SKLD

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Insights *Elevated*

A SKLD perspective on the people, work and forces shaping industry.

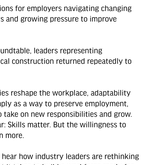
Adaptability: The Skill Behind Every Other Skill

Why the future of work belongs to people who never stop learning.

EPISODE 02

You Can Teach a Skill. But Can You Teach Coachability?

Why industry leaders are looking beyond technical qualifications to build stronger workforces.



When evaluating a potential employee, what's more valuable: the skills someone already possesses or their willingness to learn something new?

It's a question with significant implications for employers navigating changing technologies, evolving job requirements and growing pressure to improve productivity.

During SKLD's Executive Leadership Roundtable, leaders representing manufacturing, distribution and electrical construction returned repeatedly to the importance of adaptability.

And as automation and new technologies reshape the workplace, adaptability becomes even more important, not simply as a way to preserve employment, but as an opportunity for employees to take on new responsibilities and grow. The message from these leaders is clear: Skills matter. But the willingness to keep developing them may matter even more.

In Episode 2 of **Outside the Four Walls**, hear how industry leaders are rethinking what makes a great employee and what it takes to build a workforce ready for change.

Watch the Episode

A Note from Jon Neff, CEO

Technical skills may get someone hired. But increasingly, it's adaptability that determines how far they, and the organizations they work for, can go.

Across manufacturing, construction, distribution and other skilled industries, the nature of work is changing. New technologies are transforming processes. Customer expectations are evolving. And employers are being asked to accomplish more, often with fewer resources.

In this environment, experience and technical expertise remain essential. But they're no longer enough on their own.

The most valuable employees bring something more: curiosity, coachability, strong communication and a willingness to learn.

And the most successful organizations recognize that these qualities aren't simply nice to have. They're a competitive advantage.

The question for employers is changing. It's no longer just, "Can this person do the job today?" It's also, "Can this person grow with the job tomorrow?" That's an important distinction and one that may help define the future of workforce development.

Jon Neff
Chief Executive Officer, SKLD

The Workforce Insight

Skills Change. The Ability to Learn Endures.

As industries evolve, workforce development can no longer be viewed as a one-time investment.

Hiring for today's requirements is important. Preparing people for tomorrow's demands is equally critical.

Organizations that make learning part of their culture are better positioned to respond to new technologies, changing market conditions, and evolving customer needs.

That doesn't mean technical expertise is becoming less important. It means the ability to continually build on that expertise is becoming more valuable.
The takeaway: The future-ready workforce isn't simply the one with the most skills. It's the one best prepared to develop the next ones.

From Insight to Action

Three Questions Every Employer Should Be Asking

1. Are we hiring for potential as well as experience?

Technical qualifications are essential, but curiosity, communication and coachability can help identify people capable of growing into new responsibilities.

2. Are we making it easier for employees to learn?

Training, mentorship and clear opportunities for advancement help turn individual potential into organizational capability.

3. Are our leaders modeling adaptability?

Employees are more likely to embrace change when leaders demonstrate openness to new ideas, encourage feedback and recognize continuous improvement.

Adaptability doesn't happen by accident. It's a quality organization that can deliberately seek, encourage and develop.

The SKL'D Perspective

Better Workforces Begin with Better Understanding.

SKILLS GAP

49%

of L&D professionals report executive concern about employees lacking necessary skills

CONTINUOUS LEARNING

91%

of L&D professionals agree continuous learning is more important than ever for career success

PURPOSE AT WORK

84%

of employees agree learning ads purpose to their work

Source: LinkedIn, 2025 Workplace Learning Report

Understanding what makes an employee successful means looking beyond the immediate requirements of a job to consider potential, opportunity and long-term fit.

For employers, that means thinking more strategically about the people who power their businesses.

For talent, it means recognizing that every opportunity to learn can open the door to what's next.

Because work is personal. Always.

Connect with Jon Neff and the SKL'D team

The Coachability Question

Are we hiring for what people know or what they can become?

An experienced candidate may have the technical qualifications to perform today's work. But curiosity, openness to feedback and the willingness to learn can reveal the capacity to succeed as that work changes. The strongest hiring conversations should explore both.

November HR Roundtable

Join SKLD on Wednesday, November 11, from 9:00-10:00 a.m. for a conversation about timely issues facing HR and operations leaders. Interested in participating? Email **amclendon@skldjobs.com**

The Future of Work Starts with People

The skills businesses need will continue to evolve. The value of investing in people never will. At SKLD, we help organizations build stronger, more adaptable workforces by connecting the right people with the right opportunities. Let's talk about what's next for your workforce.

Connect with the SKL'D team

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