

Dr Bob Athwal

Hire for Skills, Train for AI, Design for mobility

This Session – A tour

- Who am I
- Some background context
- Global Skills
- What this means for you - how you will use this knowledge in your work from today!
- Questions

About me


UNIVERSITY OF
LEICESTER


UNIVERSITY OF
Southampton


RWE


UNIVERSITY of
GREENWICH


TESCO


enterprise


GLOBAL
CAREER
SERVICES
SUMMIT


STUDENTS'
UNION
UNIVERSITY OF GREENWICH


Institute of
Student
Employers
ise.


1 HOUR
PROJECT

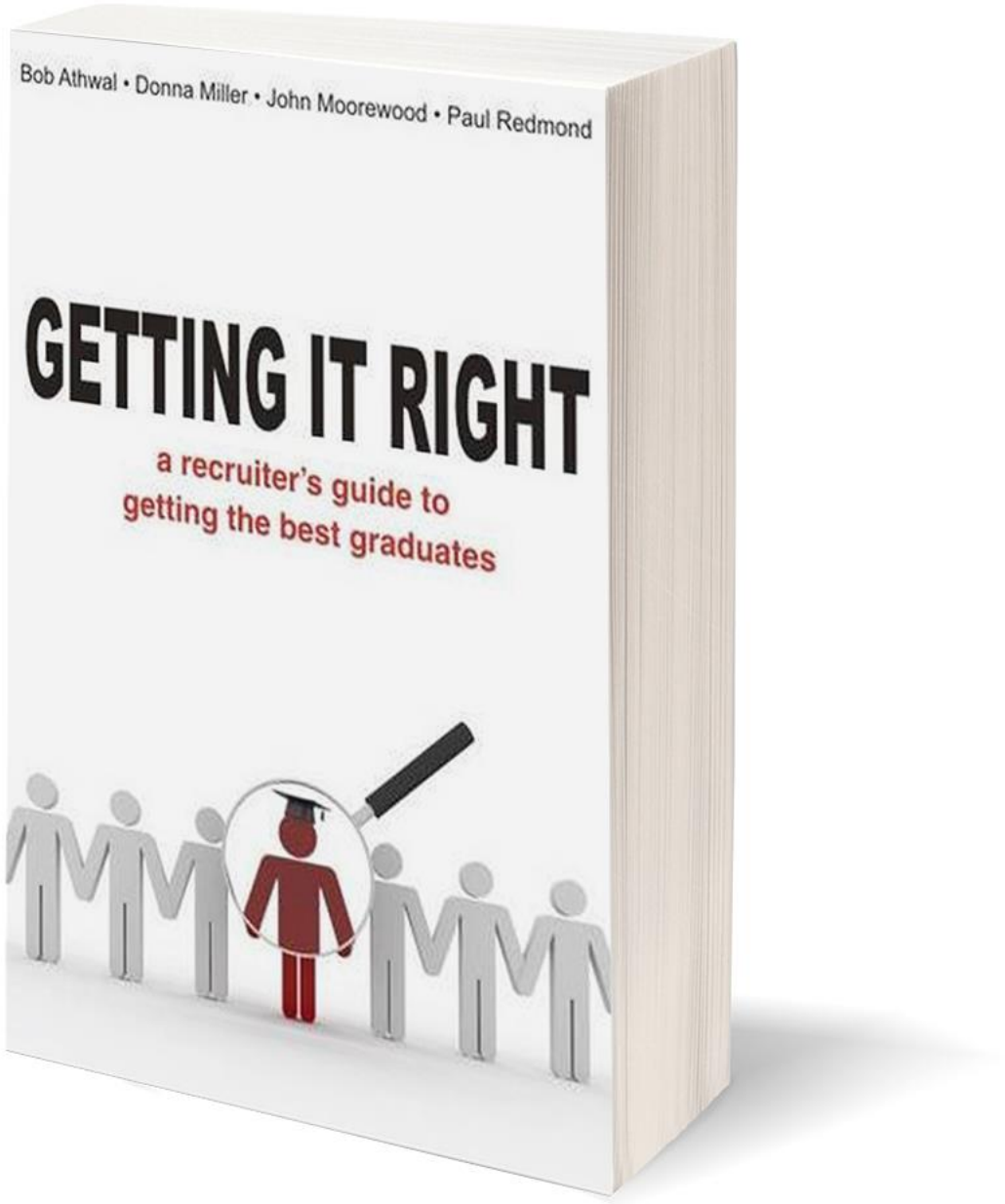

graduate-jobs.com


INEUCS
International Network of
Employers and University
Careers Services


npower


agr


Skyscanner


Bob Athwal • Donna Miller • John Moorewood • Paul Redmond
GETTING IT RIGHT
a recruiter's guide to
getting the best graduates

This is Skyscanner.

A global leader in travel and technology connecting millions of people every day with trusted travel providers.

Who we are

We’re one of the world's most trusted travel marketplaces

We search billions of prices every day to help travellers find their perfect trip, then connect them to their chosen provider’s site to book.



Become the world's number one travel ally

Accelerate is our next big step to become the world's top travel ally.



We provide helpful information and effective tools



We always treat the traveller fairly



We lead with empathy and understanding



We are a force for positive change



We think traveller first.

We love travel - this is what unites us. It's the reason we think traveller first, partner second and Skyscanner third.



We make it simple.

We've done this since day one. We look for simple and smart ways to work together and build things that will make travel easy and accessible for everyone.



We get it done, together.

Our ambition drives us every day. When we see an opportunity to make things better, we go after it and get it right, not being afraid to learn as we go.



We learn, share and grow.

Our people's diversity is our superpower. Different skills, experiences and backgrounds help us develop as individuals, as well as a business and industry.

We care, always.

We treat each other with empathy and respect because that's how we'll achieve great things together.

Skyscanner



We love our culture and believe we are ***the Real Deal***.

How do we bring that to life in every office, every team, every day?

Skyscanner

THE REAL DEAL

Objective

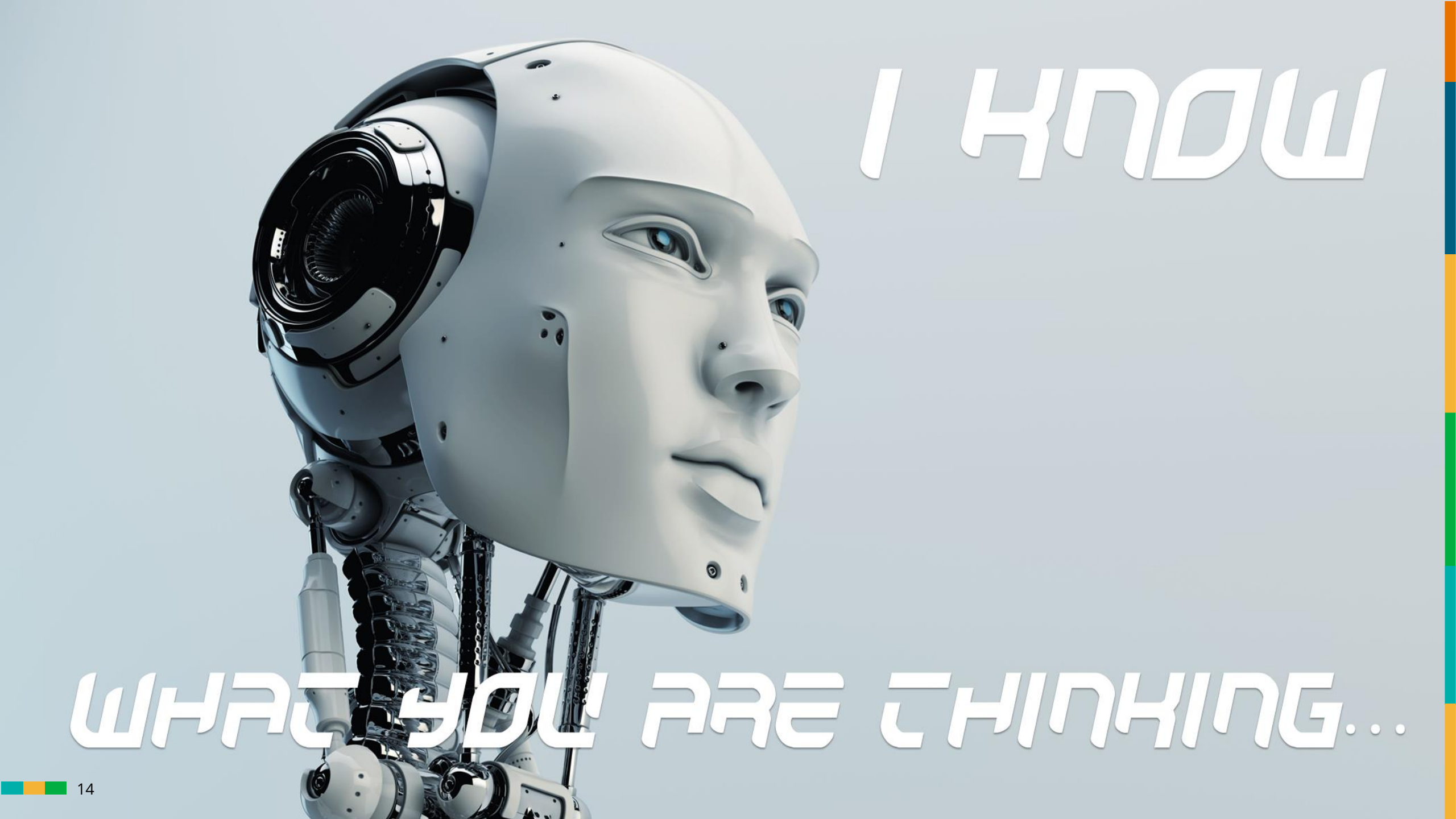
Why are **we** in this game?



The Sorting Hat




THE FUTURE

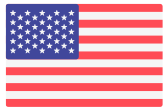

I KNOW
WHAT YOU ARE THINKING...


Soft Skills are the new Hot Skills


Superpowers



1. Hire For Skills (Global Consensus)



US

NACE– Skills-Based Hiring is Now Mainstream

- Nearly two-thirds (≈65%) of US employers now use skills-based hiring
- Core skills US employers seek most:
  - Critical thinking
  - Communication
  - Teamwork
  - Professionalism/work ethic



UK

ISE - What the ISE reports:

- UK graduate roles attract **140 applications per vacancy** (2024 record high).
- **54% of UK employers** are reducing degree requirements or shifting to skills-centric assessment.
- UK employers rely heavily on:
  - Strengths-based interviews
  - Work-sample tests
  - Situational judgement assessments
- Apprenticeships rising as graduate vacancies drop — employers want competence, not pedigree



Australia

Australia has already moved into a skills-first graduate market — and it's changing not just how graduates are hired, but how they are kept.

What AAGE Shows:

- **Academic results no longer lead**
  Only ~30% of employers say grades matter in hiring. Capability matters more.
- **Hybrid is the default**
  Graduates typically work **2–3 days in the office**, with *flexibility* considered an expectation, not a perk.
- **Development drives loyalty**
  73% of graduates are in structured development or rotation pathways — because growth keeps talent engaged.
- **Students want careers, not jobs**
  Salary matters, but what really retains graduates is **clear skill progression and real learning opportunities**.



South Africa

South Africa's Lesson: Hire for Potential, Grow Capability

- Skills shortage is real Employers increasingly select candidates based on potential, then train for performance.
- Volume makes perfection impossible
- Candidates want more than a job:
  - Mental health support
  - Inclusion & belonging
  - Structured development pathways
- Engage early
  Students who begin connecting



2. Train for AI

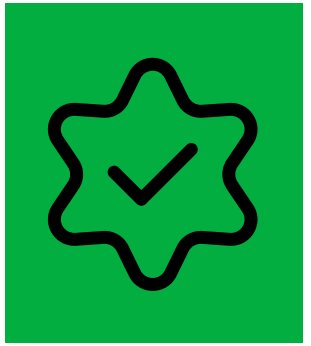
AI Readiness: The New Standard of Graduate Employability!



AI IS USED WIDELY
employers rely on AI for drafting, research, and data-driven tasks.



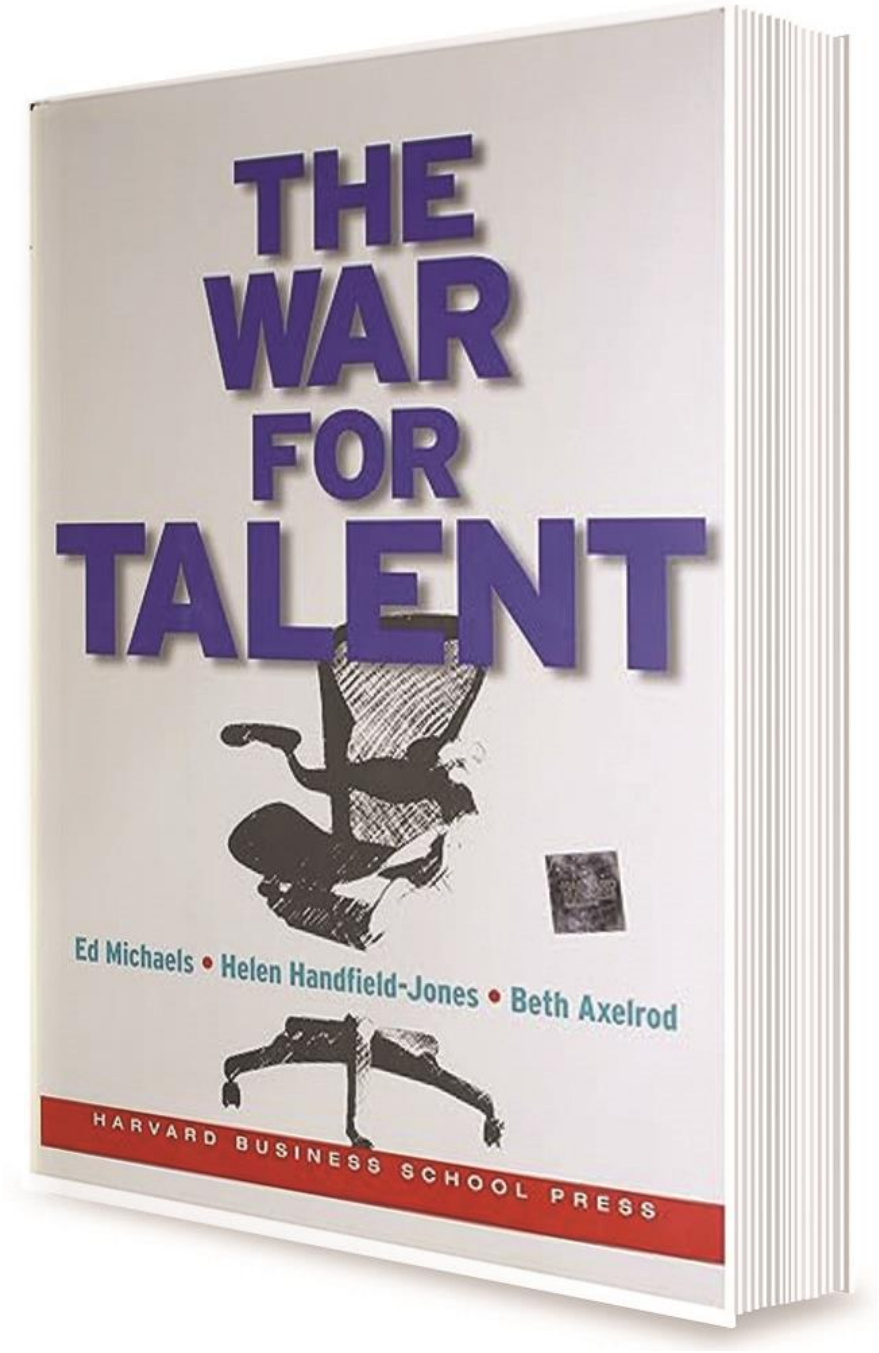
GRADUATES ARE ALREADY AI-ENABLED
Students use AI not just in applications, but to prepare, learn, and complete technical work.



AUTHENTICITY STILL MATTERS
As AI becomes more common, employers are increasing **structured, live assessments** to understand real capability — not just AI-generated output.



3. Design for Mobility


THE WAR FOR TALENT
Ed Michaels • Helen Handfield-Jones • Beth Axelrod
HARVARD BUSINESS SCHOOL PRESS

Levelling the playing field

As part of Bob's research, 3 things that make a difference:

- Build confidence - toolkits
- People vouch for you - speak up on your behalf
- Access to professional networks

= 1 Hour Project



Photo by Daniel Minárik

The Global Chorus: A Story of Talent Mobility

Around the world (NACE / ISE / AAGE / SAGEA), the message is consistent:



Skills-first hiring is redefining access

Mobility no longer depends on pedigree or privilege.



AI literacy is now a core capability

Graduates must move confidently into digital workplaces.



Development matters more than experience

Mobility comes from potential, not time served.



Inclusion is strategic, not charitable

Diverse talent isn't added in — it drives direction.



Internships are the strongest pathway

Real work unlocks mobility earlier and more fairly.

Human Stack in an AI World

Values

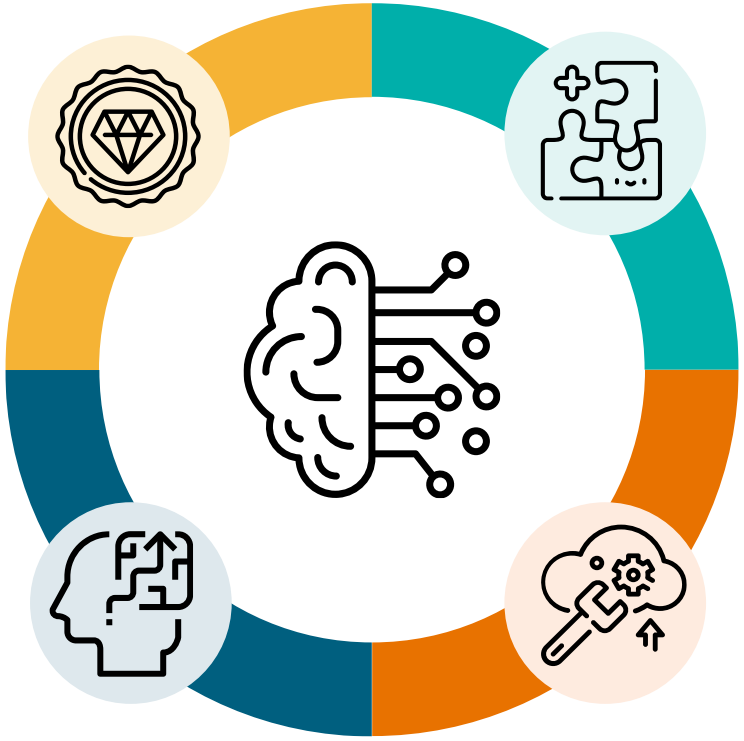
What we believe.

This is inherent in us as humans

Mindsets

How we behave.

Growth vs Fixed



Skillsets

What we build.

Critical thinking, collaboration, feedback & coaching, self-leadership, cultural intelligence, simplification.

Toolsets

What enables us.

AI & automation, + other tools

Layer	Human side	AI side
Values	What we believe: purpose, integrity, behaviours	Not programmable.
Mindsets	How we show up: growth, curiosity, accountability.	Can’t choose a mindset.
Skillsets	What we build: critical thinking, collaboration, coaching, cultural intelligence, simplification.	Learns patterns, not meaning.
Toolsets	How we extend ourselves.	AI, automation & digital tools.

The Case for Skills-based Hiring

- ***Technological innovation*** is transforming many roles. What matters now is ***what people can do***, not just what their degree says
- By removing rigid degree or credential requirements, organisations can tap into a ***broader range of candidates****:* self-taught individuals, career changers, people from non-traditional education pathways, etc.
- Hiring based on actual skills (especially role-specific or ***transferable skills***) tends to increase the likelihood that a candidate will perform well in the job.




BACK TO THE FUTURE
CALIFORNIA
OUTATIME
WHERE CREATIVITY THRIVES

Your 30-Day Playbook

1

HIRE FOR SKILLS

- Remove one proxy (e.g. GPA or uni list)
- Add one skills-based task to a grad role

2

TRAIN FOR AI

- Add AI literacy to grad onboarding
- Capture 1–2 real work use cases

3

DESIGN FOR MOBILITY

- Start collecting voluntary SES data
- Review your assessment stages for drop-offs

HIRE FOR SKILLS. TRAIN FOR AI. DESIGN FOR MOBILITY.


Q A