Climbing Mount Skillamanjaro:
# Cornerstone's vision for the age of agentic AI

Analyst day event briefing | May 2025

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Cornerstone OnDemand has long been a key player in the Learning & Development tech landscape. Following a series of strategic acquisitions this year—namely SkyHive for skills and Edcast for learning experience (LXP)—the company is eager to shed its old identity and emerge as a flexible end-to-end platform to manage all things talent and development.

At their recent analyst day, Cornerstone outlined plans to leverage their data—including over 1 billion anonymized profiles—to create smarter, more modern talent experiences. However, the true measure of success will be whether their clients are ready for this change. How can Cornerstone build a bridge to help them advance to this new state of learning and talent development?

Learn more
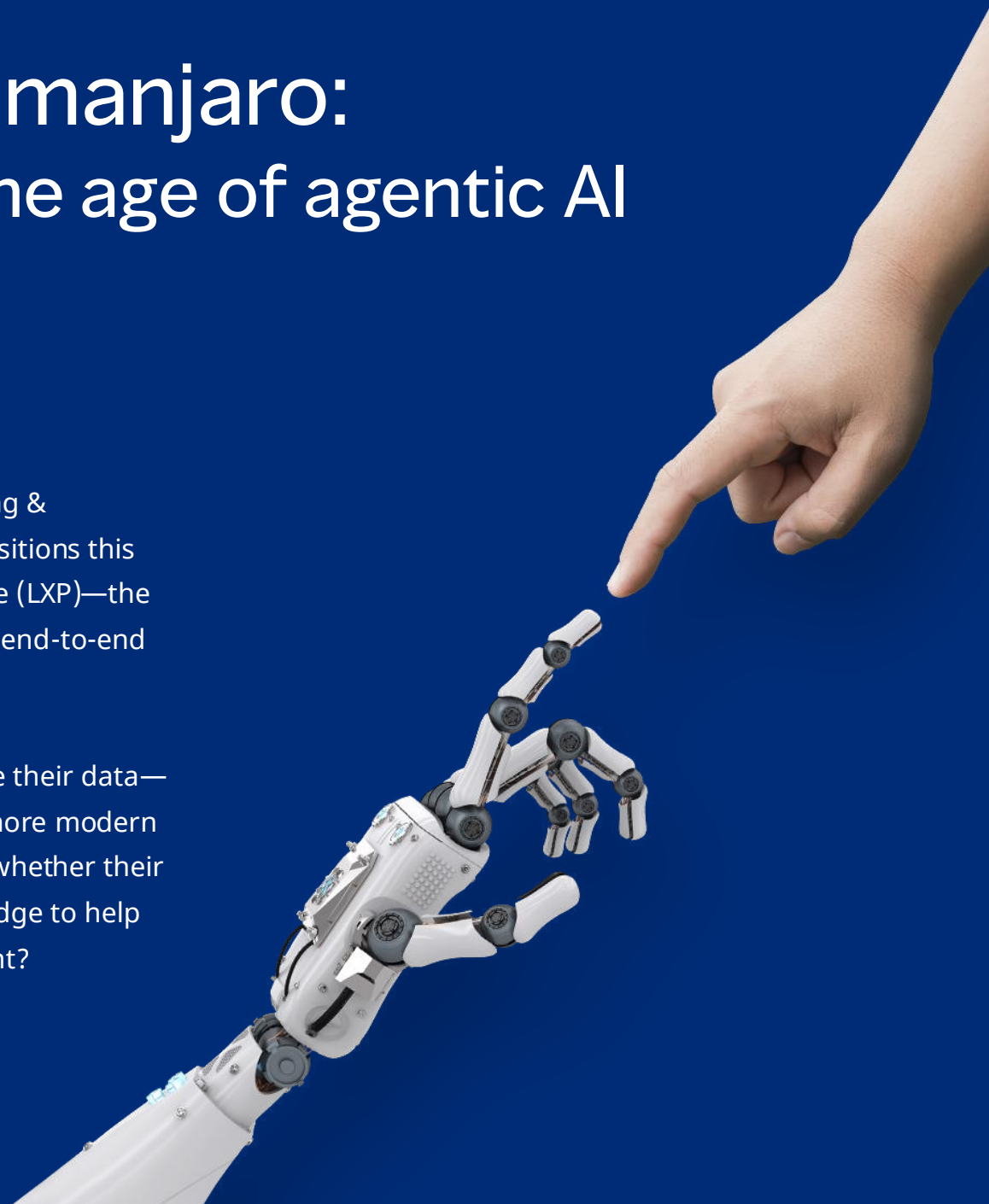
Introduction

We're in the midst of a significant shift in the way work is designed and delivered. The emergence of **agentic AI**—AI agents that act autonomously without direct human instruction—is no longer theoretical; it's here. These agents are changing how work gets done across industries and fundamentally altering our approach to organizational design, headcount planning, and workforce development. They prompt critical questions: What roles still need humans? What work can AI agents do better or faster? What new roles will emerge to manage or collaborate with AI?

Some leaders are already taking bold steps. For example, Shopify's CEO has stated that no new roles will be approved until a manager can prove that AI can't do the job, signaling a profound rethinking of hiring and workforce planning. Against this backdrop, the Cornerstone OnDemand Analyst Day showcased a decisive evolution for learning company, transitioning from an LMS provider to a platform player with significant advancements in skills, AI, experience, and workforce planning.

But perhaps most notably, **Cornerstone is one of the first vendors addressing a crucial but overlooked question: How will AI agents themselves learn?**

Training the Trainers: A unique Agentic AI partnership

The standout announcement of the event was Cornerstone's new partnership with Salesforce Agentforce. As AI agents become embedded in workflows—handling customer queries, making recommendations, and taking on repetitive knowledge work—organizations need to ensure these agents are effective, compliant, and up-to-date.

Cornerstone is stepping into this gap with a training framework for AI agents that mirrors how we train people:

- **Human-to-agent** training, where people can directly train agents in real-world context;

- **Agent-to-agent** training, enabling AI systems to transfer knowledge or patterns; and

- **Agent-to-human** training, where agents can help onboard and support people.

While many vendors are focused on what agents can do, Cornerstone is also thinking about how agents will learn, evolve, and remain aligned with organizational goals. It's a future-facing answer to a pressing challenge: **if AI agents are going to be part of our org charts and workforce models (and they are), they'll need development pathways, too**.

Learning when and where you need it

Another key announcement came in the form of a partnership with Microsoft, embedding Cornerstone into Microsoft CoPilot. This brings learning into the apps and workflows people already use—whether it's directly in CoPilot or inside other Microsoft apps, like Word—without requiring users to switch platforms or remember login details.

This is a continuation of a broader trend—bringing learning into the flow of work. Embedding an enterprise learning platform directly into CoPilot puts Cornerstone in a position to drive performance enablement and just-in-time learning in a scalable way.

While this may technologically be a step in the right direction, it doesn't address the broader reasons employees fail to engage with upskilling and development efforts: a lack of time to develop, not understanding how such efforts help them (the worker), and unclear organizational priorities all hold workers back. To get the most from tech like what Cornerstone is offering, many organizations will first need to examine their cultural conditions.

The platform play: Cornerstone Galaxy and new solution bundles

Beyond partnerships, Cornerstone unveiled its broader platform strategy, centered around the **Cornerstone Galaxy** platform—designed to serve as the end-to-end infrastructure for learning and talent development.

To help customers better access and deploy capabilities across learning, skills, and talent, Cornerstone introduced three new solution bundles:

- *Cornerstone Learn*: Combines LMS and LXP capabilities with rich content and immersive learning modalities.
- *Cornerstone Elevate*: Focused on internal mobility, recruiting, performance, and the talent marketplace.
- *Cornerstone Transform*: Designed to deliver skills intelligence, workforce insights, and planning capabilities.

What's smart here is the bundling logic: customers on legacy platforms like Saba and SumTotal will be migrated into these new bundles, giving them access to tools they may not be using today—and creating a more consistent, value-driven platform experience.

Across their 7,000+ customers, migrating everyone to these new bundles is no small feat, but Chief Customer Officer, Toya Del Valle, is taking a thoughtful approach designed to meet each customer where they're at, purposely building a bridge from where they're at today to where they need to be with the help of Cornerstone tomorrow.

Scaling the Summit:
Mount Skillamanjaro
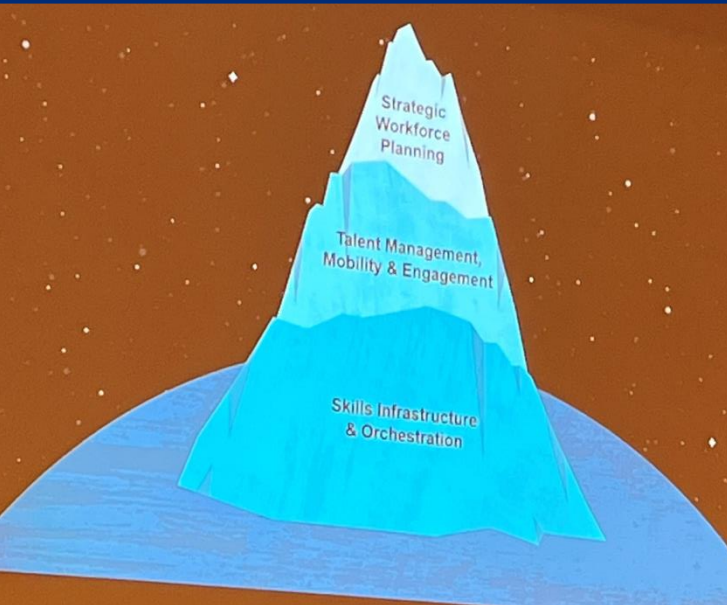
Cornerstone also introduced a conceptual framework called "Mount Skillamanjaro"—a strategic metaphor for the talent journey organizations must climb. At the base is skill infrastructure and orchestration, forming the foundation for all talent initiatives. In the middle lies talent management, mobility, and engagement. At the summit? Strategic workforce planning—which Cornerstone will launch in H2 2025.

The message is clear: it's not enough to have skills data or learning content in isolation. Organizations need an integrated system that can power everything from upskilling and development to predictive, scenario-based planning. That's the summit. And Cornerstone wants to be the path that gets you there.

With Cornerstone at the beginning of this workforce planning phase with customers, we're not likely to see evidence of its impact until at least early in 2026.

Cornerstone's system of agents

Rounding out the announcements was a look at Cornerstone's emerging ecosystem of AI agents, all designed to work together to enable smarter decision-making across the talent lifecycle:

- A Job Architecture Agent to help identify gaps or misalignments in job frameworks.

- An Insights Agent to surface predicted skill gaps and opportunities.

- A Learning Agent to recommend specific learning interventions based on business needs.

- An ATS Agent to assess open roles, recommend skill adjustments, and advise recruiters on where to find talent.

Taken together, these agents are more than isolated tools—they're meant to be an interconnected system driving toward strategic workforce planning.
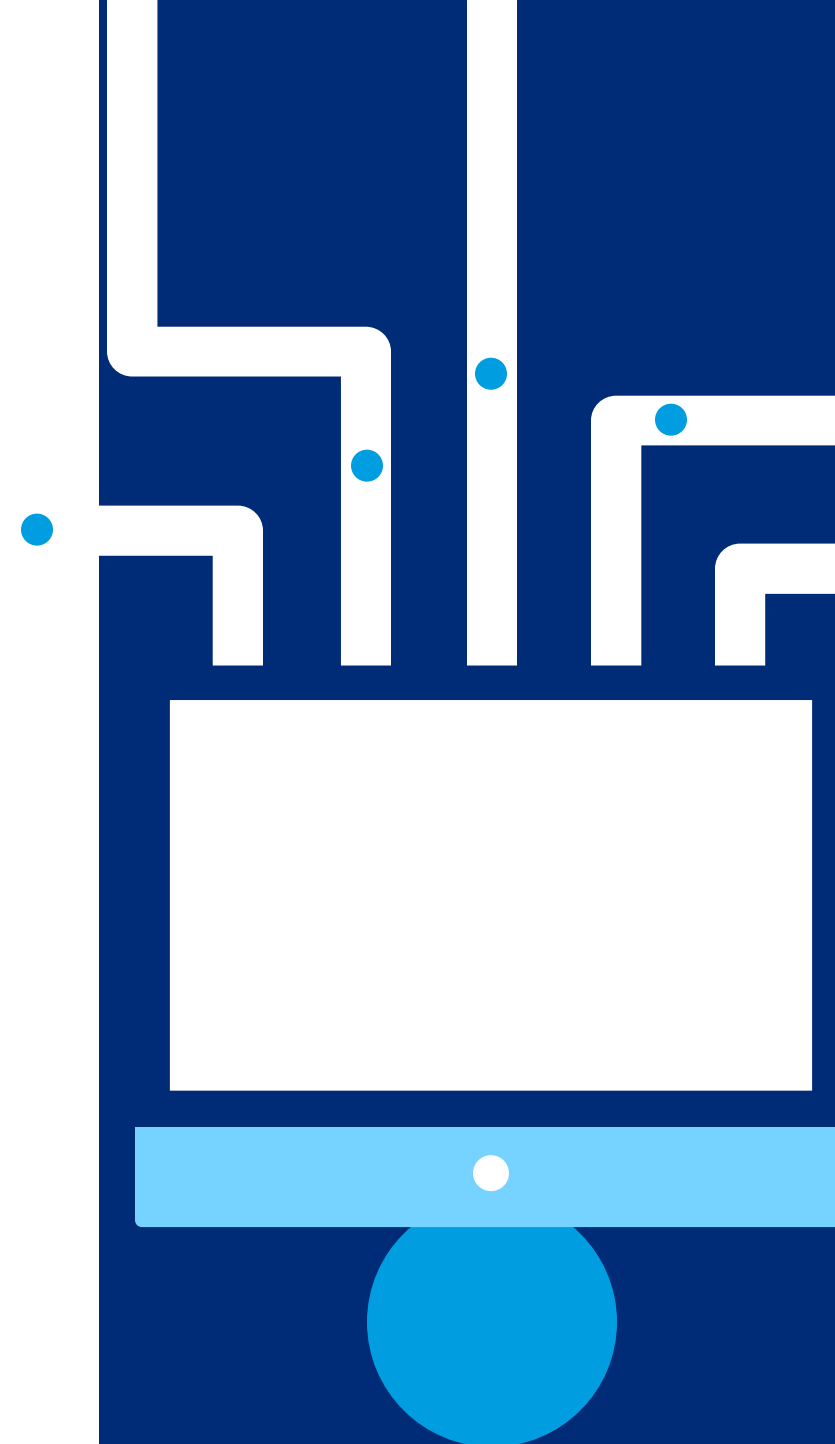
Our advice

To Cornerstone

We applaud your intentional shift—from trusted learning provider to modern talent platform that's open, extensible and AI-ready. The combination of smart partnerships, deep platform investments, and a unique take on agent development puts Cornerstone in a much stronger position than recent years. The acquisition of SkyHive offers a lot of promise as it underpins all of the workforce intelligence you're building toward, which promises serious value for your customers.

But as you modernize your platform and introduce powerful capabilities like AI agent development, it's essential to balance vision with empathy. Many of your customers are still entrenched in manual processes—especially in foundational areas like onboarding and performance. This isn't a sign of resistance; it's often a reflection of constrained resources, change fatigue, and uncertainty about what AI will mean for their people and operations.

To help your customers realize value from all you have on offer, you'll need to help them navigate this new terrain. Help customers identify real business problems, then help them understand how the AI works to address those (e.g., how does an agent make decisions, who is accountable if it gets something wrong, etc.) so they can make confident decisions around advancing their capabilities while keeping business impact squarely in view.

To Talent and Learning leaders

If you're already using Cornerstone, now is the time to explore the new solution packages—they may unlock added value with minimal additional investment. For organizations serious about becoming skills-powered, the Cornerstone Transform bundle is especially worth a look. It brings together AI-driven skills intelligence and learning in a more unified way, offering out-of-the-box skill insights that can serve as a foundation for strategic workforce planning.

For SkyHive customers or those focused primarily on skills, this integration with Cornerstone's broader ecosystem creates a stronger link between learning and work. While many talent marketplaces connect people to gigs or roles, they often fall short of connecting talent to the learning needed to grow. This combination closes that gap—bringing skills, learning, and opportunity into a cohesive, future-ready strategy.

But approach with intention. Cornerstone's stated commitment to being "non-jealous" and platform-flexible is promising—openness will be critical as you evolve your ecosystem. Still, keep an eye on how that openness is operationalized. Ensure the platform plays well with your existing systems and supports the broader architecture you're building—not just Cornerstone's vision of it.

Most importantly, don't mistake technology for strategy. Just because the tools are ready to meet you where you are doesn't mean they'll automatically move you forward. AI—especially in the form of agents—can feel abstract or even threatening if not introduced thoughtfully. Engage your teams in the journey. Involve them in shaping how AI shows up in their workflows. Don't just build the future for your workforce—build it with them. That's how you ensure adoption, trust, and long-term value.