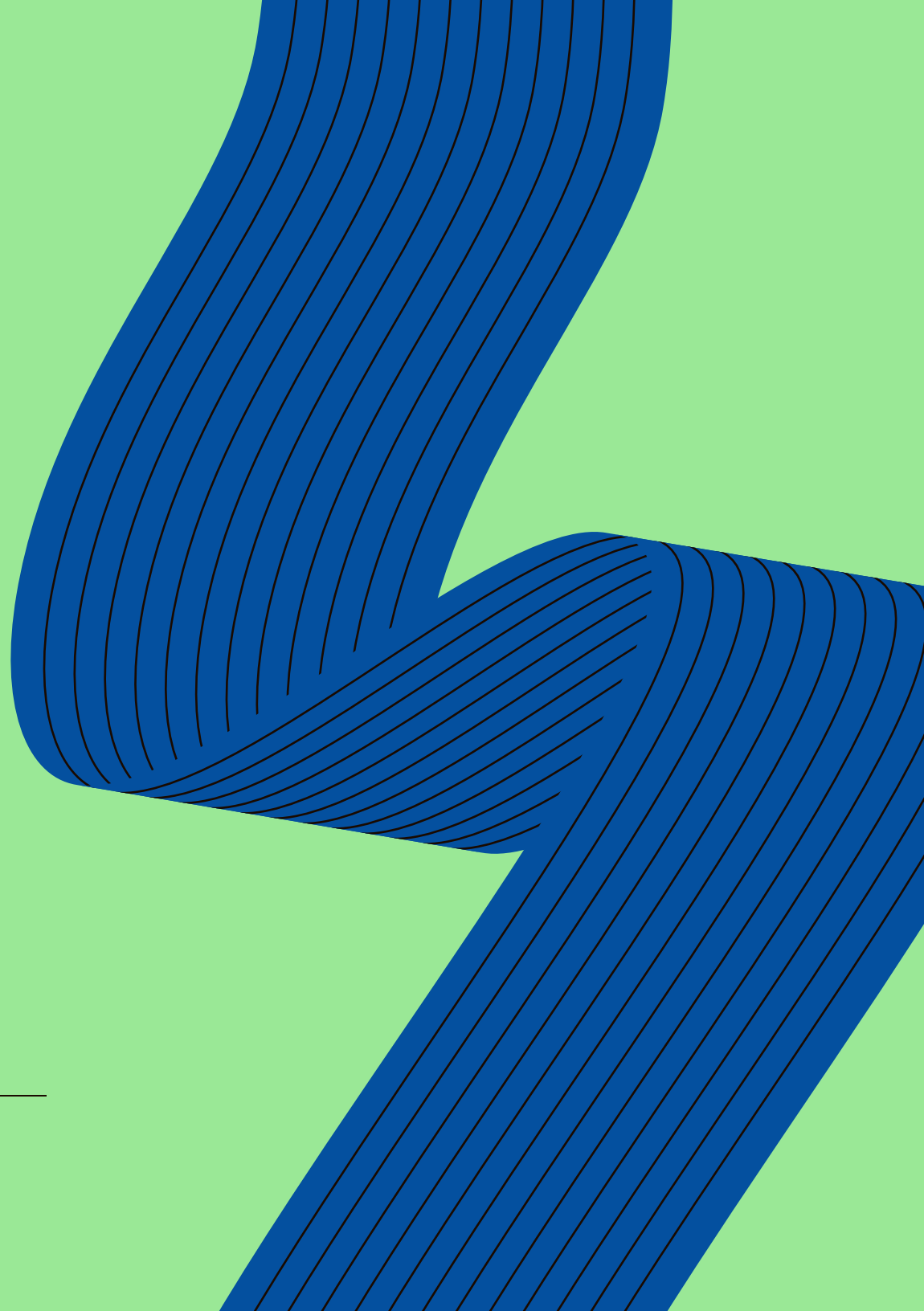# Guild

How to build the skills of tomorrow

Workbook

What are "the skills of tomorrow"?

With the pace of innovation and a near-constant state of technological disruption, predicting what skills future workforces will really need can seem like a tall order.

But when companies bring intention to building the foundational skills that actually make workforces resilient and agile, they're already preparing for tomorrow.

In this workbook, we will...

→ Skills companies actually need to build workforce agility and resilience

→ How to identify durable skills in your open roles

→ Why durable skills matter more than ever in the age of AI

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Workbook
How to build the skills of tomorrow

Start by thinking of skills in terms of their durability.

Skilling isn't static.

The concept of 'hard' and 'soft' skills is intended to demarcate skills that are either quantifiable (hard) or interpersonal (soft). As a framework, this isn't useful because it misses the critical interplay between skill types.

In today's knowledge economy —which relies on lifelong learning to keep pace with new ideas, technologies, and innovations— understanding how skills relate and build from one another is essential.

When we think of skills as **durable** or **perishable**, we can see how skills interrelate. Think of them as parts of a tree:

– **Durable skills** (the trunk) are the skills with the most staying power. They represent the foundational, teachable, measurable mindsets and dispositions that are highly transferable across roles (like communication and agility).

– **Semi-durable skills** (the branches) are industry-level knowledge and frameworks, from which specific processes, tools, and tech arise.

– **Perishable skills** (the leaves) are specialized and relate to specific policies, processes, and platforms (think coding languages, or AI prompt engineering). These often die off within a year or two and need to be replenished regularly.

Skills aren't "hard" or "soft." They are durable or perishable.
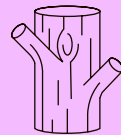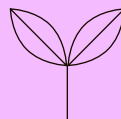
Durable | Half life = >7 years

– Teachable and measurable **mindsets and dispositions** that are highly transferable

– **Affect development & implementation** of frameworks and tech
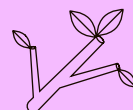
Semi durable | Half life = 2.5 - 7.5 years

– **Industry-related frameworks** from which tools, processes, and technologies arise

– **Likely to be replaced** as the field grows and evolves

Perishable | Half life = <2.5 years

– **Specialized** & related to **specific** vendors. platforms. coding languages, & org policy and proces

– Dependent on **fluid** tools and organizational structure evolves

Durable skills are the **foundational professional skills** that improve performance and ensure employees can meaningfully engage with their work, peers, and managers. These include:

Managing yourself
(e.g., time management, growth-mindset, goal-setting, creativity)

Making decisions
(e.g., problem solving, analytical thinking, creativity, logic)

Customer service
(e.g., sales, service, empathy, inquiry)

Working with managers & leaders
(e.g., upward feedback, self-advocacy, communication, receiving feedback)

Working with a team
(e.g., collaboration, conflict resolution, building trust)

Identify durable skills in your open roles.

Durable skills may take time to develop and hone, but they're easy (and important) to identify. Here's one way you can find some of your most high-demand durable skills in a matter of minutes:

Pull up the job descriptions for three of your open roles

Copy / paste them into an AI tool like **ChatGPT** or **Perplexity** and prompt it to identify the durable skills required within the job description ("List the durable skills in this job description: [paste]" works as a prompt.) —You can also highlight them yourself.

Double-check listed durable skills by prompting an AI tool to independently name the durable skills expected in a given role (e.g. "List the durable skills an employee in [X role] at [your organization] would need").

Durable skills are a constant across high-demand roles.

Excerpts of expected skills and knowledge from open roles for a Nurse Practitioner, Data Scientist, and Financial Manager.

Below are 3 real job descriptions of 3 extremely different jobs (Nurse Practitioner, Data Scientist, Financial Manager)

– What do each of these very distinct roles with specific skill sets have in common?

– Durable skills are a constant across high-demand roles (as seen in the highlighted text below).

Nurse Practitioner

Ability to: **Work effectively with individuals and families** to assist them in solving physical, mental and social health problems; work effectively as a member of a health team; **speak and write effectively** including the preparation of clear and concise reports; **recognize social problems** which affect health; instruct in the prevention of disease, good health practices, and the health care of an ill or injured person...

Data Scientist

– Technical expertise in machine learning, deep learning, statistical analysis, and software development

– Proficient in data mining, machine learning, and deep learning packages in Python/Tensorflow/Keras

– Proficient in coding SQL, Python, Java, or JavaScript

– **Ability to work in a fast-paced, iterative development environment**

– **Good communication skills, ability to work with cross-functional teams** of technical and non-technical associates

Financial Manager

– Bachelor's Degree in Accounting

– 5+ years of accounting experience, including 3+ years nonprofit accounting experience

– **Strong administrative and organizational skills, detail oriented**

– **Excellent communication skills, both written and oral**

– **Strong interpersonal and collaboration skills**

– Comfort and confidence **working in a fast-paced environment, manage multiple priorities and tasks** simultaneously, and **adapt to new inputs or emerging opportunities/needs...**

Look at the programs you currently offer to fill your open roles.

Programs offering durable skills aren't in ready supply for many companies offering education benefits. Videos and passive learning do little to actually build these skills — and degrees aren't feasible for everyone in your workforce.

Instead, short-form options that will provide meaningful interactive learning experiences support

Are these programs accessible? Could someone who is short on time do them? What about someone who doesn't already have a college degree?

Do these programs describe durable skills as an outcome?

Do short-form programs teach how to use these skills (or do they only teach about durable skills)? Many micro-learning courses are video based and lack the interactive elements needed to actually grow and use durable skills at work.
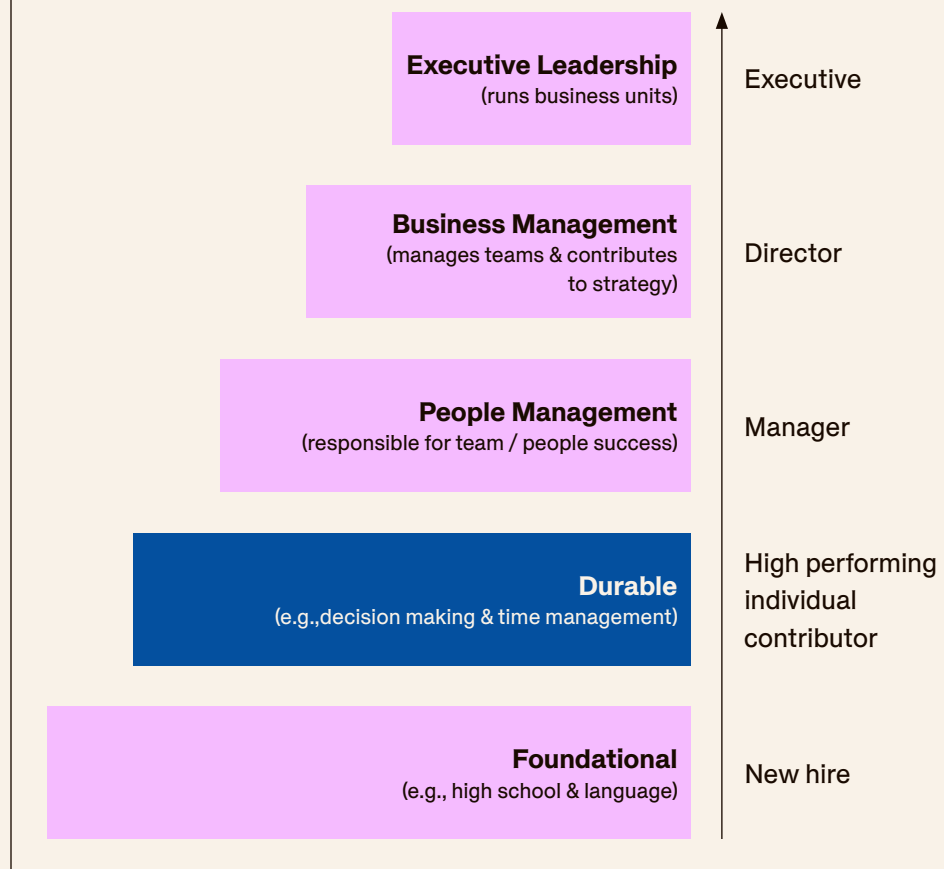
Do any of our programs focus on durable skills for the workplace?

Durable skills support equitable access to career growth.

Over-indexing on any one skill type won't serve your workforce. Unfortunately, the combined urgency of today's job market and increasingly fast innovation means many employers are focusing the bulk of their attention on **perishable skills like AI**.

In reality, all three skill types are critical. But without durable skills, employees miss opportunities to fill role gaps, grow into management positions, and obtain many of the critical perishable skills their employers are scrambling for in the first place.

Durable skills are a critical but often missing part of the onramp to management

Executive Leadership (runs business units)	Executive
Business Management (manages teams & contributes to strategy)	Director
People Management (responsible for team / people success)	Manager
Durable (e.g.,decision making & time management)	High performing individual contributor
Foundational (e.g., high school & language)	New hire

Durable skills in the age of AI.

AI is going to put a premium on durable skills.

Durable skill-intensive jobs are anticipated to account for two-thirds of occupations by 2030 — and grow at 2.5x the rate of jobs that aren't skill-intensive.[1]

2/3
of all occupations are expected to be durable-skill intensive by 2030.

2.5x
durable-skill intensive jobs are expected to grow at 2.5x the rate of other jobs.

This means two things:

1. Durable skills will become increasingly critical in the coming months and years and

2. Your entire workforce needs access to role-appropriate AI skills now.

Durable skills are a force multiplier.

We build durable skills at work and in our day-to-day, often without realizing it. For many in leadership positions, a critical time to build these skills intentionally was through the traditional university pathway that many frontline employees were unable to access.

By offering the opportunity to further develop, hone, and refine these skills in an intentional and systematic way, talent leaders open the door for more frontline workers to prepare for growth into priority and management roles.

By building the foundational skills to ensure more frontline workers are prepared for priority roles and management, workforces are agile and resilient to changing business needs and digital innovation.

Ready to overcome your top talent hurdles?

Get in touch with an expert to see how Guild can help you reach your goals.

Sources

1   Deloitte, Soft skills for business success, 2017.

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