

New research highlights gaps in UK's workplace training provisions

3 years ago



Digits' research suggests that many UK employers have gaps in the types of workplace training that they are offering their staff

In its recent whitepaper report - [*Are we trained for work?*](#) - research by enterprise LMS provider Digits revealed that over a quarter (27%) of British workers may not have received enough training for their current roles, while a similar number (25%) called their most recent training a box-ticking exercise.

Further analysis of the findings, which were based on a poll of 1,001 employees, suggests that many employers have gaps in the types of workplace training that they are offering their staff. Or, perhaps more likely, many employees are not being offered (or are even aware of) the full stack of workplace training opportunities that may be available at their organisation.

Looking at the data by organisational role, Digits' researchers discovered that people occupying senior management positions - such as CEOs, directors and C-level executives - are the most likely to receive training relating to their own professional development, such as technical skills (offered to 49% of this group), digital skills (38%), communication (36%), upskilling (30%), and reskilling (18%).

Middle managers are most likely to have been offered training related to their position within an organisation, such as management (offered to 48% of this group), diversity and inclusion (34%), mentoring (32%), and compliance (30%).

Non-managerial staff - the biggest group of survey respondents - are the most likely to be required to complete mandatory training instigated by their employers, and where they may have little choice about the content (50% compared to 36% of senior managers and 37% of middle managers). They are also the

most likely to have been offered health and safety training (61% compared to 44% of senior managers and 50% of middle managers), although providing health and safety information and training is a legal requirement for all UK employers.

Conversely, non-managerial staff are among the least likely employees to be offered digital skills (27%) or reskilling (14%) – both of which could potentially help them acquire new skills and progress in their careers.

Rather surprisingly, onboarding or induction training for new starters – irrespective of their role – has reportedly only been offered to around a quarter of workers (25% of senior and middle managers and 23% of non-managerial staff). Similarly, training in soft skills – transferable skills that help individuals work and interact with others – such as teamwork, adaptability, flexibility, time management and problem-solving, are only available at around a third (29%) of all organisations.

In general, the results do show a clear connection between job roles and the availability of training. Managers, on average, have access to more different types of training than non-managerial staff. In Digits' survey, over a quarter of senior and middle managers say they have been offered 11 types of training by their employers (although not necessarily the same ones). The same proportion (25%) of non-managerial staff have only been offered nine types of training.

It's not just employers who influence the type of training that employees are likely to receive – the industry they work in has a big impact too. For example, people working in healthcare and social assistance are more likely to be offered soft skills training than those working in IT and software (offered to 33% and 25% of employees in those industries respectively). While people working in hospitality and food services are more likely to be offered digital skills than retail workers (32% compared to 22%).

The most likely type of training to be offered to all employees, regardless of their industry or profession, is health and safety (offered to 55% of respondents), followed by technical skills – skills relating directly to a person's job role (43%), then diversity and inclusion (30%).

The next most popular types of training vary by industry:

- For retail workers, it's team leadership training (39%)
- For health care and social assistance workers, it's communication training (46%)
- For people working in education, it's mentoring training (31%)
- For hospitality and foodservice workers, it's management training (41%)
- For people working in government and public administration, it's management training (42%)
- For IT and software workers, it's digital skills training (39%)
- For people working in finance and insurance, it's communication training (40%)
- For people working in manufacturing, it's team leadership training (34%)

Upskilling and reskilling employees – opening career development and job mobility opportunities to existing workers – is one of the best ways that employers can fill any skills gaps to help future-proof their organisation. It appears that many industries, however, aren't prioritising either yet.

People working in retail, government and public administration, and shipping and distribution are, statistically, the most likely to have access to upskilling training (offered to 38%, 37% and 36% of employees in those industries respectively). While workers in hospitality and food services, and

construction, are the most likely to have access to reskilling training (21% and 20% respectively).

Bradley Burgoyne, head of talent at Digits, says: “Enabling your employees to learn new skills and expand on their existing knowledge is critical for talent retention and business growth. Ongoing competition for high-quality candidates means it’s harder than ever to fill vacancies. So rather than competing for external talent, employers could be reskilling and redeploying existing employees to help fill any growing skills gaps in their organisation.

“Unfortunately, our research suggests that many employers are underinvesting in their staff and may not be providing enough – or the right types of – regular training to support them in their roles and career development.

“Lack of onboarding is a good example of this. Shockingly, only a quarter of organisations appear to offer an induction programme – something that we know is absolutely critical to creating a really positive employee experience, especially for new starters in a hybrid or remote working environment. We know that people who don’t have a positive onboarding experience are far more likely to leave their organisation. So, why waste the time, effort and money hiring good people, only to lose them because of a lack of focus on L&D?

“For me, the survey highlights a significant disconnect between what many employers think they may be offering and what employees think they are being offered. While it’s true that many employees may be missing out on vital training, it’s also possible that our survey respondents aren’t completely aware of what training programmes exist at their organisations. That’s a communication or awareness issue that HR and L&D teams need to address. As well as providing equal access to training, employers need to ensure that they communicate to their employees why they are being asked or invited to attend training. If people know what the benefits are to them – how it will help them on their future career path – then they are much less likely to view it negatively and as just a tick-box exercise.”

Bradley Burgoyne will be speaking at the [Learning Technologies](#) conference and exhibition at London ExCeL next month, on 4-5 May. He’ll be co-hosting a seminar with Digits’ LMS specialist Andrea Matkin, on the second day of the event (at 2pm in theatre 9), discussing further insights from Digits’ whitepaper – *Are we trained for work?*

The rest of the Digits team will also be available to meet on stand K40.

Copies of the report, which explores workplace training provisions from an employee and employer perspective and features insight from L&D experts into the trends and challenges shaping the world of learning, are available to download at <https://www.digits.co.uk/are-we-trained-for-work>.

[Digits LMS](#) (a CIPHR company) has been developing [award-winning learning management systems](#) and designing bespoke, accessible-anywhere [learning content for mid- and enterprise-size organisations](#) for over 25 years. Three million courses are completed via the Digits learning platform per year, with 5,500 logins per day.

For more information, please visit www.digits.co.uk.