



US skills report

Are employers helping their employees acquire the skills they need to be successful in their role?

The short answer? No.

The long answer? We surveyed 1,000 professionals from across the US to discover that employees are feeling left behind. COVID-19 destabilized the market and exacerbated a host of issues – women, diverse and marginalized groups left the workforce in droves and existing employees – overnight – had to adapt to continue working in a digital space, heightening concerns of automation taking away jobs.

COVID-19 fundamentally changed the market. A huge portion of talent are now rethinking their future – whether that's doing their job differently, shifting roles, looking at new jobs or reassessing their current roles and responsibilities – COVID-19 awoken skills that employees didn't have or had to use before.

If employers want to win the war on talent, they have to be:

- Hyper-focused on skills development
- Be cognizant of the skills they'll need to stay competitive
- Look at their employees and ensure they're meeting their objectives of future-proofing their roles, and in parallel, provide growth opportunities tied to their skills growth



Why employers need to invest in their people's future skills



of all US professionals surveyed indicated their desire to upskill in order to stay relevant in their roles.

However, less than half of respondents (43%) feel their current employer view the upskilling of their employees as a high priority or essential. Whether it's perception or reality, it's clear that employers need to reprioritize their employee skills development agenda, and ensure that employees of all levels of the organization have access to the skills needed to meet the workforce capability of the future:

- 21% cite that upskilling opportunities are only offered to the Manager level or above
- Less than half of US professionals (44%) cite that upskilling opportunities are offered to all employees



“Businesses are struggling with future-proofing their talent pipeline. It's becoming increasingly apparent how critical the skills gap is widening and – still – how far organisations are from recognising a viable solution can be found within by upskilling and training their own employees”

– Kristen Buckheit, Senior Operations Director, Resource Solutions

It's vital that organizations identify the skills required and the skills transferable within their employees and invest heavily in reskilling and upskilling strategies. There's no better way to meet future talent needs during a global skills shortage by investing in your people – especially when it is – as established above – top-of-mind for nearly all employees.

Employees are feeling left behind

As we navigate the new world of work, employers must recognize that employee priorities have drastically changed. Employers who are able to provide education and training and make it a cornerstone of their recruitment can expect a strengthened and engaged workforce, more accessibility, diversity and inclusion for those who may have faced barriers to higher education.

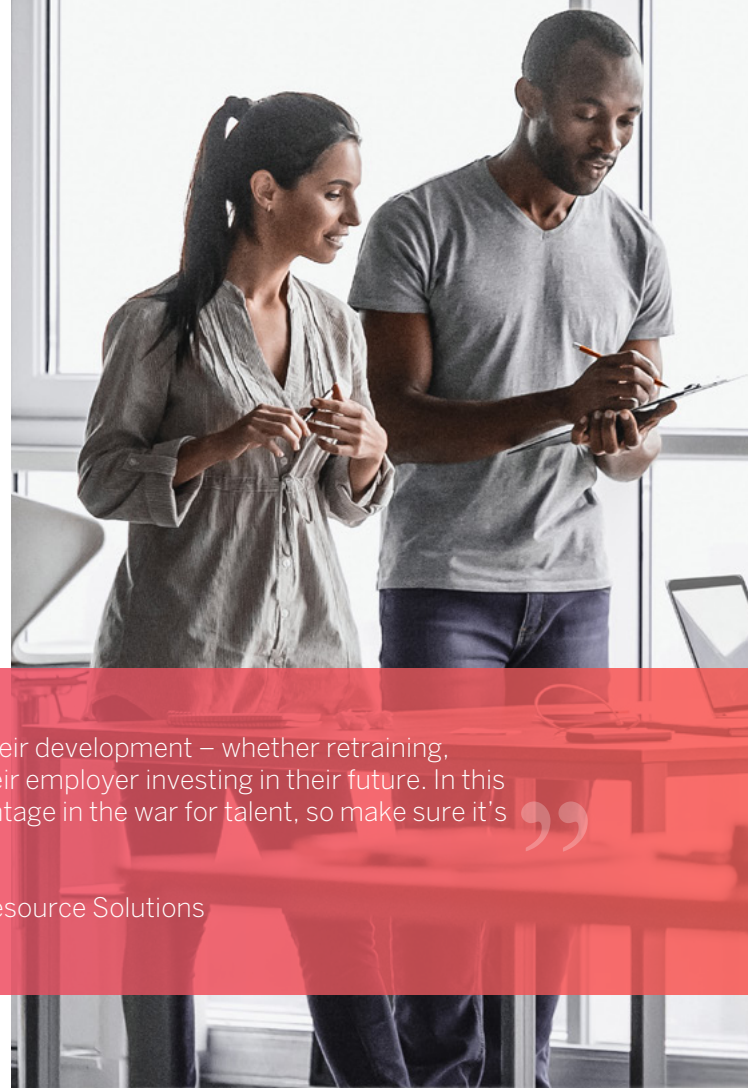
Has this changed over the past 12 months?

While respondents of our Annual Skills Survey have noted some progress from their employers, more than a third (39%) of surveyed professionals haven't seen any change in upskilling opportunities and a smaller segment (11%) have even noted a decrease in upskilling opportunities. It's clear that training and development opportunities must be made available to all employees in order to address the skills shortage and improve the bottom line – by increasing employee retention, morale, and attracting new talent who'll see an employer's willingness to invest in their employees.

50% of professionals feel their employers has increased the number of upskilling opportunities for employees, 39% cite no change and 11% have seen a decrease in upskilling opportunities offered by their employer

PwC investing in the digital fitness of their workforce

In 2019, PwC announced a \$3 billion investment in job training for all employees. The Digital Fitness app allows PwC employees to assess their digital knowledge and create customized learning plans. The Digital Lab allows employees to collaborate and share innovative solutions.



“When an employee sees a company investing in their development – whether retraining, upskilling or reskilling – it's a clear indicator that their employer investing in their future. In this market, every differentiating factor can be an advantage in the war for talent, so make sure it's communicated.”

- Sally Martin, Global Head of Talent Acquisition, Resource Solutions



43%

More than a third of respondents cited the COVID-19 pandemic changing the skills needed to perform their job.

Generational differences to upskilling

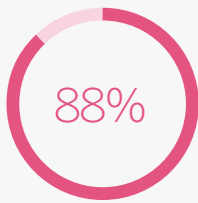
Over the past 12 months there has been a shift in how employees perceive the relevancy of their skills to their role, with nearly a half of respondents (45%) citing the COVID-19 pandemic changing the skills needed to perform their job.

But how does generation play a part in the skills development conversation?

Research uncovered a wide generational difference: 52% of Gen Z and 50% of Millennials feel the pandemic has changed the skills needed to perform their job, whilst only 34% of Gen X (and 31% of Baby Boomers feel this way.

	Yes	No
Gen Z (born between 1997 – 2015)	52%	39%
Millennials (born between 1981 – 1997)	49%	46%
Gen X (born between 1965 – 1980)	34%	56%
Baby Boomers (born between 1946 – 1964)	31%	64%

Ambitious Gen Z and Millennial professionals want to future-proof their careers



The generations most willing to upskill are Millennials, with 88% wanting to learn new skills, followed closely by Gen Z (79%)

More than a third of Gen Z and Millennials cite career progression as their main motivation for upskilling (33%). Millennials currently occupy the midweight-to-senior roles and are well-positioned to grow in their roles as they advance their careers, whilst Gen Z are just beginning to enter the early stages of their career.

What skills are important?

When asked what types of skills should take priority in an upskilling program, all respondents of every generation favored digital skills over all others (39%). As workplaces becoming more reliant on technology and automation, Baby Boomers and Gen X'ers may find it difficult to continue in their current roles – hence the desire to sharpen their digital skill sets.

On the other side, Gen Z (40%) cite personal skills, like resilience, and stress management as key skills they'd like to develop. Soft skills like empathy, emotional intelligence, and communication are key traits to foster to ease the transition of Gen Z into managerial roles that will be available to them in the near future.



Accenture's Connect Learning Platform

Accenture has invested nearly \$1 billion in 2021 on millions of hours of training to reskill its workforce. Central to the initiative is the company's Connected Learning Platform which is a blend of classroom and digital learning opportunities with content from internal and external subject matter experts.

“Bar none, creating an accessible, multi-generational learning environment will allow businesses to outpace their competitors. However, it's important to understand your employee groups – a one-size-fits-all approach won't provide the same outcomes as an upskilling programme that recognises the nuances between them”

Kirsty Adams, Chief People & Culture Officer, Resource Solutions

AT&T investing in future skills

Telecom giant AT&T found that only half of its employees had the STEM skills the company would require of its workers in the future. It's a billion-dollar, multi-year investment focusing on collaborations with online education platforms to offer employees personalised online learning opportunities in a career portal that helps employees identify new skills.

Employers need to break down barriers to upskill will win the war on talent

43% Lack of time outside of work is preventing people from learning new skills, with 43% of professionals citing this as the biggest challenge when learning new skills, despite wanting to do so.

Generationally, there are more barriers to upskilling for younger generations than older ones. Gen Z cite one of the biggest barriers to upskilling are lack of opportunity by their employers (39%), followed closely by Millennials (32%) then a big gap for Baby Boomers (12%).

Employers need to offer more accommodations to facilitate the uptake of upskilling programs or risk losing their employees to other companies that do. Consider providing flexible working arrangements, giving employees the time to attend classes and training during their work hours, rebalancing an employee's workload if they're enrolled in a training program, or build it into an employees' growth plan by making upskilling a part of an employees' milestone in order to be considered for a promotion.

“Employers must understand that people are generally busy. It's hard for anyone to find the motivation to take a class – be it online or in-person – especially after a long day's work. Offer flexible and convenient accommodations, and empower your managers to prioritise skills and training rather than waiting for the appraisal period.”

Kirsty Adams, Chief People & Culture Officer

Employees are worried about being replaced by automation

COVID-19 sped up the digital agenda, along with economic uncertainty, which drove greater automation concerns among employees. More than half of professionals surveyed indicated their concern of automation replacing all or parts of their current job.

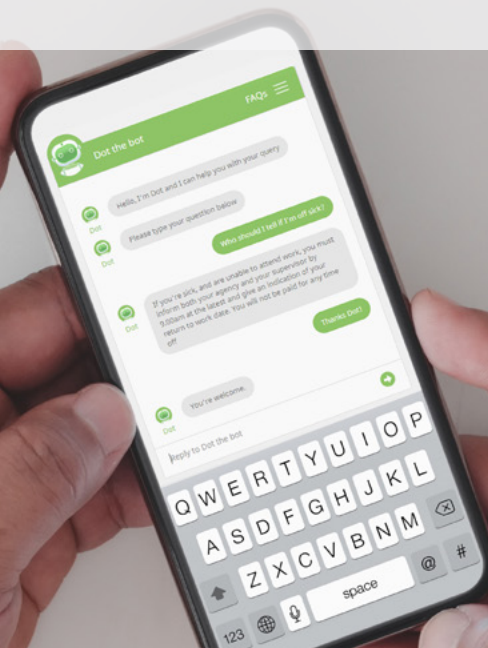
Concerns about automation seem to change with industry. The industry least concerned about automation is consulting/professional (57%) while the industry most concerned about automation is technology (75%).

To quell concerns amongst employees, businesses should be publicizing their automation technology plans and the place more emphasis on the resulting upskilling and retention efforts to train employees to manage automation. It's not one or the other – automation requires a counterbalance – and retraining can bring new opportunities for your existing staff.



Case study Evolving Careers – Training recruiters to use Chatbots, **Dot the Bot**

A Contractor Care team with one of our financial services clients was being inundated with HR-related questions that limited their time to concentrate on higher-value, revenue-generating tasks. As a solution, we developed and introduced a chatbot and AI virtual assistant, Dot to help provide prompt responses that'd address and automate time-consuming tasks, reduce costs and increase employee productivity. Automation – in this instance – was employed to support employees to be more productive and it allowed their HR-team to acquire new skills operating, training and developing an AI-assistant.



“Employers can alleviate their employees’ fears surrounding automation by providing support and upskilling around technologies that will improve their day-to-day roles, expand their skillset and ultimately demonstrate to their people their investment in future proofing their careers.”

Tom Lakin, Director of Innovation, Resource Solutions

Case study
Upskilling with
Amazon

Amazon launched its Upskilling 2025 initiative as part of its commitment to prepare workers for a more digitized workplace in the future. One of the many opportunities is the Mechatronics & Robotics Apprenticeship Program. Employees attend classes and receive on-the-job training in preparation for work as mechatronics & robotics technicians. This is another example of automation working in tandem with existing employees – it's not black and white – there'll always be a human needed to develop, work with, facilitate and monitor automated and/or AI functions.

What skills do employees want: hard vs. soft skills

With the looming sense of automation replacing jobs and the sudden influx of digital platforms and tools being introduced as a response to COVID-19 – the assumption is that employees would want to upskill and train their hard skills to stay relevant and competitive.

However, respondents still picked more soft skills over the hard skills when given the choice. When selecting from a list of over 40 skillsets professionals would like to develop in the future, the majority selected technology use as their priority, which was followed by management, critical thinking, software development then analytical thinking.

When asked what hard skills would be of interest to professionals, software development and information security skills topped the list. In a market where businesses need to make data-led decisions to remain competitive, it's no surprise that IT security, software, and digital hard skills remain top-of-mind for employees.

Soft skills are essential attributes and interpersonal skills that help gel a team together. Moreover, they're often key skills that those entering or are in managerial positions need to have in order to lead effectively, collaborate well and problem solve quickly.

Top 5 skills employees want

	Hard skills	Soft skills
1	Software Development	Technology use
2	Information Security	Management
3	Quality Control	Critical thinking
4	Business Development	Creativity
5	Project Management	Emotional Intelligence

Most wanted skills by industry



Technology/Telecommunications
Information Security



Hospitality/Retail
Critical Thinking



Transportation/Supply Chain
Business Development



Engineering/Utilities/Energy
Management



Construction/Real Estate
Critical Thinking



FMCG/Consumer Goods
Analytical Thinking



Health Care/Pharmaceutical
Critical Thinking



Manufacturing
Management



Consulting/Professional Services
Technology use



Media/Communications
Active Learning



Banking/Finance
Quality Control

Case study

Reskilling during a crisis

At the height of the COVID-19 crisis, one of our healthcare clients needed to recruit and onboard thousands of people to fill various administrative and medical positions in temporary field hospitals, vaccine distribution, customer service and more. To support the recruitment team assigned to the project Resource Solutions upskilled and redeployed a large team back-office staff to support the effort activating furloughed and laid-off employees to help fill 600,000 shifts and employ 17,500 healthcare professionals. The project was a resounding success – both supporting the fight against COVID-19 as well as marshalling internal resources and meet surge in business on short notice within a tight time frame.

“For companies finding it hard to recruit the skills needed to meet future business goals, start focusing on identifying cross-functional skill-sets, and start reviewing your skills gaps matrix at a more holistic level within your organisation.”

- Duncan Ward, Senior Operations Director, Resource Solutions

Contact us

Jason Bouchard

Sales Director, USA

jason.bouchard@resourcesolutions.com

941-241-852

Australia
Belgium
Brazil
Canada
Chile
Czech Republic
France
Germany
Hong Kong
India
Indonesia
Ireland
Japan
Luxembourg
Mainland China
Malaysia
Mexico
Netherlands
New Zealand
Philippines
Portugal
Singapore
South Africa
South Korea
Spain
Switzerland
Taiwan
Thailand
UAE
UK
USA
Vietnam