![getsmarter™]

Prepare for *the Future* of Work

**Explore emerging skills gaps in a changing world – and find out how you can fill them.**

● Introduction

Exponential change across political, socioeconomic and technological fields have impacted the workplace and created a shift in the roles and corresponding skills that are currently in demand.

To investigate these shifts, GetSmarter, a 2U, Inc. brand, conducted research on the **Future of Work** that surveyed over 8,000 global professionals – from talent acquisition professionals to business managers – across a wide variety of industries. The research assessed the degree of change currently being experienced, the reasons for the change, and how businesses are preparing for the future. This guide offers insight into the next wave of growth opportunities – for you and your organisation.
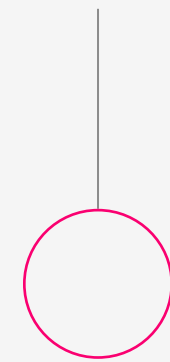
The employment landscape is in a state of constant flux as the rise of digitisation, automation, and artificial intelligence (AI) is set to change the future of careers for as many as 375 million global employees by 2030.[1] According to GetSmarter's research findings, professionals across industries are feeling the pressures of this change:

51 per cent of people managers and **41 per cent** of employees say they have experienced considerable change within their organisations and jobs in the last 18 months

54 per cent of people managers expect even more significant change over the next year and a half

49 per cent of human resource (HR) and learning and development (L&D) professionals and **51 per cent** of employees predict innovative technology to be the biggest driver of future change, followed by evolving business strategy
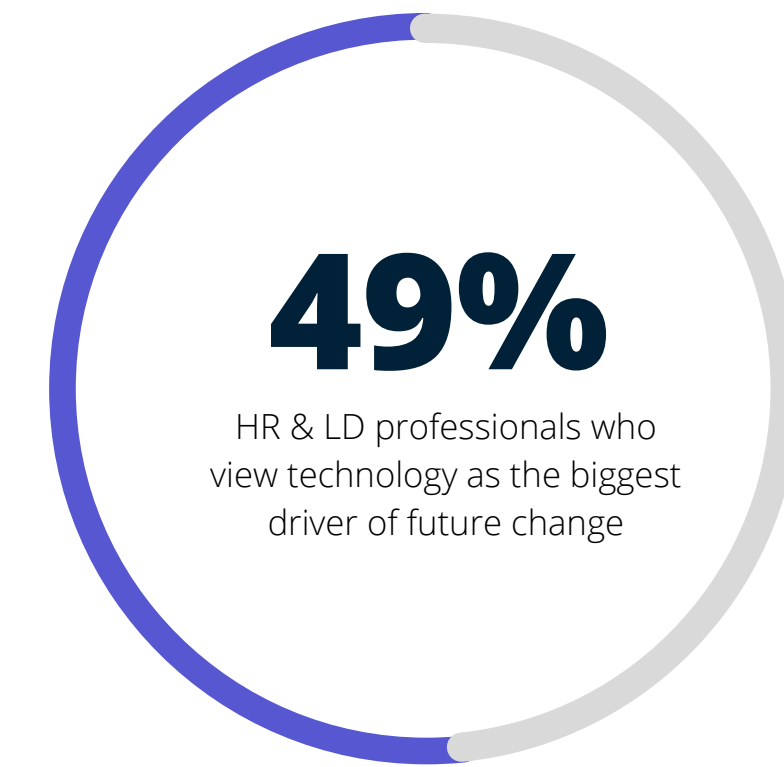
Even though the introduction of automation through robotics and AI promises greater efficiency, convenience, and financial benefit to a business, it also creates considerable uncertainty amongst decision makers and employees around skills redundancy and the impending skills gap surrounding these new technologies. Over **70 per cent** of businesses believe they're ill-prepared in having the right talent for this digital transformation.[2]

To close the skills gap, **40 per cent** of HR, L&D and talent managers, as well as **47 per cent** of people managers, are turning to **upskilling their teams,** rather than hiring external talent.

And, while there is a need to address technical and analytical shortcomings, the research also found a **growing demand for interpersonal and leadership skills** in the face of uncertainty.

51%
of people managers

41%
of employees
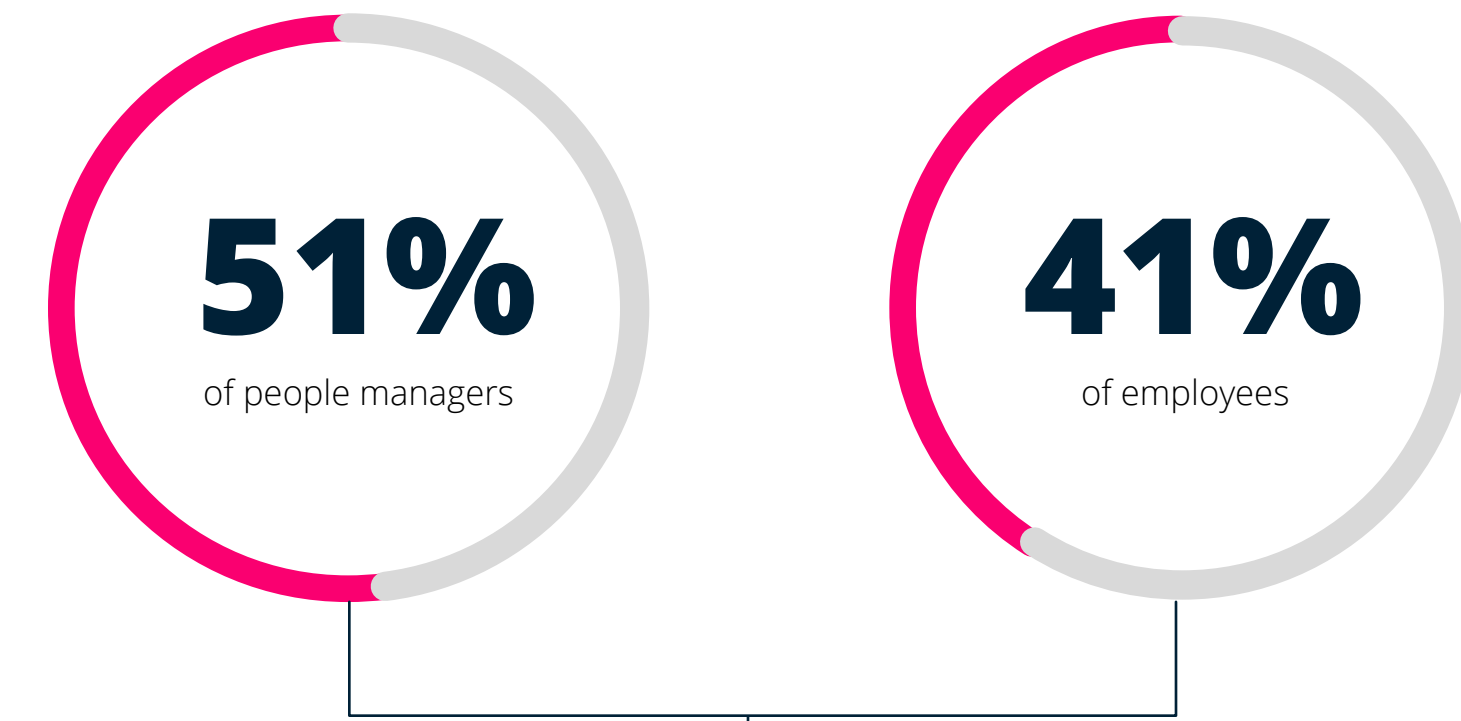
have experienced significant organisational change in the last 18 months

54%
People managers who expect significant organisational change in the next 18 months

49%
HR & LD professionals who view technology as the biggest driver of future change

[1] Illanes, P, et al. (Jan, 2018). 'Retraining and reskilling workers in the age of automation'. Retrieved from McKinsey. | [2] Snyder, S. (Jan, 2019). 'Talent, not technology, is the key to success in a digital future'. Retrieved from World Economic Forum.
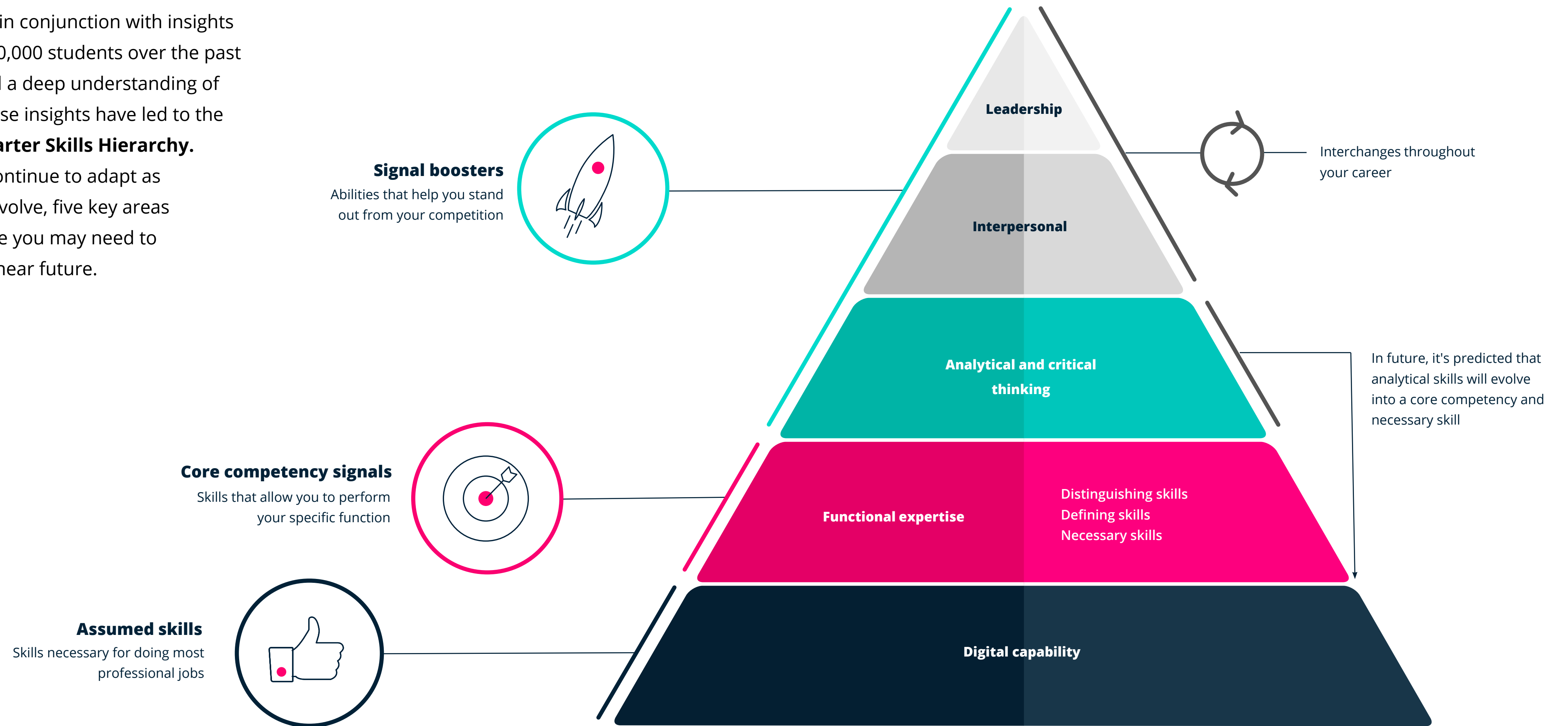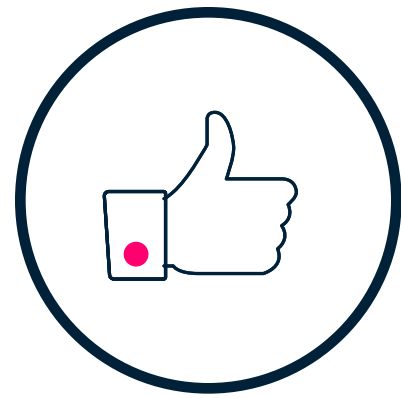
The GetSmarter *Skills* Hierarchy

Discover ways to navigate the changing work landscape, and understand the next step in skills development with the GetSmarter Skills Hierarchy.
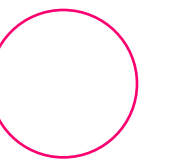
The GetSmarter Skills Hierarchy

GetSmarter's research in conjunction with insights gathered from over 100,000 students over the past 12 years have provided a deep understanding of the future of work. These insights have led to the creation of the **GetSmarter Skills Hierarchy.** While this model will continue to adapt as the nature of careers evolve, five key areas act as a guide for where you may need to upskill or reskill in the near future.

Signal boosters
Abilities that help you stand out from your competition

Core competency signals
Skills that allow you to perform your specific function

Assumed skills
Skills necessary for doing most professional jobs

Leadership

Interpersonal

Analytical and critical thinking

Functional expertise

Distinguishing skills
Defining skills
Necessary skills

Digital capability

Interchanges throughout your career

In future, it's predicted that analytical skills will evolve into a core competency and necessary skill

Assumed skills

Assumed skills are so necessary for doing a job that companies generally don't even ask if a candidate has them.

Digital capabilities

Digital capabilities can be defined as the skills you need to make use of typical office software. While previously this may have just meant being able to use Microsoft Office, the increased need for collaborative online work means that you could be expected to use tools like Google's G-suite, Slack, Zoom and Microsoft Teams. These are the foundation of the model and may be essential to be considered for many professional roles.
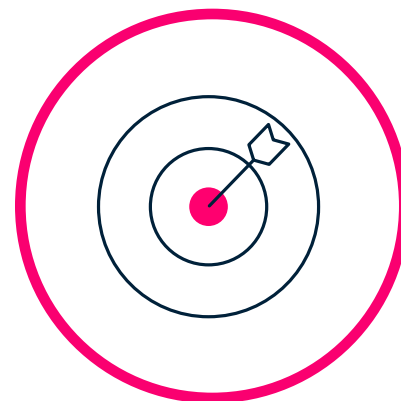
Core competency signals

Core competencies are a group of skills or attributes that employees need to carry out their actual job effectively.

Functional expertise

These skills are usually aligned with your specific business function and act as your 'core signal' to the job market or your current employer that you're competent in your field. However, there are three layers to this area. In adapting thinking from Burning Glass Technologies,[3] using the example of a marketing manager, these layers include:

Necessary skills: These are specialised skills that are required for the job and are relevant across other similar jobs. They act as building blocks to the more complex defining skills. Market research, product development and market planning would all fit under this category.

Defining skills: These are the day-to-day tasks and responsibilities of the job and are needed to perform the role successfully. For example, social media strategy, marketing strategy development, budgeting and product marketing.

Distinguishing skills: These are advanced or specialised skills that are occasionally required. It may also mean understanding how disruptive technologies could impact the position's function. For a marketing manager, this could include having expertise in branding strategy, content management and global marketing.

In order to close your skills gap, start with establishing a solid base of the necessary skills for your current role. Then aim towards gaining distinguishing skills to prepare yourself for future positions.

Skills that start out as distinguishing are often born out of new technologies and tend to change depending on business models or the market. Over time these skills may become more prevalent and move down to the defining, and eventually necessary, level.

It's important to note that skills movement between the three levels may happen quickly and regularly. In 2016, market research for example, was considered a distinguishing skill, yet today is deemed a necessary skill for marketing managers to be effective in their roles.

[3] (2019). 'Occupation analysis – skills explorer™'. Retrieved from Burning Glass Technologies.
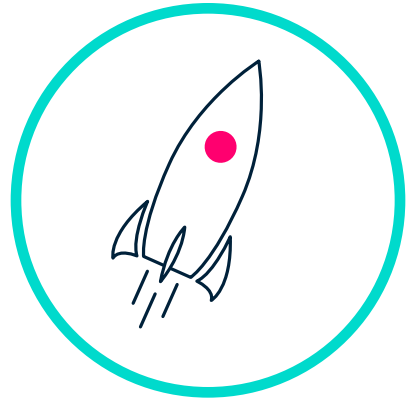
Signal boosters

Signal boosters are considered highly sought after skills that help a candidate stand out from their competition.

Analytical and critical thinking skills

The growing volume of available data is fundamentally changing what's possible across every industry. As such, employees with strong analytical skills are needed in almost all areas of business. Historically, finance and marketing functions have been most reliant on an analytical skill set, yet it's becoming increasingly important in a number of other fields. Modern HR leaders, for example, are looking to build strong talent analytics teams, and even those in creative roles now need to be able to assess the commercial impact of their work.

Being able to analyse data is also only one aspect of the skill. The real value lies in being able to critically consider what insights the data is providing, and then harnessing these to drive business decisions. Significantly, as the need for this skill grows across industries it's likely that it will evolve into a core competency and necessary skill on the GetSmarter Skills Hierarchy in future.

Interpersonal skills

In a business landscape marked by complexity, uncertainty and radical change, as well as geographically spread teams and increasingly flatter business structures, there's a greater need for collaboration than ever before. This has led to an increased focus on effective communication, productive working relationships, and the ability to persuade and influence others positively. Interpersonal skills are becoming a required foundational layer from which to develop strong leadership skills.

Leadership skills

As different generations now make up the workplace, and there's an increased need to build more inclusive and diverse teams, the demands on leaders have also changed. Businesses need to be able to balance results-driven focus with transparency, approachability and sustainability.

Interpersonal and leadership skills are also never completely mastered. In fact, the need to develop these softer skills could be considered as cyclical throughout your career. The stronger the set of interpersonal skills you develop, the better your chances of progressing your career. However, as your career progresses and your responsibilities grow, so does your need to improve your interpersonal skills or leadership ability.

Critical skills gaps

GetSmarter's research findings highlights the varying perceptions surrounding capability gaps in organisations: Both HR team members and people managers listed **leadership skills** as requiring the the most attention, while individual contributors considered the biggest gap to be **interpersonal skills.** People managers and individual contributors also believe that **digital capabilities** feature highly as opposed to those in HR who rank them as the least pressing concern.

Largest skills gaps according to different professionals

The following areas were ranked in order of level of skills gaps that exist in organisations

HR, talent managers and L&D | **People managers** | **Individual contributors**

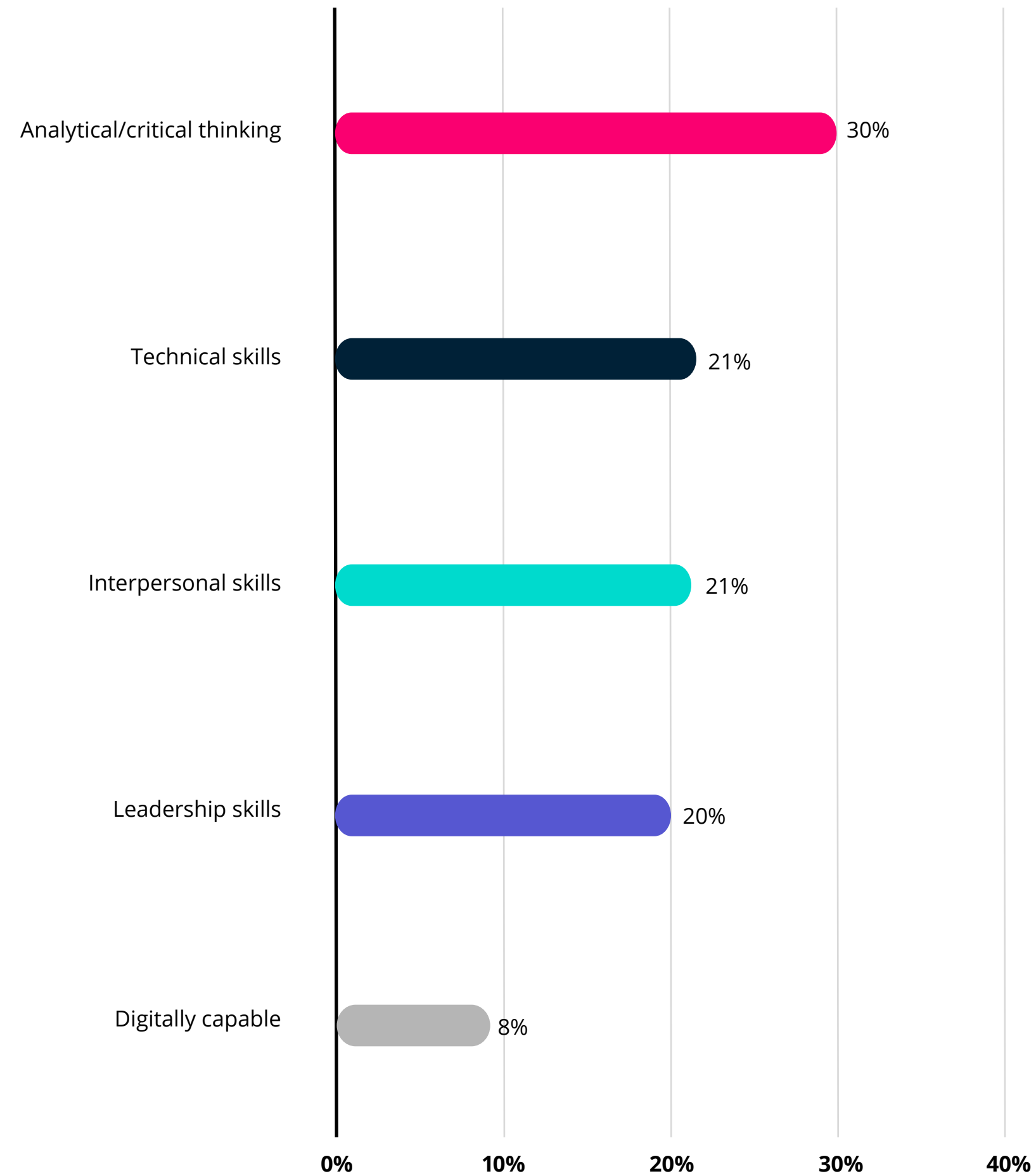Legend: High (dark navy), Moderate (pink), Low (grey)
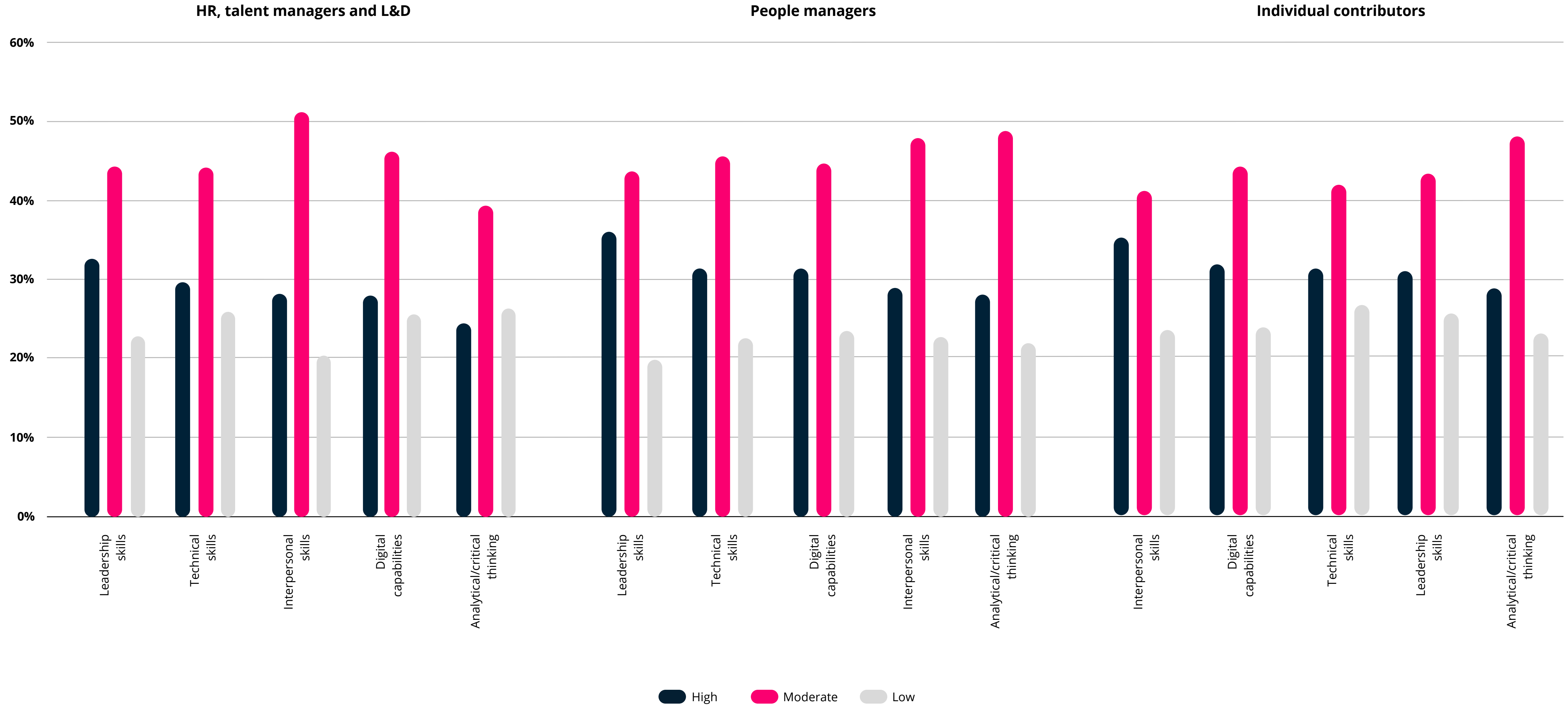
These findings suggest that while technical expertise is in high demand from those in hiring positions, leadership and interpersonal skills are equally, if not more, sought-after. As the business landscape becomes more complex, the need for these softer skills is likely to continue to grow.
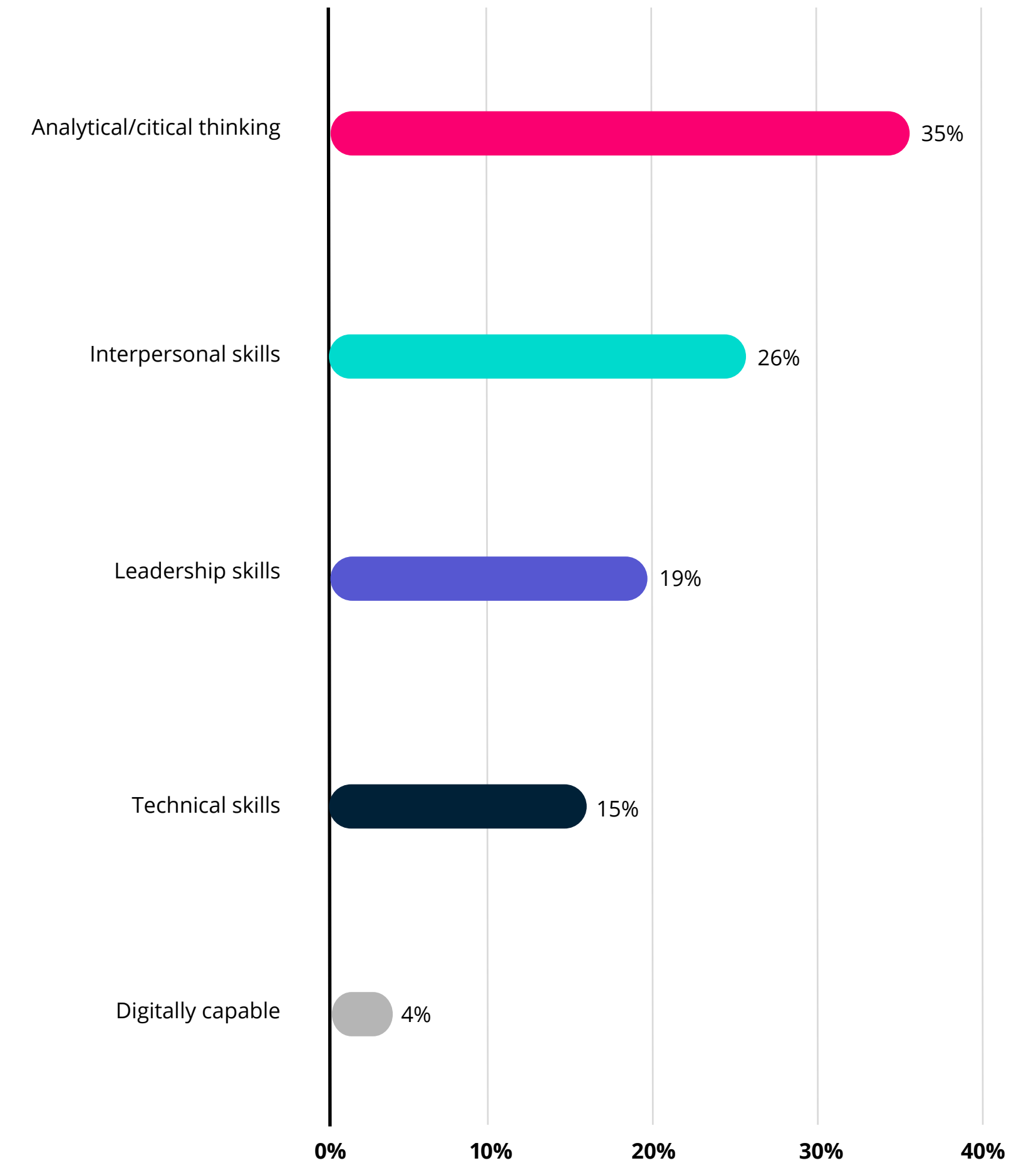
What skills do employers value most
While the majority of professionals believe interpersonal skills to be the biggest gap in their organisations, this directly contradicts what they believe their employers value most. Among individual contributors, the majority think that analytical skills are most valued by their employers, followed by technical skills.

However, while those in hiring positions, such as HR, agree on the importance of **analytical ability,** they view **interpersonal skills** as a close second and only rank technical skills as fourth. This may suggest that HR professionals are looking more to a future where the ability to work well with others trumps technical ability in the hiring process. As seen in the **GetSmarter Skills Hierarchy,** these skills have also become a differentiating factor for applicants in a competitive landscape where technical abilities are becoming increasingly assumed.

The skills *perceived* to be most valued by employers

Skill	%
Analytical/critical thinking	30%
Technical skills	21%
Interpersonal skills	21%
Leadership skills	20%
Digitally capable	8%

The skills *actually* valued most by employers

Skill	%
Analytical/citical thinking	35%
Interpersonal skills	26%
Leadership skills	19%
Technical skills	15%
Digitally capable	4%

Continuous *learning*

Whose responsibility is it to ensure that employees are growing their skills and remaining relevant?
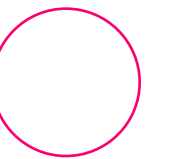
In order to fill emerging skills gaps it has become increasingly important for professionals to prioritise development, both in technical and analytical ability as well as in leadership and interpersonal skills. This is crucial for individuals who want to remain competitive in the job market, but also for companies who need the right talent to thrive in a modern, shifting business environment.

In GetSmarter's research, it was found that employees feel personally accountable for their learning paths, whereas those working in talent management and human resources view it as a business or joint responsibility. This misalignment could indicate that employees are unaware of the fact that their employer may be willing to **support their development.**
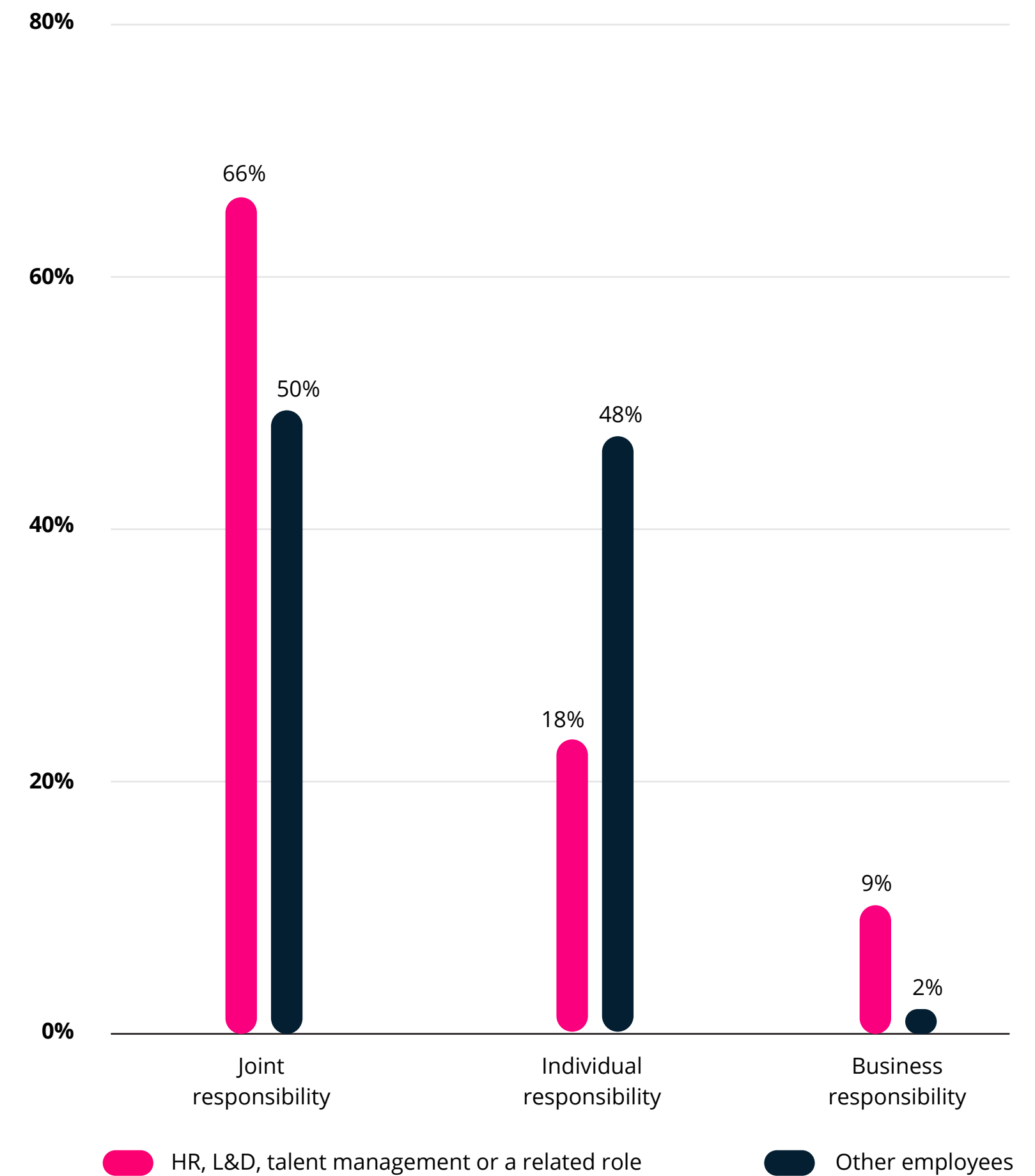
The need for continuous upskilling has also changed the format and frequency of learning for many professionals. As the modern-day employee is required to develop entirely new skills to compensate for disruption, performance support learning material (or micro-learning) is no longer sufficient to keep the workforce adequately skilled. Rather, a successful career requires

a combination of both continued micro-learning and macro-learning at key points throughout their development.

Today, a popular form of macro-learning is skills-based certificates. These show that you have specific skills or knowledge tied to an occupation, technology, or industry and tend to be offered by a professional organisation that specialises in a particular field or technology. GetSmarter's research shows that almost **70 per cent** of HR, L&D and talent managers believe that skills-based certificates are currently a valuable signal of capability on a potential candidate's CV, and **72 per cent** believe that this will become increasingly valuable in future.

Thankfully for busy working professionals, these skills-based certificates are now often offered online. This isn't only effective in helping you master technical skills; opportunities exist to assist L&D with the interpersonal skills gap their organisations are experiencing: **69 per cent** of HR managers believe that a person can effectively learn interpersonal skills online.

**Do you believe that continuous learning is an individual or business responsibility?**

Legend: HR, L&D, talent management or a related role (pink); Other employees (dark)

- Joint responsibility: 66% / 50%
- Individual responsibility: 18% / 48%
- Business responsibility: 9% / 2%

[4](Nd). 'Earning a certification can help you enter or advance in many careers'. Retrieved from Career One Stop. Accessed 5 Jan 2019.

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How to prepare for your *future career*

To help you navigate the changing landscape and ensure you're equipped with the tools for career longevity, follow these **five steps.**
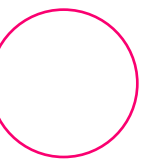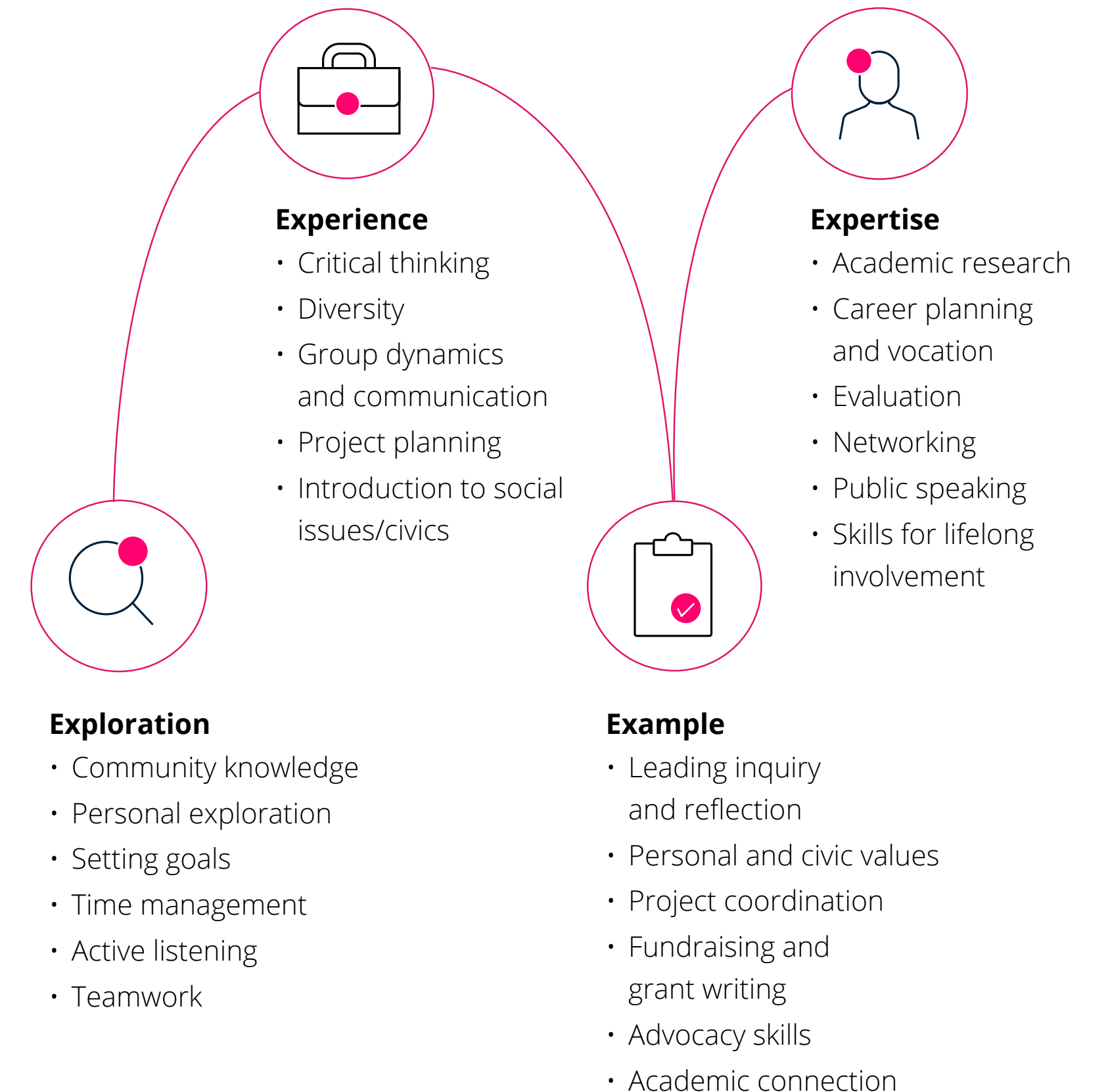
01

Create a skills development *road map*

Find out which skills are currently in demand in your organisation or the organisation you're interested in joining.[5] Most companies have a clear idea of the technology they want to adopt, or have recently integrated, and subsequently what skills are in shortfall in their organisation. Explore what training, if any, your L&D team has lined up and indicate your interest.

If you're considering a change in your career trajectory, and the in-demand skills fall outside of your current scope, then seize the opportunity to learn those skills. Find out if your organisation has a skills development programme or whether they allow for a department swap, which could expose you to new learning opportunities.[6] Otherwise, speak to a skilled person or subject matter expert within your company who is willing to mentor you and share their insights with you.[7] This also allows you to learn in a risk-free way.[8]

For your road map, spend time researching the career in question, how in-demand it is, its shelf life, and how frequently it's adapted or updated. Map the role requirements to your existing strengths and weaknesses[9] and, consider any complementary skills that support or amplify the ones you're going to acquire.

Once you have an idea of the skills needed in your interest fields, build your road map and assign deadlines to your goals. If this is your first attempt, consider listing one skill at a time and make provision for mentoring or job shadow time.[10] Be careful not to make your road map too idealistic.

Your skills development journey

Experience
- Critical thinking
- Diversity
- Group dynamics and communication
- Project planning
- Introduction to social issues/civics

Expertise
- Academic research
- Career planning and vocation
- Evaluation
- Networking
- Public speaking
- Skills for lifelong involvement

Exploration
- Community knowledge
- Personal exploration
- Setting goals
- Time management
- Active listening
- Teamwork

Example
- Leading inquiry and reflection
- Personal and civic values
- Project coordination
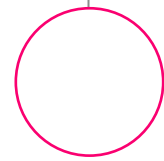- Fundraising and grant writing
- Advocacy skills
- Academic connection

[5] Joshi, N. (Feb, 2019). 'Roadmap to digital skill development'. Retrieved from BBN Times. | [6] Craig, W. (Aug, 2018). '8 ways to successfully develop employees year round'. Retrieved from Forbes. | [7] Shimkus, D. (Aug, 2019). 'How investing in your career today will set you up for career success tomorrow'. Retrieved from Forbes. | [8] Brassey, J. et al. (Feb, 2019). 'Shaping individual development along the s-curve'. Retrieved from McKinsey. | [9] Brassey, J. et al. (Feb, 2019). 'Shaping individual development along the s-curve'. Retrieved from McKinsey. | [10] Profita, M. (Jul, 2019). '10 steps to a successful career change'. Retrieved from The Balance Careers.
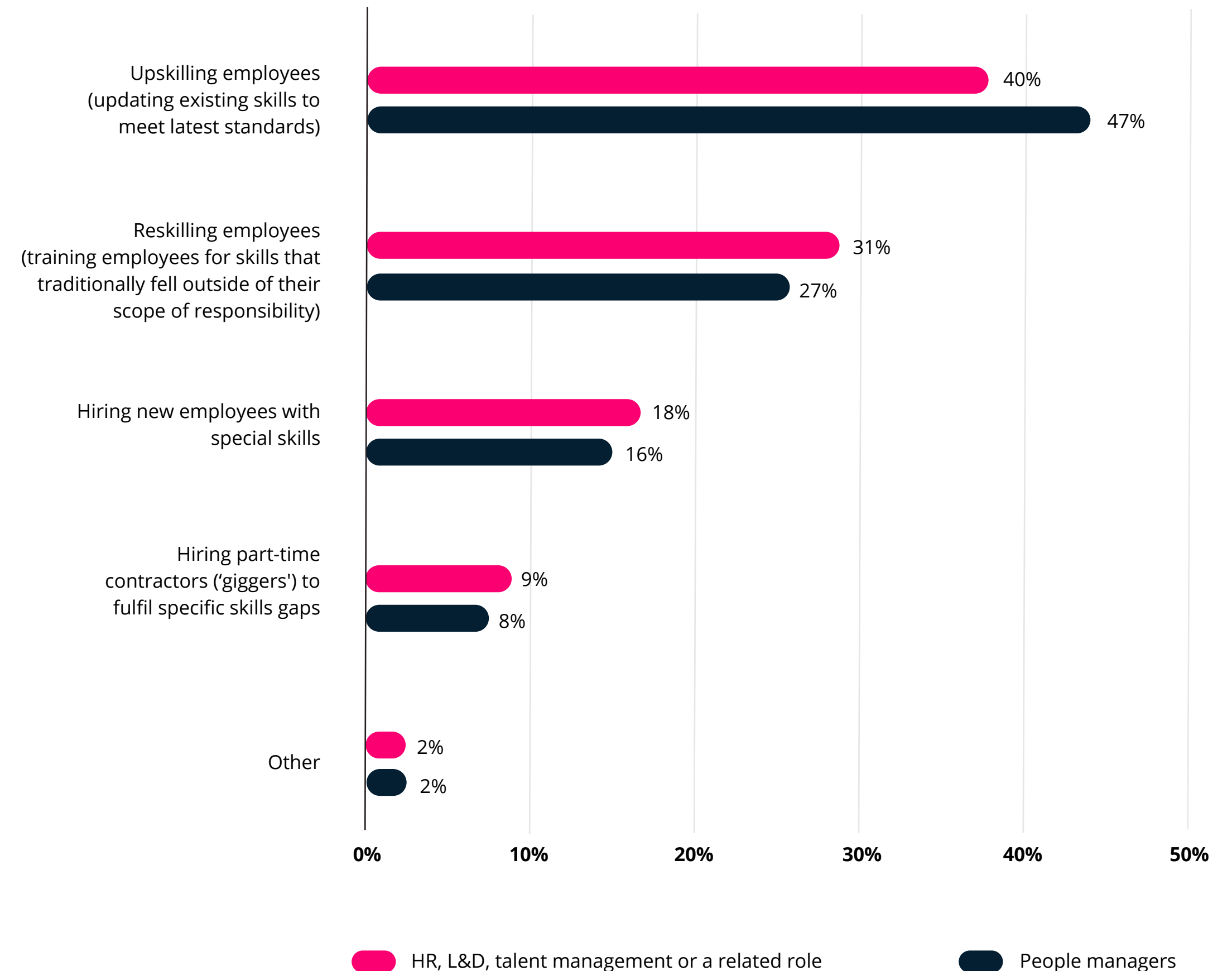
02

Start *learning* new skills

Investing in your own professional development through lifelong learning requires fortitude that comes from being willing to do whatever it takes to prepare for an unknown future. While studying may be daunting, you can be in complete control of your entire learning experience, choosing the learning methods and platforms that suit you.[11]

GetSmarter's research overwhelmingly shows that **74 per cent** of people managers prefer to upskill and/or reskill current employees, rather than hiring external candidates (16 per cent), so your business may **support your pursuit of lifelong learning** if it's to their benefit. **Online courses** are a great way to overcome the overwhelming anxiety of traditional learning, plus they work within your schedule regardless of your level of experience.

How are you closing the skills gaps that exist in your organisation?

Upskilling employees (updating existing skills to meet latest standards)
- 40%
- 47%

Reskilling employees (training employees for skills that traditionally fell outside of their scope of responsibility)
- 31%
- 27%

Hiring new employees with special skills
- 18%
- 16%

Hiring part-time contractors ('giggers') to fulfil specific skills gaps
- 9%
- 8%

Other
- 2%
- 2%

0%   10%   20%   30%   40%   50%

● HR, L&D, talent management or a related role   ● People managers

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[11] Shimkus, D. (Aug, 2019). 'How investing in your career today will set you up for career success tomorrow'. Retrieved from Forbes.
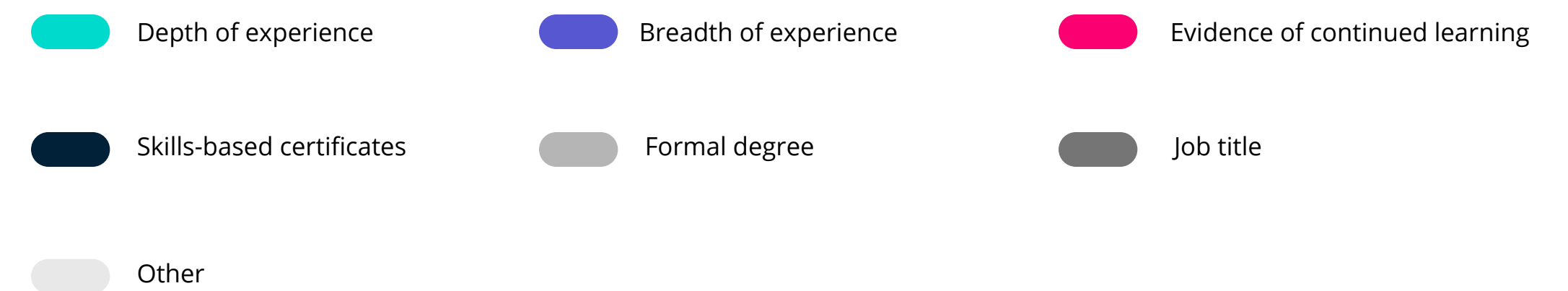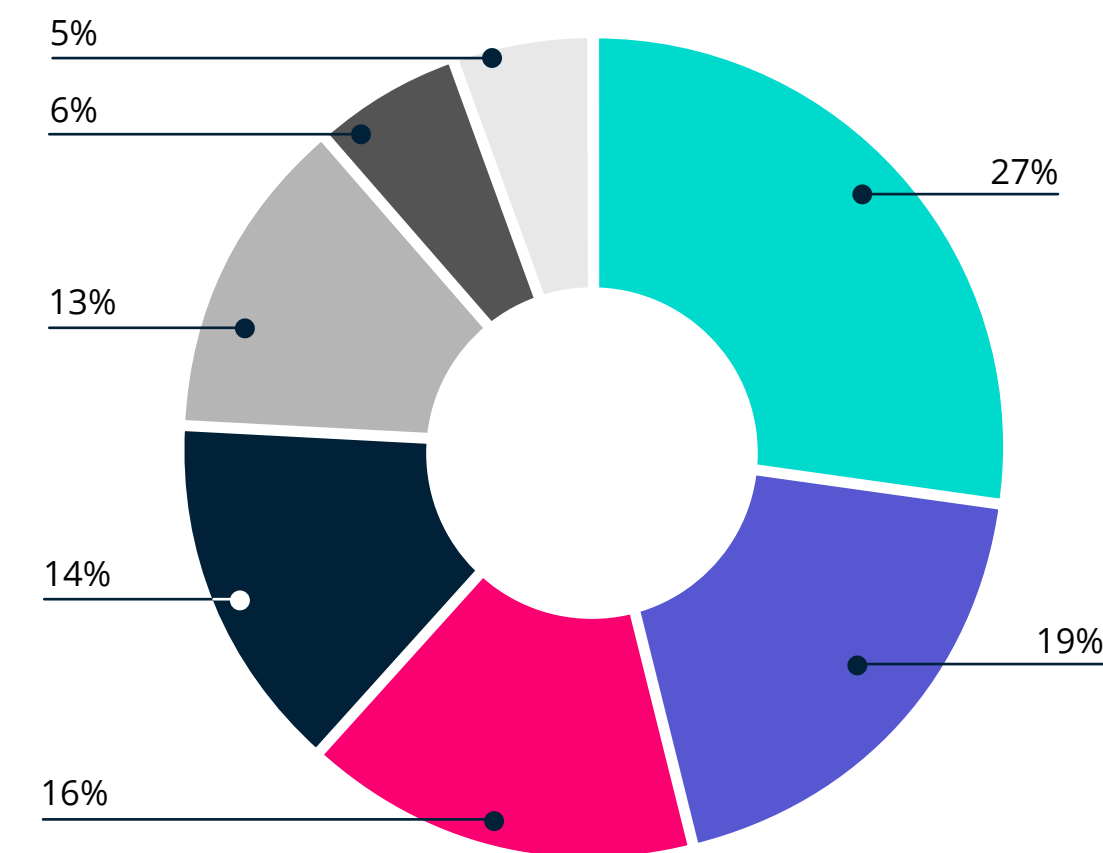
03

Update your *CV and LinkedIn* profile

Once you've added to your skill set, update your CV and LinkedIn profile accordingly. New skills attract new opportunities, so it's crucial to include the ones you acquire as you follow your road map.

According to GetSmarter's research insights, it's important to showcase both a deep level of expertise as well as breadth of experience on your CV. In addition to these, the fast rate of change in business means that evidence of continued learning and skills-based certificates also play an important role in setting you apart. HR and talent managers, in particular, place high value on this when looking at applicants, ranking it higher than formal degrees.

This comes to the fore especially when applied to technical skills or your craft – it shows that you are up to date in the new skills most relevant to your core function.

What employees *perceive* to be most valuable on their CVs

27%
19%
16%
14%
13%
6%
5%

What employers *actually* value most on CVs

28%
15%
34%
13%
5%
3%
2%

- Depth of experience
- Breadth of experience
- Evidence of continued learning
- Skills-based certificates
- Formal degree
- Job title
- Other
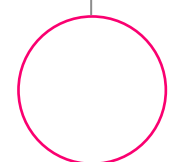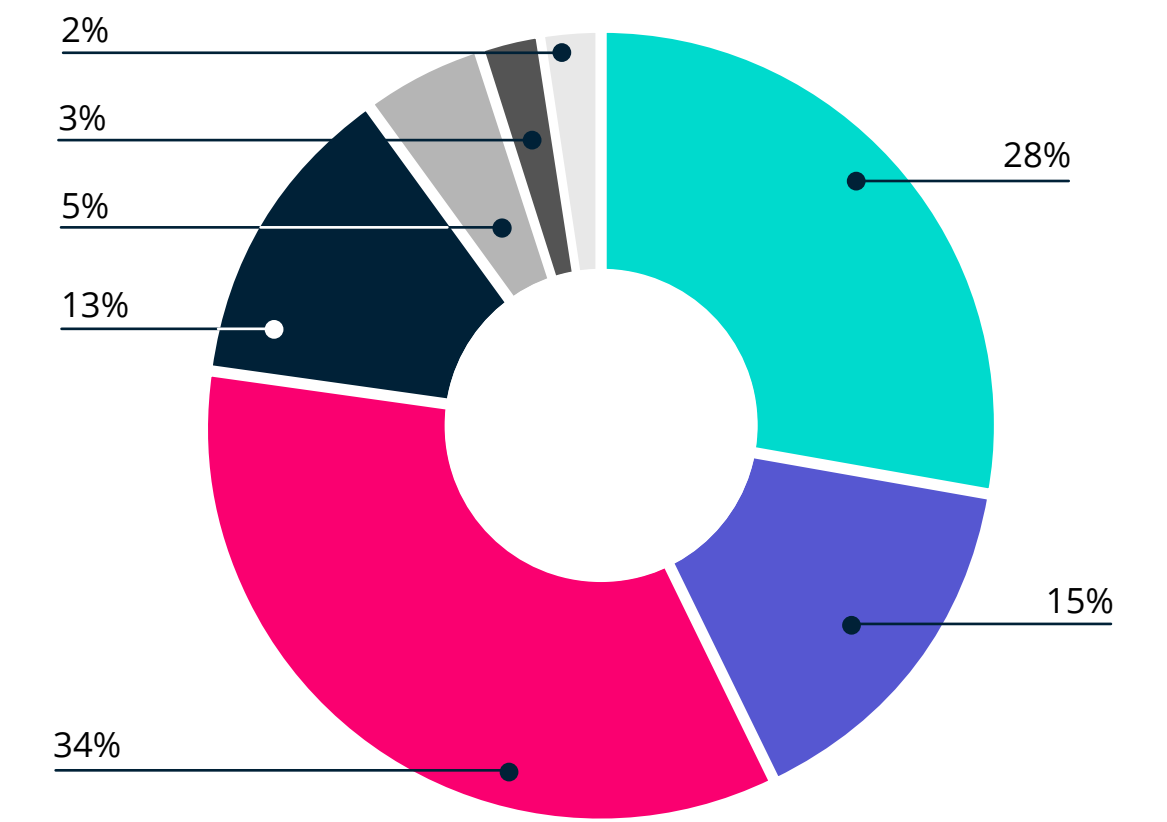
Quick ways to update your CV

1. **Research the job market.**[12] Take note of job descriptions, common industry keywords, terms and skills and use these in your CV, with examples of how and when you used the skill.
2. **Tailor for your new goals.**[13] Edit your CV to be in line with your target career or role. Include training and courses, along with additional achievements and professional memberships that you have acquired to show what you can offer in this field.
3. **Remove dated positions.**[14] GetSmarter's research shows that respondents who are 46 and older show a spike in learning. In which case, your CV has more than likely tracked 15 years or more of your career. Consider removing some of the early entry-level roles, or irrelevant positions.
4. **Refresh the layout.**[15] Make your CV more readable by giving it a makeover:
   - Select a clean, easy-to-read font
   - Ensure there's enough white space on the page
   - Where possible, use bullet points instead of paragraphs
   - Keep your formatting consistent throughout
   - Remove dated phrases such as 'references available upon request'. Formal references are no longer as important to include, unless specifically requested

Tips to maximise your LinkedIn profile

Millions of people are recruited via LinkedIn, with over 30 million businesses listed on the site and 20 million open jobs.[16] This means that employers may be seeing your LinkedIn profile before your CV. Optimise your exposure to the right people by using the platform to highlight your most impressive skills. Make sure to:

1. **Complete your profile.**[17] Recruiters are more likely to find you, the skills and experience they are looking for if all your information is up to date.
2. **Personalise your URL.**[18] Instead of the list of numbers that LinkedIn gives your profile URL, you can **create your own personalised one**. Be sure to use a well-taken, professional photo.[19]
3. **Use the summary section to note your experience.**[20] The Summary or About section is the best place to specify what makes you unique. Include relevant professional achievements, languages, skills, or noteworthy accomplishments, along with your passions and interests. If you have great stats or figures to bolster this, include those.[21]
4. **Request endorsements.**[22] To a recruiter, a LinkedIn endorsement is like a reference. It proves you're able to do what you say you can.
5. **Avoid buzzwords.**[23] There are some terms that have been overused on LinkedIn. Avoid the following: responsible, creative, effective, analytical, strategic, patient, expert, organisational driven, and innovative. Find better, more original ways to speak about yourself in an engaging way. Remember, LinkedIn isn't your actual CV. Even though you're including your skills and experience, the posts you share and the tone you use can give recruiters a better idea of who you are and can also reflect your interpersonal skills and values.

12 Fennel, A. (Feb, 2019). 'How to update your CV without ruining it'. Retrieved from CV Library. | 13 Fennel, A. (Feb, 2019). 'How to update your CV without ruining it'. Retrieved from CV Library. | 14 Burry, M. (Sep, 2019). 'Small and powerful ways to update your resume'. Retrieved from The Balance Careers. |
15 Burry, M. (Sep, 2019). 'Small and powerful ways to update your resume'. Retrieved from The Balance Careers. | 16 (Nd). 'About LinkedIn: Statistics: Economic graph'. Retrieved from LinkedIn. Accessed 9 Dec 2019.|17 (Nd). 'The 31 best LinkedIn profile tips for job seekers'. Retrieved from The Muse. Accessed 9 Dec 2019. |
18 (Nd). 'Customise your public profile URL'. Retrieved from LinkedIn. Accessed 9 Dec 2019. | 19 (Nd). 'The 31 best LinkedIn profile tips for job seekers'. Retrieved from The Muse. Accessed 9 Dec 2019. | 20 Doyle, A. (Nov, 2019). 'How to make a better LinkedIn profile'. Retrieved from The Balance Careers. |
21 (Nd). 'The 31 best LinkedIn profile tips for job seekers'. Retrieved from The Muse. Accessed 9 Dec 2019. | 22 Doyle, A. (Nov, 2019). 'How to make a better LinkedIn profile'. Retrieved from The Balance Careers.| 23 (Nd). 'The 31 best LinkedIn profile tips for job seekers'. Retrieved from The Muse. Accessed 9 Dec 2019.

04

Explore and immerse

Actively seek out additional exposure and opportunities to practise your new skills. It'll help you retain and improve on what you've learnt.[24] Here's how:

- **Attend talks and conferences with colleagues.** Debate the topics with groups of friends and acquire insights, observations, perceptions and general information.
- **Engage with the topic online.** Read articles, comment on media posts, listen to podcasts, and surround yourself with information relevant to this field.
- **Work on your new skills.** Practise what you've learnt at work or outside of work to start making a positive impression. And be ready for opportunities that open up.

Attend talks

Engage online

Practise
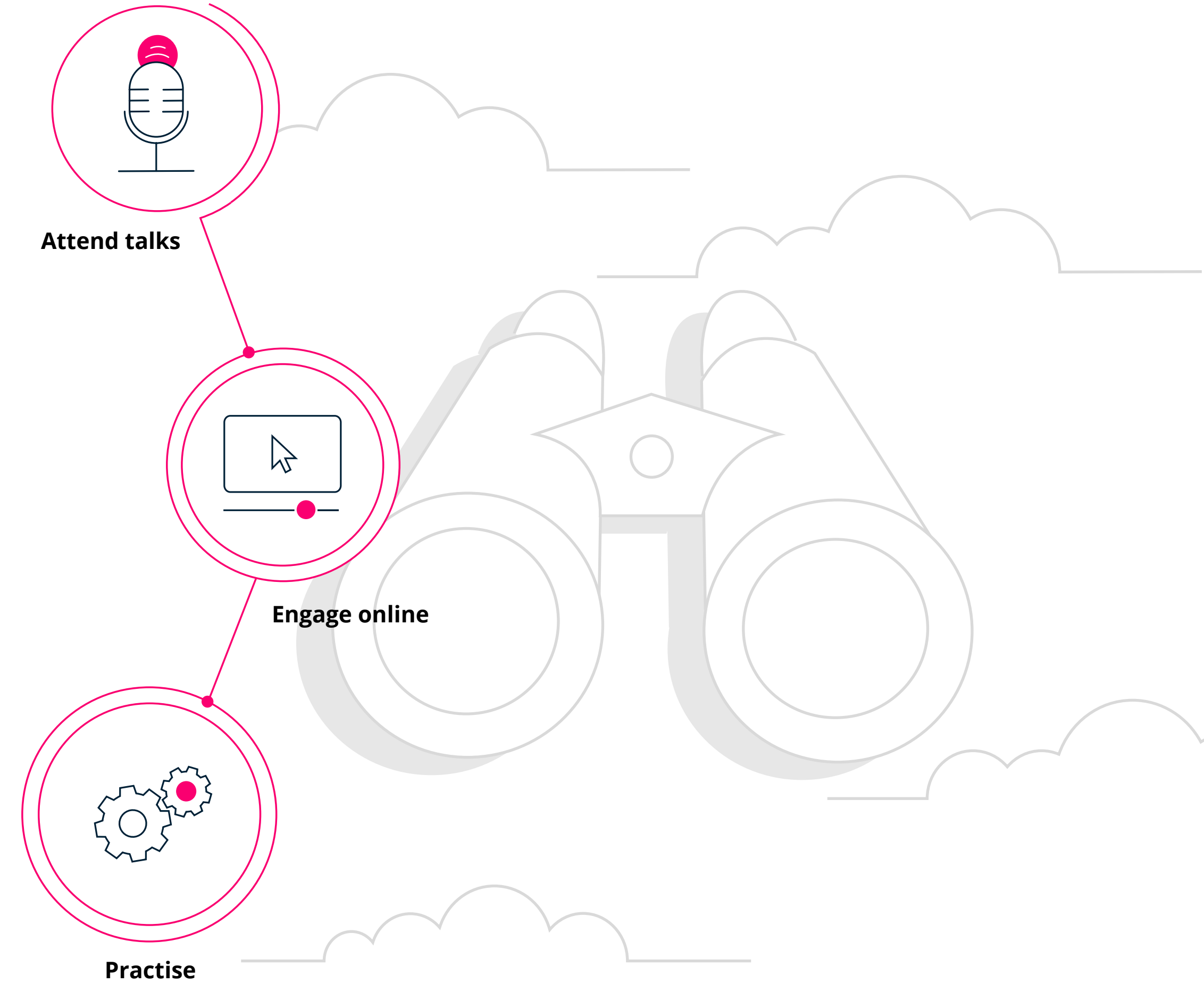
[24] Pain, E. (Jan, 2018). 'Immerse yourself for intensive learning'. Retrieved from ScienceMag.

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05

Do a *Culture check*

Preparing for the future isn't only about preparing yourself for the career of your choice – it's also about finding a company that fits your lifestyle needs.

With millennials and GenZ employees becoming increasingly prevalent in the workplace, organisations are shifting their approaches to create a more favourable employee experience, in order to retain their much-needed skill sets.[25] As a result, there's a rise in both gig working and remote employment amongst millennials, with a growing number of employers seeking out the talent of those working outside of their office walls.[26]

While a gig worker is someone who works part-time on contract and has no long-term employer-employee relationship, a remote worker, in contrast, is employed directly by a company, but works outside of a traditional office environment. **GetSmarter predicts that the rate at which remote work is adopted far outpaces the rate at which companies adopt the gig economy.** That said, gigging is an attractive alternative to many people. Globally and across generational cohorts, people are showing an interest in participating in the gig economy, and in future, other employees may have no alternative but to join them as certain non-core functions may be primarily outsourced and hired on a part-time basis.

How does this impact your future career path? Embrace the idea that you and some, or all, of your team may work from home for some, or all, of the time. Your new skills may also be more attractive when offered as a contractor or freelancer. Or, you may simply prefer the freedom and autonomy these options offer.

When it comes to the current and future workplace, technology allows for more flexibility than before. From virtual meetings, live-streamed events, and online learning to working remotely, the options for employees go beyond basic utilities and income. Identify which characteristics you're looking for in a future employer to ensure you'll thrive in their workplace culture.
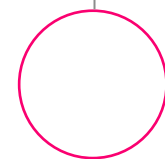
[25] Pennington, R. (Oct, 2019). 'Are you creating a valuable employee experience?'. Retrieved from CIO. | [26] Monhan, K, et al. (May, 2018). 'Decoding millennials in the gig economy'. Retrieved from Deloitte.

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● Conclusion

The professional landscape is evolving at an unprecedented rate, and while technical skills are critical in filling emerging skills gaps, **the future of work is most certainly still human-focused.** In an increasingly complex work environment, managers and HR experts are looking at what professionals can offer them that machines can't. As such, interpersonal and leadership skills are becoming more important than before in setting yourself apart.
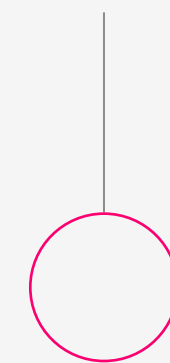
getsmarter™

Are you preparing for your future?

Equip yourself with the skills needed for career longevity.

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