



DESIGNING A **FUTURE-READY** JOB ARCHITECTURE FRAMEWORK ↗

A modern job architecture tackles one of your biggest transformation challenges—skills gaps. Get expert tips on how to optimize your framework today.





CONTENT



INTRODUCTION

The world of work is always changing. Classic roles are redefined. Critical skills needs evolve. And employee expectations shift.

Right now, one of the biggest impacts on the workforce is the increased usage of AI and related new technologies. In fact, **60% of employers expect technology to transform their businesses by 2030**—with 86% of those preparing for AI's impact.

That means organizations need to rapidly rethink how they structure and organize their workforce.

A job architecture framework provides the foundation for managing this transformation. But many CHROs are still working with outdated frameworks.

This guide explains how to adapt your job architecture for today's challenges and to prepare for tomorrow's opportunities. You'll get practical steps and actionable strategies to build a framework that supports better talent decisions and organizational agility.



60% of employers expect **technology to transform their businesses** by 2030

WHY YOUR JOB ARCHITECTURE MATTERS

Picture this—a CHRO dives into her company’s talent data and spots a troubling trend in the finance division. Financial analysts across departments have wildly different titles, pay, and career paths—even though they do almost identical work.

A “senior financial analyst” in corporate finance makes 30% more than a “business analytics lead” in operations, despite both tackling the same complex financial modeling and forecasting.

And a “finance planning specialist” in a regional office wonders why their path to senior management takes two more promotion cycles than their peers in other departments. After all, they’re using the same datasets and tools.

This isn’t just a departmental issue. It’s a sign of an outdated or missing job architecture framework.

With digital transformation reshaping work, the need for clear, flexible work architecture is critical.

THE ORGANIZATIONAL VALUE OF JOB ARCHITECTURE

A job architecture does more than just organize roles and job titles. When designed well, it creates value throughout the company.

FOR ORGANIZATIONS

It provides a **clear structure** for making fair, consistent decisions about compensation and career progression while keeping talent aligned with business goals.

FOR MANAGERS

It offers **ready-to-use frameworks** for talent management and career development conversations. This eliminates the need to reinvent processes and helps managers make fair, objective decisions about their team members’ careers.

FOR EMPLOYEES

It delivers something increasingly vital in today’s workplace: **clarity**. Role ambiguity can lead to workplace burnout, so it’s crucial that employees have a clear understanding of their responsibilities and growth opportunities to improve engagement and satisfaction.

That’s why updating job architecture shouldn’t be just another task on the list for CHROs—it’s essential for creating an engaged and future-ready workforce.

HOW JOB ARCHITECTURE IS EVOLVING

As business needs and workforce expectations evolve for the AI age, organizations are shifting from rigid, traditional hierarchies to more flexible career architecture frameworks.

A modern job architecture organizes jobs around skills and competencies, allowing for greater agility.

It enables flexible career paths and supports continuous learning through upskilling and reskilling. Plus, it leverages technology and AI for dynamic workforce planning.

This organizational structure helps companies attract top talent by matching pay with skills and market needs.

Here are some examples of what a modern framework looks like in practice:



JOB FAMILIES

The focus has shifted to capabilities that transfer across the organization.



JOB LEVELS

Employees can advance vertically through leadership roles or grow horizontally by deepening their expertise.



CAREER PATHS

CHROs now prioritize flexible career journeys over traditional fixed trajectories, creating more opportunities for employee growth.



COMPETENCIES

Skills and competencies are now seen as dynamic assets—capabilities that can be developed and redeployed as business needs change.

TRADITIONAL VS. MODERN JOB ARCHITECTURE MODELS

	TRADITIONAL JOB ARCHITECTURE		MODERN JOB ARCHITECTURE
STRUCTURE	Fixed hierarchies with rigid levels	○	Flexible structures based on skills and competencies
CAREER PATHS	Preset vertical progression	○	Multiple paths allowing vertical and horizontal movement
SKILLS APPROACH	Tied to specific roles and departments	○	Transferable across functions
JOB DESCRIPTIONS	Static descriptions tied to specific responsibilities	○	Dynamic profiles focused on capabilities
COMPENSATION	Based on hierarchical levels	○	Aligned with skills and market value
WORKFORCE PLANNING	Focus on replacing roles	○	Driven by future skills needs



THE BENEFITS OF EVOLVING YOUR JOB ARCHITECTURE

Organizations that don't adapt their job architecture risk falling behind in attracting and retaining talent, as well as meeting business goals.

Beyond just organizing roles and titles, an updated job architecture delivers strategic advantages that directly impact business performance.

Here are four key benefits:

1

BUILD A FUTURE-READY WORKFORCE

A modern job architecture helps organizations address one of their biggest transformation challenges—skills gaps.

With **63%** of employers identifying skills gaps as a major barrier through 2030, and **39%** of current skills becoming outdated in the next five years, companies need systematic ways to evolve their workforce capabilities.

A skills-based job architecture enables organizations to:

IDENTIFY EMERGING
SKILL REQUIREMENTS
ACROSS ROLES

TRACK WHICH ROLES
NEED RESKILLING OR
UPSKILLING

PLAN WORKFORCE
TRANSITIONS AS
ROLES EVOLVE

ALIGN TRAINING
INVESTMENTS WITH
FUTURE NEEDS

2

ENSURE PAY EQUITY AND TRANSPARENCY

With only **12%** of companies having implemented [pay transparency strategies](#), many organizations struggle to address compensation equity effectively.

An updated job architecture provides the essential foundation for transparent, consistent pay practices.

When roles are clearly defined and classified, companies can spot and fix pay gaps, making fair compensation decisions based on skills and responsibilities.

Organizations that embrace transparency have seen a **20%** reduction in pay disparities, [Korn Ferry research reveals](#).

An updated job architecture helps:

CREATE TRANSPARENT SALARY BANDS ALIGNED WITH SKILLS AND MARKET DATA

COMPARE AND STANDARDIZE COMPENSATION DECISIONS ACROSS DEPARTMENTS

IDENTIFY PAY GAPS THROUGH SYSTEMATIC ROLE ANALYSIS

BUILD OBJECTIVE CRITERIA FOR COMPENSATION

3

IMPROVE EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCE

Two-thirds of workers told Korn Ferry that they would stay in a job they hated if they saw clear opportunities to [learn and grow](#).

An updated job architecture improves the employee experience by providing this crucial clarity in career progression and reducing role ambiguity.

When employees understand their roles and see clear growth opportunities, they're more likely to stay engaged and committed to their work.

A modern job architecture helps employees:

UNDERSTAND THEIR CURRENT ROLE EXPECTATIONS CLEARLY

SEE POTENTIAL CAREER PATHS ACROSS THE ORGANIZATION

IDENTIFY SKILLS NEEDED FOR CAREER GROWTH

MAKE INFORMED DECISIONS ABOUT THEIR TALENT DEVELOPMENT

4

DEVELOPS INTERNAL TALENT MOBILITY

Organizations with active internal mobility programs see **41%** higher retention rates, LinkedIn's [Global Talent Trends](#) report reveals.

An updated job architecture makes this mobility possible by defining roles through skills and capabilities rather than rigid titles.

"It helps companies find and move talent within the organization based on skills, instead of always hiring from outside," says Korn Ferry's Serena Jones. "This boosts upskilling and reskilling efforts, which is especially valuable since these employees already know your culture and ways of working."

An optimized framework supports mobility by:

**CREATING CLEAR
PATHWAYS BETWEEN
RELATED ROLES**

**IDENTIFYING
TRANSFERABLE SKILLS
ACROSS FUNCTIONS**

**ENABLING
QUICK RESPONSES
TO CHANGING
BUSINESS NEEDS**

**SUPPORTING
INTERNAL TALENT
MARKETPLACE
INITIATIVES**



6 STEPS TO OPTIMIZE YOUR JOB ARCHITECTURE FRAMEWORK

Modernizing your job architecture is a significant undertaking that requires careful planning and execution.

While every organization's journey will be unique, following these proven steps will help you create a framework that's both effective today and adaptable to meet your future workforce needs.



STEP 1 ASSESS YOUR CURRENT FRAMEWORK

Begin by thoroughly evaluating your existing job architecture. Understand what's working, what isn't, and where gaps exist. Look for signs that your current workforce structure needs updating.



TITLE AND PAY DISPARITIES

Different titles and compensation for similar roles across departments



CLASSIFICATION CONFLICTS

Frequent disagreements about where roles fit in the organization



EXTERNAL HIRING DEPENDENCY

Limited internal mobility resulting in overreliance on external senior hires



OUTDATED JOB DESCRIPTIONS

Job descriptions that don't reflect current work requirements



CAREER PATH CONFUSION

Inconsistent information about growth opportunities across the organization



FRAGMENTED DATA

Multiple versions of job information across HR systems

Document these challenges and their business impact. Are you losing talent due to unclear growth paths? Are hiring managers struggling to define new roles? Is pay inequity creating retention risks?

Understanding these connections helps build a clear case for change and ensures your optimization efforts address real organizational needs.



STEP 2

DEFINE YOUR OPTIMIZATION STRATEGY

When optimizing a job architecture framework, organizations can take two distinct approaches, says Korn Ferry's Benjamin Frost.

"One approach is you start from the top-down," notes Frost. "Like designing a house, you start with your architectural drawing." This means creating a matrix that maps:



WHAT FUNCTIONS EXIST IN YOUR ORGANIZATION

(finance, IT, HR), and how they break down (like separating tax specialists from auditors in finance)



HOW MANY LEVELS OF WORK YOU NEED

(like associates to partners in consulting)



HOW ROLES DIFFER WITHIN EACH FUNCTION

(how an HR business partner differs from a training or compensation partner, for example)

"The other approach is bottom-up," Frost explains, "where you start with your current roles and map them to established frameworks."

This approach leverages existing role profiles and taxonomies—like Korn Ferry's library of more than 10,000 [Success Profiles](#)—to bring structure and consistency to your current framework.

Your assessment findings from Step 1 will help determine which strategy fits better.

Organizations entering new markets or needing fundamental restructuring might benefit from the top-down approach, while those looking to improve existing structures might find the bottom-up approach more effective.

Many organizations, Frost notes, use a combination of both approaches.



STEP 3 ALIGN STAKEHOLDERS

A job architecture transformation affects everyone from HR to line managers to employees.

This makes stakeholder alignment crucial for success. “The big opportunity is for organizations to create a single source of truth about roles and their purpose,” explains Frost.

The absence of this shared understanding has significant consequences. “You could have four different people in the company reinventing the wheel,” Frost points out.

“A recruiter writes one job description. A manager creates different performance objectives. Reward teams make separate valuations. And learning specialists develop distinct skill requirements.

“This not only creates inefficiency but also leads to a poor employee experience,” Frost adds.

To address these challenges and ensure successful implementation, begin with clear actions for each stakeholder group.



**HELP HR TEAMS
UNDERSTAND HOW TO
USE THE FRAMEWORK
CONSISTENTLY**



**SHOW MANAGERS
HOW TO USE IT FOR
DEVELOPMENT
DISCUSSIONS**



**EXPLAIN TO
EMPLOYEES HOW IT
AFFECTS THEIR CAREER
OPPORTUNITIES**



**DEMONSTRATE
TO LEADERS HOW
IT SUPPORTS
BUSINESS GOALS**

Create training materials and guides that help stakeholders understand not just what’s changing, but why it matters to them and how it will make their work more effective.

STEP 4 CREATE AN IMPLEMENTATION ROAD MAP

You need a clear plan to bring your framework to life. A well-structured implementation road map helps you manage the complexity of this change.

Start by establishing your technology foundation. Your Human Capital Management (HCM) system needs to be ready to support the new framework. This means ensuring your systems can handle:



CONSISTENT JOB CLASSIFICATIONS ACROSS DEPARTMENTS



CLEAR RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN ROLES AND LEVELS



UPDATED COMPENSATION STRUCTURES



CAREER PATH VISUALIZATION

Finally, your implementation plan should clearly outline technical requirements and key deliverables while identifying potential risks and mitigation strategies.

CONNECTING YOUR JOB ARCHITECTURE TO YOUR HCM

Your job architecture needs the right technological foundation to succeed.

Whether you're using Workday, SuccessFactors, or any other leading HCM platforms, [Korn Ferry Architect](#) integrates seamlessly with your existing systems.

Why does this matter? It helps you define a common language and ensures that your job architecture data flows smoothly across your entire HR technology ecosystem.

For the next stage, break down the implementation into manageable phases:

- > Start with a pilot group to test and refine your approach
- > Define clear milestones for each phase
- > Set realistic timelines for rollout
- > Establish success indicators for each phase

STEP 5 EXECUTE THE PLAN

It's time to implement your framework.
As you begin executing:



**HAVE MANAGERS TEST NEW
ROLE CLASSIFICATIONS
WITH THEIR TEAMS**



**GET HR TEAMS TO PRACTICE
USING THE NEW FRAMEWORK
FOR HIRING AND PROMOTIONS**



**HAVE COMPENSATION
TEAMS VALIDATE NEW
PAY STRUCTURES**



**ENGAGE EMPLOYEES
IN EXPLORING THEIR
POTENTIAL CAREER PATHS**

Move systematically through your planned phases, maintaining clear communication throughout. Document what works and what needs adjustment—from role classification challenges to feedback from managers and employees.



STEP 6 MEASURE SUCCESS

To achieve success in job architecture, measure and monitor your framework to make sure it continues to deliver value.

“Without a modern architecture that meets future workforce needs, you’re likely inflating your investment in talent by at least 2-5% or wrongly allocating it,” explains Korn Ferry’s Harm van Vijfeyken. This makes measuring impact crucial.

Key metrics to track include:



BUSINESS IMPACT

- › Time-to-hire for key positions
- › Retention rates
- › Pay equity across similar roles



PEOPLE IMPACT

- › Employee engagement scores
- › Internal mobility rates
- › Manager satisfaction with career development tools



PROCESS EFFICIENCY

- › Job architecture utilization across HR processes

BEYOND THESE METRICS, LOOK FOR QUALITATIVE INDICATORS IN YOUR PEOPLE’S EXPERIENCES.

- › Are employees finding it easier to understand their career options?
- › Are managers having better conversations about development?
- › Is HR spending less time resolving job classification issues?

THESE INDICATORS SHOW WHETHER YOUR FRAMEWORK IS TRULY SERVING ITS PURPOSE AS A FOUNDATION FOR TALENT DECISIONS.



ADAPT YOUR JOB ARCHITECTURE FOR THE FUTURE OF WORK—TODAY

Remember that your framework shouldn't be set in stone.

The most successful organizations treat their job architecture as a living system, regularly updating it to reflect new skills, emerging roles, and evolving business needs.

“This is not a one-time exercise. Expect that you will have to keep it updated, especially over the next few years as skills continue to change and emerge,” Vijfeyken adds.

Want help building or adapting your job architecture framework to meet future workforce needs?



Korn Ferry is a global organizational consulting firm. We work with our clients to design optimal organization structures, roles, and responsibilities. We help them hire the right people and advise them on how to reward and motivate their workforce while developing professionals as they navigate and advance their careers. Our 11,000 experts in more than 50 countries deliver on five core areas: Organization Strategy, Assessment & Succession, Talent Acquisition, Leadership & Professional Development, and Total Rewards.

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