

**CLOSING THE GLOBAL SKILLS GAP:
PREPARING THE
WORKFORCE FOR NEW
SKILLS, GENERATIVE AI
LITERACY, AND MORE**






Introduction

In today's rapidly evolving and competitive business landscape, organizations are increasingly recognizing the pivotal role of skills training in cultivating a workforce that thrives amidst constant change. As technology advances and industries undergo transformative shifts, the importance of equipping employees with the necessary knowledge and competencies to navigate these challenges becomes more pronounced.

In order to better understand the current state of skills training, Visier conducted a global employee survey with over 3,000 respondents based in the US, Canada, UK, and Germany. This report delves into the multifaceted dimensions of skills training in the workplace and its profound impact on employee performance, satisfaction, productivity, and long-term success. By exploring various methodologies, benefits, and emerging trends, this study seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of why investing in skills training is not only essential but imperative for businesses aiming to stay ahead in the 21st-century economy.

40% of organizations were actually investing in skills training with their current workforce.

Skills might be one of the biggest challenges facing organizations today. One McKinsey survey¹ found that 87% of organizations recognized that they had a looming skills gap problem within the next one to five years; yet this realization isn't necessarily translating into action, as a similar PwC study found that only 40% of organizations² were actually investing in skills training with their current workforce. These contradictions are compounded by the findings in this employee survey which dives deeper into how employees are considering their career futures, skills development, and what priorities can—and should—be put in place when it comes to the adoption of generative AI in the workplace.



87% of organizations recognized that they had a looming skills gap problem



What employees really care about when it comes to skills

For employees, skills, and skills training, is overwhelmingly top of mind with 96% of all respondents agreeing that developing new skills in their workplace is important, and 65% strongly agreeing. To understand why skills are such an important factor for employees, we need only look at their attitude towards pay.

More than 87% of employees surveyed believe that their ability to earn more is directly related to their skills growth and development.

What employees can't seem to agree on is what skills are most important to develop. While 47% responded that technical skills were most important for their career development, less "quantifiable" skills also ranked high on the list; 39% said "soft skills" like communication or teamwork, 38% said leadership skills, and 35% said creative thinking skills. This reflects other recent studies, including LinkedIn's Most In-Demand Skills List³ which cites communication skills, management skills, and leadership skills as some of the most sought-after skills in today's job market.

What, if anything, do you think are the most important skills for your career growth?*

Technical skills (e.g. software proficiency, data analysis)	47.56%
Soft skills (e.g. communication, teamwork)	39.74%
Leadership skills (e.g. delegation, decision-making)	38.68%
Creative thinking skills (e.g. innovation, problem-solving)	35.48%
Emerging technology skills (AI, machine learning, etc)	11.95%
No particular skills	2.05%
Not sure	2.05%
Other	0.73%

*Respondents could choose up to two selections.





The risks of not taking skills training seriously

Employers who aren't taking skills development or training seriously, are opening themselves up to potential risks in their organization. Nearly half of all those surveyed (49%) reported they were feeling disengaged from their work due to the lack of skills development and skills training; this figure becomes even more pronounced in younger demographics, particularly Gen Z and millennials who are eagerly looking for opportunities to build their skillset and grow their career opportunities. This skills development gap can also lead to retention problems. A previous Visier report⁴ found more than a third of all employees were leaving behind their current employer in order to pursue better skills training opportunities elsewhere—skills development was the third most important reason for job switching, only trumped by pay opportunities and better work-life balance.

Employee expectations, place skills development and training squarely on the shoulders of the employer. 57% of respondents said they turn to employer-led skills development training as their source of growth so, understandably, if those opportunities do not exist, it creates a growing sense of resentment that their employer is not interested in helping them grow their career within the organization.



Trained by social media

We are starting to see a diversification of informal skills training in younger generations, particularly when it comes to social media. Respondents between the ages of 18-25 were far more likely to turn to sources like YouTube (31%), LinkedIn (12%), or even TikTok (22%) for skills training. This extended into the millennial generation as well, where YouTube (30%) and LinkedIn (17%) were prominent, with TikTok less so than their younger counterparts (17%).

In order to learn new workplace skills, which, if any, of the following resources do you turn to? (multiple selections allowed)

	Gen Z ages 18–25	Millennial ages 26–41	Gen X ages 42–57	Baby Boomer ages 58–76
Employer-led skills development	44.07%	60.34%	58.78%	53.90%
Formal education courses	40.32%	44.10%	37.97%	31.17%
Attend conferences/workshops/training programs	29.64%	38.10%	33.03%	30.52%
My own research (web, books, etc)	28.46%	37.23%	33.94%	30.52%
Friends/colleagues/mentors	34.19%	31.73%	25.88%	21.43%
YouTube	31.03%	30.23%	18.73%	14.29%
Moving to a new job role or company	28.85%	26.67%	19.90%	10.39%
LinkedIn learning course	12.25%	17.36%	12.61%	9.09%
TikTok	22.33%	17.55%	4.81%	1.95%
Family	11.26%	10.81%	7.02%	5.84%
I am not trying to learn new workplace skills	1.38%	1.56%	6.37%	10.39%
None of the above	1.58%	1.37%	2.21%	4.55%



The looming AI skills revolution

No conversation about skills in the workplace would be complete without discussing the impact of the rapid rise of generative AI. Recent advancements like ChatGPT have ignited both fears and optimism about how AI will affect the future of work, and what that means for the skills employees need to develop now and in the future.

One thing is certain, because of the incredible speed of change around AI, there is no clear picture of how work, jobs, and skills training will change. This is simultaneously a source of fear and excitement.

Half (51%) of all respondents said they were genuinely concerned that the skills they currently have could, or would, be replaced by AI. Likewise, 68% said it was important for them to start building the skillsets related to AI in order to further their career growth. Naturally, as with previous skills development training, employees are expecting their organizations to take on the responsibility of up-leveling their skills training.

Who's responsible for reskilling the workforce?

86% of employees said their employer should take at least some role in reskilling to ensure they aren't easily replaced by AI tools, with 63% saying it's entirely the employer's responsibility to do so.





Upper management and lower-level employees view AI differently

Interestingly, it seems that there is a significant split between the level of interest, and understanding, around the use cases generative AI will play in the workplace between executive leaders and their employees. Over 80% of business owners and C-suite executives have spent either a significant amount of time educating themselves, or have used generative AI in a professional manner. As you go down the organizational layers, these numbers begin to drop precipitously, with Senior Managers (69%), Middle Managers (43%), Intermediate (24%), and Entry Level (27%).

This is also reflected in how quickly employees believe AI will play a role in the workplace.

On average, business owners and C-suite leaders think there is a six-month window before AI plays a role; while the average employee expects to see at least eight months, if not longer.

How familiar are you with with generative AI tools?

	Business owner	C-suite	Sr. Management	Middle Management	Intermediate	Entry-level
I have spent a significant amount of time educating myself about these tools	56.00%	56.46%	40.34%	16.19%	7.20%	11.65%
I have experimented with them in a personal or professional manner	29.00%	23.99%	29.83%	27.44%	16.97%	15.86%
I have briefly played around with them, but not given it much thought	11.00%	10.33%	16.19%	20.09%	18.51%	16.83%
I have basic knowledge, but have never used them	2.00%	4.43%	6.25%	16.94%	15.68%	13.59%
I have heard of them, but don't know much about them	1.00%	1.85%	5.97%	13.49%	25.28%	21.04%
I've never heard of them	0.00%	1.48%	0.28%	3.75%	12.51%	14.56%
None of the above	1.00%	1.48%	1.14%	2.10%	3.86%	6.47%



17% of respondents believe AI will never play a role in their workplace, compared to just 2% of C-suite executives.

The executive-employee divide on AI and skills

This disparity in knowledge and understanding of generative AI between executive leaders and employees within an organization can be attributed to several factors. First, executive leaders typically have access to a broader range of resources, such as industry conferences, specialized training programs, and networking opportunities, which allows them to stay abreast of the latest advancements in AI technologies. Additionally, their strategic roles within the organization often necessitate a deeper understanding of emerging technologies and their potential implications for business operations. As a result, executive leaders tend to have an advantage around quickly understanding the application of generative AI to their business. However, it is crucial for organizations to understand that there is a significant knowledge gap, and bridge this gap through comprehensive training programs and knowledge-sharing initiatives, ensuring that employees at all levels can contribute effectively to the integration and responsible use of generative AI within the business.

Overall, employees reported an average of 1.75 hours saved each day.

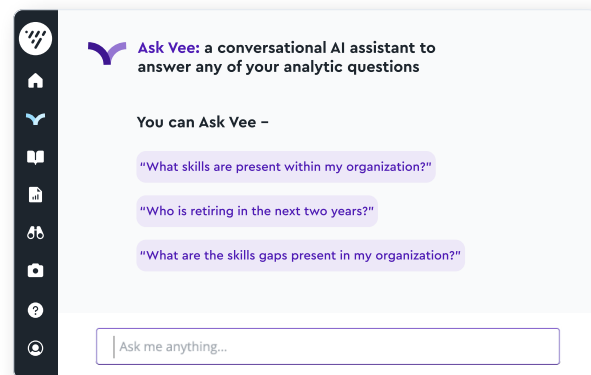
One untapped potential of AI integration into the workplace is the opportunity to increase productivity and time savings. For those employees who are currently using AI in a professional manner, a third said they are saving between thirty minutes to an hour of time each day, while a quarter reported saving between one to two hours a day. Overall, employees reported an average of 1.75 hours saved each day, resulting in over a full day's worth of work each week saved through the use of generative AI applications.

How much time, if any, do you think the generative AI tools save you on an average day?

Answered by those respondents who have "spent a significant amount of time educating themselves about these tools" or "have experimented with them in a personal or professional manner"

Less than 30 minutes	1.69%
30 minutes - 1 hour	32.07%
1-2 hours	26.51%
1-3 hours	20.31%
1-4 hours	12.89%
More than 4 hours	0.73%
They save me time less often than daily	2.90%
They don't save me any time at all	2.90%
Mean in hours (excluding "They save me time less often than daily")	1.74

Unsurprisingly, the time savings were heavily related to more routine, or administrative tasks, like data entry or research—tasks AI is naturally suited towards, but some employees were starting to find new use cases for generative AI in customer support, email drafting, project deliverables, and even during the creative process.



Vee, Visier's digital assistant, uses generative AI to answer questions about your workforce.



How to upskill your workforce in five key steps

Upskilling has immense benefits for both companies and employees. But the journey to upskilling takes a thoughtful approach. To know what to upskill, you need to know which skills you have and which are missing from your company⁵. Here's how to upskill your workforce in five key steps:

1. Map your organization's skills

Start by taking an inventory of what skills are present already in your organization. This will likely be a team effort between the HR departments, team leaders, and/or managers. Don't forget, your employees might possess skills they're not currently using in their jobs, so don't just look at their job description.

Next, look at the skills you currently need and the ones you'll need in the future. Checking your business goals for the next few years will be helpful here, as will a market analysis. Afterward, look at both sets of data and see what skills are missing from your company.

2. Determine the skills you will be losing

Of those skills that are currently present in your organization, determine which will be lost due to predictive attrition, retirement, planned leaves of absence, and automation.

3. Identify the skills you do not have but want and will need to develop

Which skills will you need to obtain either through buying (hiring), borrowing (secondment or lateral internal moves), or building (training)? Checking your business goals for the next few years will be helpful here, as will a market analysis. Afterward, look at both sets of data and see what skills are missing from your company.

4. Assess the skills gaps

- Compare #1 and #2 above—the skills you have vs. those you will lose, and put into place a succession plan to keep critical roles filled.
- Compare #1 and #3 above to inform a plan for reskilling and upskilling existing employees.

5. Match learning content to skills gaps

Map your learning content and match it with your skills gaps. Identify where you need additional learning content to map to unmatched skills gaps areas.

Skills are hard, **Visier's Skills Intelligence Engine** makes your transformation to a skills-based organization easy—and fast.



Learn more at visier.com/skills



Endnotes

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About Visier

Visier's purpose is to reveal the human truth about your workforce and contribute to a better future.

Visier was founded to focus on what matters to business people: answering the right questions, even the ones a person might not know to ask. Questions that shape business strategy, provide the impetus for taking action, and drive better business results.

Visier delivers fast, clear people insight by using all the available people data—regardless of source. With best practice expertise built in, decision-makers can confidently take action. Thanks to our amazing customers, Visier is the market leader in Workforce Analytics with more than 25,000 customers in 75 countries around the world.

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