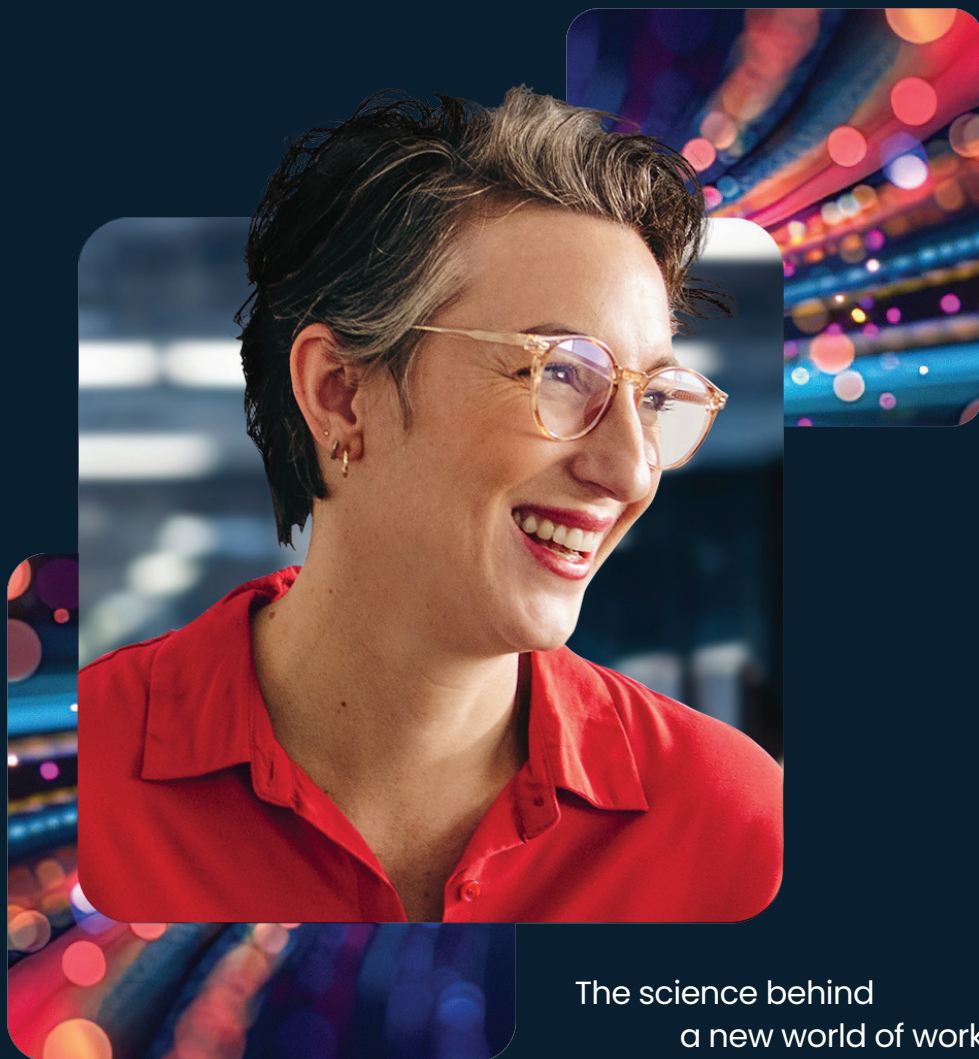




# Putting skills-based hiring into practice

How nonprofits use People First to find mission-aligned talent faster



The science behind  
a new world of work



It's a strategy designed to surface high-caliber talent that might otherwise be overlooked.

## The hiring landscape is shifting

In today's labor market, many nonprofit HR teams are rethinking how they define a qualified candidate. Degrees and past job titles once served as shorthand for ability, but they can also create barriers — especially for underrepresented or nontraditional applicants.

For nonprofits, the stakes of each hire are especially high. Teams are often small, funding sources unpredictable and missions deeply personal. The right hire doesn't just show up to do a job; they breathe life into your mission, ease the load for your team and become a spark that helps everything run better.

That's why more and more nonprofits are starting to shift their focus in the hiring process – not just to what's on a resume, but to what someone can actually do. It's a strategy designed to surface high-caliber talent that might otherwise be overlooked.





What you've done  
and what you can  
do matters more  
than a diploma.

## The new approach: Skills-based hiring

Nonprofits face a unique mix of workforce challenges: tight budgets, high turnover and a wide range of roles that often span departments, locations or funding structures. In this environment, hiring based solely on formal credentials can limit access to capable, values-aligned candidates.

Because what if the person most aligned with your mission doesn't come with a polished resume, but brings grit, heart and the kind of experience no classroom can teach?

Skills-based hiring expands who you might consider for open roles. It allows you to reach applicants with real-world experience, transferable skills and deep motivation, even if they don't check every traditional box.

And those candidates? They often bring lived experience that deeply connects to the mission – whether they've worked on the front lines, organized community impact initiatives or simply walked the path your organization supports. By focusing on capability over pedigree, you make space for exceptional candidates that may have been overlooked otherwise.

For nonprofits that truly value inclusion, skills-based hiring sends a powerful message: What you've done and what you can do matters more than a diploma.

## The common barriers to change

Shifting to a skills-first strategy can raise concerns internally. Some hiring managers may worry that relaxing credential requirements might lead to a poor fit. Others may be skeptical about non-traditional backgrounds.

There are three objections that typically arise:

### Perceived loss of quality

When qualifications are used as a proxy for competence, changing the criteria can feel risky. But focusing on real skills often leads to better alignment, not worse — especially when paired with structured screening processes. Teams that take time to refine their criteria tend to hire not just faster, but smarter.

### Lack of internal tools

Without clear methods to evaluate skills, teams may default back to resume shorthand. That's why software tools that support blind screening, resume parsing and consistent scoring criteria are essential. They reduce bias and give your team the confidence to make values-based hires.

### Resistance to change

Even well-intentioned teams may hesitate to shift from what's familiar. But when skills-first hiring is framed around equity, speed and mission alignment, it's easier to get buy-in.

Sure, these challenges are real. But they're not deal-breakers. When you face them directly, you don't just uncover qualified people – you find people who believe in what you do.



# Practical steps to start skills-based hiring with People First

People First powered by MHR makes it easier to operationalize skills-first hiring inside your existing HR workflows. Here's how:

## Review job descriptions with a skills-first lens

Use People First's AI-assisted job description tools to update outdated requirements and rewrite roles based on the capabilities that actually drive success. This helps attract a broader, more relevant pool of candidates.

## Screen based on what matters

People First enables blind shortlisting, so hiring teams can evaluate applicants based on skills and experience — not names, contact info or even full resumes. This reduces unconscious bias and helps surface qualified, mission-aligned candidates.

## Simplify interview scheduling

Built-in calendar integration lets candidates choose available time slots, automatically syncing across your interview team's calendars. This removes back-and-forth coordination and shortens time-to-hire.

## Automate offer creation

With People First, you can quickly generate and approve configurable offers, including salary and benefits and notify selected candidates in real time. This creates a more seamless experience while keeping your internal review process in check.

## Tailor onboarding for early success

Customizable, role-based onboarding tracks help new hires build skills and get oriented before day one. You can also collect required documents and data securely through the portal — no email threads or manual forms.

When employees know where they're headed and how to get there, they're more likely to stay engaged and motivated. A skills-first approach helps build that clarity and turns hiring into a foundation for long-term growth.







The good news?  
You don't have to  
figure this all out  
on your own.

## Rethinking talent through a mission-first lens

For HR teams in the nonprofit space, the stakes are high. Every hire affects culture, program delivery and long-term impact. A great hire doesn't just fill a role. They lift morale, reinforce your organizational values and help your entire team deliver on its mission.

For many nonprofit leaders, this shift feels long overdue. But even when the case for skills-first hiring is clear, the change can still feel uncertain or complex. The good news? You don't have to figure this all out on your own. People First makes it easier to take these next steps – and do it in a way that's fair, fast and actually doable.

Ready to dig  
into how you  
can implement  
skills-based hiring?

Download our  
Reinventing HR eBook





## About MHR

MHR has been driving innovation across the HRIS space for over 40 years. We don't just meet the industry standard, we exceed it. Engineered by the latest SaaS technology, our product, People First enables increased employee productivity and organizational growth with a demonstrable return on investment.

People First is guided by what our customers and the market demand in a rapidly changing world.

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