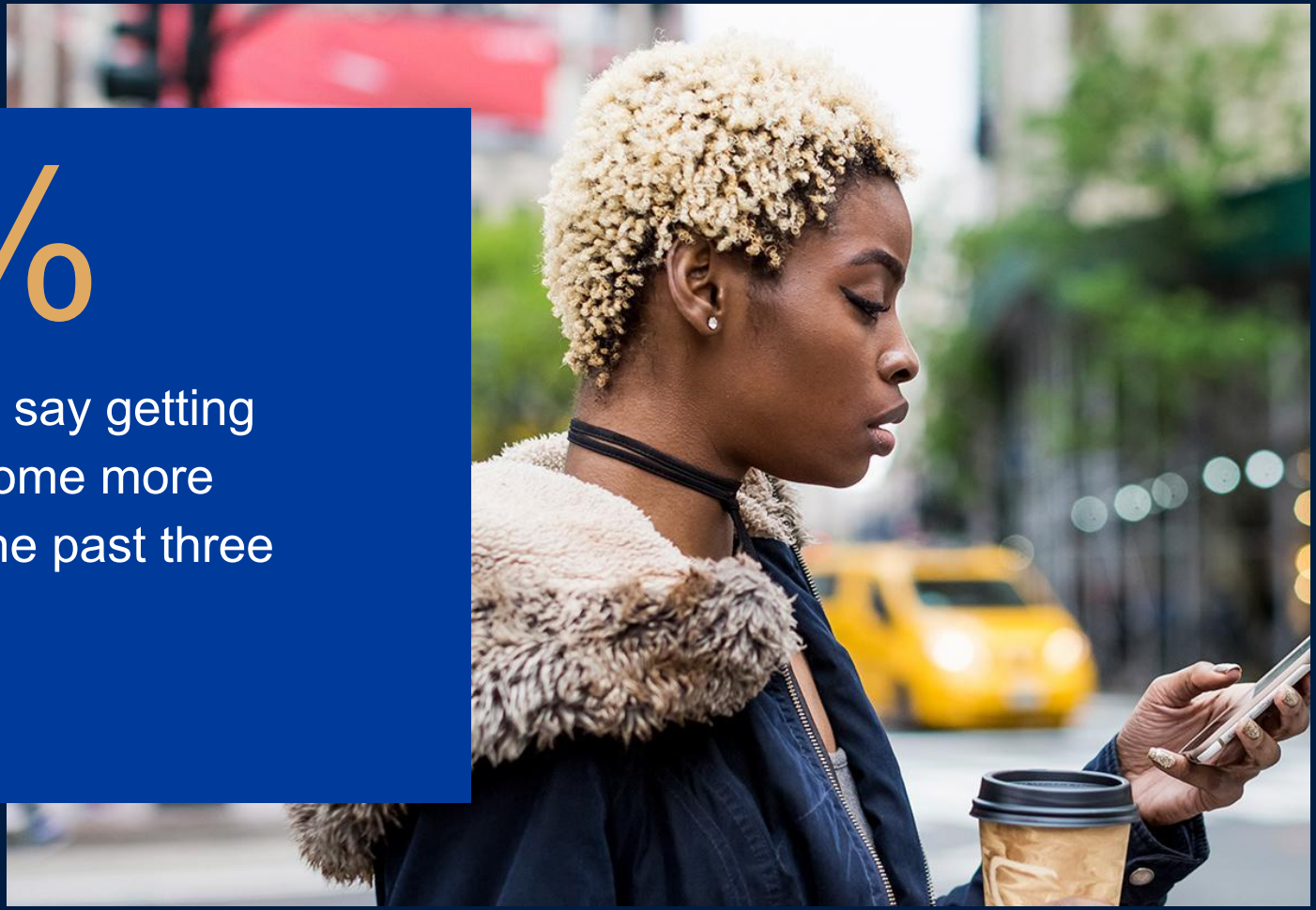


Search Browse View Apply

45%

of job seekers say getting hired has become more difficult over the past three years.

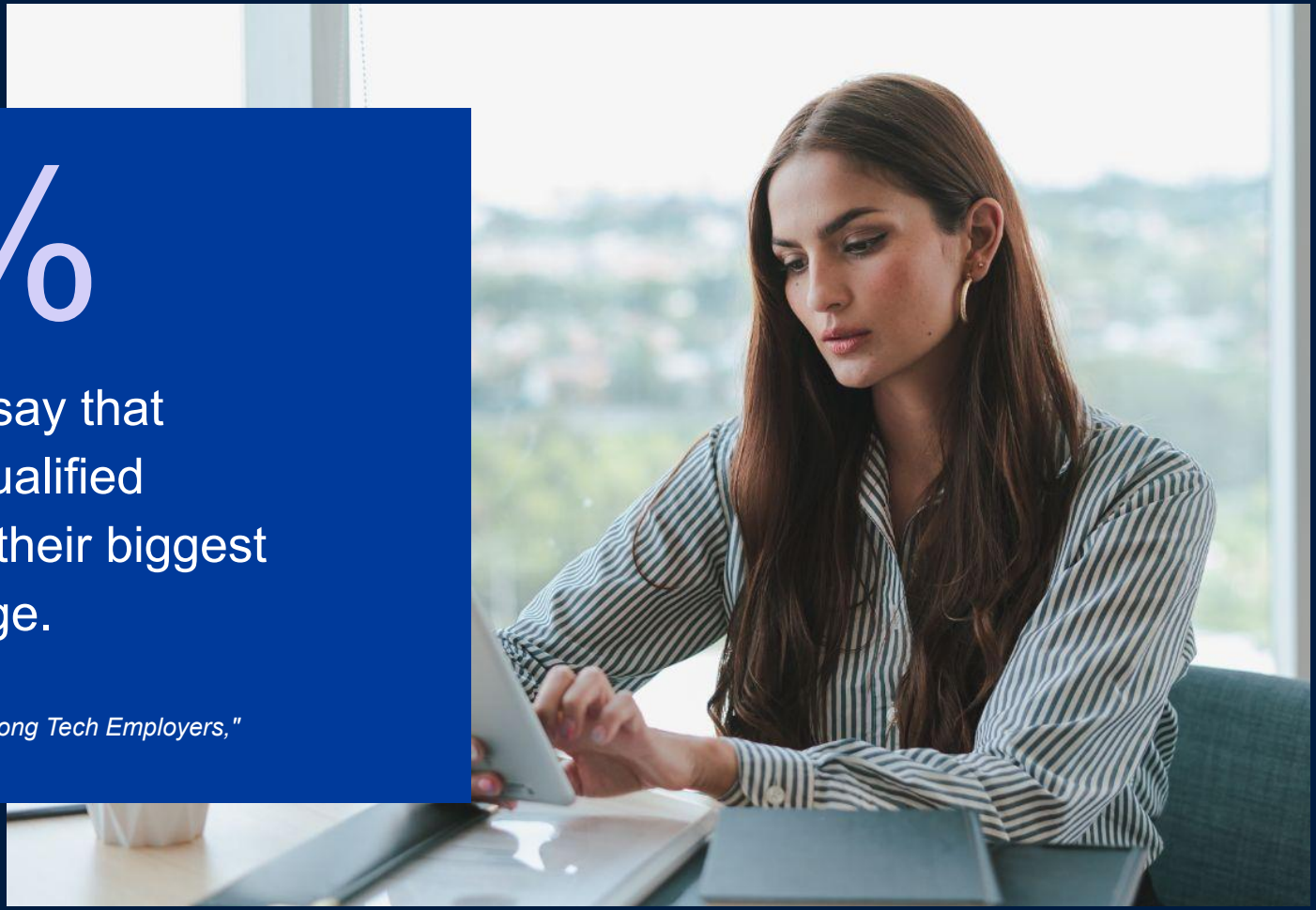
Source: Indeed Hiring Lab

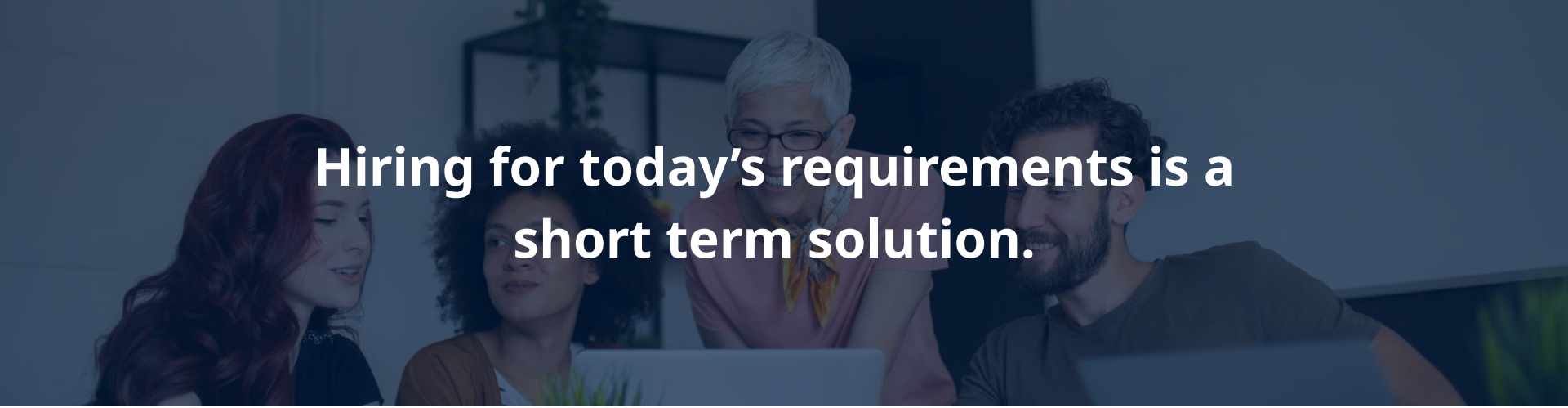


43%

of employers say that receiving unqualified candidates is their biggest hiring challenge.

Source: "Indeed Survey among Tech Employers," Nov 2024-Feb 2025, n=250





Hiring for today’s requirements is a short term solution.

70%

of working people believe skills needed in their role will change over the next 5 years

92%

of working people are confident in adapting to changes in their role*

Source: Indeed Survey with YouGov, December 2023
*confident includes those who answered “fairly” or “very” on cited survey

Intro to Skills-First

Skills-First

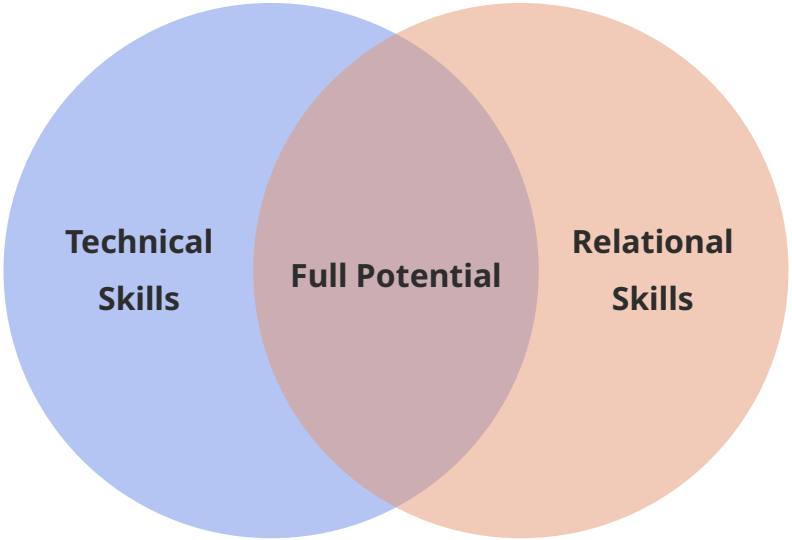
A framework for attracting, growing, and advancing talent based on skills.

The Two Types of Skills

What technical and relational indicators tell us—and why you need both.

Technical Skills

Skills that are **taught**, tested, and proven through training, credentials, or measurable outcomes of real-world work.



Relational Skills

Skills that are **earned** through experience, reflection, and how someone shows up in real situations.

Screening for skills is…

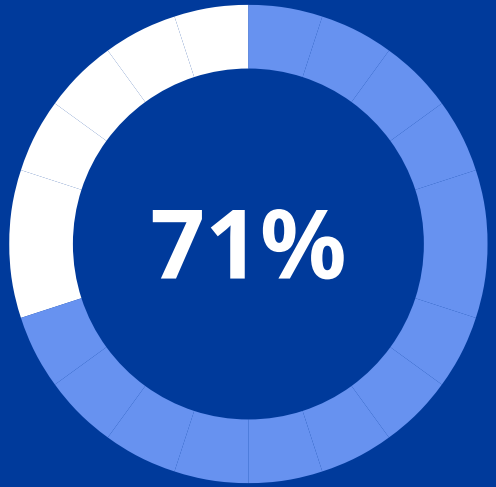
5X

more predictive of job performance than screening for ***education***[1]

2.5X

more predictive of job performance than screening for ***experience***[2]

Hunter, J. E., & Hunter, R. F. (1984). Validity and utility of alternative predictors of job performance. *Psychological Bulletin, 96*(1), 72–98.[1]
Hancock, B., Higgins, C., Law, J., Olson, S., Patel, N., & Dusen, K. V. (2022, November 15). *Taking a skills-based approach to building the future workforce*. McKinsey & Company.2



Percent candidates are matched using skills

Emphasizing the benefit of having skills first job descriptions, to yield the best matches.

Source: Indeed data, US

Taking Your Skills-First Step

Building a Skills-First Ecosystem

Talent Attraction

Hiring & Evaluation

Onboarding & Learning

Retention & Mobility

Alumni & Returnships

Talent Attraction

Conduct a Skills Audit
Identify the key technical and relational skills needed for success—starting with Day 1 must-haves.

Remove Barriers to Entry
Eliminate unnecessary requirements that screen out quality talent, like degrees or industry experience.

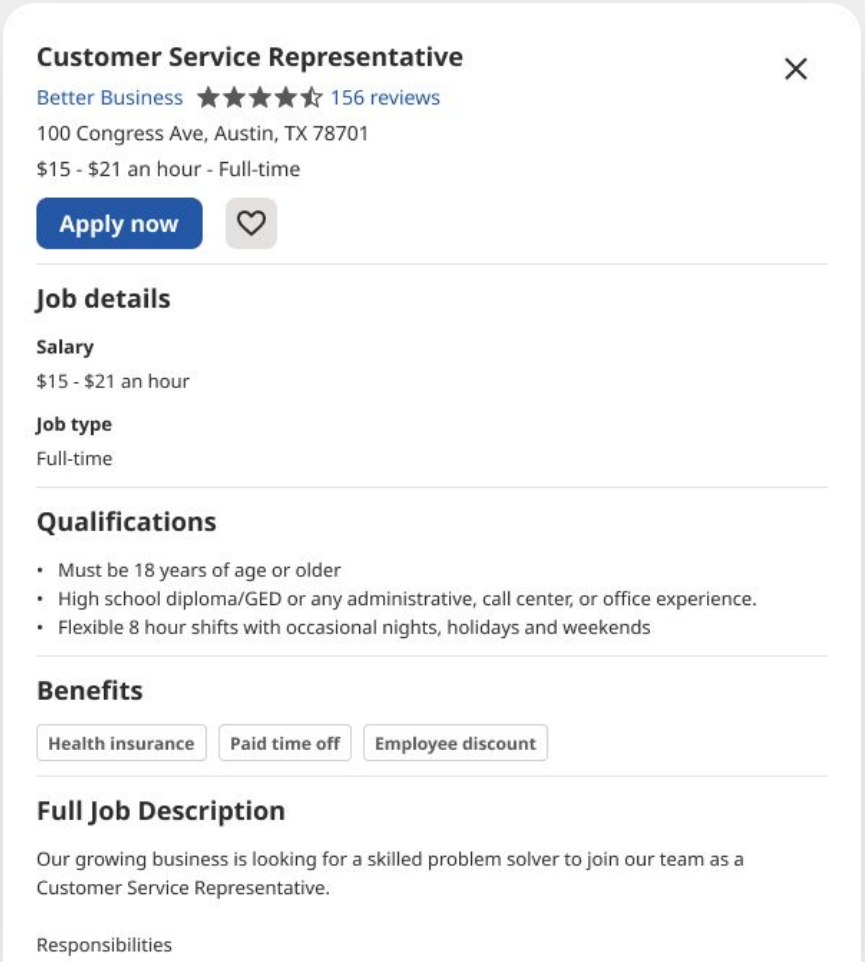
Write a Skills-First Job Ad
Use clear, inclusive language that highlights the real skills needed to succeed in the role.

Signal Support for STARs
Show openness to nontraditional paths by emphasizing what success looks like—not where it comes from.

Conduct a Skills Audit

Define your candidate pool, and the supply and demand within it

1. What does success look like in this hire—productivity, retention, morale, innovation, or something else?
2. Which technical skills are required on day one, and which can be learned on the job?
3. Which relational skills will support early success and long-term sustainability within the team and culture?
4. How does this shift our candidate pool, and what's the current demand for talent within that group?



Rethink What Makes Someone Qualified

Your next hire won’t look like the last

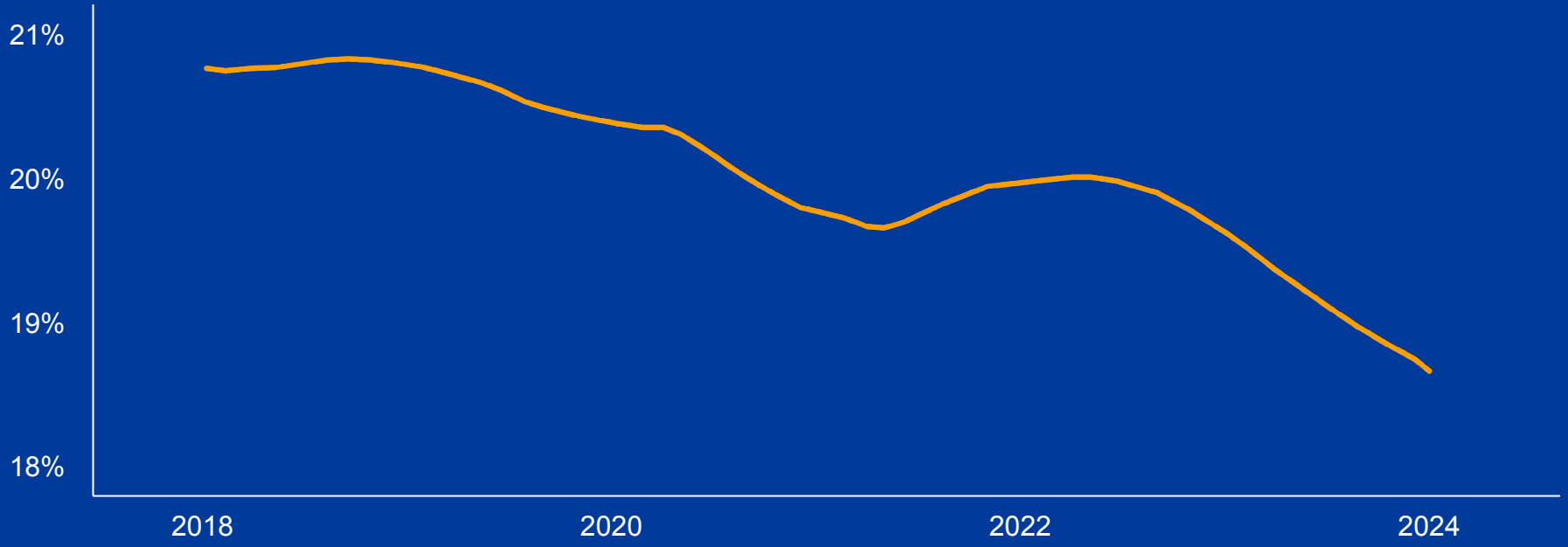
Degree requirements, minimum years of experience, or **on-site mandates** can exclude capable candidates before they’re ever seen.

Consider how policies related to **criminal records** or a lack of **accessibility accommodations** may be limiting access to great talent.

Removing barriers doesn’t lower standards—it opens doors.

Employers are becoming less likely to include college degree requirements in job postings

Share of US job postings requiring at least a bachelor's degree



Source: Indeed. 12 month moving average. Data is adjusted for changes in occupational mix over time and is based on lowest requirement mentioned.

Employers are becoming less likely to include education requirements in job postings

Based on lowest education requirement mentioned in job posting

Education level	Jan 2019	Jan 2024	Change (PPT)
No education mentioned	48.4%	52.4%	4.0
High school diploma or below	27.1%	25.9%	-1.2
Trade school or some college	0.5%	0.5%	0.0
Associate degree	3.6%	3.3%	-0.3
Bachelor’s degree or above	20.4%	17.8%	-2.6

Source: Indeed. Data is adjusted for changes in occupational mix over time and is based on lowest requirement mentioned.

87% of sectors have lower bachelor's degree or above requirements than they did five years ago

Sectors with the largest five-year decline in bachelor's degree+ requirements

Sector	Jan 2019	Jan 2022	Jan 2024	5-year change (PPT)
Project management	67.3%	64.7%	58.1%	-9.2
Information design and documentation	65.8%	64.9%	56.8%	-9.0
Software development	64.4%	61.9%	56.0%	-8.4
Logistic support	33.1%	28.4%	24.9%	-8.2
Human resources	57.4%	53.6%	49.3%	-8.1
Industrial engineering	72.8%	70.9%	65.1%	-7.7
Civil engineering	69.4%	68.3%	62.2%	-7.2
Marketing	48.9%	48.2%	41.9%	-7.0
Banking and finance	49.6%	47.8%	42.9%	-6.7
Mathematics	69.9%	70.7%	63.2%	-6.7

Source: Indeed. Data is adjusted for changes in occupational mix over time.

Indeed for Employers

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Writing a Skills-First Job Description: The Top 25 Job Skills to List in Job Descriptions

Edited by Indeed Employer Content Team
Last updated February 26, 2025

On this page

- Benefits of including a job skills list
- Top 25 job description skills examples
- How to choose which job skills to list
- Recent Job Description Examples articles

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Our mission

Indeed's Employer Resource Library helps businesses grow and manage their workforce. With over 15,000 articles in 6 languages, we offer tactical advice, how-tos

70M+ people are “STARs”

Workers
Skilled
Through
Alternative
Routes,
not a four-year degree.

Source: “STAR Barriers and Breakthroughs: A Framework to Improve STAR Economic Mobility”
Published by Opportunity@Work, 2024

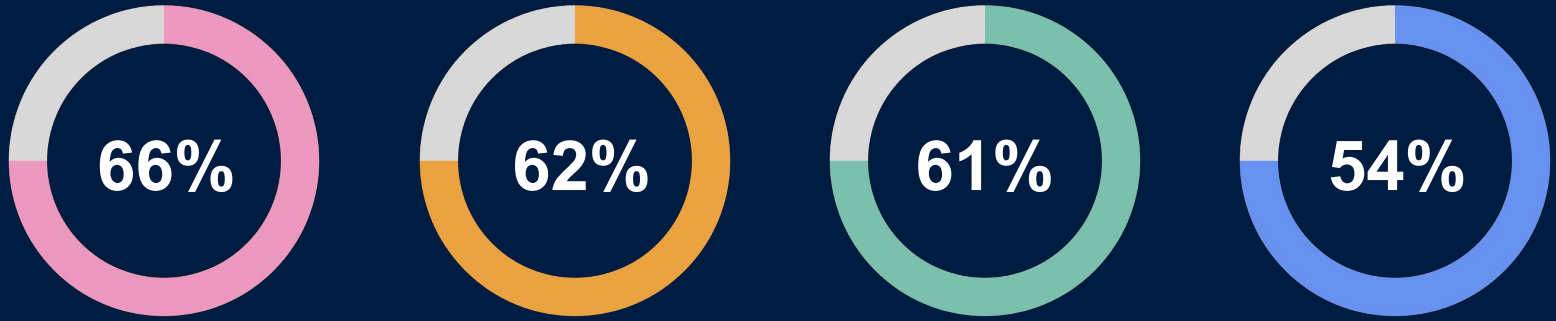
Hiring for skills rather than degrees enhances retention.

20%

STARs hired into roles that dropped degree requirements have a **20%** increase in retention compared to their college-educated coworkers

Source: Sigelman, M., Fuller, J., Martin, A. (February 2024)

Screening in STARs diversifies your talent pool



Rural workers

Black workers

Veteran workers

Hispanic workers

Source: “Reach for the STARs: Realizing the Potential of America’s Hidden Talent Pool,” Published by Opportunity@Work and Accenture, March 2020

Hiring & Evaluation

Screen for Skills, Not Proxies
Prioritize candidates based on what they can do—not where they've worked or what they've studied.

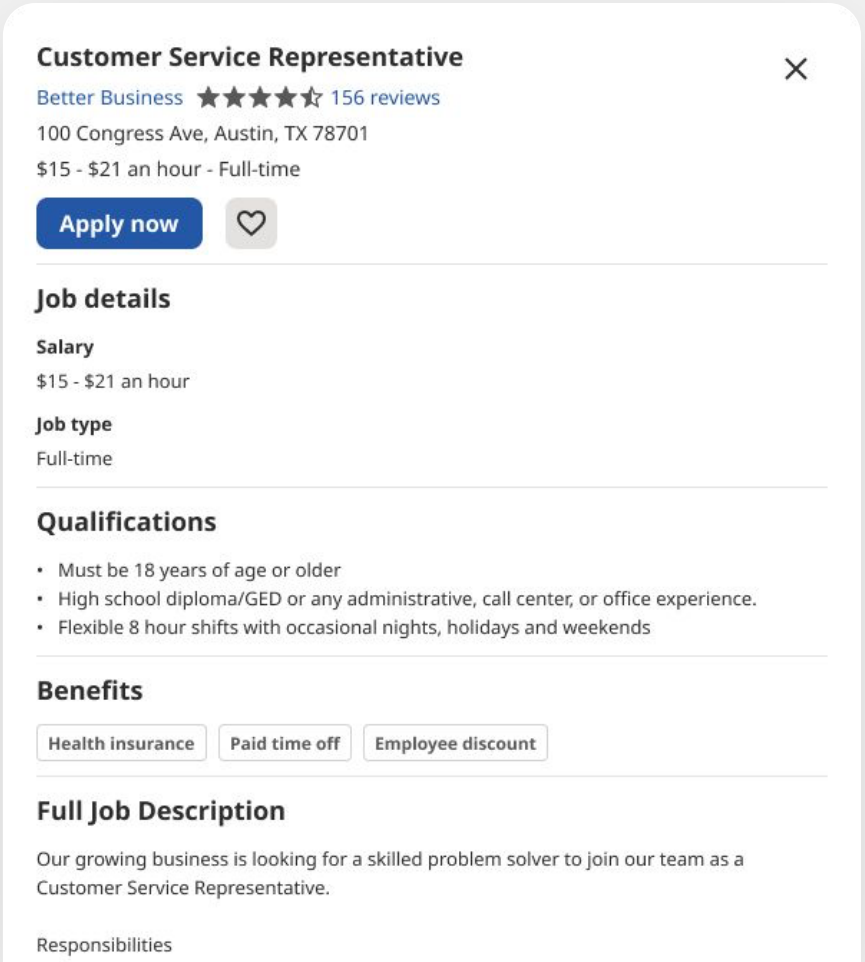
Evaluate Skills Consistently
Use structured interviews, scenario-based prompts, and job-relevant tasks to assess real capabilities.

Train Your Hiring Managers
Help managers recognize both technical and relational skills—especially in STAR and nontraditional candidates.

Activity: Skills Evaluation

Evaluate capabilities without creating barriers

1. What type of question, prompt, or task would allow a candidate to show this skill in action—regardless of background?
2. What does a strong response actually look or sound like for this role—and how will you know when you've seen it?
3. How will you evaluate responses in a consistent, structured way—especially for relational skills that feel subjective?
4. How could this evaluation process unintentionally favor certain candidates—and how might you design around that?
5. What support do your hiring managers need to evaluate these skills fairly, confidently, and quickly?



Skills-first hiring led to an astounding **4,000** job offers, with **40%** of those hired being completely new to patient care.

Source: “Skills-Based Hiring Case Study: The National Health Service,” Indeed, February 21, 2023

Onboarding & Learning

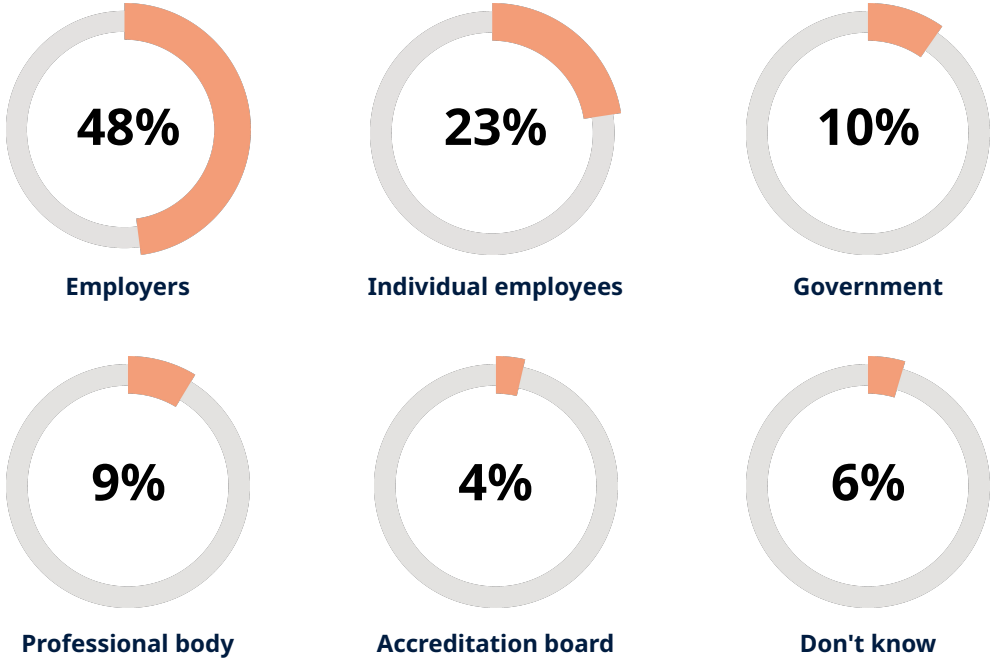
Expect to Train from Day One
Unicorns don’t exist. Plan to fill skill gaps with role-specific, on-the-job development from the start.

Invest Boldly in Continuous Growth
Offer personalized upskilling and reskilling resources—and the time, tools, and encouragement to use them.

Become an Educator, Not Just an Employer
Shift from occasional training to a culture of learning by building the workforce your future business depends on.

Build a Community of Coworkers
Foster relationships that grow emotional intelligence, collaboration, and leadership from within.

When thinking about developing the skills of employees in an organization, which of the following, if any, has the most responsibility?



Source: Indeed Survey with YouGov, December 2023

BOOST
Apprenticeship Program

Reskilling for internal mobility with BOOST

Turns potential into progress—helping non-technical employees grow into engineering roles and thrive through skills-first hiring.

Personalizing career growth with AI

Uses AI to open doors—matching employees to new roles, closing skill gaps, and making promotions fairer and more data-driven.

Source: “IBM Transforms Its Approach to Human Resources with AI,” www.shrm.org, May 20, 2019.

Retention & Mobility

Audit Skills to Unlock Internal Talent
Regularly assess employees' skills to surface strengths and align them with new opportunities.

Offer Dual-Track Promotions
Let people grow through mastery or management—don't force leadership as the only path forward.

Celebrate Growth Loudly and Often
Make internal moves visible and valued. Show what's possible when people grow with you.

Compensate for Capability
As people learn, grow, and contribute—compensation should evolve to reflect their increasing value.

Dual-Track Promotions

A growth model that values leadership *and* mastery in service of mission and culture.

Company Mission	**Why we're here**	
Company Culture	How we get there together	
	Leadership	**Mastery**
Skillset	Primarily Relational	Primarily Technical
Growth Path	Increasing the scope of care and responsibility within the organization.	Increasing the scope of influence and ownership across your domain.
Indicators	• Empathetic Communication • Relational Awareness • Motivates Without Authority	• Passion for Craft • Drive to Improve • Strategic Innovation

Talent Grows Where You Shine a Light

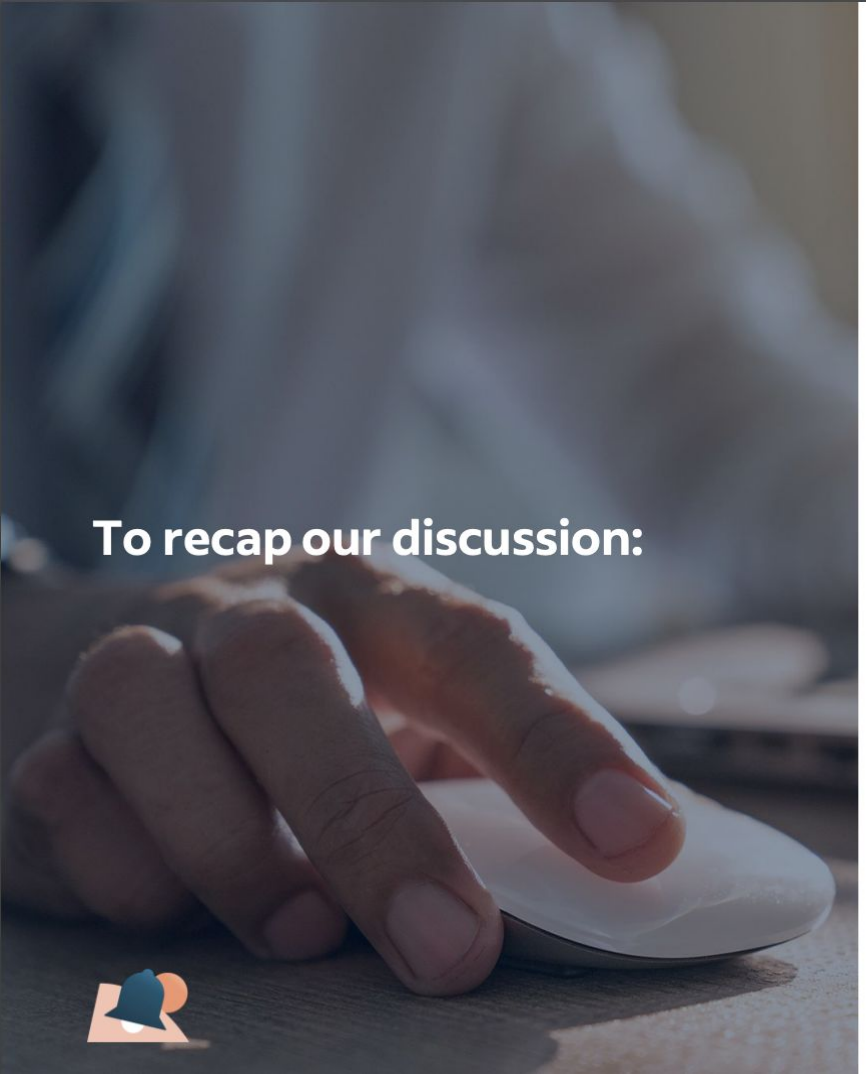
Recognition should reflect the whole person—their impact, their presence, and their ability to build community.

Alumni & Returnships

Stay Connected to Former Talent
Maintain alumni networks as a trusted source of skilled, values-aligned candidates.

Celebrate Alumni as Ambassadors
Recognize the growth and impact of former employees as part of your broader story.

Offer Returnship Opportunities
Treat exits as transitions, not breakups—welcome growth and boomerangs with open arms.



To recap our discussion:

Start Small, Go Big
You don’t have to reinvent the whole system overnight. Start with one role or team, and use that as your proving ground for what skills-first can look like in action.

Clear the Way to Great Work
Remove friction between people and their best work by eliminating barriers, building skills, and making space for people to grow in different ways.

Hire with Tomorrow in Mind
Your business is only as strong as the people you believe in. When you take care of people, people take care of business.

We help people get jobs.™

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FUTURE WORKS 2025

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September 10-11, 2025
New Orleans, Louisiana

Register virtually or reach out to your Indeed rep for an in-person pre-sale code.

Thank You!

Kyle M.K.
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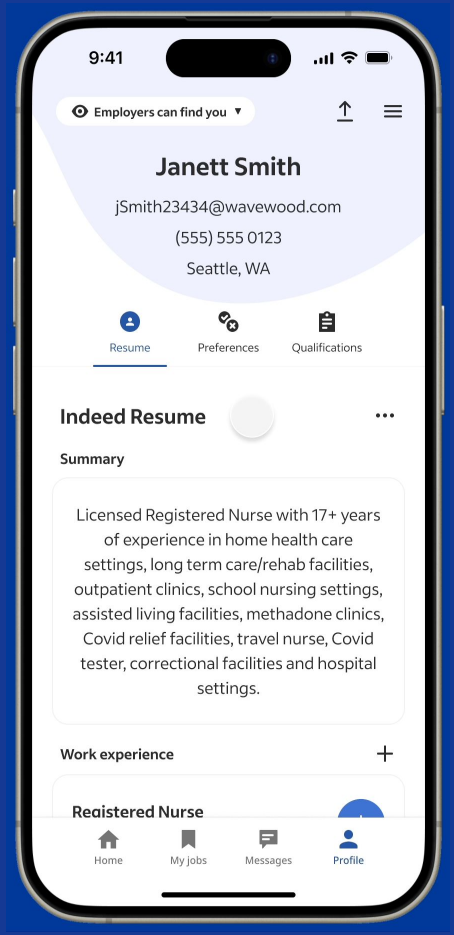
Appendix



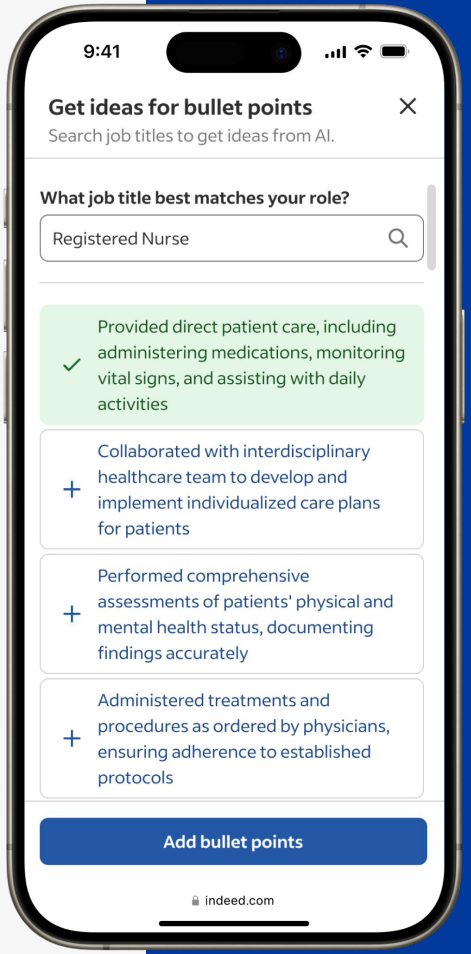
Indeed Profile

The expanded **Indeed Profile** allows job seekers to build a unique profile using new AI tools, have opportunities brought directly to them using their preferences, skills, and experiences, then apply to jobs with the click of a button.

It includes:

Enriched Profile
A redesigned look and feel to make it easier for job seekers to keep their profile up to date

Multi-Resume
Access up to 5 versions of their resume to customize their application to the job they want

Work Experience Writer
Receive suggestions to add impactful work description bullets to your profile based on your job title

Allowing Employers to Connect
A toggle allows job seekers to make themselves visible to employers and available for outreach