

How To Source Smarter With Skills Intelligence: Checklist for Recruiters



Skills-based hiring is the new standard. 70% of employers **now use skills-based practices**, cutting mis-hires **by 88%** and expanding talent pools **by nearly 16x** in the U.S.

Recruiters using skills intelligence find better candidates faster while reducing bias. Use this checklist to embed it in your workflow.



What Is Skills Intelligence?

Skills intelligence combines three core components for skills-based recruiting:

- **Skills Taxonomy:** Structured skill library with relationships (synonyms, adjacent skills) standardizes and expands searches.
- **Skills Inference:** AI predicts unlisted skills from work history and projects to uncover hidden talent.
- **Talent Profiles:** Skills-first candidate views blend verified + inferred skills for fairer comparisons.

1. Set the Foundation for Skills-Based Sourcing

Before you change your tools, shift how you and your hiring managers think about “qualified.” Skills intelligence works best when you’re aligned on the skills that actually drive success.

Checklist

- Identify 5–10 core skills for your top priority roles (e.g., “welding” or “data analysis”).
- Separate must-have skills from nice-to-have skills so you don’t over-spec the role.
- Review 1–2 recent successful hires per role and list their key skills.
- Remove degree/pedigree barriers not tied to skills (e.g., CDL certification vs. college degree).
- Document skills profiles in a reusable template for all requisitions.

2. Use a Skills Taxonomy To Build Better Searches

A skills taxonomy gives structure to your search, connecting related skills, synonyms, and levels, so you're not limited by job titles or exact keywords.

Checklist

- Start new searches with skills, not titles (e.g., "HVAC repair" + "refrigeration").
- For each role, add 3–5 related skills (e.g., "HubSpot" --> "marketing automation," "CRM," "email nurturing" or "forklift" --> "pallet jack," "warehouse safety").
- Standardize skill tags in your job posts, templates, and candidate records.
- Partner with TA/HR ops to keep a shared skills list updated for your most common roles.
- Ask HR software vendors how their platform supports a common skills language.

3. Tap Skills Inference To Uncover Hidden Candidates

Skills inference uses AI to infer skills from work history, projects, and learning. You won't miss great candidates just because they didn't cram every keyword into their resume.

Checklist :

- Turn on AI-assisted skills-based or inferred-skills search/matching in your ATS or talent platform.
- When you run a search, review a slice of "high skills match / low title match" candidates.
- Prioritize adjacent skills over "perfect title" matches for hard-to-fill roles.
- Use structured interviews or assessments to validate inferred skills instead of relying on gut feel.
- Update profiles with validated skills so your skills data gets better over time.

4. Build Skills-Rich Talent Profiles To Reduce Bias

Skills-centric profiles help you compare candidates on what they can do, not where they went to school. Employers using skills-based hiring have reported big drops in mis-hires and a 74% decrease in cost per hire, along with better quality of hire and longer tenure.

Checklist :

- Consolidate candidate data — skills, experience, portfolio work, assessments — into a single profile view, preferably in your ATS or talent management platform.
- When possible, review skills first, before you look at company names or schools.
- Use a structured scorecard tied directly to the role's skills for every candidate.
- Compare shortlists on skills coverage and evidence (work samples, projects, certifications), not just years in role.
- Regularly audit scorecards and decisions to be sure skills-first practices are actually being followed.

5. Use Skills Intelligence for Faster Time-to-Fill

Skills-based hiring expands your talent pool and reduces time spent building your candidate slate, which directly impacts time-to-fill.



Candidate Slate

List of candidates who fit the open role

Checklist

- Build outreach lists using skills-based matching for each req, instead of manual keyword searches.
- Re-engage candidates whose skills now match new roles or skill clusters.
- Create evergreen talent pools organized by skill clusters (e.g., “Python + data,” “enterprise SaaS sales,” “welding + fabrication,” “frontline leadership”).
- Track time-to-slate and time-to-fill for skills-based vs. traditional searches.
- Share pipeline wins with managers to build buy-in.

6. Leverage Skills-First Practices To Support Diversity

Focusing on demonstrable skills rather than traditional filters, like specific degrees or employers, helps you open the funnel and support more diverse hiring.

Checklist

- Remove degree requirements where they’re not legally or technically essential.
- Use skills similarity to consider candidates from adjacent industries or non-linear career paths.
- Write job ads that highlight skills over credentials.
- Monitor the diversity of your talent pools and shortlists for skills-based roles, and compare it with resume-driven processes.
- Train hiring managers on how to read skills-based profiles and scorecards fairly.



7. Make Skills Intelligence Part of Your Weekly Routine

Skills intelligence creates the most value when it's embedded in your day-to-day recruiting, not treated as a one-off project.

Checklist

- Start every new search with a 15-minute skills review with the hiring manager.
- Check skills-based talent pools before posting a new role externally.
- Review skills analytics once a week: skills gaps, internal talent, emerging needs.
- Capture post-hire feedback from hiring managers (“these are the skills that really mattered”) and feed it back into your skills profiles.
- When you're evaluating talent management software, look for platforms that offer skills taxonomy management, skills inference, and talent profiles in one place.

Skills Intelligence: Your Recruiting Edge

Skills intelligence helps you find better candidates, faster — without guessing.

Book a ClearCo demo and learn how you can source smarter across all roles.

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