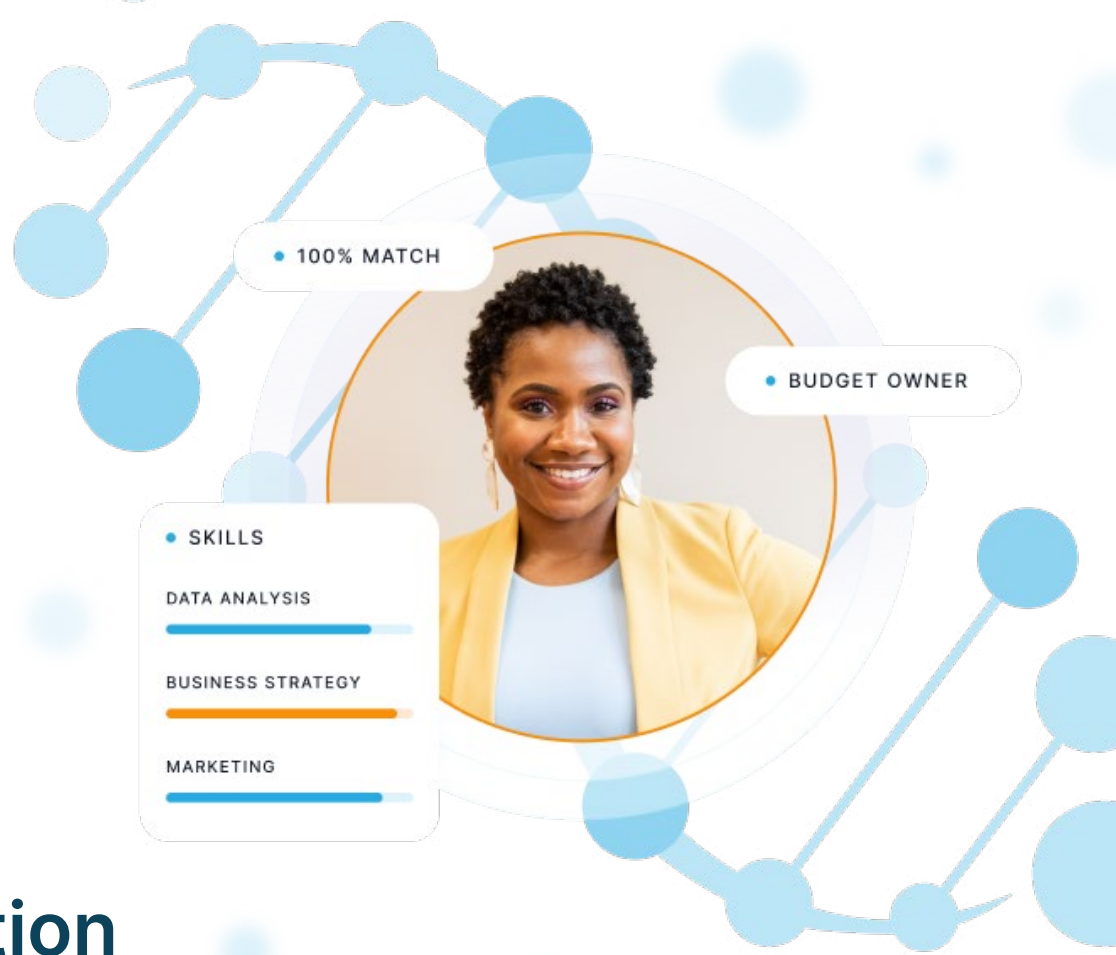


• GUIDE

# How to Use Skill Data for Smarter Talent Acquisition



## Introduction

As digital platforms for networking, learning, and hiring multiply, HR and Workforce teams have unprecedented access to top talent. Companies seeking to match candidates with roles based on specific skills can leverage vast amounts of data gathered from social networks, e-learning platforms, and other sources—though not all of these channels are equally reliable or fully compliant with regulations. With so many options, developing a strategic and reliable hiring process that prioritizes candidates' skills can be a complex endeavor.

The rapid rise of new certification programs, evolutions in job titles, and heightened global competition further complicates this process, making it harder to identify candidates with proven proficiency in key skill areas. The distinction between self-reported and officially verified skills has become increasingly blurry, complicating the process even further.

For multinational companies, these challenges are compounded by the need to find skilled candidates in global markets. This requires translating skill names, job titles, and professional certification standards across different languages and cultures. Hiring teams frequently struggle to equate job titles and professional qualifications from one region to another, making it difficult to fully grasp a candidate's capabilities. These complexities often necessitate the hiring of additional staff or specialized recruiters.

## So, with these challenges in mind, what's the most effective and reliable way to assess a candidate's skill set?

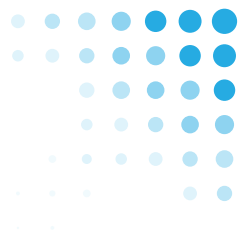
The answer lies in skill data. Skill data is a form of market intelligence that provides deeper insights into professionals' abilities and expertise. By leveraging skill data for talent acquisition, your team can find better-qualified candidates, reduce time-to-fill, and create a strong foundation for strategic employee education programs.

Curious to learn more? This guide will walk you through what skill data is, how it can transform recruitment, and practical strategies for implementing it—regardless of your budget.

## What is skills data?

Skill data reflects the abilities and expertise that professionals develop throughout their careers, encompassing everything from training and job experience to certifications and broader industry contributions. As the job market continues to evolve, so do skill requirements, making it essential for HR teams to proactively track and adapt to these changes to stay competitive.

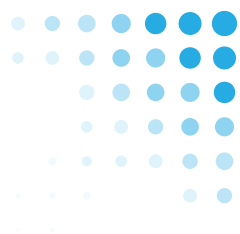
Industry experts typically classify skills into two categories:



### Hard skills

Technical, job-specific abilities

Examples: Ruby on Rails, Computer-Aided Design (CAD), Financial modeling



### Soft skills

Interpersonal traits that apply across industries and roles

Examples: Communication, Leadership, Flexibility

Understanding these skills is essential for evaluating a candidate's fit within your organization.

# Using Skill Data for Recruitment

Hiring based on skills requires a deep understanding of a candidate's qualifications. For this reason, skill-based hiring can be used to surface candidates that traditional recruitment methods, like title matching, typically miss. When collected and standardized by professionals, skill data is especially powerful for talent acquisition. Skill data can help HR teams uncover hidden talent in areas such as:

## Niche industries

Professionals working in specialized, technical fields that may otherwise go unnoticed.

## Emerging markets

As technology advances, skill data can highlight expertise in areas like prompt engineering or blockchain development.

## Rare skill/ industry combinations

Skill data enables HR teams to find candidates with unique cross-disciplinary knowledge, such as cryptocurrency experts with a background in sustainable supply chains.

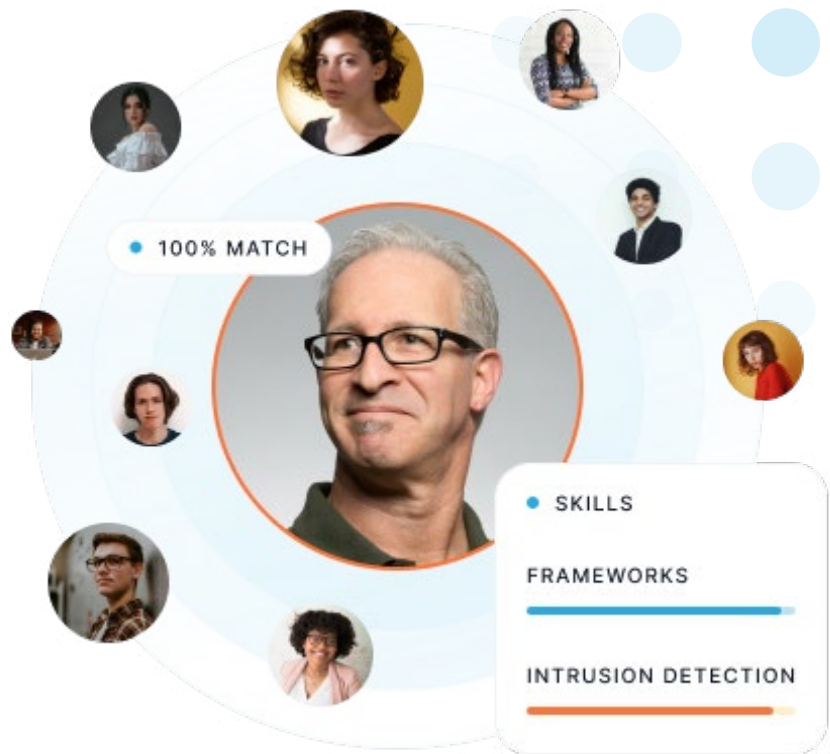
In addition to identifying new talent in hard-to-find areas, databases containing skill data allow HR teams search for specific abilities, such as:

## Technological expertise

Finding experts in specific tech platforms, specific versions of those tech platforms, and complex integrations is possible with skill data.

## Leadership abilities

Skill data can identify candidates with specialized leadership skills, such as managing remote or multilingual teams.



## Skills-based Targeting vs. Demographic Targeting

Traditional recruitment often relies on demographic targeting, with hiring teams using factors like job title, employer, and location to find prospective candidates. However, as the global job market shifts, this approach is becoming less effective. According to [SHRM's 2024 Talent Trends report](#), 73% of companies that switched to skill-based targeting successfully hired candidates who would have been overlooked using traditional methods.

Unlike title-based hiring, skill-based recruitment focuses on professionals' actual behaviors—like certifications earned, courses completed, patents filed, and responsibilities held—rather than surface-level markers. Targeting strategies that use behavioral data are proven to be more effective than strategies that rely on demographics alone. According to Microsoft, teams that leverage behavioral data for outreach [outperform their competitors by 85%](#).

# Skill-based Targeting In Action

Imagine a cybersecurity company, Cumulus Intelligence, seeking Engineering leaders with cloud storage and GDPR compliance expertise in the US and EMEA. To begin, the recruitment team has created a list of job titles (“Cybersecurity Manager”, “Engineering Manager”) and keywords (“cloud security, GDPR”) that reflect the type of candidates they’re looking for.

Their recruitment team could approach this in two ways: using a demographic or skill-based targeting method. Let’s see how each approach stacks up when it comes to finding potential hires:

## Demographic Targeting



### Strategy

Searching for job titles like “Cybersecurity Manager” or “Engineering Manager” and keywords like “cloud security” or “GDPR.”



### Result

While this method generates a large pool of candidates, many will lack the specialized skills required for the role. The reliance on job titles often leads to sifting through irrelevant profiles.

## Skill-based Targeting



### Strategy

Searching for candidates with specific **skills**, such as experience in **cloud security, GDPR compliance**, and managing global teams.



### Result

Skill-based targeting yields a focused list of candidates, uncovering professionals who may not have “Cybersecurity Manager” in their job titles but possess the precise skills needed for the role, like “Application Security Manager” or “Digital Forensics Lead.”

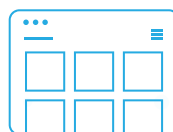
# How to Use Skills Data

Skill data is a critical tool for HR and workforce teams looking to refine their hiring strategies and make more informed decisions. By identifying candidates with the precise skills required for open positions, HR professionals can improve the quality of new hires while reducing time-to-fill. Skill data not only enhances recruitment, but also offers a range of additional benefits that can help teams drive growth and operational efficiency. Beyond recruitment, skill data can be leveraged in various other HR and Workforce functions, such as:



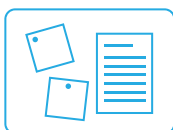
## Social Media:

Platforms like LinkedIn, Twitter, and GitHub offer insights into candidates' skills and industry contributions.



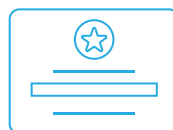
## Portfolio Websites:

Sites like Behance and Dribbble showcase professionals' tangible work and abilities.



## Job Boards:

Analyzing job postings on sites like Indeed and Glassdoor provides insights into hard and soft skills candidates may possess.



## Certifications and Learning Platforms:

Public records from Coursera or Udemy highlight professionals' expertise, certifications, and achievements.



### **Conference Presentations:**

Searching industry events or platforms like SlideShare reveals thought leadership and specialized skills.



### **Professional Associations:**

Organizations like SHRM and IEEE often list qualified members or publish relevant research.



### **Patents and Publications:**

Databases like Google Scholar and USPTO reveal professionals' expertise in niche fields.



### **Media Mentions and Awards:**

Industry achievements featured in the media can further validate skills.

While manually sourcing skill data across multiple sources is possible, this method can often lead to incomplete, fragmented, or outdated data—especially across global markets. Many teams turn to specialized vendors, like Rhetorik, who offer a deeper level of skill insight, leveraging advanced algorithms to provide skill analysis, trend reporting, and talent mapping. When integrating skill data into hiring processes, advanced organizations are likely to partner with a market intelligence provider who can offer reliable, comprehensive data at scale.



# Sourcing Skill Data at Scale


The manual collection of skill data can be inefficient and prone to errors. Like any non-automated process, its results are highly variable: the quality of skill data collected is highly dependent on the dedication of individual researchers. For these reasons, manual data collection is often undertaken by small teams with modest budgets and more flexible timelines.

For organizations seeking more reliable, scalable solutions, professional market intelligence providers can offer enterprise-grade accuracy and efficiency. Professional data providers like Rhetorik use AI-driven translation, localization, and normalization processes to collect, organize, and update global skill data, mitigating bias and risk. This results in skill data that is better suited for targeting, analysis, and decision-making.

To find the right solution for your team, assess your needs across accuracy, scalability, customization, and time efficiency:

## Data Collection Approaches

	Manual	Automated
Accuracy	Variable	High
Scalability	Limited	High
Customization	Highly customizable	Provider dependent
Time Efficiency	Low	High



For teams looking to optimize their talent acquisition efforts in less time, consider partnering with a trusted market intelligence provider like Rhetorik. Our data science team has built a proprietary **skill taxonomy and AI classification model** that uses machine learning to analyze professionals based on 30,000+ unique attributes, including patents, certifications, industry affiliations, media mentions, and more. Our skill taxonomy was designed with HR and Workforce teams in mind, so you can ensure your results are accurate, reliable, and industry-aligned.

In addition to our skill suite, our best-in-class products combine the power of cutting-edge AI models with trained data analysts to ensure our B2B data is up-to-date, legally compliant, and available across the globe.

## Interested in learning more?

Talk to a **data specialist** to learn more about how our HR and Workforce customers use skill data to find highly qualified candidates in less time.

[Contact Us](#)

