

Roles and ranks as one system

Every role has a forest; every forest has ranks; every person holds skills at levels. Run across the whole organisation, this becomes a single system with answers HR and leadership usually have to improvise.

"Is this person ready for the next rank?" — a defensible answer. They hold the skills that define the rank at the required levels, or they don't. Promotion committees stop debating impressions and start checking a map both the person and their manager have been looking at all year. "Defensible" matters: the same evidence that convinces a committee protects the decision afterwards — to the person promoted, to those who weren't, to anyone auditing fairness across teams.

Roots as the promotion and hiring bar. What someone must already know to enter a forest is *derived* from the skills' own prerequisites, not guessed by whoever wrote the job description. The same derived bar serves both doors: hiring from outside and moving people across roles inside.

One organisation-wide view of capability. With shared skill definitions and a common level scale (chapter 6), forests aggregate. Leadership can see where the org is thin, where single points of failure span *teams* — the skill that three departments each assume some other department owns — and who across the whole company is near their next rank.

Sideways visibility. Where forests overlap, the map shows where people can move laterally and what they'd need to pick up — turning internal mobility from a lucky accident into something you can actually plan.

The compounding effect is the point: each team's honest map is useful; all the maps together, speaking one vocabulary, are an organisational capability the org never had before — the ability to *see itself*.



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