

# The skills-based advantage to staffing projects with AI



## The key to taking a talent-centered approach to staffing projects comes through surfacing the skills and availability you need with AI.

The world of project staffing still mostly relies on a manual approach. Many organizations still track skills, availability, booking times, and resources with inefficient systems like spreadsheets and rely on a resource manager's previous knowledge of employees' skills to assign work. Those same organizations also battle a perpetual talent shortage, with many firms left competing for a limited pool of highly skilled resources.

At best, this is an inexact science that leads to missed opportunities, suboptimal results, or not assigning the right people to the right projects at the right times. To succeed, organizations need a more dynamic and flexible way to staff projects, one that takes into account all employees' skills and availability in real time using the power of AI.

In this e-book, we explore how you can use talent intelligence and a talent-centered approach to build an agile workforce and staff the right talent to the right project – every time.



**45% of CEOs believe their company will not be viable in 10 years if it stays on its current path.”**

– PwC's 27th Annual Global CEO Survey, *Thriving in an age of continuous reinvention*



## Staffing projects is a painful process



Decentralized staffing information, often on spreadsheets



Little or no correlation between project staffing and skills



Poor visibility into talent and skill availability at an organizational level

## The talent-centered organization

Historically, organizations have hyper-focused on the role, whether that's for hiring practices, succession planning, or internal mobility. The typical recruitment process starts with defining a job and hammering out a job description, requirements, region, compensation, and so on. With everything in place, recruiters advertise one job to as many people as possible.

**Talent-centered organizations** flip this framework on its head. Instead of starting with jobs, this model starts with people. It uses AI and real-time insights to understand a person in the context of their work, skills, and capabilities.

Rather than exposing one job to as many people as possible, this model applies a person's skills and interests to as many opportunities as possible – projects, gigs, roles, events, mentorship programs, and more. Some organizations, like those in the professional services industry, are doing this to some extent as they already live in a project-based world. This more flexible approach to staffing allows for speed and agility rather than inefficiency and rigidity, as it uses real-time data to reveal what someone can do and where to deploy them best to capitalize on their strengths.





## Project staffing needs talent intelligence

Through the power of deep-learning AI, talent intelligence platforms examine the entire life cycle of billions of data points about careers to provide real-time data on what skills someone has, which skills your organization needs, and how to best acquire and develop those skills. Until recently, talent intelligence has primarily been used by HR and talent leaders looking to acquire or manage skills within their organizations.

Now, organizational leaders can also use the power of talent intelligence to inform their plans to build, buy, or borrow talent when it comes to project staffing. Even better, these talent insights are continuously updated and dynamic. Adjacent skills, learnability, and capabilities are easily found in one place to help you widen the talent pool and find the best candidates possible.

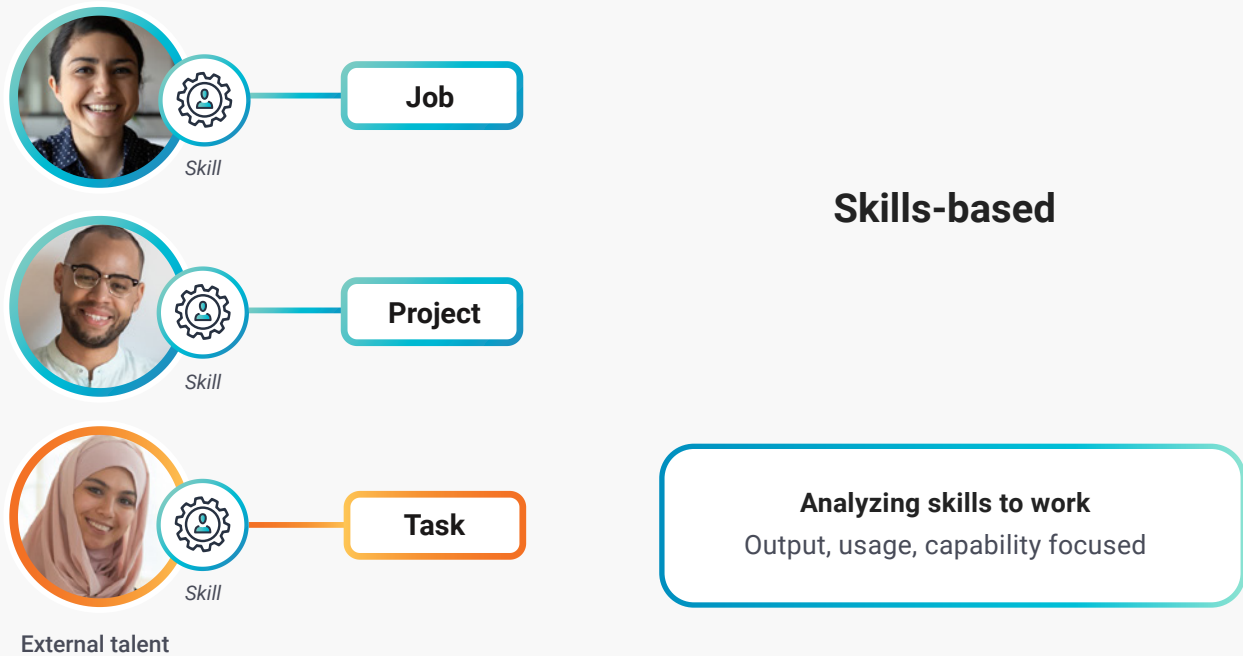
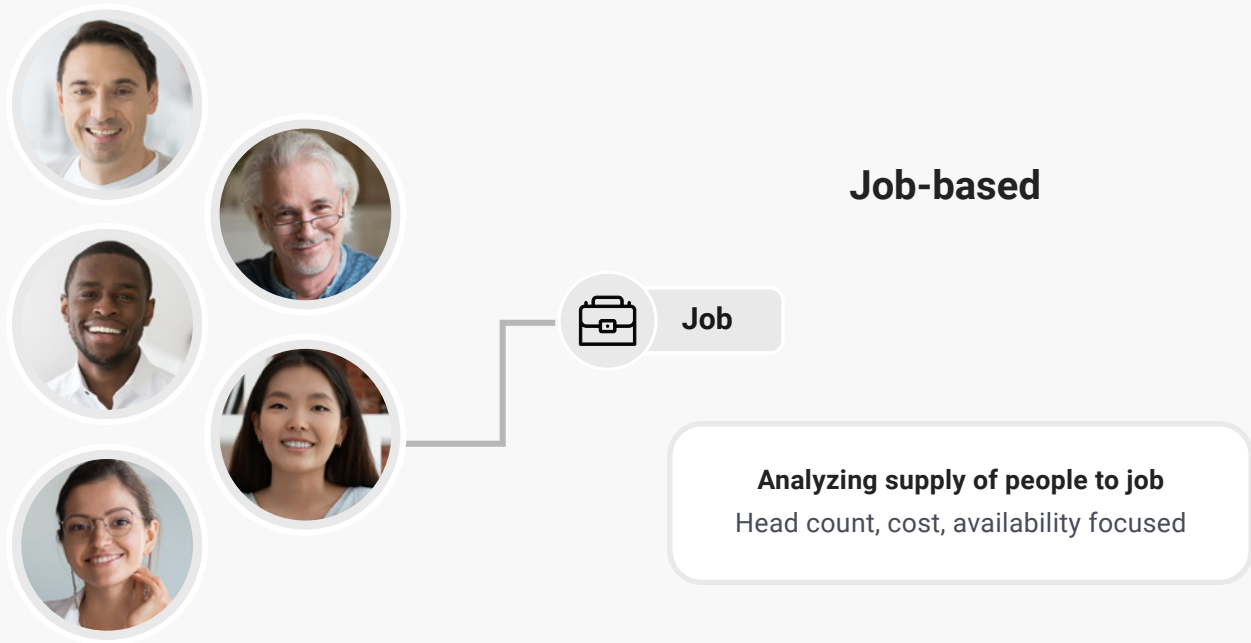
All this skills data resides in the same place where you're building your talent strategies. As a result, your talent strategy shifts from building a 2D and rigid talent pipeline to a diverse 3D talent portfolio, where employees can branch out in their careers in a way that suits their aspirations and your organization's goals and give you a more universal view of your resources.



The organization will increasingly be a **landscape of ongoing and evolving projects** rather than a collection of defined and organized processes. Managers will constantly source talent within and beyond the traditional organization and **rapidly assemble teams based on required skills and capabilities.**

— [Work without jobs: How to reboot your organization's work operating system](#), Ravin Jesuthasan and John W. Boudreau

# A new talent supply and demand equation



## Benefits of a talent-centered approach

With a universal view of the skills within your organization, you can staff projects using a talent-centered approach. Let's further explore the top benefits for professional services organizations.



### A bigger bottom line

Every staffed hour counts. Speeding up the staffing process and getting the right talent on the right project equals greater margins. Additionally, with skills-based project staffing, your organization is better positioned to give clients the highly specialized talent they need to complete various requests while delivering quality and speed, improving results for both parties.

This build, buy, borrow strategy ensures more efficient skills acquisition and resource deployment.



### More engaged employees

Skills-based insights lead to a more transparent staffing and selection process, giving employees greater insights into why they did or didn't get selected. By using stated career goals as a factor in project-based matching, projects can align with employees' career paths, helping them progress toward their goals, interests, and aspirations.

Employees also don't have to wait to get matched. They can search a project marketplace and self-nominate to be considered for upcoming work.



### Winning the talent war

Many firms are competing for highly specific, expensive skills. Rather than competing head-to-head for this talent, you can widen your search. Talent intelligence platforms use AI and billions of global talent data points to understand the skills and career trajectories of millions of people.

These insights allow you to infer skill adjacencies, giving your organization the option to hire someone with high degrees of learnability who could quickly pick up a critical skill or upskill someone who is close to having the skill you need – helping you acquire talent faster and cheaper than otherwise possible.



### Strategic resource planning

Once you have a comprehensive understanding of the skills in your organization, including which skills are under- or overused, you can make strategic decisions about the best way to acquire, deploy, or reallocate those skills.



### Faster time to staff

You want to pair the right person with the right assignment, but this becomes incredibly difficult when you have to keep a roster of your talent somewhere in the back of your mind or a spreadsheet. Unless you've worked with someone before, it can be difficult to know if they'll succeed on a project.

## Eightfold Resource Management

Eightfold Resource Management integrates with your staff's availability and booking systems so you can surface the best possible fit for a project based on skill sets, availability, and other signals, including career aspirations and goals – all in a single, centralized system.

Additionally, as employees complete various projects, their skills and experiences are captured in your talent intelligence system, updating in near real-time, giving you dynamic information about skills, compatibility, and availability.

With AI-powered talent intelligence and Eightfold Resource Management, you get a full view of the entire talent bench and the power to deploy people to the most beneficial and profitable places possible.

Talent intelligence gives you deeper insights into project fit based on a person's skills. For example, skills data surfaced by AI can open your talent pool of qualified candidates across global borders or industries. You'll be able to surface talent you'd never considered before and assign them based on their skills and availability matching to the client's needs.





## With skills-based planning for project staffing, you can:



### Match the right work to the right skills:

Go beyond simple availability, location, or previous project data. Use a more in-depth understanding of people's skills, adjacencies, and potential to find the best-fit talent to work on any project.



### Capture new and emerging skills in real time:

As employees finish projects, Eightfold highlights potential skills they can add to their profiles to inform future opportunities.



### Offer availability, skills, booking, and AI all in one system:

Project management becomes more powerful and agile with skills intelligence. When combined with availability, booking systems, and other signals, you get a valuable and complete view of talent all in one place.



### Improve time to staff:

Quickly take skills, availability, location, past engagements, and other details into account so you can more efficiently staff projects. This ultimately drives higher consultant and staff engagements, growing top-line revenue and margins for service-based businesses.



## How EY uses talent intelligence to quickly staff projects

Antony Shields, Partner and Global Digital Talent Leader at EY, a global professional services firm and one of the “Big Four” accounting firms, is no stranger to rigid HR processes. Shields knew if he could find a better way to match EY’s 400,000 employees to project-based work, they could deliver better outcomes for the company and its clients.

Not only would an agile project-based approach help Shields modernize his workforce, but he could also give employees the professional development they craved.



**People don’t operate within a career structure that is entirely rigid. For us, that’s changed everything.”**

– Antony Shields, Partner and Global Digital Talent Leader, EY

When Shields’ team initially deployed Resource Management, they were pleasantly surprised to see the results. It correctly identified employees’ skills with 80% accuracy with no intervention from his team. These real-time, skills-based insights opened the doors to matching people to projects that normally wouldn’t have been paired together.

“People resource the people that they know,” Shields said. “So there is a significant shift into resourcing people they don’t know. The AI is surfacing real data around skills that should be used as opposed to what you think should be used.”

Real-time skills insights and agile project staffing helped EY transition from rigid talent pipelines to robust talent portfolios. Today, EY can more effectively staff resources to projects where employees can be successful – an improvement for everyone. Employees enjoy more transparency, autonomy, and career mobility, and EY gets higher quality projects, a skills inventory to guide staffing decisions, and faster time to staff. Valuable resources are kept off the talent bench – and earning revenue.

“The shift to looking at our people with the skills they have, identifying their skills profiles with AI, and enabling them to take control is such a significant shift – and not just for EY, but for any organization,” Shields said. “It’s actually the difference between making money or not, and often the difference between delivering on a client project or not.”

## EY's journey with Resource Management

### Challenges:

Need to scale efficient and value-driven staffing across 400k consultants.

Employees asking for skills-based career tools.

Clients demanding specific skills and capabilities for engagements.

Firm looking to go beyond people availability and use skills as inventory across the organization.

### Results:

#### Employee value

Visibility into how skills open up future career paths.

Transparent marketplace so employees can both see and self-nominate for projects.

#### Client value

Quality client projects driven by trusted and highly skilled EY advisers.

#### Financial value

Turbocharge project-staffing speed and quality, improving engagement rates.



**EY is committed to bringing best-in-class people solutions to our teams. Working with Eightfold has allowed us to transform our approach to skills for careers and experiences in GDS. Our new AI capability will provide a foundation to drive further value across our Talent functions from learning to recruitment and resourcing.”**

– (Sree) Sreekanth Arimanithaya, Global Delivery Services Talent Leader, EY



## Staff the best talent for every project, every time

With Eightfold Resource Management, you can identify ideal employees for any project at any time, shifting the focus from who seems best to who is best. In turn, you'll improve outcomes for your firm, your clients, and your employees.

Discover how we can help you align resources to projects today.

Get a personalized demo

### About Eightfold AI

Eightfold AI's market-leading Talent Intelligence Platform™ helps organizations retain top performers, upskill and reskill their workforce, recruit talent efficiently, and reach diversity goals. Eightfold's patented deep-learning artificial intelligence platform is available in more than 155 countries and 24 languages, enabling cutting-edge enterprises to transform their talent into a competitive advantage. For more information, visit [www.eightfold.ai](https://www.eightfold.ai).