

• SKILLS MATRIX EXAMPLES • GUIDE

Skills matrix examples *for* *HR teams*

HR teams are usually busy mapping everyone else's capability and rarely their own. Yet the same tool that develops the wider workforce works just as well on the HR function itself. This is what a skills matrix looks like for HR, with worked examples, ready-to-use skill lists, and the structure behind them.



Dr Alex J. Martin-Smith
CMGR • MBA • LLM • DBA

Reading time 12 min • **Method** Upleashed 0 to 5 capability framework • **Updated** May 2026

THE SHORT ANSWER

A skills matrix for HR maps the people in the HR function against the skills the function needs, recruitment, employee relations, L&D, analytics, employment law, HR systems, with a capability rating in each cell. Group the skills into clear categories, score on one consistent scale, and read the rows for individual profiles and the columns for where the team is thin. In short: **the same grid HR uses on everyone else, turned on HR itself, to see exactly where the function is strong and where it is exposed.**

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- **HR needs a skills matrix too.** The function that maps everyone else's capability benefits just as much from mapping its own.
- **Group skills into categories.** Functional, behavioural, cross-functional and leadership skills give an HR matrix a clear structure.
- **Tailor the columns to the function.** Recruitment, employee relations, L&D, analytics, employment law and HR systems are the usual HR skills.
- **Read it two ways.** Rows show each HR person's profile; columns show where the function is thin or exposed.
- **It powers HR's own work.** Succession, recruitment, development and resourcing for the HR team all start from this one grid.

— [START HERE](#)

What an HR skills matrix *looks like*

A skills matrix for HR is the same tool HR champions across the organisation, applied to the HR function itself: a grid mapping HR people against the skills the function depends on, with a capability rating in each cell. The only thing that changes is the columns, which become HR-specific.

Same grid, HR-specific skills

The structure is identical to any skills matrix, people down the side, skills along the top, a rating where they meet, but the skills are those an HR team actually needs: **recruitment and sourcing, employee relations, learning and development, HR analytics, employment law and compliance, and HR systems**. Read across a row and you see one HR professional's profile; read down a column and you see how well the function covers, say, employment law, or how exposed it is if only one person can do the HR analytics.

Why HR teams overlook their own capability

It is a common blind spot. HR spends its time building skills matrices for operations, sales and engineering, and rarely turns the lens inward. Yet an HR function carries exactly the same risks it helps others manage: **key-person dependency, hidden skills gaps, uneven development**. A skills matrix for the HR team surfaces all of it, and has the added benefit of letting HR practise on itself the very discipline it asks the rest of the business to adopt.

It is built for HR's own decisions

An HR skills matrix is not an academic exercise; it drives the function's own people decisions. It shows who is ready for a step up (succession), where the team needs to recruit or develop, who should cover a critical skill when someone is away, and how to allocate project work by capability. In other words, it gives HR the same **evidence-based view of its own team** that it provides to every manager it supports.

— WHY IT MATTERS NOW

HR cannot model what it does not *practise*

An HR team asking the business to map its skills is far more credible when it has done the same itself. Beyond credibility, an HR function faces real capability risks of its own, and the data on workforce visibility applies to HR as much as anyone.

8%

GARTNER, 2024

of organisations have reliable data on their workforce's skills, a gap HR can close first by starting with itself.

39%

WEF, 2025

of workers' core skills are expected to change by 2030, and HR's own skills, analytics, AI, are shifting fastest.

63%

WEF, 2025

of employers call skills gaps the biggest barrier to transformation, including gaps inside HR itself.

There is a credibility dividend and a practical one. An HR team that has mapped its own capability speaks from experience when it asks a sceptical manager to do the same, it has felt the value and the awkwardness first-hand. And the practical risks are real: HR skills are evolving quickly, especially analytics and the use of AI, while employment law and compliance often rest on a single expert. Mapping the HR function turns those quiet risks into a visible picture, so HR can **develop, recruit and plan for itself with the same rigour it brings to everyone else.**

— STRUCTURING THE COLUMNS

The four skill categories of an HR matrix

A good HR skills matrix groups its columns into categories, so the grid stays organised as it grows. Most HR functions map skills across these four, mixing the technical with the behavioural.

CATEGORY 01

Functional / technical

The core HR craft: recruitment and sourcing, employee relations, L&D design, reward, HR analytics, employment law. The skills that do the actual HR work.

CATEGORY 02

Behavioural

How HR people work: influencing, coaching, handling difficult conversations, discretion and judgement. Often the difference between a competent and a trusted HR adviser.

CATEGORY 03

Cross-functional

Skills shared with the wider business: project management, data literacy, stakeholder management, change. What lets HR work effectively alongside other functions.

CATEGORY 04

Systems & tools

The platforms HR runs on: the HRIS, applicant tracking, payroll and analytics tools. Increasingly central as HR work becomes more data and technology driven.

You do not need every category for every matrix, start with the functional skills that matter most, and add the others as the picture matures. The point of categorising is simply to keep a growing matrix legible: when columns are grouped, anyone can find the skill they are looking for, and the grid reveals patterns, a function strong on craft but thin on systems, say, that a flat, ungrouped list would hide.

— THE SCALE BEHIND THE SCORES

The 0 to 5 capability framework

Whatever the skills, an HR matrix needs one clear, shared scale so a given rating means the same for everyone. This fixed framework, developed by Dr Alex J. Martin-Smith, provides exactly that, defining each level the same way so HR's scores are consistent and comparable.

0	<p>No skill required or desired EXCLUDED</p> <p>No expectation that the person or role needs this skill within the next year. Take a longer-term view here, and do not use this level for short-term assessments. A 0 drops the skill out of that person's score entirely.</p>
1	<p>In training / Trainee WEIGHTING 25%</p> <p>Expected to be proficient within a year. Has completed up to 75% of training and does not yet fully understand the quality requirements.</p>
2	<p>Developing capabilities WEIGHTING 50%</p> <p>Has completed more than 75% of training. Can probably perform the task alone, but consistent quality and productivity are not yet evidenced, so complex output still needs checking or verification.</p>
3	<p>Capable WEIGHTING 75% · USUAL TARGET</p> <p>Has completed 100% of training and shown consistent quality and productivity. Can work unsupervised. This is the level most roles aim for, the point at which a person genuinely counts on a skill.</p>
4	<p>Subject Matter Expert / Trainer WEIGHTING 100%</p> <p>Prolonged experience at a consistent quality and productivity level. Works autonomously and can train others to a high standard. If the skill has not been used in three months, drop back to Level 3 to reconfirm competence.</p>
5	<p>Strategic ownership / Leadership WEIGHTING 100%</p> <p>Can define and develop new processes and skill requirements, show cross-function expertise, and demonstrate leadership. Carries the same numeric weight as Level 4; the purple flag highlights strategic capability and helps you spot succession candidates.</p>

How an HR person's row becomes a number

Each level carries a proficiency weighting: Level 1 = 25%, Level 2 = 50%, Level 3 = 75%, and Levels 4 and 5 = 100%, with 0 excluded. An HR person's capability is the average of those weightings across the HR skills their role needs; the function's capability is the average across the team. The same simple maths that works on any team turns an HR matrix into trackable figures.

A worked example. Read an HR business partner's row across six HR skills:

Nadia's row **3, 3, 4, 2, 3, 2** (recruitment, L&D, employee relations, analytics, law, systems)
 weightings 75, 75, 100, 50, 75, 50 = 425 ÷ 6
 Nadia's capability = **71%**

A skills matrix for an *HR team*

Here is a complete skills matrix for an illustrative six-person HR function, scored on the 0 to 5 scale. The right-hand column is each person's capability; the bottom row counts how many are capable (Level 3 or above) of each skill. In one grid, the function's strengths and risks are plain.

	Recruitment	L&D design	Employee relations	HR analytics	Employment law	HR systems	Capability
Hannah Recruiter	4	2	2	1	1	2	50%
David L&D Lead	2	4	2	2	1	2	54%
Nadia HRBP	3	3	4	2	3	2	71%
Olu HR Advisor	3	2	3	1	2	3	58%
Beth HR Analyst	1	1	1	4	1	3	46%
Sam HR Ops	2	2	2	2	1	4	54%
CAPABLE (L3+)	3	2	2	1	1	3	56%

■ 1 Trainee
■ 2 Developing
■ 3 Capable
■ 4 Expert
■ coverage 0-1 · risk
■ coverage 3+ · healthy

2 skills rest on one person (HR analytics, employment law), a clear risk

56% HR function capability, a figure to track over time

Illustrative HR team on the Upleashed 0 to 5 framework. Names and scores are examples; the structure is exactly what an HR function would use on itself.

WHAT THIS HR MATRIX REVEALS

- Each HR person's profile.** Reading a row, Nadia the HRBP is the strongest all-rounder at 71%, while specialists like Beth (analytics) and Hannah (recruitment) are deep in one area and lighter elsewhere, exactly as you would expect.
- Two single points of failure.** Reading the bottom row, HR analytics rests on Beth alone and employment law on Nadia alone. If either is away, the function is exposed, a textbook cross-training priority.
- Specialists who could train others.** The Level 4s, Hannah, David, Beth, Sam, are each the natural person to lift their colleagues on their specialism, spreading thin cover from within.
- A function figure to track.** At 56%, the HR team has the same single capability measure it gives every other team, ready to watch climb as it develops itself.

— READY-TO-USE EXAMPLES

Example skill lists by HR function

The columns of an HR matrix should reflect the specific HR function you are mapping. Here are ready-to-adapt skill lists for the common HR sub-functions, a starting point you can tailor rather than a blank page.

HR function	Example skills to map (the columns)	Watch out for
Talent acquisition	Sourcing, screening, interviewing, candidate experience, employer branding	Mapping volume metrics instead of the underlying recruiting skills
Learning & development	Needs analysis, content design, facilitation, evaluation, digital learning	Listing tools used rather than the design and facilitation capability
HR business partnering	Stakeholder influence, employee relations, coaching, workforce planning	Vague behavioural skills with no observable descriptor behind them
HR operations & systems	HRIS administration, payroll, data accuracy, process design, compliance	Treating systems skill as one column when several tools are involved
Reward & analytics	Pay benchmarking, modelling, HR analytics, reporting, data storytelling	Mapping reporting alone while the scarce skill is genuine analysis

Treat these as a head start, not a prescription. Take the lists for the functions your HR team covers, trim them to the vital few skills that genuinely matter, and add anything specific to your context, a particular HRIS, a regulated specialism, a sector requirement. The aim is the same as any skills matrix: enough columns to be useful, few enough that the grid actually gets maintained.

— AVOID THESE

Six mistakes in an HR skills matrix

MISTAKE 01

Never mapping HR itself

HR maps everyone else and skips its own team. The function carries the same key-person and gap risks it helps others manage.

MISTAKE 02

Listing tools, not skills

"Uses Workday" is not a capability. Map the underlying skill, the systems, analysis or design ability, not just the tool.

MISTAKE 03

Vague behavioural columns

"Good with people" cannot be scored. Behavioural HR skills need observable descriptors just like technical ones.

MISTAKE 04

One giant ungrouped list

Dozens of flat columns become unreadable. Group skills into categories so the grid stays legible as it grows.

MISTAKE 05

Ignoring the coverage row

Healthy individuals can still leave employment law or analytics resting on one person. Always read the columns for risk.

MISTAKE 06

Copying a generic HR list whole

An off-the-shelf list rarely fits your function. Trim it to the skills that actually matter in your context.

Build the examples here from scratch, or start from a *ready-made grid*.

Every example in this guide works in a blank spreadsheet, and that is a fine place to start. A purpose-built template just removes the setup: the grid, the fixed 0 to 5 scale and the formulas are ready, so you simply drop in your HR skills and people, and the heat map, each person's capability and every skill's coverage calculate themselves, turning an HR example into a working tool for your own team in minutes.



The Advanced Excel Skills Matrix gives HR a ready-made grid: drop in your HR skills and people, and capability and coverage calculate automatically, on the same 0 to 5 framework used throughout this guide.

<p>TRY IT FREE</p> <p>£0</p> <p>The online 5x5 builder maps a small team in your browser, with no sign-up. A fast way to map your HR team.</p>	<p>MOST POPULAR</p> <p>£199</p> <p>The full Excel template: heat map, capability and coverage analytics, categories, up to 30 people and 30 skills. One-off, yours forever.</p>	<p>WHEN YOU ARE READY</p> <p>£1</p> <p>Upgrade to PulseAI in your first year for a living, web and mobile version with AI skill suggestions and reminders.</p>
---	--	---

— COMMON QUESTIONS

Quick *answers*

Q What is a skills matrix for HR?

It is a grid mapping the people in the HR function against the skills HR needs, recruitment, employee relations, L&D, analytics, employment law, HR systems, with a capability rating in each cell. It is the same tool HR uses across the business, applied to the HR team itself.

Q What skills should an HR matrix include?

The functional HR skills your team actually uses, grouped into categories: functional or technical (recruitment, ER, L&D, analytics, law), behavioural (influencing, coaching, judgement), cross-functional (project and stakeholder management) and systems (the HRIS and tools). Map the vital few, not everything.

Q What skills should I map for different HR roles?

Tailor the columns to the function: talent acquisition maps sourcing, screening and interviewing; L&D maps needs analysis, design and facilitation; HR business partnering maps influence, employee relations and workforce planning; HR operations maps HRIS, payroll and process; reward and analytics map benchmarking, modelling and data storytelling.

Q How do I rate HR skills?

Use one consistent scale so a level means the same for everyone. The 0 to 5 framework runs from 0 (not required) through 3 (capable, works unsupervised) to 5 (strategic leadership), with each level defined in plain words and backed by evidence, technical and behavioural skills alike.

Q Why should HR map its own team's skills?

For credibility and for risk. An HR team that has mapped itself speaks from experience when asking the business to do the same. And an HR function carries its own key-person dependencies and gaps, often in analytics or employment law, that a matrix makes visible before they cause a problem.

Q Do I need software for an HR skills matrix?

No. A well-built spreadsheet makes an excellent HR skills matrix, and most teams should start there. Dedicated software helps when you want a live, shared picture across HR and the wider business, with automatic analytics, reminders and AI-assisted suggestions.

— ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Dr Alex J. Martin-Smith

CMGR · MBA · LLM · DBA

Alex is the creator of the Upleashed capability framework that powers Skills Matrix Template, the award-winning Excel skills matrix. A Chartered Manager with an MBA, an LLM and a doctorate in business administration, he has spent more than two decades helping operations, HR and quality teams turn capability from a gut feel into something they can measure, manage and prove.

Connect on LinkedIn: [linkedin.com/in/alexmartinsmith](https://www.linkedin.com/in/alexmartinsmith)

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Alex J. Martin-Smith".

Dr Alex J. Martin-Smith

— SOURCES

Gartner. (2024). *Talent management research: Workforce skills data*. Gartner.

Martin-Smith, A. J. (n.d.). *The 0 to 5 capability framework*. Upleashed Limited.
<https://upleashed.com/capability-framework/>

World Economic Forum. (2025). *The future of jobs report 2025*. World Economic Forum.

Map HR, *too*.

You now have the examples and the structure. The quickest way to start is to list your HR team's vital skills this week, take one of the function lists above as a head start, score everyone on the 0 to 5 scale, and read the rows and columns. HR deserves the same clear picture it gives everyone else.

[Try the free 5x5 builder →](#)

[Get the template, £199](#)

Award-winning method · 148,000+ teams · instant download · single-team licence

Skills Matrix Template — the award-winning Excel skills matrix by Upleashed. skillsmatrixtemplate.com
Powered by [Upleashed Limited](https://upleashed.com) · upleashed.com