

3 ways AI can prepare your organization for skills-based roles

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In the new world of work, every employee must learn new skills. With the support of AI, skills-based role readiness is now a reality. Learn how three leading organizations — Amgen, EY, and Cisco — apply skills-based talent planning.

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6 min read



Employee development is top of mind for many HR professionals these days, and for good reason. According to a LinkedIn [survey](#), employees who feel unfulfilled tend to leave jobs 12 times faster than if they see future opportunities. In fact, 45% of the people surveyed said they left jobs because they had concerns about opportunities for advancement.

[Skills intelligence](#) is fundamental to understanding where employees are now, and how to develop the skills they'll need for the future. Organizations can make data-driven decisions about how to fill skills gaps, develop skills, and meet workload demand. But the road to skills-based role readiness is not always a direct path. Each organization may have a different starting point and the journey will look different.

At [Cultivate in London](#), we talked with three Eightfold customers from different industries at different starting points in their skills-based journeys — [Amgen](#), [EY](#), and [Cisco](#).

While they all have different missions and drivers, each has come to realize that skills intelligence is the foundation on which to improve their businesses and transform their people's experiences. Strategically, skills intelligence is no longer a nice-to-have — it's a

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When it comes to employee development at Amgen, a multinational biochemical company, it helps to begin with the end in mind. This is no easy task for [Jan Tichy](#), Executive Director, Global Talent Management at Amgen, leading the global talent management function for about 25,000 employees. Tichy shared that his team began by looking for a way to connect employees with development opportunities, and a common language to operationalize this was to begin with skills.

"Our development philosophy is based on learning by doing, so we began by implementing a project marketplace with Eightfold to democratize access to key initiatives," Tichy said. "This is where skills help us make the connection to the development employees need to go after those opportunities."

Tichy's team approach was to pilot the AI-powered project marketplace with 1,500 people across the globe in three parts of the business: information systems, HR, and internal consulting. Projects posted were short-term for a specific amount of time with a specific skill requirement. After a positive experience and with good learnings from the initial pilot in tow, Tichy's team rolled out the platform from there. He shared a few unexpected successes from the experience.

"We were originally looking to connect employees with projects that would build their skill sets, and what we found in the pilot was that there were aspects of the platform that we knew were potentially valuable, but we didn't anticipate the level of interest in them," Tichy said. "People can get guidance on how to navigate their career and that had about the same amount of views as projects, which was much higher than what I expected."

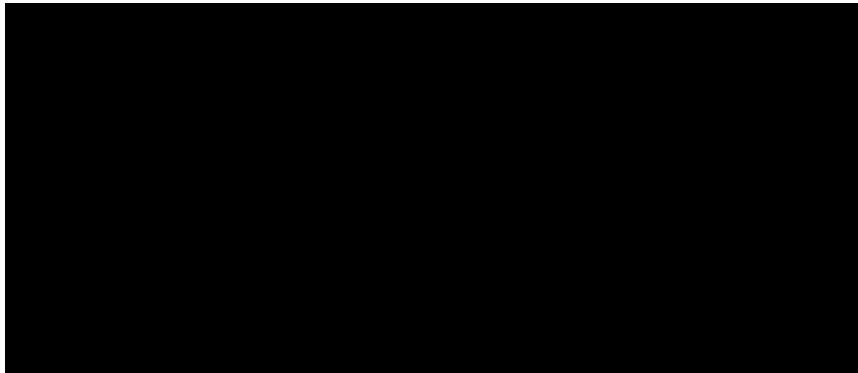
What began as a journey toward developing skills for specific roles turned into much more. Tichy's talent management strategy could now include developing skills for projects, providing career navigation advice, and connecting skills across the organization. His advice for HR professionals looking to implement a similar technology approach to skills-based role readiness is to listen to what employees and managers really want.

"It sounds obvious, but it gets you better engagement," Tichy said. "Because we were able to connect the implementation to a clear need that's coming from our employees, we have some of the best click-through rates that we see across the company all over."

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cross-skill, and reskill employees to ensure future skill demands are met.

"With Eightfold, we are working on skill taxonomy and skill inventory of our people," Arimanithaya said. "This helps us understand the demand and match projects with the right people who have the skills. But not only this, we also need to understand future workload, how the future workload is going to change, and what skills are needed. We also want to fill those roles internally rather than hire externally since every employee brings revenue."

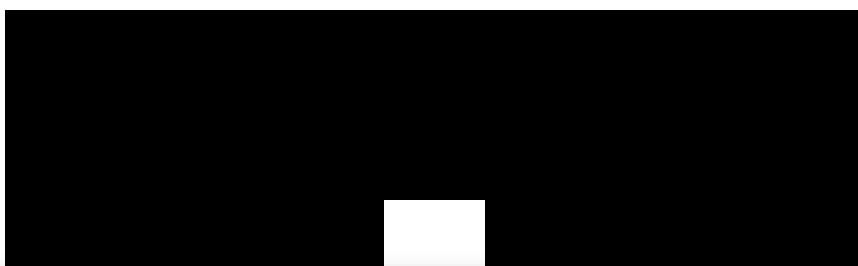
Another key part of Arimanithaya's strategy on the journey to skills-based role readiness is skills ontology, which is sets of skills and the relationship between those skills. Once his team is complete with the skills taxonomy, this will be the next phase.

In the professional services industry, there's intense pressure to keep costs contained while delivering stellar experience and expertise. Arimanithaya says the key to this is finding [skills adjacencies](#).

"Using an AI engine like Eightfold, we can look for candidates in locations where we don't have to pay premium salaries yet we get the same skill sets," Arimanithaya said. "We can also hire people with adjacent skills, or less experience but with the same skills. In this way, we create abundance, which is a theory we've been working on to find the right people with the right skills."

Once EY finds employees with the right skills, the imperative becomes keeping them. Arimanithaya said it's critical to provide an [exceptional employee experience](#). Doing quarterly surveys on employee skill-building programs enables Arimanithaya and his team to ensure they meet high expectations.

"We believe an exceptional employee experience drives an exceptional customer experience, and we can monetize that customer experience in terms of repeatable business," Arimanithaya added.



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with an employee base of over 80,000. This includes moving toward a skills-based organization, which is what [Alistair Antoine](#), Director of People & Communities, and his team have been working on over the past five years. Antoine shared that it was critical to begin Cisco's journey by examining the silos across the entire organization, then building a skills taxonomy and governance around that.

"What we're trying to achieve with this is a consistent skill taxonomy to enable us to identify the skills of the workforce," Antoine said. "Getting that buy-in to break down the silos was really key, then to set up a governance structure where we had accountable leaders from the various functions that we brought along the journey. We think about it as a skill-centered talent journey that encompasses hiring, development, performance management, and workforce planning at scale."

With an initiative this large, it can be common for organizations to fall back on "how things have always been done." Antoine shared that this was the case when his team was looking at the best way to implement Eightfold to support the skills-based role readiness journey at Cisco.

"At the start, we had a clear plan identified with four phases of how that implementation was going to go," Antoine said. "We implemented phase one, and then we started looking at how we could use some of the skills data to do things like bespoke or custom reporting. That resulted in a learning curve for both us as well as Eightfold. After further examination, we decided to follow Eightfold best practice of what the solution can do, rather than trying to shoehorn it into a legacy process."

As a result of that pivot, Antoine and his team are moving ahead to collect as much skills data from employees as possible across the entire organization. This will form the basis of Cisco's skills-based role readiness and will empower the organization to hire more and conduct workforce planning at scale.

Watch the [entire session](#), "Skills-based role readiness: How businesses can take action in 2023," now on demand.

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