

• TRAVEL & TOURISM • GUIDE

## The skills matrix *for tourism teams*

Travel and tourism live or die by the peak season, and that depends on a simple question: will enough staff be genuinely competent in time? With high turnover and a rush of seasonal hires, it is easy to reach the busy weeks with people still half-trained. A skills matrix tracks every seasonal recruit from hire to peak-ready, so a manager can see how many will truly be competent when it matters, and act on the shortfall before the season arrives.



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

### THE SHORT ANSWER

A travel or tourism skills matrix maps seasonal and core staff against the skills each role needs, scored on a clear scale, and tracks their progress from newly hired to fully competent. Read it as a readiness pipeline: how many recruits will actually reach the competent level, and be multi-skilled enough, before peak season. In short: **it turns seasonal staffing into a visible readiness funnel, so the drop-off where people stall short of competence is caught early, and enough staff are genuinely peak-ready when the rush arrives.**

#### KEY TAKEAWAYS

- **Peak season is the deadline.** Competence has to arrive before the rush, so readiness must be tracked against the calendar.
- **Hired is not ready.** A seasonal recruit only counts when trained and signed off competent, not on their start date.
- **Watch the drop-off.** The funnel from hired to peak-ready shows where people stall, so training can be unblocked in time.
- **Multi-skilling adds flexibility.** Staff competent across roles let a venue cover shortfalls and flex with demand.
- **High turnover demands speed.** With churn high, the matrix keeps the readiness picture current as people join and leave.

#### — START HERE

## Will they be ready *in time*?

Tourism demand is sharply seasonal, and the workforce that meets it is largely seasonal too, hired in a rush, trained at speed, and needed at full competence the moment the peak begins. The question that decides the season is not how many people you have hired, but how many will be **genuinely competent in time**. A skills matrix answers it by tracking every recruit's readiness against the calendar, so the gap is visible while it can still be closed.

### Map roles, skills and readiness

A tourism matrix maps staff against the skills each role requires, front-of-house, food and beverage, housekeeping, bar, guiding, reservations, and tracks where each person sits on the journey from **hired to fully competent**. Because so much of the workforce is new each season, the matrix is less about long-term development and more about **speed to competence**: who is trained, who is signed off, who can be trusted to work the peak unsupervised.

### Read it as a readiness pipeline

The most useful way to read a seasonal matrix is as a **pipeline**: everyone hired, then those inducted and in training, then those trained on core skills, then those signed off as competent, and finally those multi-skilled enough to be truly peak-ready. At each stage the numbers narrow, and that narrowing is

the insight, it shows how many recruits will actually be ready when the season hits, and where people are stalling on the way there.

### Spot the drop-off and multi-skill

Two things matter most. The **drop-off**: if a large share of hires stall before reaching competence, the venue will be short-staffed in capability even if it is full in headcount, and the matrix shows exactly where and why, so training can be unblocked. And **multi-skilling**: staff competent across several roles give a venue the flexibility to cover shortfalls and flex with demand, so the matrix highlights who can be cross-trained to turn a fragile rota into a resilient one.

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#### — WHY IT MATTERS NOW

## Full on headcount, *short on skill*

A venue can hit its seasonal hiring target and still be dangerously short of capability if too many recruits are not yet competent. A skills matrix shows the readiness behind the headcount, so the peak is met with skill, not just bodies.

8%

GARTNER, 2024

of organisations have reliable workforce skills data, so most venues judge seasonal readiness on a hopeful guess.

High

ILO / SECTOR REPORTS

turnover is structural in tourism and hospitality, so the readiness picture shifts constantly through the season.

63%

WEF, 2025

of employers call skills gaps the biggest barrier; in tourism they show as service quality slipping at peak.

Seasonality is unforgiving: the rush arrives on the calendar's schedule, not when training happens to finish, and service quality, the thing guests remember and review, depends on staff being genuinely competent when it does. A skills matrix counters the risk by making **readiness visible against the deadline**: how many recruits have reached competence, how many are still in training, and how many are stalling short. Seeing this lets a manager unblock training where people are stuck, prioritise the roles that will be most stretched, cross-train for flexibility, and decide early whether to hire more or accelerate development, rather than discovering on the first busy weekend

that the team is full of people who are not yet ready. It turns seasonal staffing from a hopeful scramble into a managed run-up to peak.

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— WHAT IT PROTECTS

## Four things a tourism matrix safeguards

In travel and tourism, a skills matrix protects four things that bear directly on a successful season. Each follows from tracking readiness against the peak.

PROTECTS 01

### Peak readiness

By tracking the pipeline to competence, the matrix shows whether enough staff will be genuinely ready when the season hits, in time to act.

PROTECTS 02

### Service quality

It ensures guests are served by competent staff, not half-trained ones, protecting the experience and the reviews that follow.

PROTECTS 03

### Rota flexibility

It highlights multi-skilled staff and cross-training opportunities, so shortfalls can be covered and demand swings absorbed.

PROTECTS 04

### Against turnover shocks

It keeps the readiness picture current as people churn, so a wave of leavers does not quietly hollow out competence unnoticed.

The common thread is **readiness on a deadline**. A tourism operation cannot move its peak, and cannot deliver a good guest experience with a team that is staffed on paper but not yet skilled. Its capability is built fast, in a churning, largely seasonal workforce, against a calendar that will not wait. The matrix makes that race visible, so a venue can see how readiness is building, unblock it where it stalls, cross-train for resilience, and arrive at peak with enough genuinely competent people to deliver the season well.

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— THE SCALE BEHIND THE SCORES

# The 0 to 5 capability framework

Seasonal readiness needs a scale that marks the line between still-learning and ready-to-work-the-peak. This framework, developed by Dr Alex J. Martin-Smith, draws it at Level 3, competent and unsupervised, the point a seasonal recruit truly counts as peak-ready, with the lower levels charting their progress towards it.

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0	<b>Not required for the role</b> <span>EXCLUDED</span>
1	<b>In training / New starter</b> <span>WEIGHTING 25%</span>
2	<b>Developing</b> <span>WEIGHTING 50%</span>
3	<b>Competent</b> <span>WEIGHTING 75% · PEAK-READY</span>
4	<b>Multi-skilled / Trainer</b> <span>WEIGHTING 100%</span>
5	<b>Supervisor / Lead</b> <span>WEIGHTING 100%</span>

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0

**Not required for the role** EXCLUDED

The skill is not part of this person's role. Excluded from their score, keeping the matrix focused on the skills each seasonal role genuinely needs.

1

**In training / New starter** WEIGHTING 25%

Just hired and learning, works under close supervision. Up to 75% trained. Counts towards headcount, but not yet towards peak-ready capability.

2

**Developing** WEIGHTING 50%

More than 75% trained; handles routine service alone, but still needs support at the busiest times. Nearly there, the stage to push over the line before peak.

3

**Competent** WEIGHTING 75% · PEAK-READY

Works the role unsupervised to standard, including under pressure. The level that counts as genuinely peak-ready, the target for every seasonal hire in time.

4

**Multi-skilled / Trainer** WEIGHTING 100%

Competent across several roles and able to train others. The flexible staff who cover shortfalls and bring new starters up to speed quickly.

5

**Supervisor / Lead** WEIGHTING 100%

Runs a section or shift, sets the service standard and develops the team. Often the experienced core staff a venue works hard to retain year-round.

## Count who reaches peak-ready, in time

Map every seasonal hire and track their level on each required skill as the run-up progresses. Peak-ready means **Level 3 or above** on the role's core skills, competent and unsupervised. Counting how many recruits reach that level, and by when, against how many the peak rota needs, tells you whether the season is genuinely covered. Where the count falls short, the matrix shows who is stalled and at what stage, so training can be focused there before the deadline. Multi-skilled Level 4 staff count double, they flex across roles.

**A worked example.** Why headcount misleads:

Hired for the season **120** · full on paper  
Signed off competent (L3+) **54** · peak-ready → the number  
that actually counts  
truly multi-skilled **31** – the rota needs 70 competent: act  
now.

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— [SEE THE PIPELINE](#)

## From hired to *peak-ready*

Here is the seasonal workforce as a readiness funnel: every recruit starts at the top as hired, and narrows down through induction, training and sign-off to those who are genuinely competent and, finally, multi-skilled and peak-ready. The width of each stage is the number of people, and the drop between stages is where readiness is lost. The funnel shows, at a glance, how many will truly be ready, and where the leaks are.

#### SEASONAL READINESS PIPELINE · FROM HIRED TO PEAK-READY



120 → 54

**hired versus peak-ready:** fewer than half are signed off competent, and only 31 are multi-skilled, well short of the rota's need

*Illustrative venue on the Upleashed 0 to 5 framework. Each stage's width is the number of seasonal staff; peak-ready means Level 3+ on the role's core skills.*

#### WHAT THE VENUE MANAGER READS HERE

- **Headcount hides the gap.** 120 hired looks healthy, but only 54 are signed off competent. If the peak rota needs 70 competent staff, the venue is short on capability despite being full on paper, the gap to close before the season.
- **The biggest drop is training to sign-off.** The steepest narrowing is between trained and competent: people are learning but not being signed off. Unblocking assessment and on-the-job sign-off here would lift readiness fastest.
- **Multi-skilling is thin.** Only 31 are multi-skilled and peak-ready across roles. Cross-training a few more competent staff would give the rota the flexibility to cover shortfalls and demand swings.
- **There is still time, if you act now.** Read weeks before peak, this funnel is a prompt: focus training on those stalled at developing, prioritise the most-stretched roles, and decide whether to hire more, while it can still make a difference.

#### — READY-TO-USE EXAMPLES

# Example skills to map for tourism

A travel or tourism matrix should map staff against the operational and service skills each role needs to deliver a great guest experience. Here are ready-to-adapt categories, a starting point to tailor to your venue.

Category	Examples to map (the columns)	Watch out for
<b>Front of house</b>	Reception, check-in, reservations, concierge, guest handling	Peak-facing roles still in training when the season starts
<b>Food &amp; beverage</b>	Waiting, bar, barista, food prep, allergen awareness	Allergen and safety competence assumed rather than signed off
<b>Housekeeping &amp; ops</b>	Housekeeping, maintenance basics, laundry, turnaround speed	Turnaround capacity short at peak occupancy
<b>Guiding &amp; activities</b>	Tours, activities, safety briefings, local knowledge, languages	Safety-critical activity skills resting on too few staff
<b>Service &amp; compliance</b>	Customer service, complaint handling, licensing, health and safety	Compliance basics missed in the rush to fill rotas

Map the skills each seasonal role needs, scored so Level 3 means competent and unsupervised, and track readiness against your peak dates. Keep the safety and compliance skills, allergens, licensing, activity safety, firmly in scope, since these cannot be left half-trained. As always, map what matters most for the guest experience, keep the matrix current as people join and leave, and read it as a pipeline so you reach peak with enough genuinely competent, multi-skilled staff.

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— AVOID THESE

# Six mistakes on a tourism matrix

## MISTAKE 01

### Counting hires, not readiness

A full headcount can hide a skills shortfall. Count who is competent, not who has started.

## MISTAKE 02

### Ignoring the drop-off

People stall on the way to competence. Watch where the funnel narrows and unblock it.

## MISTAKE 03

### Leaving it too late

Competence takes time to build. Track readiness weeks before peak, not on opening day.

## MISTAKE 04

### No multi-skilling

Single-role staff make a fragile rota. Cross-train for the flexibility to cover shortfalls.

## MISTAKE 05

### Half-trained on safety

Allergens and activity safety cannot wait. Sign these off properly before the season.

## MISTAKE 06

### Stale through churn

Turnover shifts readiness fast. Update the matrix as people join and leave, all season.

## The method is free. A ready-made matrix just makes the readiness gap before peak *impossible to miss*.

Everything here works in a blank spreadsheet, and that is a fine place to start. A purpose-built template just makes the seasonal view effortless: score staff on the 0 to 5 scale across the skills each role needs, and the count reaching competent, and multi-skilled, is laid out for you, so the readiness pipeline, the drop-off where people stall, and the roles still short stand out, while there is still time to train, cross-skill or hire before the season hits.



*The Advanced Excel Skills Matrix tracks each recruit from hired to peak-ready, the basis for seeing the readiness pipeline, unblocking the drop-off and arriving at peak fully staffed in skill, all on the same 0 to 5 framework used throughout this guide.*

TRY IT FREE	MOST POPULAR	WHEN YOU ARE READY
<p><b>£0</b></p> <p>The online 5x5 builder maps a small team in your browser, with no sign-up. Ideal for a single venue or season.</p>	<p><b>£199</b></p> <p>The full Excel template: readiness tracking, required levels and analytics, up to 30 people and 30 skills. One-off, yours forever.</p>	<p><b>£1</b></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 travel and tourism?**

It is a grid mapping seasonal and core staff against the skills each role needs, with a level in each cell, tracked from newly hired to fully competent. Read as a readiness pipeline, it shows how many recruits will genuinely be competent, and multi-skilled, before peak season, so shortfalls can be addressed in time.

### **Q Why track a readiness pipeline rather than headcount?**

Because a full headcount can hide a capability gap. A venue may have hired its target number yet have too few who are actually signed off competent. Tracking the pipeline from hired to peak-ready shows how many will truly be able to work the season unsupervised, which is what determines whether the peak is covered.

### **Q What does the drop-off in the funnel tell me?**

It shows where recruits are stalling on the way to competence. A big narrowing between, say, trained and signed-off competent means people are learning but not being assessed and cleared. Seeing exactly where the leak is lets you unblock that stage, often the fastest way to lift overall readiness before peak.

## Q Why does multi-skilling matter so much?

Because it makes the rota flexible. Staff competent across several roles can cover shortfalls, absences and demand swings that would otherwise leave a single-role team exposed. In a seasonal operation with high turnover, multi-skilled people are the buffer that keeps service running when the unexpected happens, so the matrix highlights who to cross-train.

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## Q How does it cope with high turnover?

By keeping the readiness picture current as people join and leave. Turnover is structural in tourism, so a static plan ages fast. Updating the matrix through the season means a wave of leavers, or a batch of new joiners still in training, is reflected immediately, so you always know the real competent-staff position, not last month's.

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## Q When should I start using it for a season?

Well before peak, ideally as soon as seasonal hiring begins. The whole value is in seeing the readiness gap while there is still time to train, cross-skill or hire more. Used from the start of the run-up, the matrix turns the approach to peak into a managed countdown rather than a hopeful guess on opening weekend.

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

Dr Alex J. Martin-Smith

— SOURCES

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## Reach peak *genuinely ready*.

You now have the tourism method. The quickest way to start is to list your seasonal roles and skills, mark where each recruit sits from hired to competent, and read it as a pipeline against your peak dates. The drop-off you find, and the roles still short, are exactly where to focus training and cross-skilling before the rush arrives.

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