Skill Forge

Business Plan

TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

SkillForge is building the new infrastructure layer for early-career work. The traditional entry-level hiring system built around résumés, job boards, and sequential interviews has collapsed under its own weight. AI has accelerated this collapse: candidates are now using AI to write, inflate, or fabricate résumés, while companies use AI to filter them. The result is a credibility arms race where both sides automate against each other, and the signal-to-noise ratio rounds to zero.

Companies are now spending $50–100k per entry-level hire only to discover that interviews predict performance about as well as a coin flip. Gen Z, entering the workforce at peak scale, is facing unprecedented economic pressure, while universities are losing credibility as a signal of job readiness. Everyone agrees the system is broken; no one has built a new one.

SkillForge is that system.

By 2030, entry-level work becomes task-first, portfolio-driven, and AI-verified.

- Companies evaluate based on *real work*, not self-reported claims.

- AI instantly scores capability, correctness, and performance.

- Gen Z earns income while building a live, authenticated portfolio.

- Universities integrate work-first tasks into curriculum and credentialing.

- Recruiting agencies decline as outcome-based hiring becomes the dominant model.

SkillForge becomes the canonical early-career graph as the place where juniors prove themselves, companies hire with confidence, and portfolios replace résumés as the atomic unit of credentialing.

Why This Transformation Is Inevitable (Five Forces)

1. AI Is Eliminating Junior Roles—and Exposing the Pipeline Crisis

Between 2020 and 2024, 54% of junior developer roles disappeared.
 AI now performs much of the repetitive work juniors used to do: code generation, testing, documentation. But AI *cannot* mentor, judge potential, or grow future mid-level talent. Companies are facing an unavoidable mid-level drought unless they find new ways to identify high-potential juniors.

2. Résumé-Based Hiring Has Collapsed Under AI

The résumé was already a weak signal. AI made it worthless.

- The résumé was already a weak signal; AI has now made it effectively worthless.
- 80% of résumés contain exaggerated or fabricated experience, making traditional screening unreliable.
- Gen Z increasingly uses ChatGPT, Claude, and Gemini to generate polished but misleading résumés in minutes
- Employers use AI-driven filters to scan résumés, creating a system where AI-generated résumés routinely pass AI-generated filters.
- This dynamic has produced zero authenticity, zero signal, and hiring outcomes that are nearly random
- Interview performance correlates with actual job performance at only 0.15, confirming that employers are largely selecting on noise rather than ability.

3. Gen Z Is Under Historic Financial Pressure

- 67% live with "single paycheck panic," facing immediate financial risk if income is disrupted.

- 48% rely on side hustles, yet most earn only $2–5k per year, offering little real stability.

- 87% expect multiple income streams, reflecting a shift away from traditional single-employer pathways.

- Gen Z cannot wait months for hiring cycles or rely on résumé-based signaling. They need income now, proof now, and clear pathways now.

4. Universities Are Losing Their Signaling Power

- Only 30% of graduates secure jobs in their field, weakening the degree as a job-readiness indicator.

- Families are demanding ROI on $150k+ degrees, pushing institutions to demonstrate employment outcomes.

- Career centers still teach résumé writing despite employers no longer trusting résumés as credible signals.

- Universities need new ways to validate skills, creating strong demand for work-first, portfolio-driven platforms.

- Universities are actively seeking work-first platforms to rebuild credibility.

5. Companies Are Cutting Recruiting Costs

- CFOs are increasingly rejecting agency fees of **$30–50k per placement** and re-evaluating the ROI of in-house recruiting teams.

- Budget pressure is pushing companies away from **process-driven hiring** models and toward **outcome-driven, performance-verified hiring**.

- The sector is experiencing a significant shift in spending, with **an estimated $500M to $5B in budget migrating toward alternative hiring platforms** that deliver measurable results.

Why Now: Market Catalysts

2025 brings collapsing bootcamps, rising Gen Z unemployment, and accelerating AI automation. 2026 will see the first major university integrations and Fortune 500 work-first pilots. By 2027, the adoption becomes reflexive: résumés become optional in half of all Fortune 500 entry-level roles. This is the single biggest structural shift in early-career talent since LinkedIn.

THE SKILLFORGE SOLUTION

SkillForge replaces résumé claims with verified capability. Instead of relying on self-reported experience, companies evaluate talent through real work, submitted by Gen Z and scored instantly by AI. Every task becomes a certified, authenticated portfolio artifact, giving companies objective proof and giving candidates real income and real experience.

How the Work-First Model Operates

Companies post scoped, paid tasks (typically $200–$2,000) that reflect real job responsibilities. Within days, they receive 30–50 submissions from Gen Z talent. AI evaluates work quality as you are measuring correctness, performance, clarity, and compliance with requirements allowing employers to review all submissions in parallel rather than relying on slow, sequential interviews.

Companies then meet only the top 5–10 proven performers, based on the work they already completed. Hiring decisions can be made with confidence, and onboarding is faster because candidates have already demonstrated they can do the job. The entire cycle compresses into one week, at a total cost of $2–5k, with success rates exceeding 90%.

Benefits for Each Stakeholder

For Companies

- Post real tasks with clear requirements

- Receive dozens of real submissions, not résumés

- AI evaluation provides objective scoring

- Parallel review replaces slow sequential interviews

- Hire high-confidence candidates who have already performed similar work

- Reduce cost by 95% compared to traditional recruiting

For Gen Z Talent

- Focus skill

- Browse real-world tasks and apply with one click

- Complete tasks to earn immediate income (typically $150–$750 per task)

- Build a verified portfolio automatically

- Stand out through performance, not credentials

- Receive direct hires from impressed employers

For SkillForge

- Earns a 25% commission on each paid task

- Generates recurring revenue from continuous task flow

- Accumulates proprietary talent-performance data

- Expands network effects on both sides of the marketplace

SkillForge becomes the default identity, verification, and capability layer for early-career professionals. It is not a job board and it is a task-based evaluation system that replaces traditional recruiting entirely, with data and network effects forming a defensible moat.

BUSINESS MODEL CANVAS (REFINED)

Key Partners

- Tech companies: Microsoft, Google, Stripe, 5000+ SaaS startups
- Talent source: Bootcamps, universities, career-switchers
- Platforms: GitHub, Stripe, Salesforce (integrations)
- Credentialing: Universities (partnerships for pipeline)

Key Activities

Core Platform Activities:

- Task curation (quality control; prevent spam)
- Work evaluation (AI + manual review)
- Marketplace matching (recommend tasks to Gen Z)
- Payment processing & escrow
- Dispute resolution
- Community management (Discord, events, recognition)

Value Streams (Primary Revenue)

Stream	% of Revenue	Model	Year 1	Year 2
Task Commission	75%	25% of task budget	$2.5M	$33.75M
Premium (Employer)	15%	$500-10k/month	$900k	$7.2M
Premium (Gen Z)	5%	$9.99/month	$600k	$7.2M
Recruiter API	5%	$25k/year	$250k	$2.5M
TOTAL	100%	—	$3.3M	$45M

Customer Segments (Prioritized)

Segment	Size	TAM	Willingness	Year 1 Target
Fortune 500 Tech	500 companies	$4B	Highest	5
SaaS Startups	5000 companies	$1.5B	Highest	40
Gen Z Talent	500k+ users	$500M	High	500
Recruiting Agencies	300 firms	$500M	Highest	5

VALUE PROPOSITION (BY PERSONA)

For Fortune 500 Companies (All Departments)

Their Current State

- Need **hundreds of junior hires per year** across Marketing, Finance, HR, Operations, Product, Sales, Data, Creative, and Tech.

- Traditional recruiting costs **$50k–$100k per hire** once sourcing, interviews, onboarding, and attrition are included.

- Hiring cycles take **2–3 months**, causing delays in marketing campaigns, financial reporting, HR initiatives, and operations projects.

- CFOs demand cost reduction; department leaders frustrated with inconsistent junior talent.

The Problem

"We can't reliably identify strong junior talent. Résumés are inflated, interviews are unreliable, and we're spending $100k per hire for mediocre entry-level performance. This problem affects every department

SkillForge Solution

"Post a $1,000 real-world task (e.g., build a marketing brief, analyze a finance dataset, draft an HR policy, create a product requirement, design creative assets, or conduct a market study). Within 3 days, receive 30–50 submissions. AI evaluates them instantly. Meet the top 5 candidates. Hire the best 3. Total cost: $3k. Total time: 1 week. Success rate: ~90%."

Financial Impact

- Cost: **$80k → $3k per hire** (96% savings)

- Speed: **3 months → 1 week** (12× faster)

- Quality: **50% → 90% success rate** (2× improvement)

- Annual ROI example: 10 junior hires = **$770k saved** in recruiting costs

Pitch to Enterprise

"If you need 10 junior hires across Marketing, Finance, Ops, HR, or Analytics, traditional recruiting will cost ~$800k and take ~30 weeks. SkillForge delivers them for ~$30k in ~10 weeks with better talent and verified performance data than you've never had before."

For Gen Z Talent (All Majors & Backgrounds)

Their Current State
- Marketing, business, finance, HR, biotech, design, and CS grads all face the same barrier: "3+ years of experience required for entry-level roles."

- Sending 100+ applications with no responses.

- No meaningful portfolio or work samples.

- Desperate for income and proof of ability.

The Problem

"I have the skills whether in marketing, finance, biotech, analytics, or design — but every job requires experience I don't have. Résumés don't reflect what I can actually do. I can't get my first opportunity."

SkillForge Solution

"Complete 4 real tasks for real companies in 4 weeks e.g., run a small marketing analysis, draft an HR policy, build a financial model, summarize research, create a design asset, or write product requirements. Earn $2,000–$3,000. Build a real portfolio. Receive job offers after your third task."

Income Impact

- Task 1: $500

- Task 2: $600

- Task 3: $750

- Task 4: $500 bonus (conversion hire)

- **Total: $2,350 earned + job offers**

Pitch to Students & Recent Grads

"Stop applying to jobs. Start doing tasks. Build a proof-based portfolio. Earn while you learn. Get hired based on real work, not résumés."

For Recruiting Agencies (All Industries)

Their Current State

- Place 50–100 junior candidates across marketing, finance, HR, ops, product, design, and junior analyst roles.

- **40% of placements fail in the first year**, hurting reputation and client trust.

- Constant pressure from in-house recruiting teams and competitors.

- No reliable signal to differentiate strong junior talent.

The Problem

"We place 100 junior hires a year, but nearly half fail. Clients blame us. Our reputation suffers. We can't prove capability, and we're losing market share."

SkillForge White-Label Solution

"Use SkillForge to pre-screen candidates through real-world tasks. Only send proven performers to clients. Increase placement success from 60% to 90%. Deliver higher-quality candidates without changing your fees."

Business Impact

- Success rate: **60% → 90%**

- Client retention: **70% → 95%**

- Reputation shifts from "risky supplier" to **trusted partner**

- Repeat business increases without increasing operational costs

Pitch to Agencies

"Your clients don't trust your junior placements because success rates hover around 60%. With SkillForge pre-screening, you can consistently deliver 90% performers and control the junior market."

COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE: WHY INCUMBENTS CAN'T COPY THIS

Why LinkedIn Jobs Can't Compete

LinkedIn's Core Problem:

- Business model: recruiter subscriptions ($$ per month)
- Incentive: More applications = more recruiter subscriptions
- Result: Incentive misaligned; want more submissions; don't care if good
- Structural issue: Can't charge candidates for work completion (violates platform ethos)

Why They Can't Build This:

- Would cannibalize recruiter subscription revenue
- Shareholders expect recruiting to remain recruiter-focused
- Corporate culture: "networking" not "work evaluation"
- Regulatory complexity: Labor law issues

Why We Win:

- Work-first is core; not cannibalizing anything
- We're obsessed with quality (good work only; spam removed)
- No legacy business to cannibalize

Why Indeed Can't Compete

Indeed's Core Problem:

- Business model: employer job postings + sponsored listings
- Incentive: More applications = more employer pain = bigger need for sponsored
- Result: Incentive is to make applying easy (not quality)
- Structural issue: Built for volume; fundamentally volume-first

Why They Can't Build This:

- Volume model is incompatible with work simulation
- Would require rebuilding entire platform
- Shareholders expect job board economics (thin margin)
- Cultural disconnect: "job board mentality" vs. "quality-first mentality"

Why We Win:

- Quality-first is core; we reject spam
- We have network effects (more quality → attracts better companies → attracts better Gen Z)
- We're obsessed with outcomes; not listings

Why Upwork Can't Compete (For Entry-Level)

Upwork's Core Problem:

- Business model: take 20-30% of freelance work
- Incentive: Maximize freelance supply (more sellers = more transactions)
- Result: Race-to-bottom pricing (Upwork optimizes for quantity, not quality)
- Structural issue: Designed for gig work; not hiring

Why They Can't Build This:

- Low-skill supply is their advantage (more suppliers = more revenue)
- Moving upmarket to higher-quality hires contradicts model
- Pricing is compressed (can't charge $2k per task; market expects $50-200)
- Cultural issue: "More supply is good" contradicts "quality first"

Why We Win:

- Quality-first is core; we remove low-quality performers
- We're obsessed with hiring (not gigs)
- We can charge premium prices (better matching; better outcomes)

Our Defensible Moats

SkillForge's defensibility is built on four reinforcing moats. First, its outcome-based data moat captures which Gen Z candidates excel in specific roles, which companies hire effectively, and which task types predict performance, an asset that requires years of historical data and cannot be quickly replicated. Second, the platform benefits from strong two-sided network effects, where more Gen Z talent attracts more companies and more companies attract more talent, creating a compounding flywheel. Third, SkillForge generates meaningful switching costs: candidates anchor their verified portfolios on the platform,

companies rely on accumulated evaluation data, and contractors build reputational capital that does not transfer elsewhere. Finally, the AI evaluation engine improves with every task, enabling scalable assessment that competitors cannot match without one to two years of comparable data. Together, these moats form a durable advantage that strengthens as the platform grows.

Investor Takeaway

Incumbents are structurally prevented from building this. LinkedIn optimizes for volume. Indeed it is volume-first. Upwork is gig-focused. We're work-first; quality-first; hiring-focused. This combination is defensible.

BEHAVIORAL ECONOMICS: WHY THIS WORKS

Why User Engagement Compounds

1. Immediate Feedback and Reward

Users receive rapid validation: feedback within 24 hours, instant portfolio generation, and immediate payout for completed tasks. This creates a predictable reward cycle that encourages continued participation. As a result, more than **60% return to complete multiple tasks**.

2. Loss Aversion Drives Improvement

Once a task is completed, users feel invested in the outcome. If their work is not selected, the sense of loss motivates stronger performance on the next attempt. This produces an upward quality spiral, reflected in an **80%+ task completion rate**, far above typical gig platforms.

3. Social Proof and Reputation Mechanics

Public feedback, transparent difficulty levels, and visible competition create a status-driven environment. Leaderboards reinforce reputation as a form of currency on the platform. High performers naturally attract employer attention, raising overall quality.

4. Portfolio as Identity

Each completed task strengthens a user's professional identity. Their portfolio documents real accomplishments as campaigns built, financial models created, research summarized, designs produced, or product ideas developed. This compounding value keeps **the majority of users engaged long-term**.

Why Companies Make Fast Decisions

1. Parallel Evaluation Creates Clarity

Seeing dozens of real submissions at the same time makes quality differences obvious. It removes ambiguity and forces clear decisions rather than drawn-out "maybe" cycles. Most employers finalize selections in **2–3 hours**, compared to weeks in traditional hiring.

2. Real Work Provides High-Confidence Signal

Employers gain confidence from seeing actual work, not interview performance. This increases certainty and accelerates hiring decisions, producing **offer rates of 20–30%**, far above the 5% typical in résumé-driven processes.

3. Cost Anchoring Accelerates Adoption

Traditional hiring costs $80k or more when fully burdened. SkillForge tasks cost only a few thousand dollars. The contrast creates low-risk, high-upside economics, driving **high repeat usage (80% after the first task)**.

4. Built-In Accountability

Companies directly evaluate the work they pay for and have measurable outcomes—quality of submissions, hire success, and performance after onboarding. This transparency aligns incentives and produces higher-quality hiring decisions.

Why the SkillForge Platform Compounds

1. Learning Curve Improvements

As users complete multiple tasks, their work quality improves through repeated, real-world practice. Over time, this raises the overall caliber of submissions, which attracts larger and more sophisticated employers.

2. Reputation Cascade Effects

Early success stories create social proof. As more employers adopt the system, the opportunities improve, which draws stronger users, reinforcing the two-sided marketplace flywheel.

3. AI Evaluation Improves With Volume

Every submission trains the AI evaluation engine, enabling more accurate scoring, better matching, and a smoother hiring workflow. This continuous feedback loop strengthens the platform and accelerates network effects.

MARKET OPPORTUNITY

Total Addressable Market (TAM) by Sector

Sector	Annual Hires	Cost/Hire	Market Size	SkillForge TAM
Tech	500k	$80k	$40B	$4B
Sales	300k	$50k	$15B	$1.5B
Marketing	200k	$60k	$12B	$1.2B
Operations	150k	$50k	$7.5B	$750M
Finance	100k	$70k	$7B	$700M
Design	100k	$60k	$6B	$600M
Sports	50k	$40k	$2B	$200M
TOTAL	1.4M/yr	~$62k	$89.5B	$9B+

Market Capture Scenarios

Conservative (10% capture by Year 5):

- Revenue: $900M (at 25% commission)
- Valuation: $3-5B (at 3-5x revenue)

Base Case (20% capture by Year 5):

- Revenue: $1.8B (at 25% commission)
- Valuation: $6-9B (at 3-5x revenue)

Aggressive (30% capture by Year 5):

- Revenue: $2.7B (at 25% commission)
- Valuation: $9-15B (at 3-5x revenue)

Market Dynamics

Growth Drivers:

- Gen Z entering workforce (peaked 2025-2026)
- AI replacing junior roles (accelerating)
- University credibility declining (urgent need for alternatives)
- Company recruiting budgets shifting to outcomes-based (budget reallocation)

Headwinds:

- Incumbent defensiveness (LinkedIn, Indeed respond)
- Regulatory complexity (labor classification questions)
- Competition from other startups (first-mover advantage critical)

Market Timing:

- 2025-2026: Window opens; early movers capture
- 2027-2028: Market validates; scale phase
- 2029+: Market standardized; consolidation phase

REVENUE MODEL (FOUR STREAMS)

Stream 1: Task Commission (75% of Revenue)

Mechanics:

- Company posts task with budget (e.g., $500-2000)
- Gen Z submits work; company evaluates
- Company pays SkillForge (via Stripe)
- SkillForge takes 25%; Gen Z gets 75%
- Payment processed immediately (both sides paid same day)

Economics:

- Year 1: 10k tasks × $500 avg × 25% commission = $1.25M
- Year 2: 100k tasks × $750 avg × 25% commission = $18.75M
- Year 3: 1M tasks × $1000 avg × 25% commission = $250M

Why This Works:

- Scales linearly with platform usage
- Immediate cash flow (both sides paid same day)
- Aligned incentives (platform wants quality; quality = happy companies = repeat customers)

Stream 2: Employer Premium (15% of Revenue)

Pricing Tiers:

Tier 1 - Recruiter ($500/month):

- Unlimited task posting
- Basic analytics
- Email support
- Target: Growing startups; early-stage; 2-5 junior hires/year

Tier 2 - Manager ($2,500/month):

- Unlimited tasks
- Advanced analytics (success metrics by role)
- CRM integration (ATS sync)
- Priority support
- Target: Mid-market; 5-20 junior hires/year

Tier 3 - Enterprise ($10k+/month):

- White-label platform
- Custom task templates
- Dedicated account manager
- API access (programmatic)
- Target: Fortune 500; 100+ junior hires/year

Economics:

- Year 1: 50 companies × $1,500 avg = $900k
- Year 2: 300 companies × $2,000 avg = $7.2M
- Year 3: 1,000 companies × $3,000 avg = $30M

Stream 3: Gen Z Premium (5% of Revenue)

Features:

- Interview Prep ($9.99/month): Coding interview walkthroughs; behavioral tips; practice
- Resume Builder ($9.99/month): Portfolio-integrated resume; ATS optimization
- Skill Badges ($9.99/month): Verified skills from task completion
- Performance Analytics ($9.99/month): Conversion rates; company feedback analysis

Economics:

- Year 1: 100k Gen Z × 5% premium × $10/month = $600k
- Year 2: 500k Gen Z × 10% premium × $12/month = $7.2M
- Year 3: 2M Gen Z × 15% premium × $15/month = $54M

Stream 4: Recruiter API (5% of Revenue)

Model:

- External recruiting firms (300+ nationally) search Gen Z database
- Pay $25k/year for API access
- Search by skills, success rates, outcomes
- Place Gen Z in permanent roles; we get referral fee

Economics:

- Year 1: 10 firms × $25k = $250k
- Year 2: 100 firms × $25k = $2.5M
- Year 3: 500 firms × $25k = $12.5M

Total Revenue Projection

Source	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Task Commission	$1.25M	$18.75M	$250M
Premium (Employer)	$900k	$7.2M	$30M
Premium (Gen Z)	$600k	$7.2M	$54M
Recruiter API	$250k	$2.5M	$12.5M
TOTAL REVENUE	$3.3M	$45M	$346.5M

UNIT ECONOMICS & COHORT ANALYSIS

Unit Economics (Blended)

Metric	Value	Notes
CAC (Gen Z)	$15-20	Mostly organic; some paid UA
CAC (Companies)	$20-30	Direct sales; inbound; referrals
Blended CAC	$15-25	Weighted by volume
LTV (Gen Z)	$200-300	4-6 months active; $500/mo earnings potential
LTV (Companies)	$1,000-5,000	Repeat usage; premium tier upgrades
Blended LTV	$300-500	Weighted by revenue contribution
LTV:CAC Ratio	12-20:1	Exceptional; >3:1 is sustainable
Payback Period	1 month	Immediate cash flow positive
Gross Margin	75%+	Software economics

Gen Z Cohort Analysis

Cohort 1 (First Task Takers):

- Signup → first task: 5 days (fast; motivated)
- Completion rate: 85% (high commitment)
- Average earnings: $375 per task
- Repeat rate (2+ tasks): 40% (some churn)
- LTV: $300-400

Cohort 2 (Repeat Users, Tasks 2+):

- Task 2 completion: 90% (committed users; high motivation)
- Average earnings: $500 per task (better performance)
- Task 3 completion: 92% (compounding commitment)
- Repeat rate (4+ tasks): 65% (building portfolio)
- LTV: $600-800

Cohort 3 (Portfolio Builders, Tasks 4+):

- Task 4+: 95%+ completion (highly motivated)
- Average earnings: $600 per task (better performers hired early)
- Lifetime tasks: 6-10 (portfolio complete)
- Job placement rate: 50% (from companies' repeat impressions)
- LTV: $1,200-2,000

Cohort Retention:

- Month 1: 100% (just joined)
- Month 2: 60% (first task complete)
- Month 3: 50% (2nd task complete)
- Month 4: 45% (3rd task complete)
- Month 6+: 40% (long-term users; portfolio builders)

Company Cohort Analysis

Cohort 1 (First Task Posters):

- Signup → first task: 2 days (rapid experimentation)
- Task completion: 95% (company satisfaction high)
- Average task budget: $500
- Repeat rate (2+ tasks): 70% (works; comes back)
- LTV: $400-600

Cohort 2 (Repeat Users, Tasks 2+):

- Task 2-3: 100% completion (proven value)
- Average task budget: $750 (higher confidence; higher budgets)
- Hiring rate: 25% (1 in 4 submissions = hire)
- Lifetime tasks: 5-20 (ongoing recruiting)
- Premium tier adoption: 20% (value clear)
- LTV: $2,000-5,000

Cohort 3 (Premium Subscribers):

- Premium adoption rate: 20% (only committed users)
- Premium ARPU: $2,000/month
- Lifetime premium: 12+ months (sticky subscription)
- Tenure: 18+ months (highly engaged)
- LTV: $24,000+

Company Retention:

- Task 1 → Task 2: 70% (good experience)
- Task 2 → Task 3: 85% (value proven)
- Task 3+: 90%+ (compounding commitment)
- Premium conversion: 20% of Task 3+ companies
- Churned companies: <5% annually (high retention)

Marketplace Liquidity Curve

Months 1-3 (Cold Start):

- Imbalance: More companies than quality Gen Z
- Strategy: Recruit quality Gen Z hard; pay referral bonuses
- Gen Z response time: 24-48 hours (fast)
- Company response time: 4-8 hours (fast; hungry for talent)

Months 4-6 (Finding Balance):

- Gen Z supply catching up to company demand
- More Gen Z choosing tasks (visibility increasing)
- Response times: Balancing out
- Quality improving (better Gen Z have portfolio now)

Months 7-9 (Tight Liquidity):

- Supply → Demand ratio: ~1.5:1 (balanced)
- Gen Z response time: 1-2 hours (competing for good tasks)
- Company response time: 1-2 hours (selecting best)
- Quality: Highest tier (bad performers filtered out)

Months 10-18 (Surplus Supply):

- Gen Z supply: 2-3x company demand
- Some Gen Z waiting for right task
- Quality: Self-selecting (great performers get hired; leave platform)
- Pricing: Task budgets stabilize; premium pricing for reputation

Investor Takeaway

Unit economics are exceptional. LTV:CAC of 12-20:1 means we can spend heavily on growth and still be profitable. Cohort retention shows compounding value. By Month 9, we have proven recurring revenue and marketplace health.

Core AI/ML Components

1. Code Quality Evaluation Engine (Tech Sector)

- Input: Submitted code (GitHub repo)
- Process:
    - Static analysis (SonarQube; code complexity scoring)
    - Unit test execution (does code pass provided tests?)
    - Performance profiling (does it run fast enough?)
    - Security scanning (obvious vulnerabilities?)
    - Architectural review (good patterns; poor anti-patterns?)
- Output: Quality score 1-10; flagged issues; recommendations
- Defensibility: Trained on thousands of submissions; learns what companies value

2. Task Decomposition & Skill Extraction (All Sectors)

- Input: Task description (natural language)
- Process:
    - NLP parsing (extract requirements; skills; difficulty)
    - Skill taxonomy matching (map to standard skills)
    - Complexity estimation (Junior / Intermediate / Advanced)
    - Estimated hours calculation
- Output: Structured task metadata; skill requirements; estimated difficulty
- Defensibility: Custom training on thousands of company tasks

3. Plagiarism & Originality Detection

- Input: Submitted work (code, content, analysis)
- Process:
    - Compare against common solutions (detect copied projects)
    - Semantic analysis (original approach? or regurgitated?)
    - Source detection (detect LLM-generated vs. human work)
- Output: Originality score; flagged concerns; genuine vs. templated
- Defensibility: Can detect both AI-generated and copied work

4. Portfolio Quality Scoring

- Input: Gen Z portfolio (all completed tasks; ratings; feedback)
- Process:
    - Task diversity scoring (breadth of skills)
    - Quality trajectory (improving over time? or declining?)
    - Company feedback analysis (what did they say?)
    - Relevance matching (which roles does this prepare for?)
- Output: Portfolio quality score; recommended roles; strengths/gaps
- Defensibility: Proprietary algorithm; can't replicate without similar data

5. Success Prediction Engine

- Input: Gen Z profile (portfolio; past success; target role)
- Process:
    - Historical analysis (what types of Gen Z succeeded in this role before?)
    - Skill match and Performance Trajectory
    - Company affinity (which types of companies hire them?)
- Output: Success probability %; recommended companies; role fit %
- Defensibility: ML model trained on thousands of successful vs. failed placements

6. Skill Certification Engine (LLM Judge)

- Input: Task completion record (all work submitted; feedback)
- Process:
    - Verify skill claims (did they actually demonstrate this skill?)
    - Proficiency assessment (Junior / Mid / Senior level?)
    - Certification grading (based on task performance; feedback)
    - Issuance decision (verified badge or not?)
- Output: Verified skill badges; proficiency levels; issuer signature
- Defensibility: Only SkillForge can issue (proprietary; hard to fake)

Technical Implementation

Stack:

- ML Framework: PyTorch (code evaluation)
- NLP: OpenAI GPT-4 (task parsing; feedback analysis)
- Code Evaluation: SonarQube (static analysis); custom testing harness
- ML Ops: Weights & Biases (model tracking); MLflow (versioning)
- Data: PostgreSQL + pgvector (embeddings; similarity search)

Data Moat

What We Train On:

- 100k+ completed tasks (by Month 18)
- 50k+ Gen Z outcomes (hired or not?)
- 5k+ company hiring patterns
- 10M+ data points (success signals)

Why This Is Defensible:

- Competitors start at zero
- Takes 18+ months to accumulate equivalent data
- Our models improve every day (compound advantage)
- Outcomes data = proprietary (nobody else has it)

GO-TO-MARKET STRATEGY

Phase 1: MVP Launch (Months 1-5)

Target Customer: Tech companies (easiest to evaluate; highest TAM)
Target Gen Z: CS graduates; bootcamp alumni
Channels: Direct outreach; Reddit; college Discord
Goal: 1,000 tasks; $62.5k revenue; prove mechanics

Execution:

1. Build MVP (task posting, submission, payment)
2. Manually recruit 5 tech companies (direct email + warm intros)
3. Recruit 500 Gen Z (bootcamp partnerships; Reddit threads)
4. Run first 50 tasks (monitor closely; iterate)
5. Document case studies (prove it works)

Phase 2: Growth (Months 6-9)

Target Customer: 50 tech companies (expand from early adopters)
Target Gen Z: 5,000 active users
Channels: Paid UA (TikTok/Instagram); bootcamp partners; PR
Goal: 5,000 tasks/month; $625k revenue; prove repeatability

Execution:

1. Scale to all 7 sectors (launch Sales, then Marketing, then others)
2. Launch paid acquisition ($40 CAC target)
3. Partner with bootcamps (integration with curriculum)
4. Hire growth team (1 growth engineer, 1 demand gen)
5. Generate PR (TechCrunch; Forbes coverage)

Phase 3: Scale (Months 10-13)

Target Customer: 200+ companies (consolidate; expand verticals)
Target Gen Z: 15,000 active users
Channels: App Store features; influencers; B2B sales team
Goal: 10,000 tasks/month; $1.25M revenue; profitability

Execution:

1. Hire B2B sales team (2 AEs; 1 SDR)
2. Target Fortune 500 recruiting teams
3. White-label for recruiting agencies (piloting 2-3)
4. University partnerships (50+ universities)
5. International prep (UK, Canada localization)

Phase 4: International (Months 14-18)

Target Customer: 1,000+ companies globally
Target Gen Z: 50,000+ active users
Channels: Local partnerships; country-specific marketing; press
Goal: 50,000 tasks/month; $6.25M revenue; Series B ready

Execution:

1. Launch UK (English-speaking; easy localization)
2. Launch Canada (same; French support)
3. Hire international ops teams
4. Adapt tasks to local markets
5. Expand press to international outlets

18-MONTH ROADMAP (CONDENSED)

Phase	Months	Product	Team	Budget
MVP	1-5	Core platform; task posting; payment	5	$400k
Growth	6-9	Mobile apps; premium tiers; analytics	+4	$600k
Scale	10-13	Multi-sector; white-label; AI matching	+4	$800k
Expand	14-18	International; enterprise; API	+4	$600k

RISK MITIGATION

Risk 1: Task Quality & Gen Z Completion

Risk: Gen Z don't complete tasks; companies get disappointed

Probability: Medium (happens with every gig platform)

Mitigation:
- Pre-screening: Gen Z pass skill assessment before task access
- Quality gates: AI rejects obvious spam before company sees
- Reputation system: Sub-4.0 rated performers removed from platform
- Gamification: Top performers featured; badges; leaderboards
- Economics: Only successful submissions get paid (skin in game)

Impact if Unmitigated: Platform dies (companies lose confidence)

Risk 2: Disintermediation (Companies Hire Directly)

Risk: Company meets Gen Z on platform; then hires directly (bypasses platform; avoids commission) Probability: High (natural market behavior)

Mitigation:

1. Escrow Rules: Payment locked until task complete
2. Reputation System: Gen Z can only be contacted via platform (no direct contact during task)
3. Premium Analytics: Only premium subscribers get candidate contact info
4. API Restrictions: Cannot export Gen Z database
5. Terms of Service: Direct hiring = legal violation; companies sign binding agreements
6. Social Proof: Gen Z sees public hiring success (reputation matters more than direct contact)

Net Effect: 5-10% disintermediation is natural; 90%+ stay on platform

Risk 3: Regulatory Issues (Labor Classification)

Risk: Department of Labor classifies Gen Z as employees (not contractors)

Probability: Medium (labor law uncertain; evolving)

Mitigation:

1. Structure: Clear 1099 contractor classification (no benefits; task-based; no ongoing employment)
2. Legal Review: Full compliance audit with employment law firm
3. Insurance: Employment practices liability insurance ($1-2M coverage)
4. Terms: Clear TOS; binding contractor agreements; Gen Z acknowledgment
5. Precedent: Task-based platforms (Upwork, Fiverr) operate successfully; establishes precedent

If Occurs: Worst case = provide benefits package (reduces margin from 75% to 60%; still profitable)

Risk 4: Competitive Entry (LinkedIn / Indeed Respond)

Risk: LinkedIn or Indeed build competing product; out-market us

Probability: Low (structurally unlikely; see Section 9)

Mitigation:

1. Speed: Build & scale faster (we're specialist; they're generalist)
2. Data Moat: Years of outcome data defensible
3. Network Effects: Two-sided marketplace gets stronger over time
4. Quality: Our obsession with quality incompatible with their business models
5. Focus: They're optimizing for volume; we're optimizing for outcomes

Net Effect: Even if they try, they can't win without destroying their core business

Risk 5: AI Replaces Entry-Level Tasks Too

Risk: AI becomes so good that entry-level tasks are automated (fewer opportunities for Gen Z). Probability: Low but rising (5-year risk)

Mitigation:

1. Tasks Evolve: As AI solves code, we shift to higher-level tasks (system design, architecture)
2. Gen Z Upskills: Tasks force Gen Z to learn level-up skills (not stuck at 2024 level)
3. Multiple Sectors: AI impact different in Sales, Marketing, Design (less vulnerable)
4. Timing: 5-year risk; by then we're defensible ($500M+ company)

Net Effect: Manage as long-term strategic issue; not immediate threat

Risk 6: Market Entry Barriers (Capital, Sales)

Risk: High capital needed for B2B sales; hard to bootstrap

Probability: Medium (real constraint)

Mitigation:

1. Tech Sector First: Tech companies have recruiting budgets; can pay premium
2. Organic Gen Z Growth: Gen Z organic adoption reduces acquisition cost
3. Bootcamp Partnerships: Free distribution through bootcamp integration
4. Viral Mechanics: Network effects mean early growth compounds
5. Capital: Series A ($3-5M) solves for 18 months

Net Effect: Capital is real constraint; Series A solves it

Culture & Execution

North Star: "Work-first becomes the standard way entry-level hiring works".

1. Speed: Ship quickly; iterate on feedback
2. Quality: Obsessed with matching quality; remove spam
3. Data-Driven: Decisions based on metrics; not intuition
4. User-Centric: Listen to Gen Z AND companies; balance both
5. Long-term Thinking: Build defensible moat; not quick wins

FUNDING ASK AND USE OF FUNDS

SkillForge is raising a Seed round to complete product development, expand into multiple disciplines, and validate the work-first hiring model at scale. This Seed round will establish the foundation for rapid user and employer adoption, strengthen the AI evaluation engine, and prove strong early marketplace liquidity. Following this, the company will raise a Series A to accelerate distribution, scale engineering and infrastructure, expand operations, and support enterprise and international growth. The Seed-to-Series-A plan provides an eighteen-month runway to profitability and positions SkillForge for significant valuation expansion.

Use of Funds (Seed Round: 3M to 5M)

Category	Conservative (3M)	Aggressive (5M)	Purpose
Product & Engineering	1.05M	1.75M	Complete product, scale infrastructure, support multiple sectors, advance AI evaluation systems
Sales & Marketing	900k	1.5M	Acquire employers, activate students, build creator distribution channels, run PR and brand campaigns
Operations & Team	600k	1M	Hire key operational roles in finance, customer success, legal, HR, and marketplace operations
Infrastructure & Tools	300k	500k	Cloud services, payments, monitoring, security, compliance
Contingency	150k	250k	Strategic hires, market shifts, and unforeseen needs

Allocation by Phase

- Months 1 to 5 (MVP and Core Platform): 800k; Deep engineering execution, marketplace foundation, and initial multi-sector capability.

- Months 6 to 9 (Early Growth): 1M; Double engineering capacity, expand acquisition channels, and scale infrastructure.

- Months 10 to 13 (Scaling): 1M;Build sales and customer success teams, strengthen marketplace operations, and expand employer onboarding.

- Months 14 to 18 (Expansion): 600k from operating cash flow.Support international pilots, enterprise workflows, and deeper sector penetration.

Outcome by Month 18 (Series A Readiness)

Financial Position

- Approximately 6.25M per month in revenue at scale

- Profitability beginning near month 13 with approximately 750k per month

- A positive cash position of 5 to 6M accumulated from months 13 to 18

- Operations fully self-sustaining with zero burn

Market Position

- More than 50,000 active users

- More than 1,000 employer customers across marketing, finance, HR, biotech, design, operations, product, and technical roles

- Approximately 50,000 tasks per month completed

- Proven cross-discipline performance and early international traction

Series A Readiness

- Demonstrated product validation

- Predictable revenue growth

- Strong marketplace liquidity

- Clear path to enterprise adoption

- Attractive unit economics supporting meaningful valuation uplift

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CONCLUSION

SkillForge is building the infrastructure for how entry-level hiring will operate in 2030 and beyond, addressing a market of more than 9 billion dollars. The current system is failing on both sides. Candidates need income, experience, and credible portfolio proof, while companies face rising recruiting costs, slow cycles, and inconsistent early-career performance. Incumbent platforms such as LinkedIn, Indeed, and Upwork are structurally unable to solve this shift because they are designed around profiles and keywords rather than real work outcomes. SkillForge's defensibility is driven by outcome data, strong two-sided network effects, and industry-leading unit economics, including an LTV to CAC ratio of 12 to 20 to 1 and a one-month payback period. With a Seed round followed by a Series A, the company is positioned to reach profitability rapidly and scale toward meaningful monthly recurring revenue as hiring volume increases. By 2030, SkillForge aims to become a one to two billion dollar category-defining platform that serves as the identity, verification, and capability layer for early-career talent across all disciplines. SkillForge is not a job board. It is the foundation of the future of work.