



Credentials Get You Started - Skills Build Careers





Welcome

If you still think the degrees hanging on your wall, or the official credentials you've earned over the years, are the only things influencing your chances of a successful professional career this year, you may be in for a surprise. The job market is shifting, forcing employers to value demonstrable skills over traditional credentials when making hiring decisions.

Thanks to rapid technological transformations and changes to Finance and Engineering roles and responsibilities, traditional credentials are becoming less effective at helping organizations predict long-term candidate success. In fact, according to the World Economic Forum, for some roles, around 40% of the existing skills employers screen for could become obsolete by 2030.

As a result, anywhere up to 95% of employers now consider skills-based hiring to be the future of recruitment. They're focusing on evaluating candidates based on their ability to demonstrate digital literacy, adapt quickly to changing workplace environments, and show durable, human skillsets.

This transformation presents opportunities and challenges for job seekers in the Finance and Engineering market. On one hand, the emphasis on "skills" over degrees allows individuals from diverse backgrounds to compete for roles on a more level playing field.

However, as the skills employers prioritize continue to change, professionals must also take a proactive approach to career development. Continuous learning, adaptability, and agility are now crucial to career success.

In this guide, we'll show you how to align your career development strategies with employers' evolving demands and stay resilient in a complicated job market.

-Mark



The Evolution of Hiring Practices in the Engineering & Finance Industry

The strategies employers use to screen, validate, and hire candidates in the Engineering & Finance industry have changed drastically in just a few years. Traditionally, employers often considered formal education qualifications to be direct insights into a candidate's potential. Degrees and certifications served as standardized indicators of a candidate's capability.

Unfortunately, this approach had several limitations. It meant that employers frequently overlooked individuals who possessed the skills they needed for a role, just because they lacked formal credentials.

This narrowed the talent pool for companies, often hurting diverse, equitable, and inclusive hiring priorities. As talent gaps have continued to grow, with job openings exceeding available workers by more than one million positions in 2025, organizations have increasingly begun to focus on skills-based hiring strategies.

Skills-based hiring prioritizes/prioritises a candidate's actual, demonstrable abilities over formal educational backgrounds. This is an approach that many pioneering companies (particularly those in the technology space, like IBM, Apple, and Google) have achieved amazing results with.

Some reports show that organizations focused on skills over traditional credentials aren't just more likely to be diverse and have access to a wider talent pool—they're also 57% more likely to adapt to market changes successfully—that's crucial in a rapidly changing professional space.

Technological advancements are also further accelerating this shift. Innovative tools, like recruitment systems powered by AI and automation, are enabling more efficient, unbiased candidate evaluations.

AI-driven tools can analyze vast amounts of data to identify candidates whose skills align closely with job requirements, reducing reliance on traditional credentials.



Why Skills Matter More Than Ever in the Engineering & Finance Space

The new “skills economy” in the Engineering and Finance industry has evolved due to numerous factors. First, the continued impact of the global skill shortage. Eighty-seven percent of global companies are currently experiencing skill gaps or expect to struggle with hiring issues in the next few years.

Focusing too heavily on traditional credentials immediately narrows a company’s hiring pool, forcing it to omit candidates who may be ideal for roles simply because they lack a specific degree or experience in a particular role.

Example:

I saw the shift firsthand while working with a manufacturing client who was struggling to hire a Financial Analyst. For months, they focused narrowly on candidates with a CPA and Big 4 background. After multiple interviews and no hires, the pool had dried up—and so had their momentum. Internal teams were stretched thin, and the finance lead was still doing most of the analyst work herself.

That’s when I introduced a candidate who didn’t check all the traditional boxes. No CPA. No Big 4. But he brought something else: strong, hands-on experience with cost modeling, forecasting, and financial systems in a fast-paced manufacturing environment. He understood plant operations and had a track record of partnering with cross-functional teams to drive margin improvement.

Instead of dismissing him outright, I suggested the client try something new—we gave him a case study problem. It wasn’t about getting the “right” answer. The client wanted to see how he approached the challenge, what assumptions he made, and how well he justified his conclusions. It was a chance to evaluate thinking, not just credentials.

His analysis wasn’t perfect—but his logic was sharp, his reasoning was clear, and his business instincts were solid. He moved forward in the process—and the team was energized again.

Research from Deloitte finds that focusing on skill-based hiring makes companies 107% more effective at placing talent, 52% more likely to innovate, and 52% more adept at responding to marketplace changes effectively, highlighting how valuable a new mindset can be.

Beyond simply overcoming skill shortage issues, skills-based hiring allows companies in the [sector] industry to address evolving challenges such as:

The Accelerating Pace of Skill Obsolescence

The shelf life of skills previously considered crucial in the [sector] industry is diminishing at a rapid pace. Generational shifts in the workplace, new working styles, evolving technologies, and new priorities among organizations are all redefining which skills really matter for success in various Finance and Engineering roles.

While traditional qualifications and certifications highlight a person's aptitude with certain tasks, today's employers need to focus on candidates that continuously learn, and adapt to new workplace requirements. Both evolving technical skills, and critical soft skills (such as resilience) will be more valuable to employers than standard credentials.

The Rise of Automation and AI: Reshaping Skill Requirements

The integration of automation and artificial intelligence (AI) into [sector] workflows is transforming all kinds of roles. Automated systems are now capable of performing tasks that once required human input – from evaluating data, to crafting crucial documents.

This means the tasks attributed to human workers are changing, and human skills like creativity are becoming more critical for many roles. Additionally, the rise of technology in the workplace is pushing employers to search for candidates who can work effectively alongside intuitive systems.

Today's staff members need a high degree of digital literacy to leverage automation and AI safely and efficiently, use cloud-based communication and collaboration tools, and organize workflows across a range of apps and tools.

The Growing Gap Between Formal Education and Workplace Needs

Traditional educational institutions develop certifications and credentials based on the insights they have in the moment – into the skills that professionals need at that time. Many of the courses and classes [sector] employees took in the past didn't account for the tools and workflows they'd be navigating today. This results in a major skill gap.

Graduates might possess theoretical knowledge, and basic skills, but they could lack the practical, up-to-date skills required by modern employers. This means many companies are beginning to prioritise/prioritize upskilling, reskilling, and continuous learning, making traditional, formal education less important to a candidate's long-term success.

Essential Skills for Future-Proofing Your Career

As mentioned above, the switch in focus from credentials to skills presents opportunities and concerns to candidates. Going forward, [sector] professionals won't be able to rely exclusively on degrees or certifications to access the roles they want.

Instead, you'll need to develop a plan for continuous skill development, aligning your strategy for ongoing learning, with the evolving priorities of employers. Notably, this approach will influence how you pursue both technical, and human (soft) skills in the years ahead.



Building In-Demand Technical Skills

The technical skills employers are searching for in today's [sector] market are primarily linked to evolutions in workplace technology and digital transformation. Business leaders want candidates that can adapt to an ever-growing need for AI, automation, and data in the workplace. Although the technical skills you develop will need to evolve over time, right now, you should be focusing heavily on areas such as:

AI Literacy

Artificial intelligence is unavoidable in the [sector] space today. Employees that can effectively use and work alongside AI tools and machine learning applications will easily outperform their colleagues. Focus on learning as much as you can about the latest innovations in the AI landscape, and the types of tools your industry is using. For instance, coders might experiment with tools like GitHub Copilot, while marketing teams use AI solutions like Jasper and Copy.AI.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Today, data drives decision-making across every [sector] business. An ability to analyse/analyze, interpret, and use that data effectively will make you a more valuable employee. Proficiency in basic data analytics processes can help you identify trends, make informed decisions, and share insights that can help your business grow and evolve.

Proficiency with Digital Collaboration Tools

The shift towards remote and hybrid work is still accelerating in the [sector] industry. This means employees need to be comfortable using digital systems for communication and collaboration. Experiment regularly with file-sharing and project management tools, like Dropbox or Trello. Make sure you're confident using video conferencing systems like Microsoft Teams or Zoom for meetings.

Industry-Specific Technical Competencies

Each industry has unique technical requirements that professionals must grasp to excel. For example, the automotive sector is transitioning towards electric and automated vehicles, necessitating skills in battery technology and software development.

Find out what kind of technical competencies are becoming increasingly important for [sector] professionals in the roles you want to pursue, and prioritize them. Attending industry events, or networking with relevant professionals can give you useful insights here.



Building Durable Human Skills



Durable human skills are essentially the next generation of “critical soft skills”. They encompass valuable, but rarely-taught competencies in areas like creative problem-solving, intuitive communication and collaboration, and emotional intelligence.

These skills are becoming increasingly critical in the AI and automation-powered age. Some of the key capabilities you should be focusing on include:

Critical Thinking and Problem-Solving

The ability to think critically and solve complex problems will be crucial to success in any [sector] career. The more effectively you can navigate unpredictable challenges, and devise innovative solutions, the faster you’ll achieve your professional goals.

Adaptability and Learning Agility

Thanks to rapid technological advancements, and ever-evolving role changes in the [sector] industry, adaptability has become a valuable trait for employees. If you can pivot quickly, embrace changes, and leverage new technologies fast, you’ll be able to adjust to evolving job requirements.

Collaboration and Communication

Effective communication and collaboration are essential in today's interconnected work environment, particularly as new generations of workplace cohorts, and flexible working policies make communication more complex. Focus on strengthening your ability to connect and share ideas efficiently with a wide variety of different team members.

Creativity and Innovation

AI can’t fully replicate human creativity yet. That means that [sector] employees who can innovate are inherently more valuable. Nurture your human curiosity, think outside of the box when tackling challenges, and don’t be afraid to challenge the status quo. This will help you drive change, and maintain a competitive edge in your career.

Emotional Intelligence

Emotional Intelligence (EI) is another thing that AI and autonomous tools struggle to master. Being able to recognize and manage your own emotions, as well as understanding the feelings of others will help you strengthen your interpersonal relationships, and deal with conflicts in the workplace more effectively.

Practical Strategies for Skills Development

Identifying the types of crucial skills you need to develop as an evolving [sector] employee is just the first step. You'll also need a comprehensive plan for how you're going to nurture the right competencies throughout your career. Here are some of the top tips you can use to push your career growth in the right direction.

Use Self-Assessments to Identify Gaps Regularly

You can't improve what you don't measure. Before you can start investing in your skills and abilities, you need to understand where your strengths and weaknesses lie. Evaluate your current competencies, and abilities, comparing them to the types of skills employers in the [sector] industry value for someone in your role.

You could experiment with skill assessment tools online to uncover potential gaps you might be missing, or even consider asking for insights from peers and mentors. Your professional network of colleagues and supervisors can often help reveal blind spots you might be missing.

Re-assess your competencies regularly, as you move through your career, develop new skills, and identify changing trends in the [sector] job market.

Experiment with Versatile Learning Pathways

As employers continue to focus less on traditional degrees and credentials, it's becoming increasingly crucial for [sector] professionals to explore a range of "alternative" learning pathways. Based on your specific needs and goals, explore options like:

Online Courses and Certifications

Online courses offer an easy way to rapidly access new skills relevant to your [sector] role. Many platforms, like Coursera and Udemy offer an ever-changing range of courses, with certifications that are widely recognized across industries.



Microlearning Platforms

If you're limited in availability, microlearning programs could be a good way to match your educational strategy to your schedule. They offer concise, focused learning modules that can be completed in short bursts – making it easier to fit education into your routine.

Project-Based Learning

Engaging in project-based learning allows you to apply theoretical knowledge to real-world scenarios. This hands-on approach enhances practical skills and gives you useful “evidence” of your abilities you can share with employers and supervisors. Try contributing to open-source initiatives, or collaborating with team members on a community project.

Mentorship and Coaching

Establishing relationships with [sector] mentors or coaches can give you access to custom guidance tailored to your career aspirations. Mentors can share their experiences, provide constructive feedback, and help you navigate challenges, accelerating your professional growth.

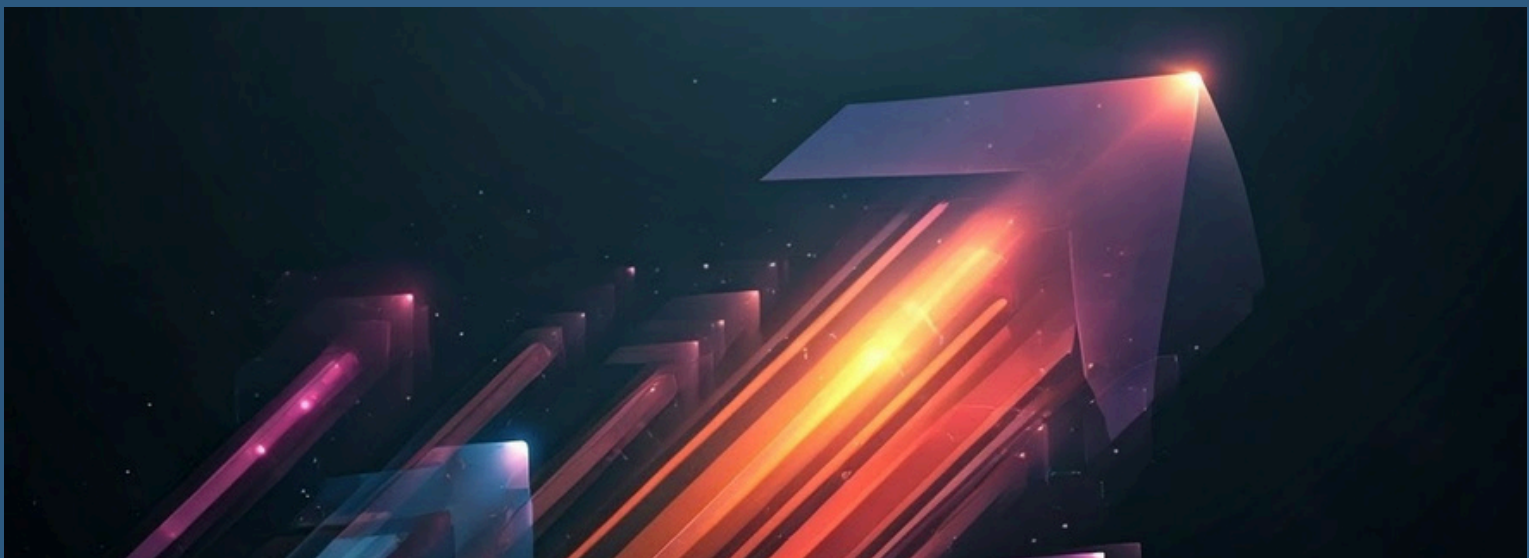
Industry Communities and Networking

Participating in industry-specific communities and networking events exposes you to the latest trends and best practices in the [sector] space. Attending conferences, joining professional associations, and engaging in online forums can expand your professional network, opening doors to new opportunities and collaborations.

Create Personal, Adaptable Skill Development Plans

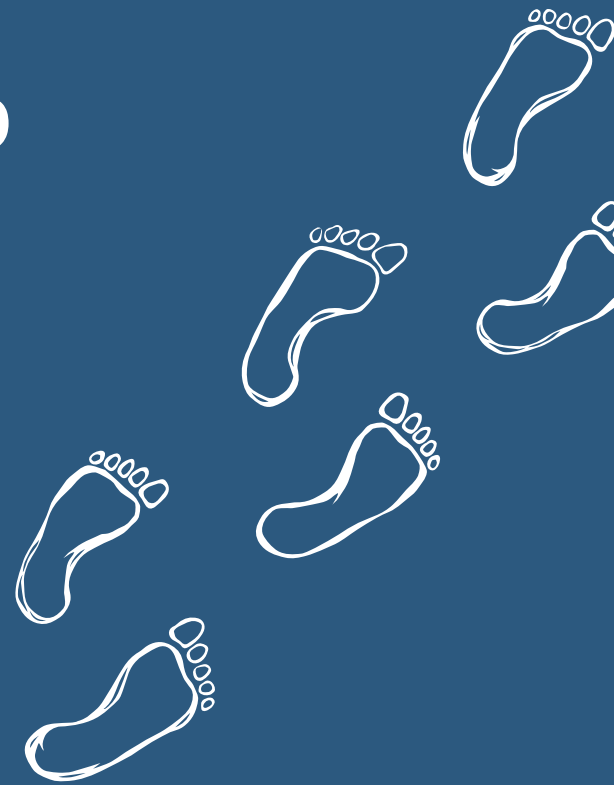
As you progress throughout your [sector] career, a structured, but adaptable skill development plan will give you a roadmap to guide your journey. Use your self-assessment process as a foundation, setting clear (SMART) objectives for the skills you want to develop.

From there, identify the resources you're going to use to harness new skills, whether it's online courses, mentorship programs, or workshops. Allocate specific resources (time and budget) to the learning process, ensuring you make education a part of your regular schedule. Additionally, make sure you have a plan in place for monitoring your progress. Review how effectively you're achieving your goals, and adjust your plan, as needed to stay on track.



Showcasing Skills to Employers

Once you begin developing the right in-demand skills, it's essential to demonstrate them effectively to potential employers. It's no longer enough to simply point to a certification or course completion. Today's employers want clear evidence that you can translate knowledge into real-world results.



Step 1:

Developing a Modern Portfolio

Portfolios aren't just for artists. A digital portfolio can be an excellent way to showcase various skills and accomplishments. You can include insights into the work you've done on major [sector] projects, case studies, feedback from supervisors, and even videos or articles. Use a personal website you can constantly update with new content.

Step 2:

Creating a Skills-Focused Resume/CV

Traditional **engineering resumes** often emphasize job titles and degrees. A more effective approach is to highlight technical skills and problem-solving capabilities. Start by reviewing the job description and tailoring your resume to include core engineering competencies—supported by real examples. For instance, instead of simply listing CAD experience, show how you improved a product design that reduced manufacturing time by 15%.

Step 3:

Optimizing Personal Branding

You'll need to be intentional about how you present yourself both online and offline. This includes your presence on platforms like LinkedIn and how you show up at industry events. In **finance**, professionalism matters—from your attire to the content you share. Positioning yourself as a thought leader by posting relevant financial insights or market analysis can significantly strengthen your personal brand.

Step 4:
Documenting Skill
Development on
Digital Platforms

Your LinkedIn profile and personal website aren't just places to list your previous achievements and projects. You can also use them to show the skills you're currently working on. For instance, you could share content about the projects you're working on, or draw attention to some of the online courses or workshops you're currently involved in. Regularly update these platforms with new progress milestones, to demonstrate a commitment to continuous growth.

Step 5:
Showcasing Skills
During Interviews

In finance interviews, it's critical to show how you apply your skills—especially if your background isn't traditional. One client hired a non-CPA candidate after seeing how he tackled a case study and justified his approach. Use the STAR method (Situation, Task, Action, Result) to share real examples that highlight your problem-solving and impact.

Navigating the Shift from Credentials to Skills in Engineering and Finance

The shift toward skills-based hiring is opening new doors for finance and engineering professionals. While credentials like degrees and certifications still matter, employers today are placing growing emphasis on your ability to apply what you know. That means showing how your skills solve real problems—whether through analysis, modeling, or innovation.

Moving Beyond the “Credentials-First” Mindset

If you've spent years in either field, you may be used to leading with your degrees, certifications, or licenses—on your resume, in interviews, and even in networking. But the most forward-thinking employers are now looking for proof of capability, not just credentials.

How to Stand Out?

Combine Credentials with Demonstrated Skills

Academic credentials can still give you an edge—especially with employers who haven't fully embraced skills-first hiring. But pairing them with strong examples of your work is what creates impact.

For example, if a role calls for an accounting degree or an engineering certification, include it prominently—but also explain how you've applied that knowledge. Have you used your financial modeling skills to streamline budgeting? Or leveraged CAD expertise to cut design cycle times? Highlight certifications alongside online courses, hands-on projects, and measurable results.

Be ready for skills-based assessments too. Many companies now use case studies or practical tests to evaluate problem-solving ability. And don't overlook soft skills—adaptability, communication, and critical thinking are increasingly sought after. In fact, 84% of leaders say soft skills are now essential for success.

Address Gaps and Reframe Strengths

Even in a skills-first market, some job descriptions still require traditional qualifications. If you're missing a specific credential, be prepared to make a case for your value.

Instead of focusing on what you lack, spotlight what you've gained—real-world experience, specialized projects, or technical accomplishments. For instance, maybe you don't have a CFA, but you've led capital planning initiatives or built models that drove major cost savings. Maybe you're not a PE-licensed engineer, but your design work has improved efficiency or safety in real applications.

The goal is to help employers connect your proven skills to the outcomes they care about.

Stay Ahead of Market Shifts

The hiring landscape in finance and engineering continues to evolve—fast. New technologies, global competition, and shifting regulations are changing which skills matter most. Staying relevant means staying proactive.

Watch the job market closely. Consider partnering with a specialist recruiter who understands your sector—they can give you a clearer idea of what is valued today, and where opportunities are growing.

Invest in your own development through online courses, certifications, hands-on projects, or volunteering for cross-functional work. Attend webinars, technical meetups, or finance summits to stay current.

About MKIS Professional Search

MKIS specializes in helping companies build stronger Finance, Engineering, and Operations teams through precision recruiting, strategic succession planning, and proactive talent engagement. We understand the shift toward skills-based hiring—and we help our client-partners stay ahead by identifying professionals who can deliver real-world results, not just check boxes on a résumé.

If you're a ***business owner, C-Suite, VP, or HR leader***, we can help you:

- Strengthen your leadership pipeline
- Attract and retain high-performing talent with critical technical and business skills
- Move from a credentials-first model to a future-ready, skills-based approach

Why MKIS? With decades of real-world military and corporate experience in technical, commercial, and executive roles, we bring insider knowledge of your challenges—and a proven ability to find the right people to solve them. Our placements consistently drive performance, improve retention, and fuel growth.

If You're a ***Candidate***:

We work with professionals who are ready to take their careers to the next level—whether you're seeking a better fit, a new challenge, or a more rewarding environment. If your skills are underutilized or overlooked, let's talk.

- We can help you:
- Position your experience to stand out in today's evolving job market
- Identify roles that align with your strengths, goals, and values
- Navigate the hiring process with clarity, strategy, and support

Email us at mark@mkis.us

Learn more at www.mkis.us/about

Let's Build What's Matters—together.

www.mkis.us

