

[RESTRUCTURE](#) · [GUIDE](#)

How to use a skills matrix *in a restructure*

Restructures are too often decided on org charts, titles and reporting lines, which says nothing about who can actually do the work in the new design. A skills matrix changes the basis of the decision: it shows the real capability of every person, so you can map people to new roles on what they can do, redeploy instead of lose talent, and make selection decisions you can defend. This is how to reorganise on capability, not assumptions.



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

THE SHORT ANSWER

To use a skills matrix in a restructure, map the capability the new structure needs, then place people into new roles on what they can actually do, not their old title. Use the matrix to spot transferable skills and redeploy rather than make redundant, to form fair selection pools from people with similar capability, and to see the gaps the new design will have. In short: **reorganise on capability, not the org chart, so you redeploy talent, make defensible decisions, and know the gaps before day one of the new structure.**

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- **Reorganise on capability, not titles.** Reporting lines say nothing about who can do the work; the matrix shows the real skills behind the chart.
- **Redeploy, do not just remove.** Transferable skills reveal who could move into a new role, retaining talent and knowledge instead of losing it.
- **Build fair selection pools.** Where roles must reduce, the matrix groups people of similar capability for an objective, defensible process.
- **See the new structure's gaps.** Mapping people to new roles exposes where the redesign will be short, so you can plan to fill it.
- **Make it a fact base.** Skills data turns a fraught, opinion-led process into one grounded in evidence everyone can see.

— [START HERE](#)

Reorganise on capability, *not the chart*

A restructure decided on boxes and reporting lines answers the wrong question. The org chart shows who reports to whom; it says nothing about who can actually do the work the new structure demands. A skills matrix supplies that missing answer, the real capability of every person, so the reorganisation is built on what people can do rather than on titles, assumptions and informal reputation.

Map people to new roles on capability

The heart of a skills-based restructure is matching people to the **new roles** by capability. Define what each new role requires, then read the matrix to see who already has those skills, who is close, and who is a stretch. This turns "where does this person's title fit?" into "who can do this role?", a far better question. It is how leadership can evaluate reallocation options against real skills data, rather than debating placements on the basis of titles and history.

Redeploy instead of lose

Restructures destroy value when they shed people whose skills the organisation still needs, only to hire them back later. A matrix surfaces **transferable skills**: the support-desk person whose capability fits a new customer role, the analyst who could move into the new specialist unit. Seeing these matches lets you redeploy talent and retain institutional knowledge instead of making it redundant, which is almost always cheaper, faster and kinder than losing people and rebuilding.

A defensible basis for hard decisions

Where roles genuinely must reduce, decisions are scrutinised, internally and sometimes legally, so they must be **fair and evidenced**. A skills matrix helps form selection pools of people doing similar work at similar capability, and provides objective criteria rather than subjective judgement. It does not make the hard calls for you, but it grounds them in a transparent capability fact base, which is exactly what a fair, defensible restructure process needs.

— WHY IT MATTERS NOW

Title-based restructures *lose talent*

Reorganising on the chart alone risks placing people where they cannot succeed, shedding skills you still need, and making decisions you cannot defend. A capability fact base is how a restructure keeps the right people, in the right roles, fairly.

8%

GARTNER, 2024

of organisations have reliable workforce skills data, so most restructures are decided without a real view of capability.

39%

WEF, 2025

of workers' core skills are expected to change by 2030, so the skills a new structure needs are shifting fast.

63%

WEF, 2025

of employers call skills gaps the biggest barrier to change, exactly what a restructure must not create blindly.

The cost of a chart-led restructure is paid twice: once when capable people are placed where they cannot perform, or lost entirely, and again when the new structure turns out to have gaps nobody saw coming. A skills matrix prevents both by making the reorganisation a **skills-mobility decision rather than a boxes-and-lines one**. It shows who can do the new roles, who can transfer with a little development, where the redesign will be short of capability, and how to select fairly where reductions are unavoidable. Decisions made on that basis are faster, kinder, more defensible, and far more likely to leave a new structure that actually works from day one.

Four restructure questions the matrix answers

A skills matrix turns the four hardest restructure questions from contested opinion into evidence. Each is one a reorganisation must answer well to succeed.

ANSWERS 01

Who fits the new roles?

By matching capability to what each new role needs, the matrix shows who can do it now, who is close, and who is a stretch, on evidence, not title.

ANSWERS 02

Who can we redeploy?

Transferable skills reveal people who could move into new or different roles, so you retain talent and knowledge rather than losing it to redundancy.

ANSWERS 03

How do we select fairly?

It groups people of similar capability into pools and gives objective criteria, so where roles must reduce, the process is defensible and transparent.

ANSWERS 04

Where will we be short?

Mapping people to the new design exposes the capabilities it will lack, so you can plan to develop or hire for them before the structure goes live.

Together these turn a restructure from a fraught, opinion-led exercise into a **deliberate, evidenced redesign**. Instead of arguing over who should sit where based on history and titles, leadership can weigh real options against real capability: redeploy this person, develop that one, pool these fairly, fill that gap. The matrix does not remove the difficulty or the human cost of a restructure, but it ensures the decisions are the right ones, made fairly, and that the structure left standing is one the remaining people can actually deliver.

The 0 to 5 capability framework

A restructure needs a scale precise enough to judge who can step into a new role. This framework, developed by Dr Alex J. Martin-Smith, lets you say not just whether someone has a skill, but whether they are at the

level the new role requires, the difference between a confident placement and a risky one.

-
- 0** **No skill required or desired** EXCLUDED
- The skill is not part of a given role. In a restructure, it keeps the comparison focused on the capabilities the new roles actually need.
-
- 1** **In training / Trainee** WEIGHTING 25%
- Up to 75% trained. Someone at Level 1 against a new role needing Level 3 is a stretch placement, possible with development and support, not a like-for-like move.
-
- 2** **Developing capabilities** WEIGHTING 50%
- More than 75% trained; works alone but not yet consistently. A realistic redeployment candidate for a role needing Level 2, or a short step from a Level 3 role.
-
- 3** **Capable** WEIGHTING 75% · USUAL TARGET
- Fully capable, works unsupervised. Someone at Level 3 on a new role's key skills is a confident, low-risk placement, they can do the role from day one.
-
- 4** **Subject Matter Expert / Trainer** WEIGHTING 100%
- Expert who can train others. In a restructure these are people to retain and build the new structure around, and who can bring others up to the new roles.
-
- 5** **Strategic ownership / Leadership** WEIGHTING 100%
- Sets direction and standards. The people who should be shaping and leading the new structure, and whose loss in a restructure is most costly.

Match level to the role's requirement

The scale turns placement into a clear comparison: the new role needs Level n on each key skill, and the matrix shows where each person sits against it. A match at or above the required level is a confident move; one level below is a **stretch** that development can close; two below is a true gap. The weightings, Level 1 = 25% up to 3 = 75% and 4 and 5 = 100%, let you express how well each person fits a role as a single percentage to compare options.

A worked example. Three ways a person can meet a new role:

```
New role needs Level 3 on customer handling, data analysis
Person X 3 and 3 → confident move · Person Y 3 and 2
→ stretch, develop one skill
Person Z 1 and 1 → not a fit for this role – consider
another.
```

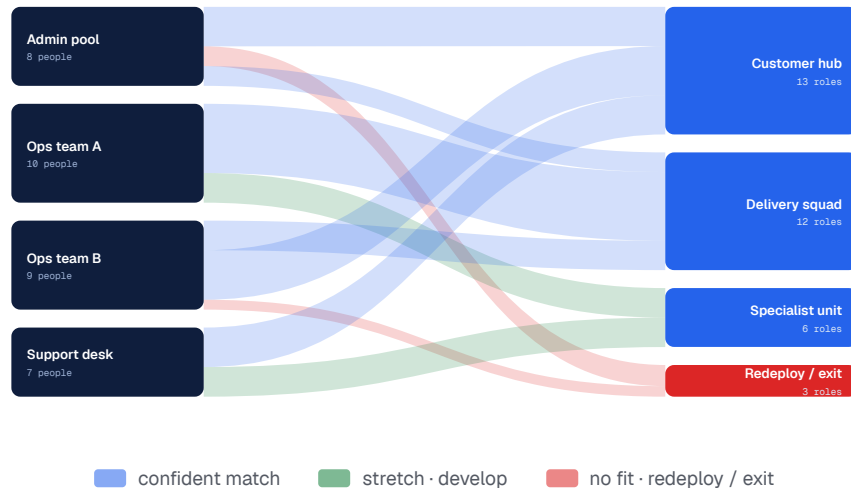
— SEE THE MOVES

People into the *new structure*

Here is a restructure as a flow: the current teams on the left, the new structure on the right, and the ribbons showing where people move, sized by how many. Most moves are confident matches, some are stretch moves needing development, and only a few, where no role fits, fall into redeployment or exit. Capability, not the chart, decides the flows.

CURRENT STRUCTURE

NEW STRUCTURE



3

of 34 people without a capability match, most of the workforce maps to a new role, retaining talent and knowledge

Illustrative restructure on the Upleashed 0 to 5 framework. Ribbons show people moving from current teams to the new structure, sized by number.

WHAT THE RESTRUCTURE LEAD READS HERE

- **Most people map cleanly.** The thick blue ribbons are confident matches, people whose capability already fits a new role. The bulk of the workforce moves across on evidence, not guesswork, which is the goal.
- **Stretch moves are opportunities.** The green ribbons into the specialist unit are people one level short, redeployment with a development plan. Retaining and growing them beats hiring externally.
- **Only three lack any fit.** The thin red ribbons are the genuinely hard cases, no role matches their capability. Concentrating the difficult decisions on three, not the whole team, is what redeployment achieves.
- **The new structure is staffed.** Reading the right-hand nodes confirms each new team is filled to its required roles, and shows immediately where any remaining gap must be developed or hired.

— DOING IT

Five steps to restructure on capability

Using a matrix in a restructure adds rigour without adding bureaucracy. These five steps keep the reorganisation evidenced, fair and gap-aware.

1

Define what the new structure needs

Start with the new design: the roles it contains and the capability each requires, on the same scale you score people. This is the target you will map people against, so be specific about the skills and levels each new role genuinely needs, not just its title.

2

Score current capability honestly

Make sure the matrix reflects what people can actually do now, scored on evidence and ideally calibrated. A restructure built on inflated or stale scores places people wrongly, so the integrity of the data matters more here than almost anywhere else.

3

Match people to new roles

Map each person's capability against the new roles: confident matches, stretch moves that development can close, and genuine non-fits. Look hard for transferable skills, the aim is to redeploy and retain wherever a credible match or short stretch exists.

4

Form fair pools where roles reduce

Where the new structure has fewer roles than people, use capability to group those doing similar work into selection pools, and apply objective, consistent criteria. This keeps the hard decisions fair, transparent and defensible, never based on impression alone.

5

Plan for the gaps

Reading people into the new design will expose capabilities it lacks. Decide for each whether to develop someone into it or hire, and put a plan in place before go-live, so the new structure launches with its gaps known and being closed, not discovered later.

— AVOID THESE

Six mistakes in a restructure

MISTAKE 01

Deciding on the chart

Titles and reporting lines hide real capability. Map people to new roles on what they can actually do.

MISTAKE 02

Losing transferable talent

Shedding people you will rehire wastes money and knowledge. Use transferable skills to redeploy first.

MISTAKE 03

Subjective selection

Opinion-led cuts are unfair and indefensible. Form pools and apply objective, evidenced criteria.

MISTAKE 04

Ignoring the new gaps

A redesign can create capability holes. Map people in to expose them, and plan to fill them before go-live.

MISTAKE 05

Trusting stale scores

Placements built on old data go wrong. Re-score and calibrate before a restructure relies on the matrix.

MISTAKE 06

Over-stretching placements

Placing people two levels below need sets them up to fail. Match to level, and support genuine stretch moves.

The method is free. A ready-made matrix just gives a restructure *a fact base it can stand on.*

Everything here works in a blank spreadsheet, and that is a fine place to start. A purpose-built template just makes a restructure easier to run on evidence: with current and required levels in place, you can see at a glance who matches each new role, who is a short stretch, and where the new design will be short, so the reorganisation is built on a clear capability fact base rather than the org chart and informal reputation.



The Advanced Excel Skills Matrix shows capability against required levels, the fact base for matching people to new roles, spotting redeployment, and seeing the new structure's gaps, all on the same 0 to 5 framework used throughout this guide.

TRY IT FREE	MOST POPULAR	WHEN YOU ARE READY
£0 The online 5x5 builder maps a small team in your browser, with no sign-up. A fast way to test placements.	£199 The full Excel template: current and required levels, fit analysis and analytics, up to 30 people and 30 skills. One-off, yours forever.	£1 Upgrade to PulseAI in your first year for a living, web and mobile version with AI skill suggestions and reminders.

— COMMON QUESTIONS

Quick *answers*

Q How do I use a skills matrix in a restructure?

Define the capability each new role requires, score current capability honestly, then map people to the new roles on what they can do, not their title. Use it to spot transferable skills for redeployment, to form fair selection pools where roles reduce, and to see the gaps the new structure will have so you can plan to fill them.

Q Why reorganise on capability rather than the org chart?

Because the chart shows reporting lines, not who can actually do the work the new structure needs. Reorganising on titles risks placing people where they cannot succeed and shedding skills you still need. A capability fact base lets leadership weigh real options, redeploy talent, and build a structure that works from day one.

Q How does it help avoid redundancies?

By surfacing transferable skills. Often someone whose current role is disappearing has capability that fits a different new role, the matrix makes those matches visible, so you can redeploy and retain them rather than make them redundant and rehire later. That retains institutional knowledge and is usually cheaper and kinder.

Q Can a skills matrix make a restructure fairer?

Yes. Where roles must reduce, it helps group people doing similar work at similar capability into selection pools and apply objective, consistent criteria, rather than relying on subjective impressions. It does not make the decision for you, but it grounds a scrutinised process in transparent evidence, which is exactly what fairness requires.

Q What about the gaps the new structure creates?

Mapping people into the new design exposes them: capabilities the redesign will be short of once everyone is placed. For each, decide whether to develop someone into it or hire externally, and put that plan in place before go-live, so the new structure launches with its gaps known and being closed rather than discovered weeks in.

Q Should I update the matrix before a restructure?

Absolutely. Placement decisions are only as good as the data behind them, so re-score on current evidence and ideally calibrate across managers before the restructure relies on the matrix. Stale or inflated scores lead to wrong placements, which in a restructure are costly and hard to unwind, so data integrity matters most here.

— ABOUT THE AUTHOR



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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.

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

Dr Alex J. Martin-Smith

— SOURCES

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Reorganise on what people *can do.*

You now have the restructure method. The quickest way to start is to define what each new role needs, re-score your team honestly, and map people across on capability. The confident matches, the stretch moves and the few genuine non-fits you find are a fairer, clearer basis for a restructure than any org chart.

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