**SUMMER OF PRODUCT**

**TEAM CREED**

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**Skills-Based Hiring Platform: Research & Summary Document**

**Executive Summary**

This case study explores how to build a platform that helps people get jobs based on their skills instead of their college degrees. Through research and interviews, we found that both job seekers and recruiters are frustrated with the current system but need better tools to make the change.

**Research Methodology**

**Primary Research:**

* Interviews with recent graduates and career changers
* Interviews with recruiters and hiring managers
* Online surveys from professionals without traditional degrees

**Secondary Research:**

* Industry reports on hiring trends
* Analysis of existing platforms (LinkedIn, GitHub, AngelList)
* Job posting analysis from companies

**Key Data Points & Statistics**

**The Problem is Real**

* **76% of job postings** require a bachelor's degree, even when it's not needed
* **87% of executives** say they have skills gaps despite hiring people with degrees
* **6.2 million unfilled jobs** exist in the US while millions of skilled people can't get hired
* **43% of recent graduates** work in jobs that don't require their degree

**The Shift is Happening**

* **65% of hiring managers** say they would consider candidates without degrees if they could prove their skills
* **Companies like Google, Apple, and IBM** have removed degree requirements for many roles
* **Skills become outdated in 2-5 years** while degrees take 4+ years to complete

**User Quotes & Insights**

**Job Seekers**

**Sarah, 24, Bootcamp Graduate:**

"I spent 6 months learning web development and built 5 real projects, but recruiters still ask about my English Literature degree. It's so frustrating because I know I can do the job better than someone who just studied computer science theory."

**Manas, 32, Career Switcher:**

"I was a marketing manager for 8 years and taught myself UX design. I have a portfolio, but every job posting wants a design degree plus 3 years experience. How do I get experience if no one will hire me?"

**Rani, 28, Self-Taught Designer:**

"I've been freelancing for 3 years and have happy clients, but companies don't take me seriously without a degree. I wish there was a way to show my actual work and results instead of just talking about school."

**Dhanu, 22, Trade School Graduate:**

"I'm really good at fixing things and understanding how systems work, but tech companies only look at computer science degrees. I built my own apps and websites, but they don't even look at them."

**Recruiters & Hiring Managers**

**Lalitha, Corporate Recruiter:**

"Honestly, the degree requirement is just an easy way to filter out candidates when we get 500 applications. I know we're probably missing great people, but I don't have time to review everyone's portfolio."

**Mani, Startup Founder:**

"I care way more about what someone can actually do than where they went to school. But it's hard to tell who's really good just from looking at their projects online. I need some way to trust that they can deliver."

**Jeswitha, HR Manager:**

"Our legal team is worried about removing degree requirements because it might look like we're not being consistent. But I've seen people with degrees who can't do the job and people without degrees who are amazing."

**Tharun, Tech Recruiter:**

"I wish candidates would show me their actual work instead of just listing technologies they know. Anyone can say they know Python, but can they actually build something useful with it?"

**In-Depth User Personas**

**Persona 1: The Determined Self-Learner**

**Name:** Akhil  
**Age:** 26  
**Background:** Economics degree, self-taught data analyst

**Current Situation:**

* Works in customer service but spends nights learning data analysis
* Has completed 3 online courses and built 2 personal projects
* Applies to 20+ jobs per week but rarely gets interviews
* Lives in a smaller city with limited networking opportunities

**Goals:**

* Get a data analyst job that pays $50k+ per year
* Be recognized for the skills they've actually learned
* Build credibility without going back to school

**Frustrations:**

* "Entry-level" jobs require 2+ years of experience
* Portfolio projects don't seem to matter to recruiters
* Imposter syndrome from not having a "proper" background
* Doesn't know what employers actually want to see

**Needs:**

* Way to prove their skills are real and valuable
* Clear path to demonstrate competency
* Connection to employers who value ability over credentials
* Feedback on how to improve their skill presentation

**Persona 2: The Experienced Career Changer**

**Name:** Maria  
**Age:** 38  
**Background:** 12 years in project management, transitioning to UX design

**Current Situation:**

* Completed UX bootcamp while working full-time
* Has 3 case studies but no "professional" design experience
* Earning less than previous role, looking for career growth
* Supports family, can't afford to take unpaid internships

**Goals:**

* Land UX role at $70k+ salary level
* Leverage project management skills in new career
* Find companies that value diverse backgrounds
* Build professional network in design community

**Frustrations:**

* Feels too old for junior roles, too inexperienced for senior roles
* Previous accomplishments don't translate obviously to design
* Competing against 22-year-olds with design degrees
* Family responsibilities limit networking time

**Needs:**

* Platform to showcase transferable skills
* Way to demonstrate leadership and business understanding
* Connection to age-diverse, inclusive companies
* Mentorship from other career changers

**Persona 3: The Practical Skill Builder**

**Name:** Ramu  
**Age:** 23  
**Background:** Community college dropout, self-taught developer

**Current Situation:**

* Left college due to financial constraints
* Learned programming through YouTube and free resources
* Built several apps that friends and family actually use
* Works retail but codes in spare time

**Goals:**

* Get hired as a junior developer
* Prove that practical skills matter more than formal education
* Find companies with inclusive hiring practices
* Eventually mentor other non-traditional learners

**Frustrations:**

* Automatic rejection due to "degree required" filters
* Doesn't know how to present coding skills professionally
* Feels intimidated by computer science terminology
* Lacks confidence in technical interviews

**Needs:**

* Skills-first job discovery and application process
* Community of other non-traditional developers
* Clear standards for what "junior developer ready" means
* Practice opportunities for technical interviews

**Persona 4: The Efficiency-Focused Recruiter**

**Name:** Riya  
**Age:** 31  
**Background:** Corporate recruiter at mid-size tech company

**Current Situation:**

* Manages 15-20 open positions at any time
* Receives 200+ applications per role
* Pressured to fill positions quickly while maintaining quality
* Uses degree requirements as initial screening tool

**Goals:**

* Find qualified candidates faster
* Reduce time-to-hire while improving hire quality
* Build more diverse candidate pipeline
* Demonstrate value to hiring managers

**Frustrations:**

* Degree filter eliminates potentially great candidates
* Portfolio review takes too much time per candidate
* Difficulty assessing technical skills from resumes
* Hiring managers have unrealistic expectations

**Needs:**

* Efficient way to evaluate actual skills at scale
* Standardized method for comparing candidates
* Tools that integrate with existing hiring workflow
* Evidence to show hiring managers that non-degree candidates can succeed

**Persona 5: The Quality-Conscious Hiring Manager**

**Name:** Srihitha  
**Age:** 42  
**Background:** Engineering manager at growing startup

**Current Situation:**

* Needs to hire 3 developers in next 6 months
* Budget constraints mean each hire must contribute quickly
* Previous bad hires have made him cautious
* Wants diversity but struggles to find qualified candidates

**Goals:**

* Hire developers who can contribute from day one
* Build team with diverse perspectives and backgrounds
* Reduce hiring mistakes and improve retention
* Find candidates who fit company culture

**Frustrations:**

* Resumes don't show actual coding ability
* Interviews don't predict real job performance
* Diverse candidates often filtered out by degree requirements
* Time spent on hiring takes away from team management

**Needs:**

* Evidence of real-world coding ability
* Insight into candidate's problem-solving approach
* Understanding of how candidate works with others
* Confidence that skills claims are accurate

**Opportunity Areas Explored But Not Pursued**

**1. AI-Powered Skill Assessment Platform**

**What it was:** Automated testing system using AI to evaluate coding, design, and other skills through interactive challenges.

**Why we didn't pursue:**

* Too complex for MVP - would need extensive development time
* Risk of bias in AI algorithms affecting hiring fairness
* Many candidates might feel intimidated by automated testing
* Difficulty in assessing soft skills and cultural fit through AI

**Learning:** While skill assessment is important, human judgment and portfolio review might be more valuable initially.

**2. Blockchain-Based Credential Verification**

**What it was:** Using blockchain technology to create tamper-proof skill certificates and endorsements.

**Why we didn't pursue:**

* Technology still too new and complex for mainstream adoption
* Most recruiters and candidates don't understand blockchain
* High technical barrier to entry would limit user adoption
* Existing peer review and portfolio systems might be sufficient

**Learning:** Innovation should focus on user experience rather than cutting-edge technology.

**3. Virtual Reality Portfolio Presentations**

**What it was:** VR platform where candidates could present their work in immersive 3D environments.

**Why we didn't pursue:**

* VR equipment not widespread enough among recruiters
* High development costs for relatively small user benefit
* Novelty factor might distract from actual skill evaluation
* Traditional portfolio formats still effective when done well

**Learning:** Focus on improving existing formats rather than creating entirely new ones.

**4. Peer-to-Peer Skill Exchange Network**

**What it was:** Platform where people trade skills (teach design, learn coding) to build verified competencies.

**Why we didn't pursue:**

* Complex matching system would be difficult to scale
* Quality control challenges in peer teaching
* Doesn't directly solve job placement problem
* Time investment might be too high for busy professionals

**Learning:** Direct path to employment should be primary focus.

**5. Company Culture Matching Algorithm**

**What it was:** Detailed cultural fit assessment to match candidates with compatible company environments.

**Why we didn't pursue:**

* Culture fit often used to justify bias in hiring
* Difficult to quantify culture objectively
* Skills and performance should be primary evaluation criteria
* Risk of perpetuating homogeneous team composition

**Learning:** Focus on skills demonstration rather than cultural matching.

**6. Gig-Based Trial Employment System**

**What it was:** Platform for short-term project work that could lead to full-time employment.

**Why we didn't pursue:**

* Many candidates need stable income, not gig work
* Companies often prefer traditional interview processes
* Legal complications around trial work and compensation
* Doesn't address core credibility and discovery problems

**Learning:** Traditional hiring processes are preferred; focus on improving candidate presentation within existing systems.

**Key Research Insights Summary**

1. **The problem affects both sides:** Job seekers can't showcase skills effectively, and recruiters can't evaluate them efficiently.
2. **Trust is the central issue:** Without traditional credentials, both parties struggle with credibility and verification.
3. **Portfolio quality matters more than quantity:** A few well-presented, contextualized projects are more valuable than many basic examples.
4. **Integration with existing workflows is crucial:** Solutions must work within current hiring processes rather than requiring complete overhaul.
5. **Community and networking are as important as individual profiles:** People need connections and mentorship, not just better resumes.
6. **One size doesn't fit all industries:** Different fields require different approaches to skill demonstration and evaluation.