

Map your next move:

# HR Career Goal Setting

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AIHR Live event / Wihan de Wet & Annelise Pretorius/ 15 Jan 2026



# Agenda

- 1 Rethinking career progression
- 2 Clarifying career direction
- 3 Choosing what to focus on
- 4 Building a development plan

**Which best describes how your HR career has unfolded so far?**

- **Mostly linear and planned**
- **A mix of planned and opportunistic moves**
- **Largely unplanned or reactive**
- **Many lateral or sideways moves**
- **In and out of HR or across disciplines**



# Rethinking career progress



When I grow up I  
want to be...

# Why being intentional matters

AI is fundamentally  
changing how HR work  
gets done

Traditional career  
ladders are collapsing

Skills are changing  
faster than job titles

Competition for  
high-impact HR roles  
is increasing

Workforce decisions  
are now  
business-critical

# How HR careers progress now:

## What's replacing the ladder?

- Progress is built through a portfolio of experiences
- Titles matter less than capability + evidence of impact

## What makes up a strong portfolio?

**Depth:** one area you can lead, own, and be trusted for

**Breadth:** enough range to collaborate and advise across HR

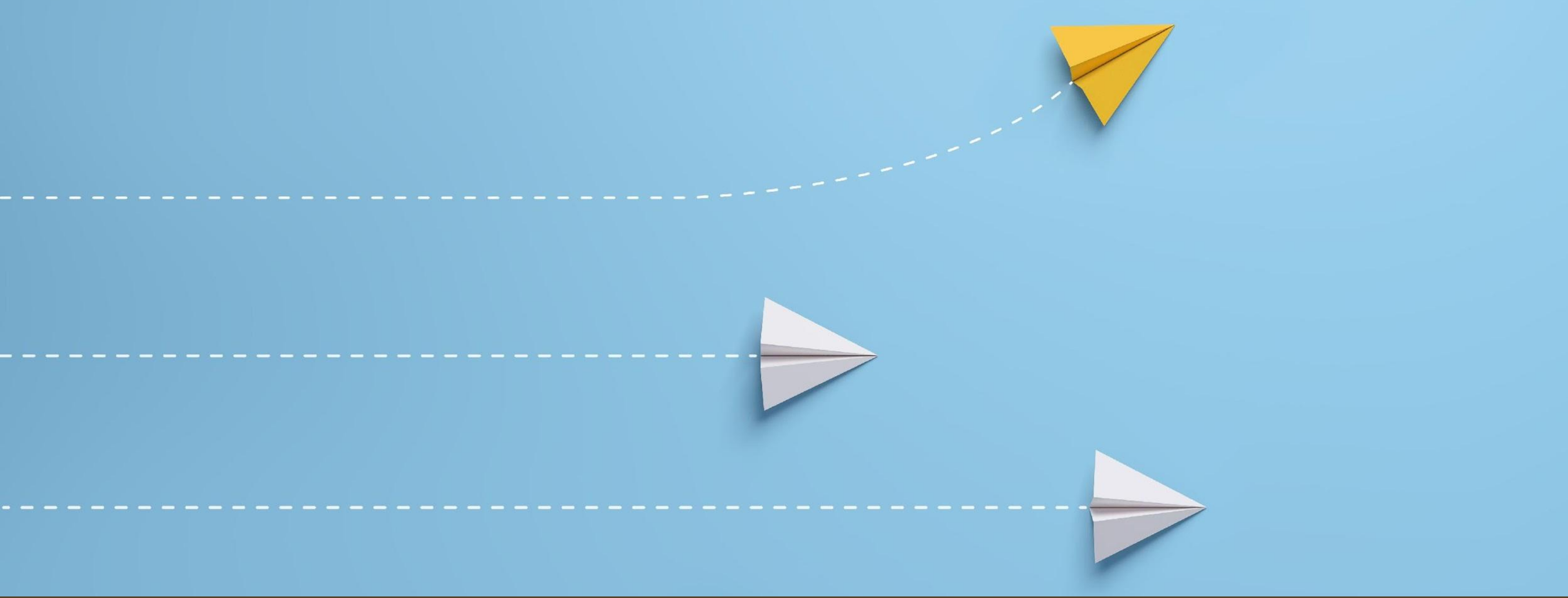
**Proof:** outcomes you can point to (projects, metrics, decisions influenced)

## What experience do I need next to build the capability I want?

*Tip: If it doesn't build depth, breadth or proof, it's probably just busyness*

# **What currently drives your career decisions the most?**

- **Growth and learning**
- **Influence and leadership**
- **Stability and security**
- **Variety and new experiences**
- **Alignment with values and purpose**



# Clarifying career direction

# Capture your current snapshot



- 01 Where do I feel most solid in how I operate as an HR professional?
- 02 Where does my foundation most need strengthening?
- 03 Which HR domain do I want to focus my depth on?
- 04 What do I want to be known for in that domain?
- 05 What HR or business priority makes this focus relevant right now?

# Example: People ops professional



- 01 Strengths: Strong execution and process improvement across HR operations
- 02 Breadth focus: Need to strengthen business acumen and strategic thinking
- 03 Depth focus: People operations
- 04 Want to be known for: Building scalable, efficient HR processes that reduce friction for employees and managers
- 05 Impact: Organisation focused on cost control and operational efficiency

# Key ingredients

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1

## A direction

What kind of HR professional am I moving towards becoming?

2

## A capability focus

What do I need to get better at next to support that direction?

3

## An impact anchor

Why does this matter now in my organisation or context?

# Your career aspiration statement

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*In the next **[timeframe]**, I want to move from **[current role]** towards **[direction]**, by building strength in **[breadth focus]** and depth in **[focus area]**, aligned to **[HR or business priority]**.*

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## Sense check:

1. Does this build capability, not just activity?
2. Does this align with my or the business reality?
3. Does this feel motivating right now?

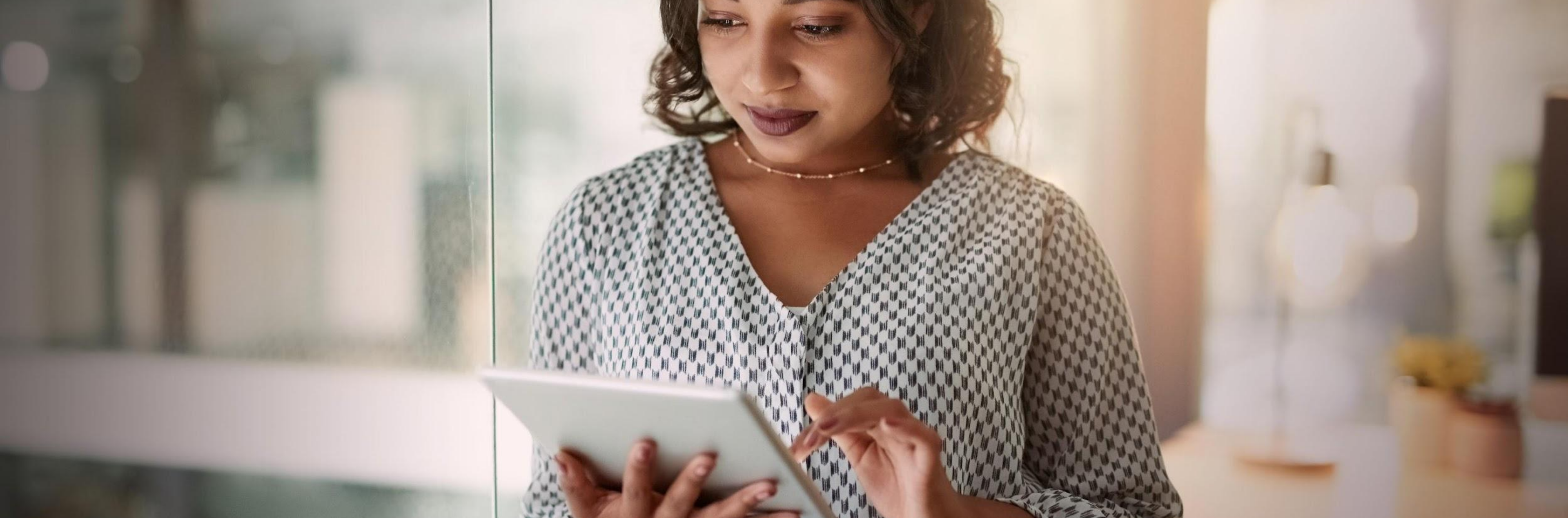
# What you have now

- A clear direction for your next move
- A capability focus (breadth + depth)
- An impact anchor tied to business reality

# How it helps you decide

Use this as a filter for:

- Development choices
- Projects and stretch opportunities
- Conversations with your manager
- Career tools and frameworks



# Choosing what to focus on

**Your aspiration gives  
you direction.**

**Now we choose and  
fine tune what to  
focus on:**

- Depth focus: what you'll build into strength next
- Breadth foundations: what will support that depth
- Blockers: what could stop you applying it
- Impact anchor: why this matters

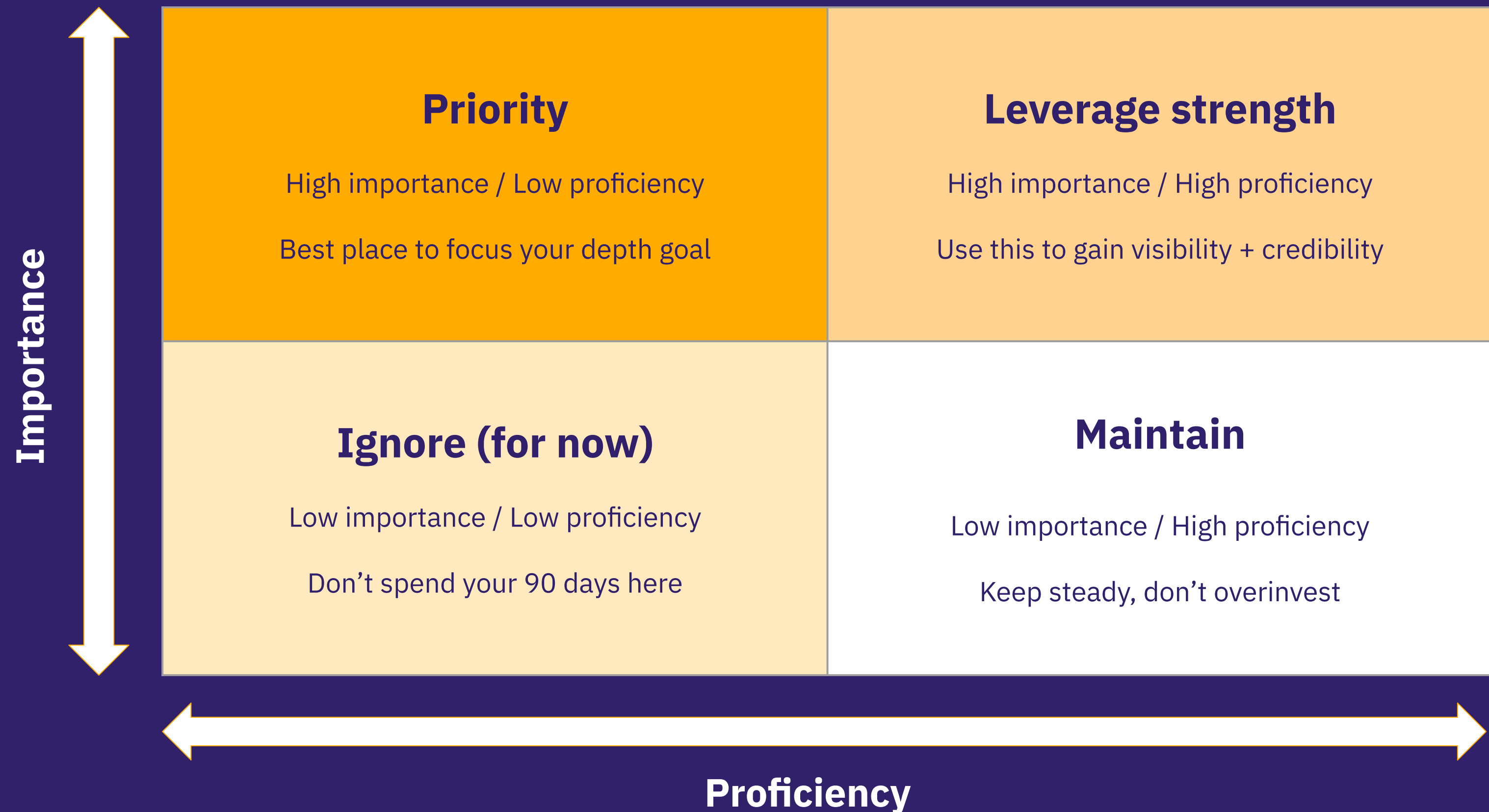
# Reality check

## Proficiency levels:

1. Basic – I’m learning, need guidance
2. Working – I can do routine tasks on my own
3. Competent – I can deliver end-to-end reliably
4. Proficient – I handle complexity and influence decisions
5. Mastery – I set standards and others come to me

| Depth capability              | Current (1–5) | Evidence (what proves it?)                                                 | Required (1–5) |
|-------------------------------|---------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|
| Stakeholder influence         | 3             | Led a difficult stakeholder meeting and secured agreement on a new process | 4              |
| People ops process design     | 2             | Mapped the onboarding workflow + identified 3 bottlenecks                  | 4              |
| Talent analytics storytelling | 2             | Built a simple turnover dashboard and shared insights with HR team         | 3              |

# Assessing depth



**Skill gap (learn)**

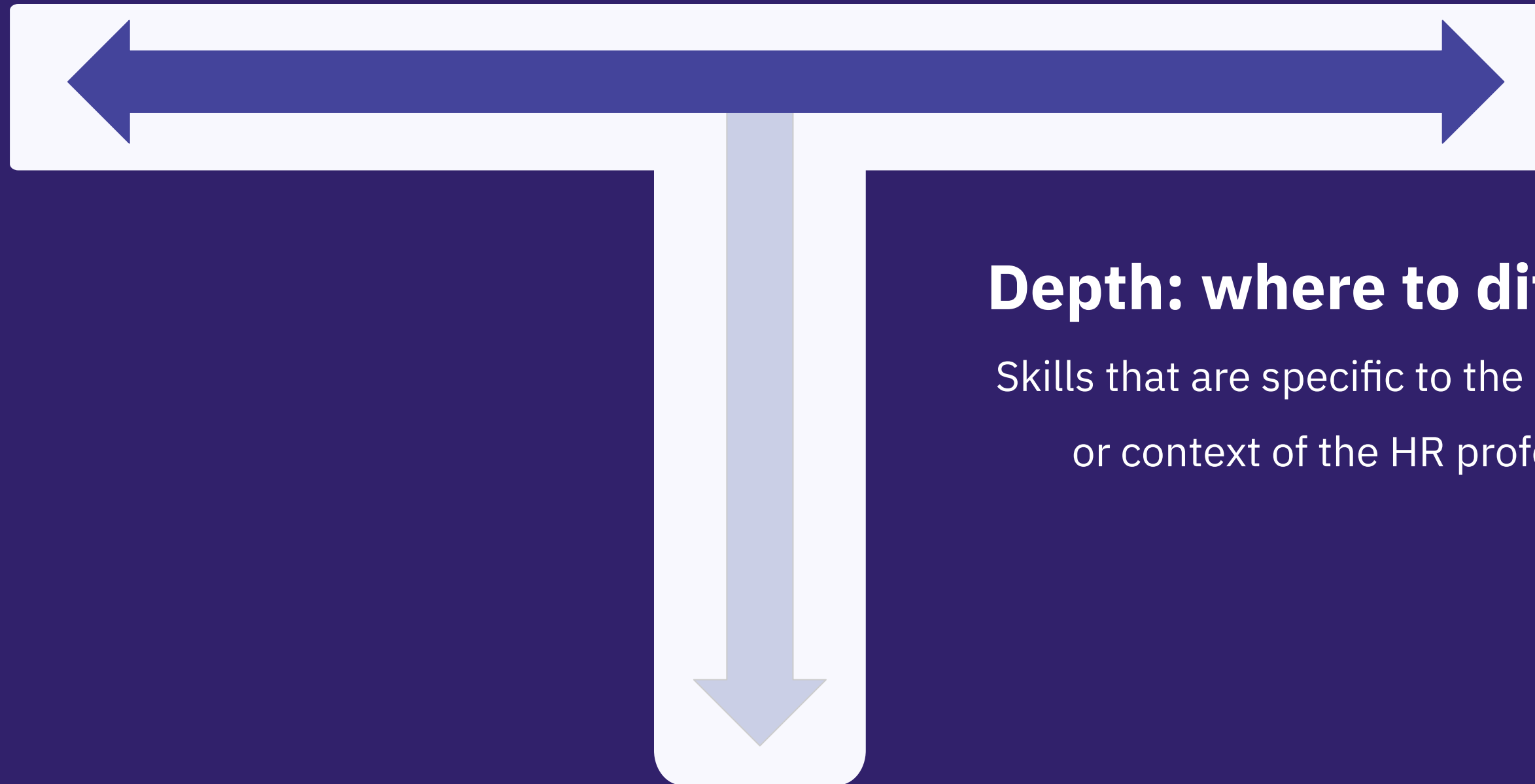
**Experience gap (do)**

**Confidence gap  
(practice + feedback)**

**Proof gap (document  
+ quantify)**

# **Breadth: what to strengthen across domains**

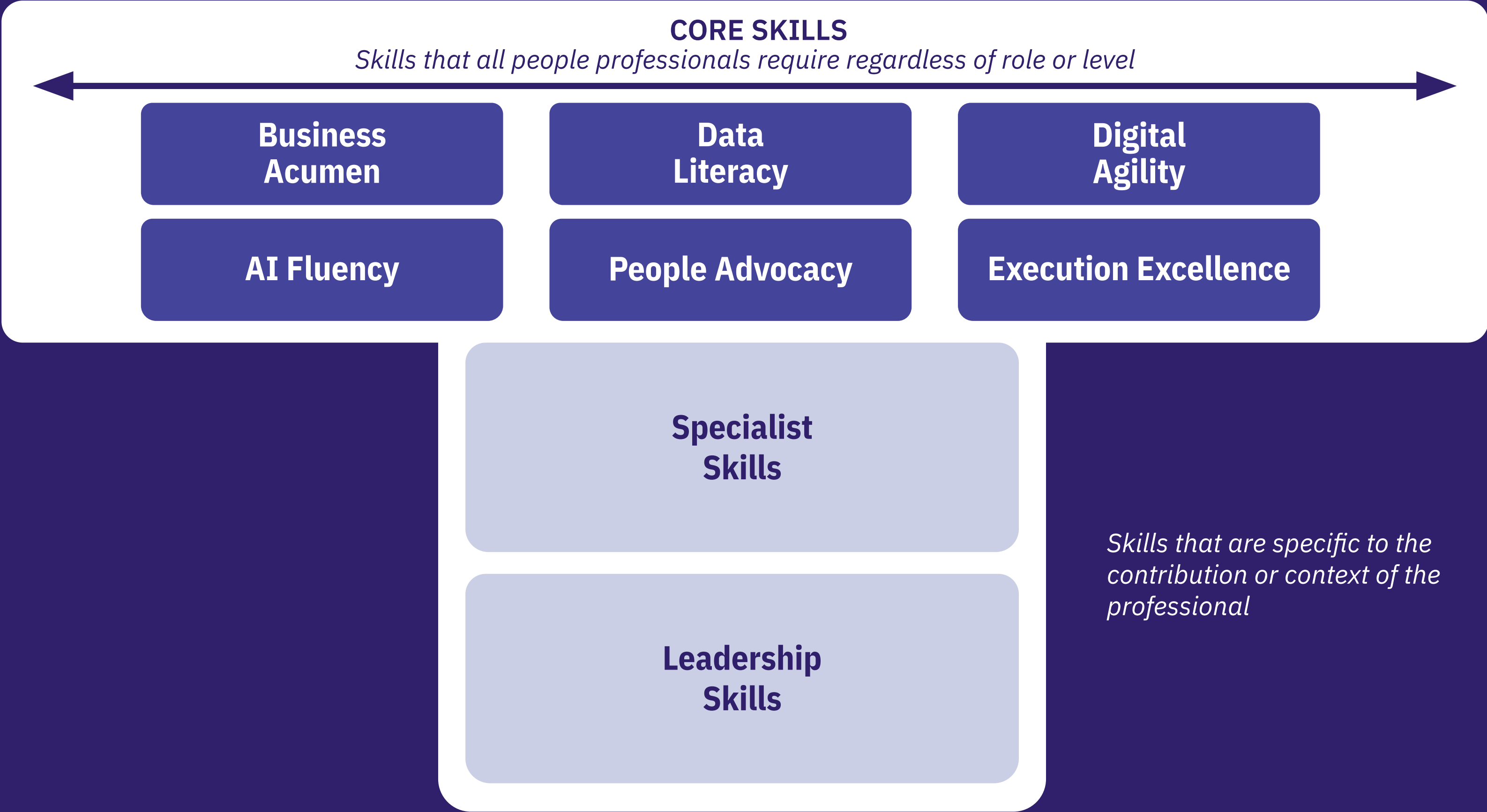
Skills that all HR professionals require regardless of role or level



## **Depth: where to differentiate**

Skills that are specific to the contribution  
or context of the HR professional

**Priority anchor** = what to align to (so it matters)



# Blocker check: what's could get in the way?

## Application + proof

### Questions:

- Where do I have expertise that I'm not able to demonstrate?
- What's missing to show progress: evidence, tools, or delivery?

## Access + visibility

### Questions:

- Who needs to see my work for my next move to be possible?
- Am I visible in the forums where decisions are made?

## Business + credibility

### Questions:

- Which part of the business do I not understand well enough to advise credibly?
- What do I need to understand to make my work land?

# Impact anchor: why this matters now

Your impact anchor links your development focus to a real priority in your organisation.

## It helps you:

- choose the right projects
- make your plan credible to others
- stay motivated because it matters now

# Pick one “anchor point”

Anchor your focus to one of these:

- a **business priority** (growth, cost, speed, productivity, customer impact)
- an **HR priority** (retention, engagement, performance, capability, culture)
- a **pain point people feel** (friction, delays, confusion, rework)
- a **metric leaders care about** (time-to-fill, cycle time, attrition, quality)



# Building your development plan

# From clarity to action

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## 01 *Build*

Depth goal: capability + output + outcome

*“In the next 90 days, I will develop **[capability]** so I can deliver **[real work output]**, resulting in **[measurable outcome]**.”*

## 02 *Enable*

Breadth goal: blocker removal + what it enables

*“Remove **[blocker]** by **[2 actions]**, enabling **[access/visibility/proof/execution]** so I can deliver my depth goal.”*

**Real work vehicle (where I'll apply this):**  
**Project / problem / responsibility**

# Your 90-day plan

## 30 days: Start + first proof

### What will exist?

- baseline / draft / map / first conversation / first output

### Proof:

- a doc, metric snapshot, pilot plan, stakeholder agreement

## 60 days: Build + feedback

### What will have improved?

- test it, iterate, deepen scope, get input

### Proof:

- feedback, version 2, adoption signal, decision made

## 90 days: Deliver + impact

### What will be delivered?

- final output + measurable improvement

### Proof:

- metric moved, problem reduced, leadership sign-off, visible result

# Integration check:

**Does my depth goal  
produce a real  
output?**

**Does my breadth  
enabler remove a real  
blocker?**

**Is my impact anchor  
tied to something  
that matters now?**

**Will I have proof  
within 30 days?**



# Questions?