




FUEL50 GUIDE

# A Practical Guide to Supporting Managers With Skills – at Team Scale

*Why your skills investment isn't changing manager behavior yet – and what it takes to close the gap between skills data and leadership decisions.*

 **Your Rating: 10 Points**  
Account Executive

Progress bar showing Bronze, Silver, and Gold levels. A location pin is on the Silver level.



I want to look at **Leader Feedback** and compare it to **Role Required** Higher Matching Lower

	AI Strategy	Communication	Data Pipes	GenAI
<b>David Kim</b> Director of Data & AI	Advanced	Advanced	Advanced	Skilled
<b>Mei Lin</b> Head of Data Science	Advanced	Skilled		Skilled
<b>Emily Rodriguez</b> Head of ML Engineering	Skilled	Advanced		Skilled
<b>Sarah Johnson</b> Senior Data Scientist	Basic	Basic		Basic
<b>Ben Johnson</b> Data Engineer	Basic	Basic		Basic

**Communication**

Self Assessed: *Skilled*

Leader Feedback: *Basic*

Peer Feedback: *Basic*

- Give Leader Feedback
- Request Self Assessment
- Request Peer Feedback

For CHROs, CPOs, and senior HR leaders at organizations that have already invested in skills frameworks, taxonomies, and platforms – and are now asking why managers still aren't using them.

## Introduction

Over the past five years, enterprise HR teams have invested heavily in making skills operational. They've built or purchased taxonomies. They've mapped roles to competencies. They've deployed platforms that collect self-assessments, peer ratings, and skill validations at scale. The foundational infrastructure for a skills-based organization is, in many cases, already in place.

In fact, in our **2026 State of Skills-Based Work research of 272 HR leaders at organizations with 1,000 or more employees, 65% reported that skills practices are operational or fully scaled across their organizations.**

Most CHROs are now asking: Is that infrastructure changing how people are coached, developed, promoted, and retained? They're looking at managerial behavior – the one-on-ones, the growth conversations, the readiness decisions – and recognizing that skills data rarely shows up in those moments. Managers continue to work from observation, memory, and instinct. The investment was made, yet the behavioral change hasn't followed.

That gap is the subject of this guide. It sits between the skills data organizations have invested in and the managers who are supposed to use that data to lead their teams. It persists for identifiable reasons and has a measurable cost: It determines how fairly employees are developed across teams, how much time HR spends interpreting data instead of doing strategic work, and how quickly the organization can close capability gaps before they affect delivery.

# Why Managers Still Struggle to Make Data-backed Decisions Even When Skills Data Is Available

The gap between skills investment and managerial behavior is rarely a matter of willingness; most managers would prefer to have clear, reliable information about their team's capabilities. The problem is the current experience of working with skills data fails them in three compounding ways: The information isn't where they need it, the information they do find raises more questions than it answers, and the resulting uncertainty pushes them back to familiar but unreliable signals.

## Skills information lives in systems managers don't use while leading

Skills data lives inside HRIS platforms, embedded in learning management systems, scattered across individual employee profiles, or compiled in workforce planning dashboards.

These systems were designed for HR workflows, namely, annual reviews, succession planning, and organizational development, and they serve those purposes well.

However, they weren't designed for a manager preparing for a Thursday afternoon one-on-one or five minutes after a coaching session when a manager needs to document what they discussed. The systems that hold skills data and the moments when managers make talent decisions occupy entirely separate spaces in the work day.

Every coaching conversation that happens without skills context is built on memory and assumption. Every staffing decision made without a clear picture of team capability is a risk assessment founded on intuition. Every growth conversation that defaults to, **"Where do you want to go?"** instead of, **"Here's where your skills stand relative to what your role requires,"** is a missed opportunity to connect development to business needs. Multiply that problem across hundreds of managers and thousands of decisions per quarter, and the organizational cost accumulates fast, even though each individual instance feels minor.

## When managers do find skills data, it raises more questions than it answers

Organizations that recognize the access problem often respond by capturing skills data more directly. They build team dashboards, expose skill profiles, and generate reports that summarize team capability by competency area. The data reaches the manager, and the problem shifts from access to interpretation.

A manager opens their team's skills view and sees proficiency ratings across a dozen people. Self-assessments show one picture, peer ratings tell a different story, leader feedback introduces a third perspective, and role requirements add another layer of comparison. The data is there but fails to answer the questions the manager needs answered: Which of these gaps is urgent? Is the discrepancy between what Employee A says about their communication skills and what their peers report something to address, or is it normal variation? Where should the limited coaching time go this quarter?

This is where organizations inadvertently create the dependency that undermines the entire investment. When managers can't interpret skills data on their own, they turn to HR. The HRBP becomes the translator, reviewing dashboards, preparing summaries, and explaining what the numbers mean ahead of review cycles. That effort doesn't scale across hundreds of managers and keeps HR in a reactive cycle of interpreting data for individual leaders instead of doing the strategic work that connects skills to business outcomes.

**92%**

of organizations in our 2025 Skills Crisis Report said they had sufficient visibility into workforce skills, while 74% simultaneously admitted that a lack of visibility was impeding their business objectives. Both statements felt true because the data existed but was useless without interpretation.

## The fallback to instinct makes every talent decision less consistent and difficult to defend

When skills data is hard to reach and harder to interpret, managers rely on the signals they've always trusted, namely, who performs well in meetings, who's been in the role longest, who they've personally observed handling a difficult situation, etc.

These signals encode the kind of inconsistency and bias that skills-based approaches were designed to eliminate. Instinct favors visibility over competence. It rewards people who speak up in group settings and underweighs the contributions of those who work quietly. It skews toward familiarity, as managers tend to identify potential in people who communicate similarly to them or who've taken a similar career path. These patterns are well documented in organizational behavioral research, and they consistently appear in every organization that relies on managerial judgment without a shared standard underneath.

Consequently, two managers leading teams with identical skill compositions make entirely different development investments, because each is working from a personal mental model of what "ready" looks like. Promotion decisions thus vary across departments, creating internal inequity that damages employee trust and increases attrition among high performers who feel overlooked. HR then spends significant time adjudicating these inconsistencies, building custom reports, and attempting to impose consistency through process controls that address symptoms rather than root causes.

Every inconsistent development decision is a retention risk: Promotions based on gut feel rather than shared standards weaken the organization's ability to defend those decisions under scrutiny. Further, each time an HR business partner steps in to interpret a team's skills data for a manager, that's a senior resource doing work that the experience itself should handle – time not spent on workforce planning, organizational design, or measuring return on the skills investment.

*If your organization has invested in skills data, frameworks, and platforms, and your managers are still making talent decisions based on instinct and tenure, the problem isn't the data — it's where and how that data shows up in the manager's workflow.*

## Reframing Team Skills From Something Managers Review to Something They Lead With

Training managers to use existing dashboards more effectively doesn't fix an experience that was never designed for them. Similarly, adding another analytics layer on top of fragmented data won't make that information actionable. The solution has to address the structural problem: skills information built for the person who has to use it while leading a team, structured around the decisions they make, and delivered in the moments when those decisions happen.

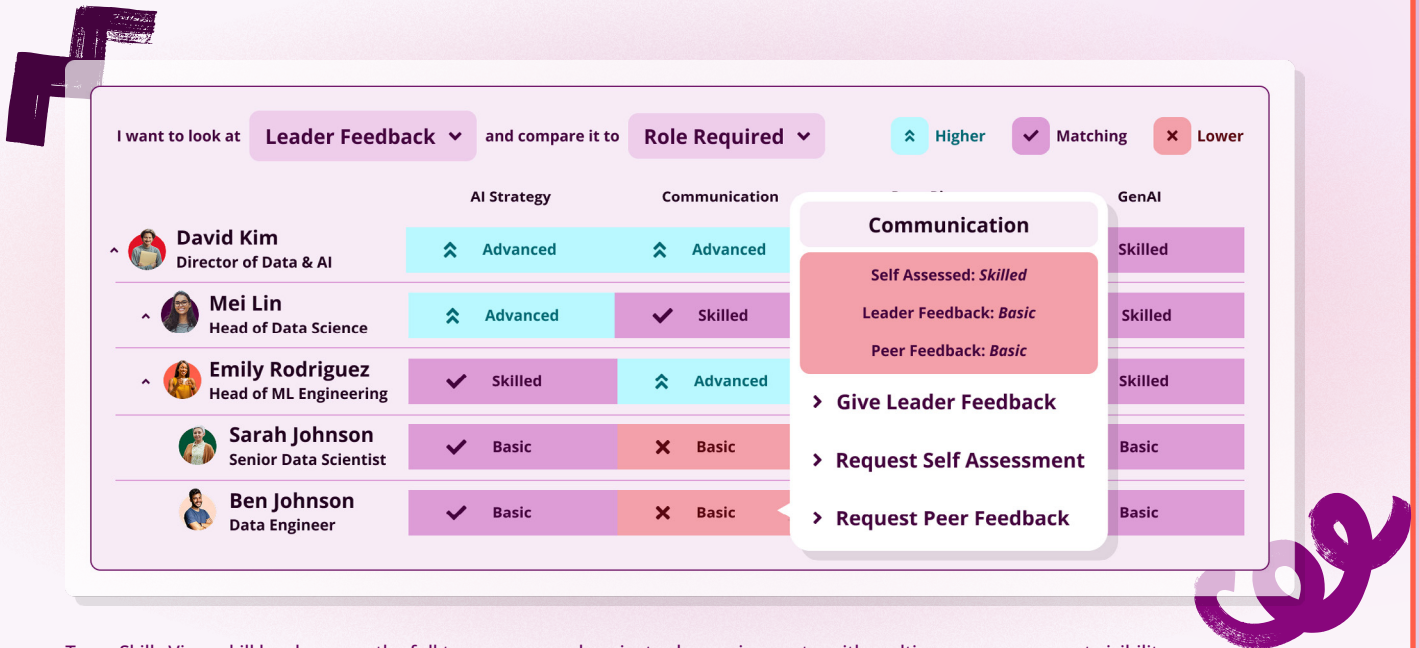
This is the thinking behind Fuel50's Coach module – specifically, the **Team Skills View**. When Fuel50's product team studied how managers interact with skills data in enterprise environments, they kept arriving at the same failure point, which was managers had access to information, but it was organized based on the system's logic rather than the manager's workflow. The product was designed around a different starting question: What would a manager need to see, understand, and do in the 10 minutes before a coaching conversation? The answer pointed to three shifts.

### A view organized around teams and roles, not taxonomies and assessment types

Most team-level skills views start with the data model – skills taxonomies, competency frameworks, assessment types – and present that structure to the manager. The experience reflects how HR thinks about skills, organized by competency cluster, filterable by assessment source, and displayed across the full skill architecture. Managers don't think this way. They think about their team: Who owns what, who's growing, who's struggling, and whether the group has what it needs to deliver next quarter.

Team Skills View organizes information by role and team structure so direct and indirect reports appear in one coherent view. Skill levels are displayed against role expectations so the comparison between where someone is and where they need to be is immediate.

Multiple assessment sources – self, leader, and peer – are visible together, making discrepancies obvious rather than hidden across separate reports. Those discrepancies are some of the most valuable signals for a manager, as they point to conversations that need to happen, perceptions that need correction, or blind spots that coaching should address.



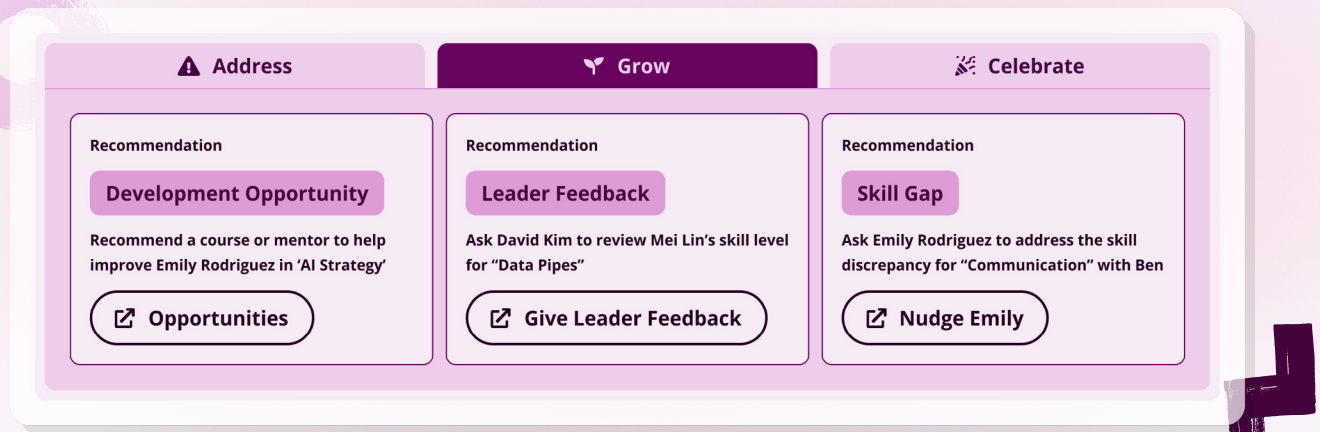
Team Skills View: skill levels across the full team compared against role requirements, with multi-source assessment visibility.

In this view, a manager sees their entire team’s proficiency across role-required skills, with color-coded indicators for levels that exceed, match, or fall below expectations. Clicking into any cell reveals the underlying assessment sources and direct actions, like giving feedback or requesting a new assessment. The information is structured the way the manager already thinks about their team, so using it requires no translation nor any help from HR.

## Guided focus that tells managers where to pay attention and why

Showing managers their team’s skills in a clean, role-aligned grid solves the access and structure problems, but not the prioritization problem. A grid of a dozen people across multiple skills contains dozens of data points, every one of which could warrant attention. Without guidance, the manager has to scan, compare, and infer which signals matter most – exactly the analytical work that caused them to avoid dashboards in the first place.

Team Skills View addresses this with categorized, AI-generated recommendations. Rather than presenting raw data and expecting the manager to find the pattern, the feature offers specific guidance organized by urgency, including skill gaps that need immediate attention, growth opportunities worth investing in, and strengths worth recognizing. Each recommendation includes context – not just what to focus on, but why it matters and what to do about it. A gap recommendation might say, **“Recommend a course or mentor to help Emily Rodriguez improve in AI Strategy.”** Whereas a growth recommendation might say, **“Ask David Kim to review Mei Lin’s skill level for Data Pipes, because the leader feedback may be outdated.”**



AI-driven recommendations organized by urgency: areas to Address, opportunities to Grow, and strengths to Celebrate.

This reframes the manager’s relationship with skills data. The starting question shifts from, “What does all this mean?” to, “Which of these should I focus on first?” As a result, they’re more likely to check skills data regularly instead of viewing it once, finding it overwhelming, and never coming back.

## Actions that happen from the same place as insight

A well-documented pattern in enterprise software sees a user spy something important in one system and then have to navigate to a different one to act on it. In the gap between seeing and acting, most follow-through dies. This pattern is particularly damaging for managerial skills usage. A manager spots a gap in their team’s skills view, then needs to switch to a coaching tool for a conversation, open the learning platform to find a resource, navigate to their feedback system to document an observation, and return to the original view to verify priority. Each context switch reduces the likelihood that the action will be completed.

Team Skills View shrinks this process. In the same view where a manager sees skill levels, they can give feedback on a specific skill, request a self-assessment, ask for peer input, or initiate a development recommendation. The insight and action both live in the same place.

**Coach Team Skills View**

Address | **Grow** | Celebrate

**Recommendation**  
**Development Opportunity**  
 Recommend a course or mentor to help improve Emily Rodriguez in 'AI Strategy'  
 Opportunities

**Recommendation**  
**Leader Feedback**  
 Ask David Kim to review Mei Lin's skill level for "Data Pipes"  
 Give Leader Feedback

**Recommendation**  
**Skill Gap**  
 Ask Emily Rodriguez to address the skill discrepancy for "Communication" with Ben  
 Nudge Emily

I want to look at **Leader Feedback** and compare it to **Role Required**  Higher  Matching  Lower

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Individual employee view: risk indicators, coaching actions, engagement drivers, and session tracking in one place.

At the individual level, this same principle extends to the full coaching experience. Before a one-on-one, a manager can see the person's risk level, available coaching actions, engagement drivers, upcoming sessions, and incomplete assessments all from one screen. The preparation that used to require 15 minutes of cross-referencing across multiple systems now takes less than one. When action requires two minutes, managers do it. When it requires more than 10 and three system switches, they intend to do it but rarely follow through. The design difference is small, but the behavioral difference enormous.

**Skills become part of how managers lead when three conditions are met:**  
*the information is where they work, it tells them what to focus on,  
and it lets them act immediately.*

**Remove any one of these, and the experience reverts back to what most organizations have today:** *data that exists, managers who avoid it, and HR filling the gap.*

## What Changes When Managers Use Skills

The shifts described above are not incremental improvements to an existing experience. Rather, they change the operating relationship between HR and people managers. The effects are felt across three areas that matter directly to CHROs.

### **Development decisions become more consistent – and defensible**

When managers work from a personal model of what “good” looks like, the quality of coaching, the criteria for promotion readiness, and the standards for growth investment vary from team to team. Employees in identical roles receive fundamentally different developmental experiences depending on who manages them. This inconsistency creates internal inequity that high-performing employees can feel – the sense that opportunities are allocated based on who you report to rather than what you’ve demonstrated. It weakens the credibility of promotion decisions and exposes the organization to risk where those decisions face scrutiny.

Conversely, when managers work from a shared, role-aligned benchmark – where skill expectations are defined by the organization and visible to every manager doing similar work – the baseline shifts. Coaching conversations start from a common foundation, and growth decisions reference the same criteria. When a manager identifies someone ready for the next level, that assessment is traceable to specific skills measured against specific role requirements, rather than a subjective judgment that varies by department. Managers still exercise judgment and weigh context, but that judgment is now informed by shared, objective information rather than standing in for it.

## HR shifts from interpreter to strategist

In most organizations, a significant portion of HR's relationship with skills data is operational and reactive. Talent teams build rollup reports, HRBPs prepare summaries that translate skills data into language managers can act on, and L&D leaders compile analyses to explain what gaps mean for their populations. This work is valuable but consumes time and capacity that should be directed toward work only HR can do.

When managers can work with skills information directly – that is, when the experience provides clarity without requiring translation – the demand pattern changes. Escalations for clarification decrease, the manual rollup requests drop, and the pre-review preparation cycles shrink. What HR gains back is strategic capacity: time to connect skills growth to emerging business needs, identify systemic patterns across the organization, and build the measurement frameworks that justify continued investment. The shift is from HR as the translator between skills data and managerial behavior to HR as the architect of the standards, strategy, and measurement that make the system work.

## Managers identify and respond to capability gaps before they affect delivery

Many organizations measure the delay between recognizing a capability gap and responding to it in weeks or months; first, a gap appears in a review cycle, then a manager escalates to HR for interpretation, then HR builds a recommendation, and finally, that recommendation becomes an action.

When managers have clear, real-time visibility into their team's skills, that delay collapses. A manager notices a critical skill is rated below role requirements by both leader observation and peer feedback. Instead of waiting for the next quarterly review, they give specific feedback in that week's one-on-one and recommend a developmental resource. The gap is identified, communicated, and addressed in the same cycle it was discovered.

Early intervention for skill gaps prevents them from compounding into delivery problems, while timely recognition of strengths improves engagement and retention. Faster coaching conversations build trust between managers and their teams, because employees see their development actively managed rather than deferred. Confident managers stop treating skills as an HR initiative they participate in and start treating them as the operating language of how they lead. Staffing conversations reference skill readiness, growth plans connect to specific proficiency targets, and team planning accounts for capability gaps before they affect timelines.

That behavioral shift from skills as a periodic HR exercise to skills as a leadership rhythm is the outcome that determines whether a skills investment produces organizational return. Rather than training or enablement sessions, it comes from making the experience of using skills better than that of relying on gut feel.

**The infrastructure most organizations have already built – the frameworks, taxonomies, and platforms – is necessary. Making that infrastructure useful in the daily rhythm of leadership is what unlocks the return on that investment.**

## See What This Looks Like in Practice

If this guide described problems your organization is working through, here are three ways to go deeper.

### 01 Watch the webinar

See a walkthrough of how Fuel50's Team Skills View works in practice, with examples from enterprise implementations and a live Q&A from HR leaders navigating this same transition.

**Register or watch the replay →**

### 02 View a demo tailored to your organization

Every skills architecture and team structure is different. A personalized demo shows what Team Skills View looks like inside your context, with your roles, skills, and the kind of team structures your managers manage.

**Request a personalized demo →**

### 03 Talk to our team

Our team works with CHROs and heads of talent at skills-first enterprises every day. If you're evaluating how to close the gap between skills data and managerial behavior, we're available for a conversation about where you are and what the path forward looks like.

**Book a conversation →**