

Dependability, Communications Skills and Willingness to Learn Deemed Essential Soft Skills for Applicants

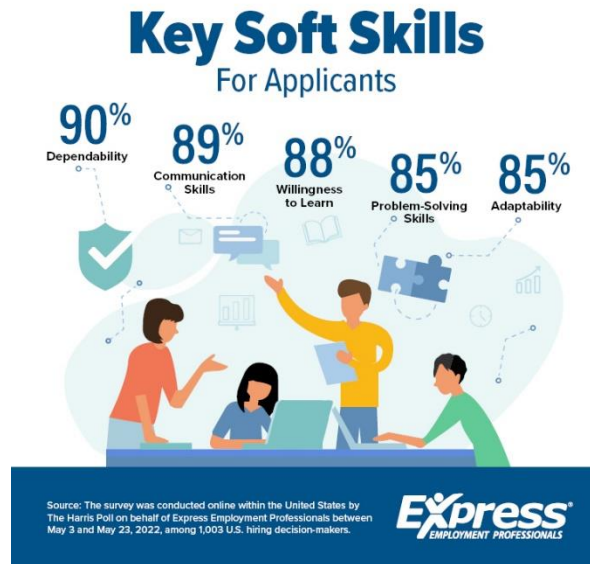
Majority of Businesses, However, Prefer to Reskill Current Employees

Latest Results from The Harris Poll

OKLAHOMA CITY, Nov. 16, 2022—Dependability (90%), communications skills (89%) and a willingness to learn (88%) are among the top soft skills hiring managers deem absolutely essential or very important in job applicants.

This is according to a survey from The Harris Poll commissioned by Express Employment Professionals.

Other important skills include problem-solving skills (85%), adaptability (85%), critical thinking (84%) and/or initiative (84%). More than 7 in 10 feel fitting with the company culture (79%), creativity (72%) and/or leadership skills (71%) are also of high importance to them.



However, instead of bringing on new hires, reskilling current employees has been continuing to entice U.S. hiring decision-makers since 2021. Nearly 4 in 5 (77%) would prefer to train their current employees for new roles before venturing outside the organization for employees—75% in the second half of 2021 and 72% in the first half of 2021.

Offering Training Opportunities

A hard work ethic, proper communication skills, teamwork, problem-solving, commitment and flexibility are soft skills that Express franchise owners Nancy Reed in Texas and Beth Cary in Virginia say are the most important soft skills in today's workers, but also the ones most lacking.

"Skills training and continuing education are incredibly important, but it's hard to say it's the responsibility of an employer to provide such opportunities," Cary said. "While many large organizations already provide this for their employees, it could be a hefty burden for small- to mid-size businesses that do not have the resources to provide it."

Reed believes it will take all employers to train the workforce on soft skills required for successful operations.

"If companies invest in more training, this will result in having the employees we need with the skills we need," she said. "It will improve retention, work environments and increase profitability. If the current lack of professional development continues, the fallout will be high turnover, poor company culture and increased frustration with the available workforce."

Propriety training programs or uniform offerings from third parties would, however, allow for consistency of knowledge for every employee, Cary says.

"Everyone would be given the same information and operate from the same playbook," she

added. “Despite the cost, a pitfall of not providing on-the-job training would be a workforce that is operating based on each individual’s frame of reference, rather than by corporate standards.”

Reskilling Current Employees

The desire to retrain current employees for new roles versus recruiting outside the company can be more efficient and prudent in the tight labor market because employers generally know the strengths of opportunities of their staff, according to Reed.

“Training your current workforce on the soft skills gap will make them more loyal and create a better team and work environment,” she said. “You know the gaps in your current workforce and bringing in new employees may result in new gaps and new challenges that will affect your ability to grow and profitability.”

Current employees who already possess institutional knowledge and are successful in their positions have an advantage over potential new hires, Cary said.

“Recruiting and training a new employee is considerably more costly, timewise and financially, especially when there are no guarantees they will be a fit,” she added.

Some positions, though, will be easier to transition with training than others regarding soft versus hard skills.

“Hard skills are difficult to teach if an incumbent employee cannot perform them,” Reed said. “Like an accountant; you may not be able to teach them the technical skills required to do the job. Mistakes in this field could be very costly for the business.”

While the structure of work may have changed drastically over the past few years, the makeup of quality employees is still paramount, Express Employment International CEO Bill Stoller said.

“Employees should take pride in their work and the soft skills expected of them create a more collaborative work environment for all and can translate into other areas of life,” he added. “No matter the company structure, dependability, communications skills and willingness to learn are timeless attributes.”

Survey Methodology

The survey was conducted online within the United States by The Harris Poll on behalf of Express Employment Professionals between May 3 and May 23, 2022, among 1,003 U.S. hiring decision-makers (defined as adults ages 18+ in the U.S. who are employed full-time or self-employed, work at companies with more than one employee, and have full/significant involvement in hiring decisions at their company). Data were weighted where necessary by company size to bring them into line with their actual proportions in the population.

If you would like to arrange for an interview with Bill Stoller to discuss this topic, please contact Sheena Hollander, Director of Corporate Communications and PR, at (405) 717-5966.

About Bill Stoller

William H. "Bill" Stoller is chairman and chief executive officer of Express Employment International. Founded in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, the international staffing franchisor supports the Express Employment Professionals franchise and related brands. The Express franchise brand is an industry-leading, international staffing company with franchise locations in the U.S., Canada, South Africa, Australia, and New Zealand.

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