



upGrad^{ENTERPRISE}

The Workforce Wishlist 2025

United States of America

October 2025

Foreword



Skills have become the **core operating system** of today's dynamic workplace, driving every meaningful outcome we see across industries. No longer a mere checkbox or addition to a résumé, they now determine **how organizations compete, evolve, and realize their boldest ambitions**.

In our latest study, **The Workforce Wishlist 2025: United States**, we illuminate the pivotal shifts leaders must undertake to stay ahead. The research unpacks evolving talent expectations and reveals where investment truly moves the needle—whether in **budget allocation, aligning learning to pay and promotion, or cultivating the capabilities** that underpin **sustainable growth and resilience**. What emerges is clear: success is not measured by the quantity of programs deployed, but by the **meticulous design and execution of every learning intervention**.

Transformation happens when learning is **personalized, blended, and directly linked to business imperatives**. From role-tailored pathways and self-paced foundations to live, immersive sprints and immediate workplace application, this approach redefines skilling not as a function of HR, but as a **direct driver of profitability and performance**.

As stewards of our organizations' futures, our mandate is to deliver not just informed talent, but **teams equipped to thrive**—it is our responsibility to translate insight into operational excellence. The insights within this report serve as a blueprint to spur progress and realize our collective vision for the next era of work.

Srikanth Iyengar
CEO - upGrad Enterprise

Executive summary

* Abundant certifications, limited relevance

While ~70% of surveyed professionals received workplace training, 41% report that corporate learning is not tailored to their specific roles or career goals. This gap drives close to 80% to pursue external skilling opportunities, highlighting untapped demand that can be addressed through targeted skilling.

* The practice-priority disconnect slows progress

Skills essential for innovation and competitiveness remain underdeveloped. Although organizations list technical and digital skills as priorities, most training focuses on power skills (65%) and leadership (~60%). In contrast, employees increasingly seek expertise in advanced AI/ML, UX/UI, data science, and cybersecurity.

* Blended, role-specific formats win

Employees favor flexible, relevant formats that preserve human interaction. 55% prefer role-tailored programs, 58% want self-paced modules, and 43% value in-person engagement. The most effective approaches integrate self-paced content with interactive, live sessions such as labs or clinics.

* Career impact stands out as the strongest motivator

80% want training achievements reflected in performance reviews, and half say this recognition would significantly boost their willingness to upskill. Around 40% expect training to directly influence promotions and salary growth, underscoring the importance of linking learning to career advancement.

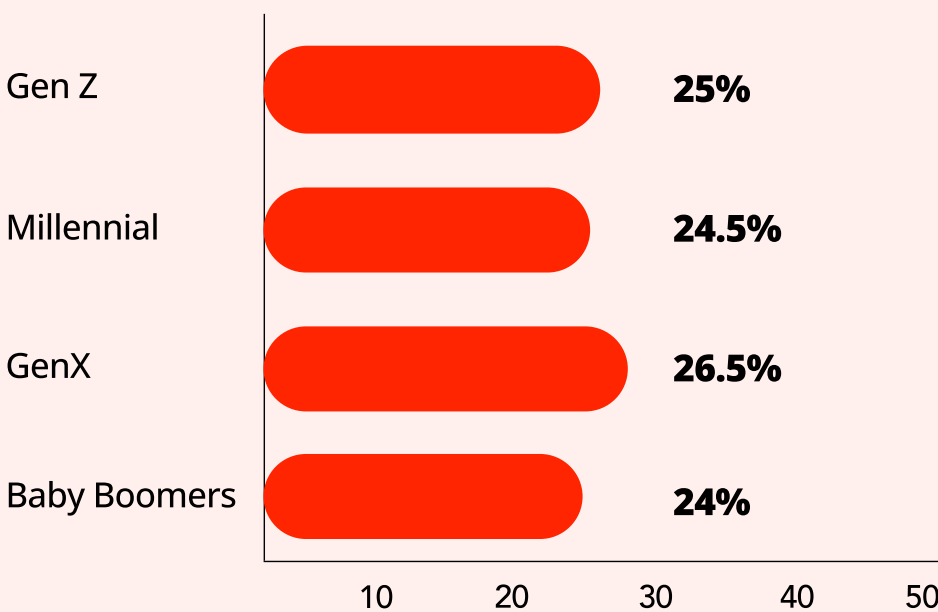
* Logistical challenges stand in the way of impactful outcomes

Scheduling conflicts and training-format mismatches each affect 57% of learners. Nearly 40% cite irrelevant content, incomplete materials, and poor feedback loops as major hurdles. Addressing these requires stronger manager support, learner-centric design, and continuous content refinement.

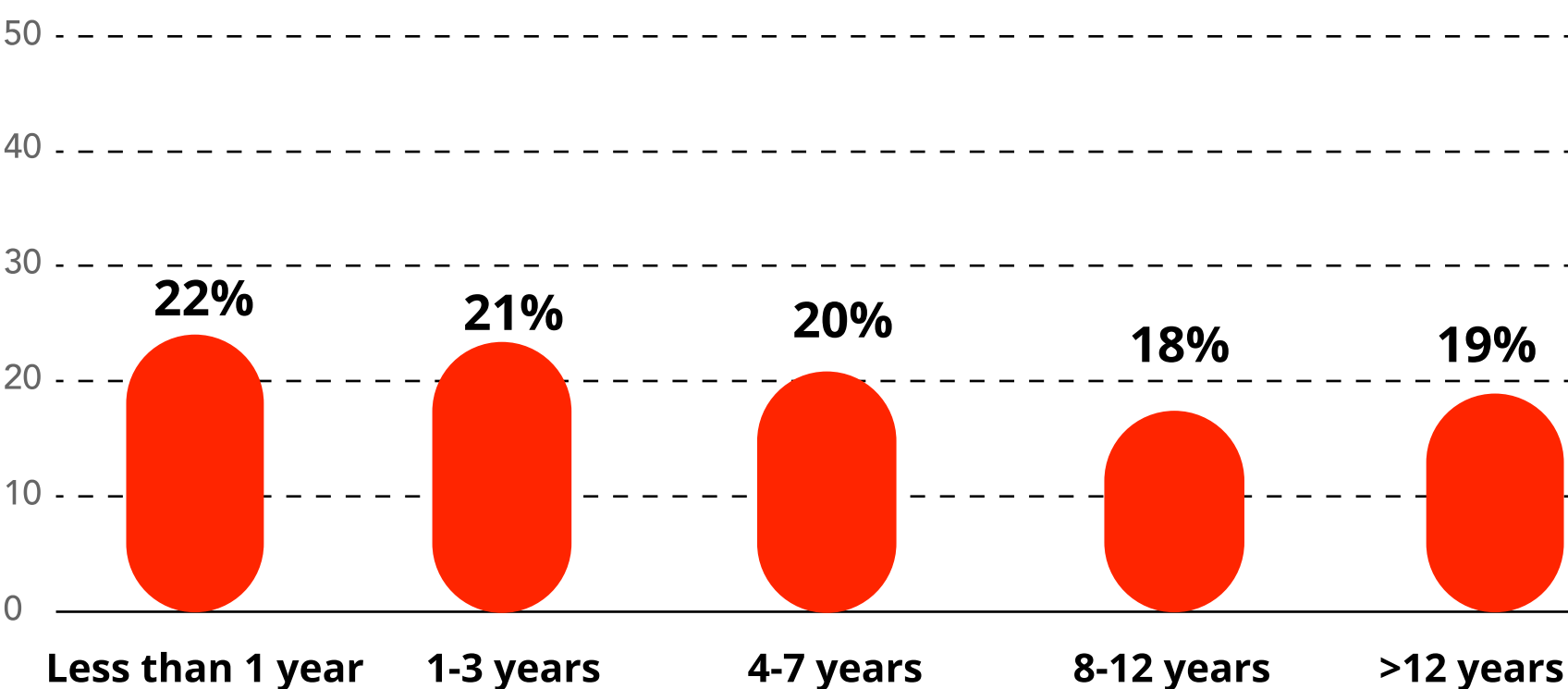
Methodology

This report is based on a survey of 2,989 working professionals across USA, representing over 10 industries, multiple generations, and a range of seniority levels. The data provides a comprehensive view of current skilling trends, challenges, and priorities shaping the workforce today.

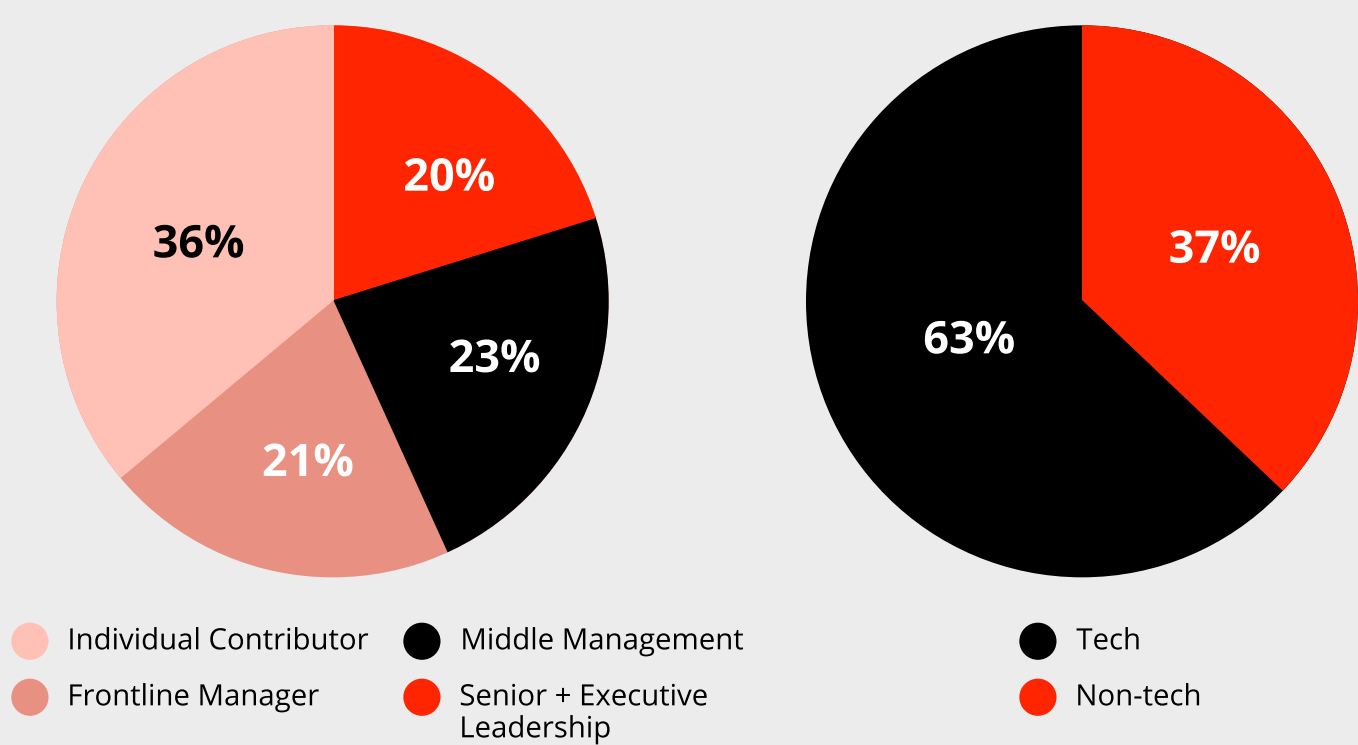
GENERATION



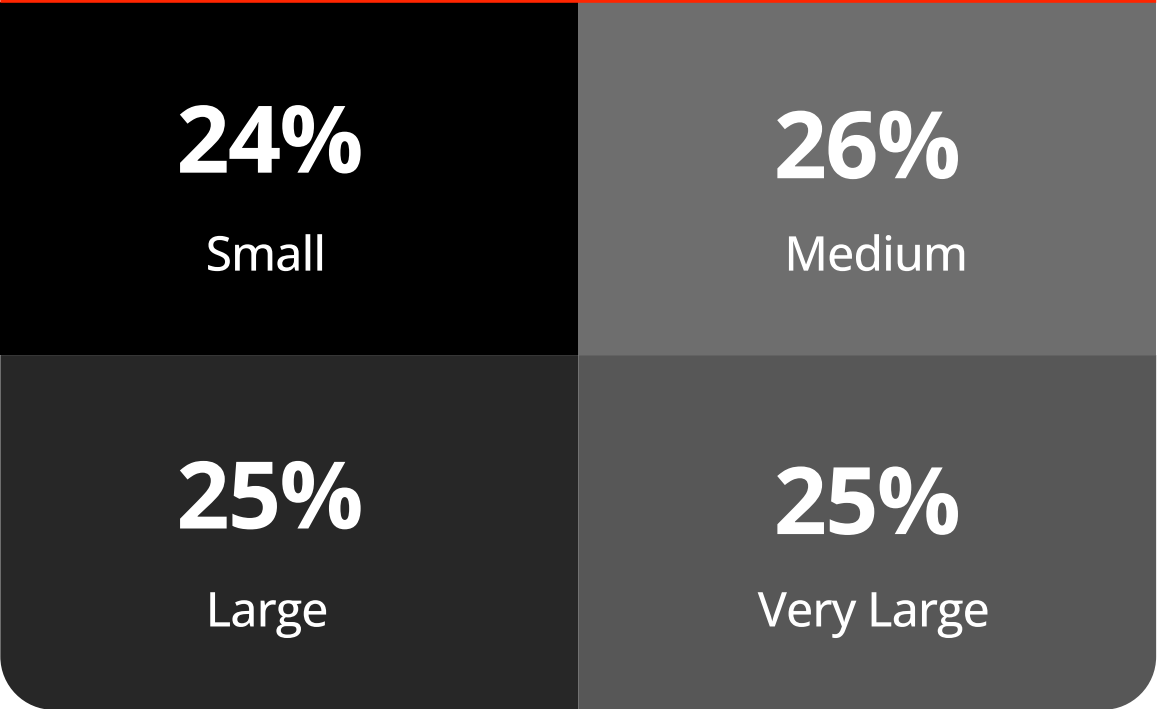
YEARS OF WORK EXPERIENCE



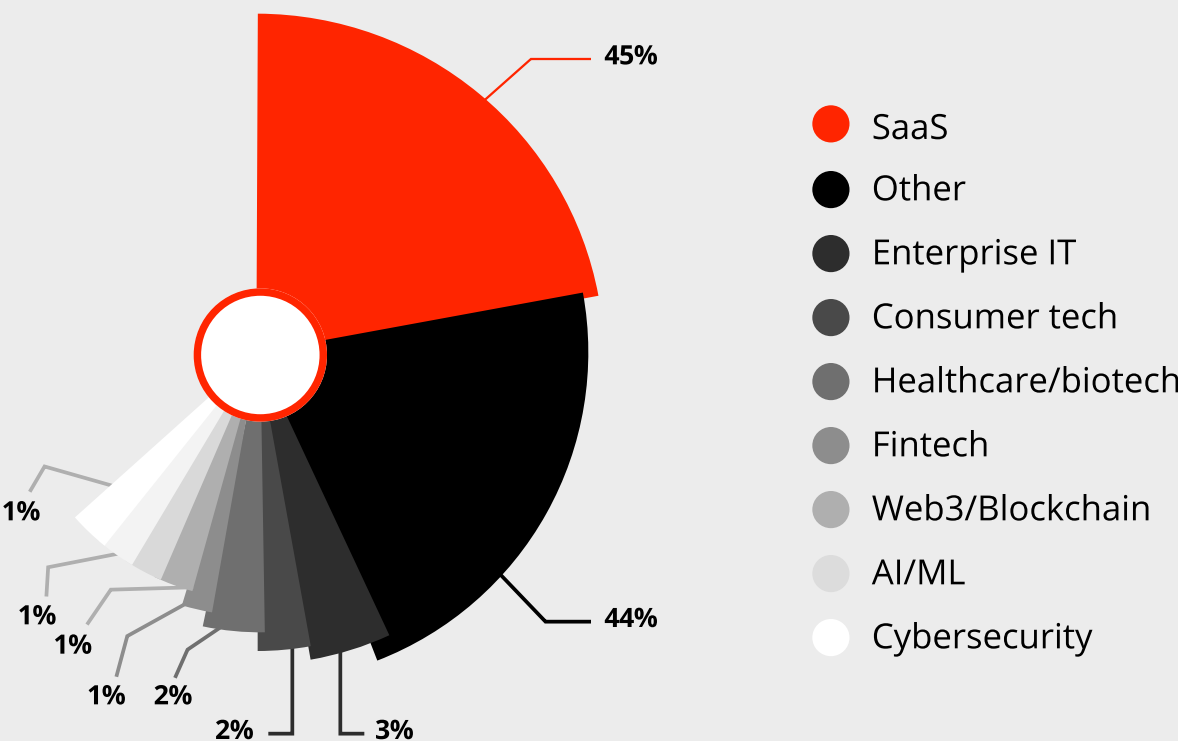
ROLE-BASED SPLIT



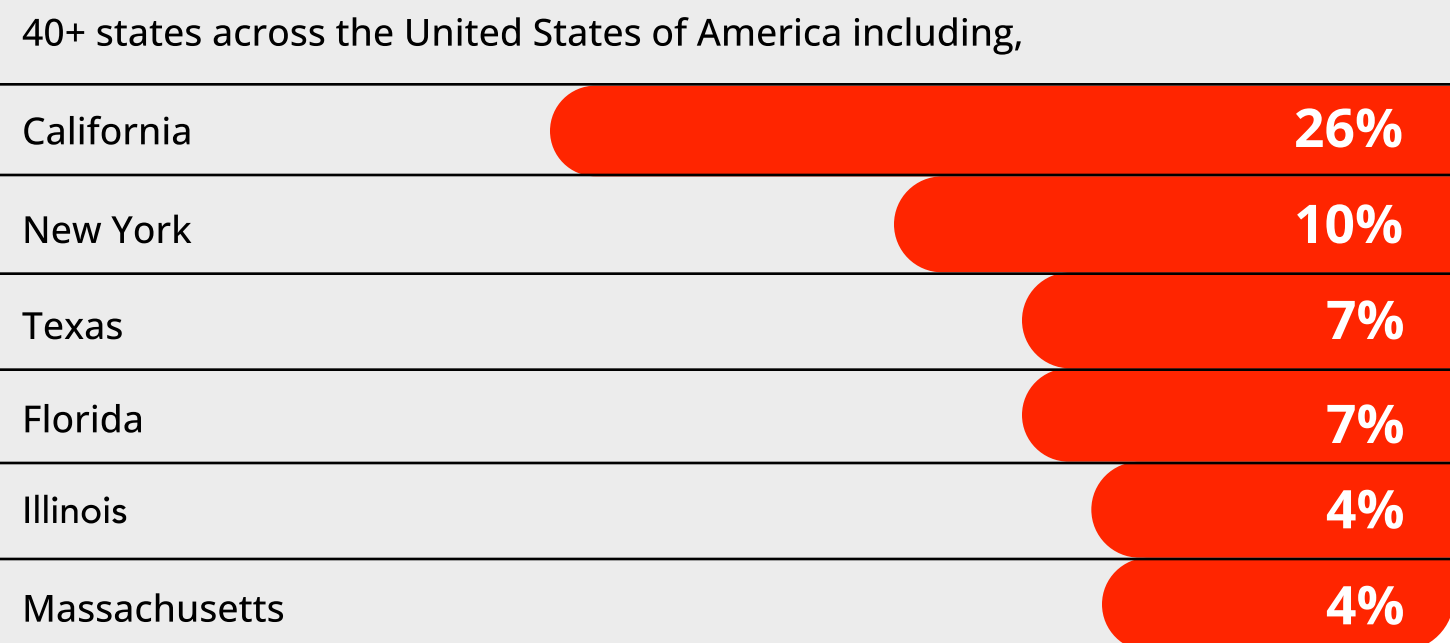
ORGANIZATION SIZE



SECTOR

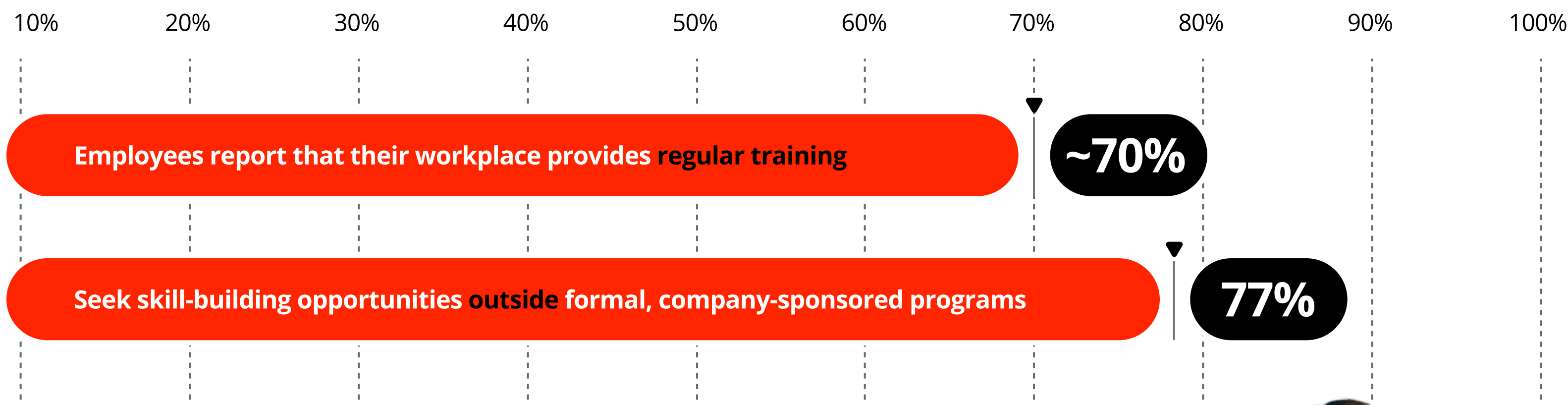


REGION



The state of skilling: Engagement, focus, and on-ground realities

Employers in the USA are actively investing in year-round training initiatives, but the challenge lies less in access and more in relevance. Achieving the right balance of skills training is critical to sustaining engagement and delivering measurable impact.



Workforce priorities



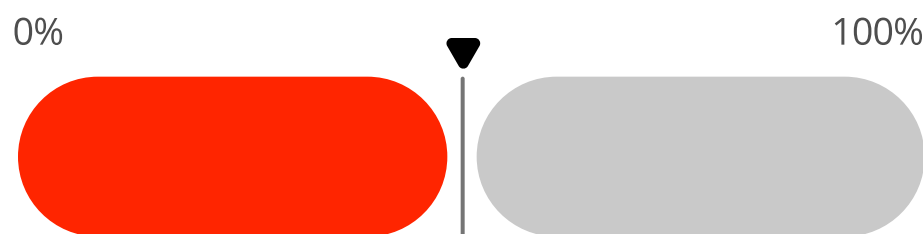
What it takes to reach, resonate, and retain top talent

Skilling in isolation seldom drives retention. Its true value emerges when learning is connected to both current performance and long-term career advancement.



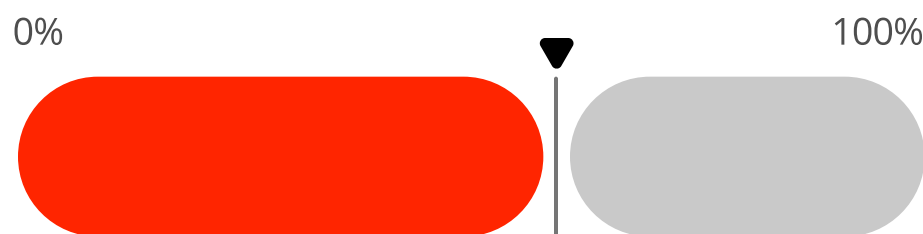
77%

of employees say they are more likely to **complete training** when it is **linked to performance reviews**



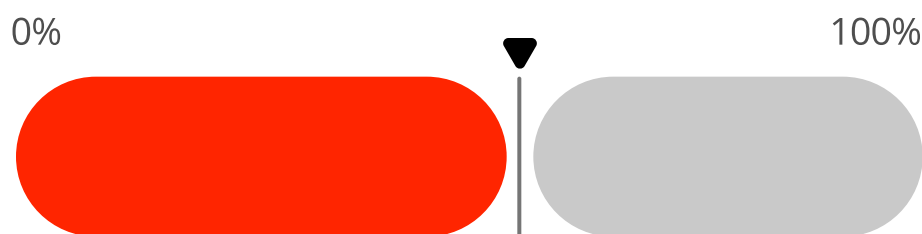
41%

expect training outcomes to **influence promotions** and **salary growth**



60%

of professionals prefer **learning at their own pace**



55%

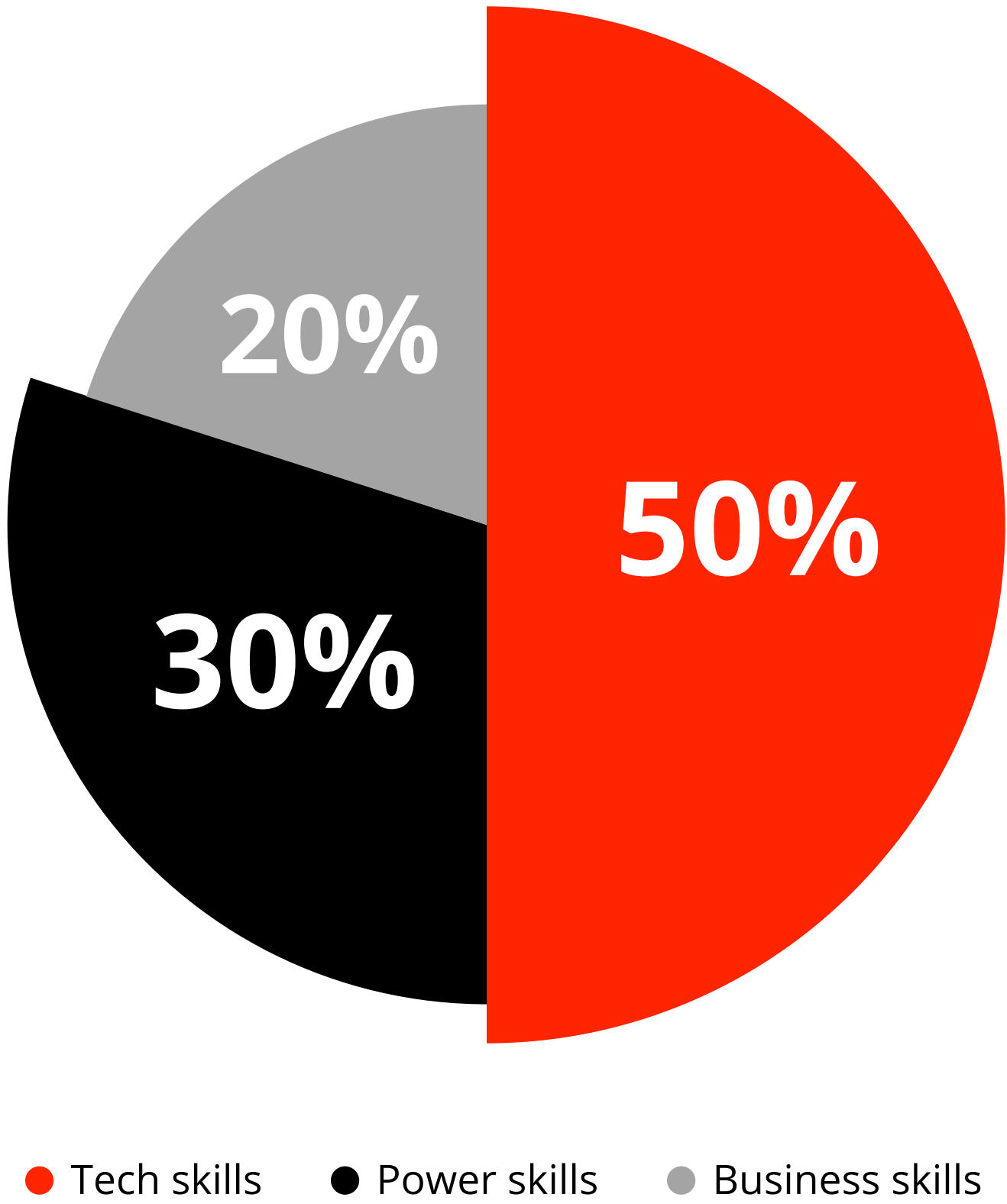
favor training that is **tailored to their specific roles** and **responsibilities**

Learner engagement peaks when **skilling experiences are personal, role-relevant, and yield clear, measurable outcomes**



The American Workforce Wishlist calls for a **balance** in tech and leadership training

Leadership & team management	53%
Advanced AI/ML	51%
UI/UX design & prototyping	51%
Data science & analytics	50%
Cybersecurity	49%
Product management & road mapping	44%
Time management & prioritization	43%
Conflict resolution & negotiation	43%
Operations, HR, & culture	40%
Cloud infrastructure & DevOps	40%



Beyond the basics: AI, advanced analytics, and accessibility lead the tech training agenda

1 in 2 professionals feel like novices in AI/ML and cybersecurity, with just as many aiming to master data, cloud, and design.

A CLOSER LOOK AT WHAT TEAMS WANT TO LEARN

Advanced AI/ML



Cybersecurity



UI/UX design & prototyping



Cloud infrastructure & DevOps



Data science and analytics



Beyond the basics: Business skills continue to command learner interest

Half the workforce identifies as beginners in sales and go-to-market strategy, with only moderate confidence in product, operations, and financial skills.

A CLOSER LOOK AT WHAT TEAMS WANT TO LEARN

Sales & revenue generation



Operations, HR & culture



Go-to-market strategy



Financial modeling



Product management & road mapping

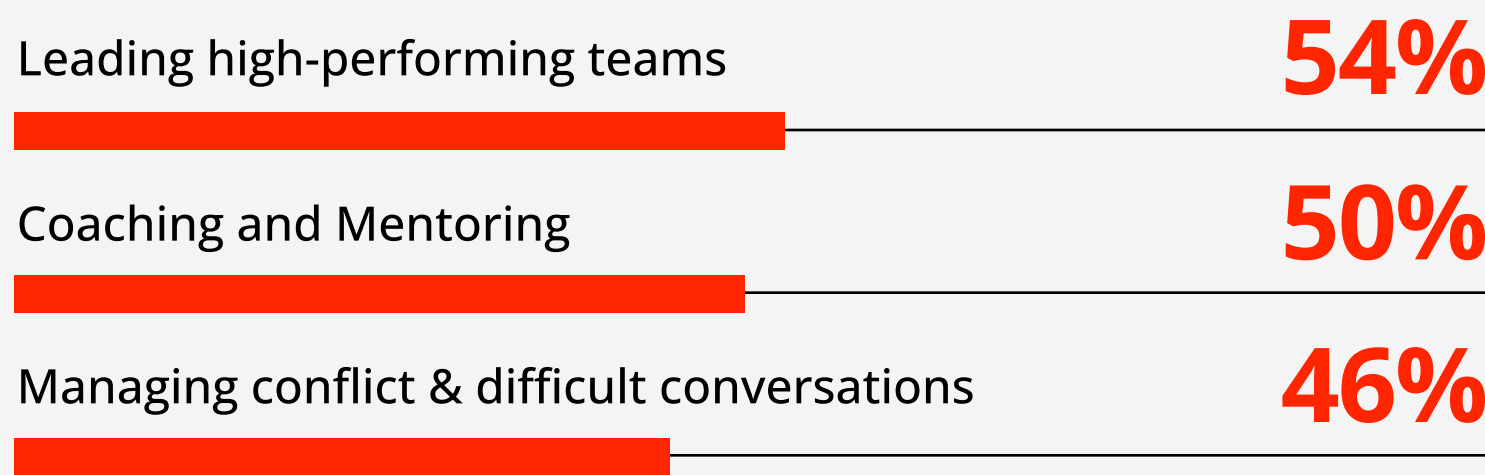


Leadership and power skills remain a dedicated focus while tech needs evolve

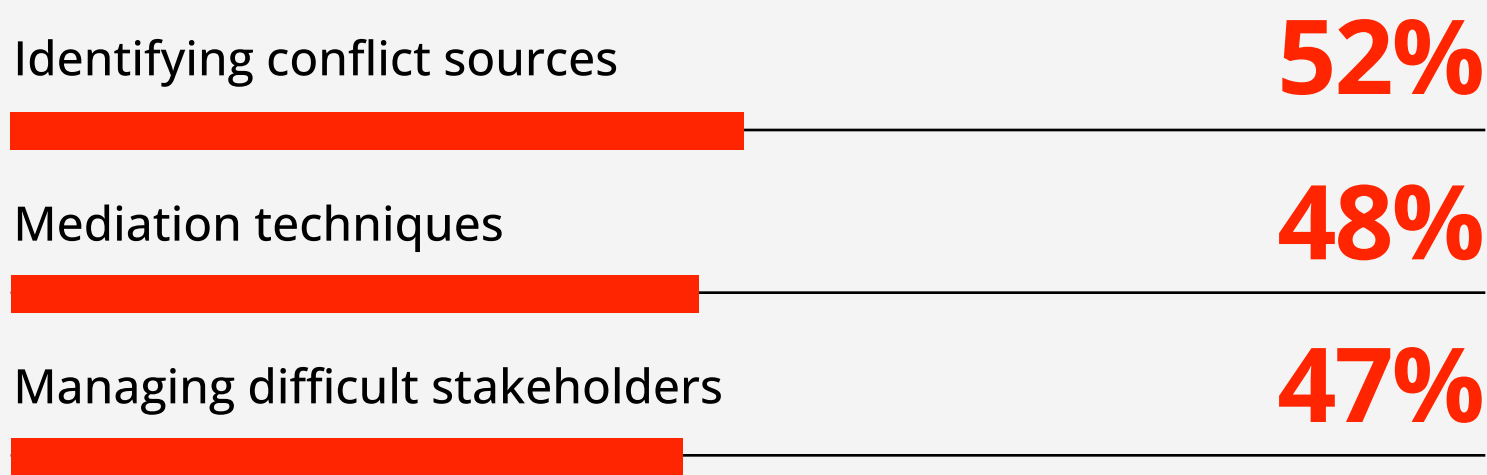
Over half of professionals say they need and would like to improve communication, time management, and emotional intelligence at work—closely followed by leadership and conflict resolution.

A CLOSER LOOK AT WHAT TEAMS WANT TO LEARN

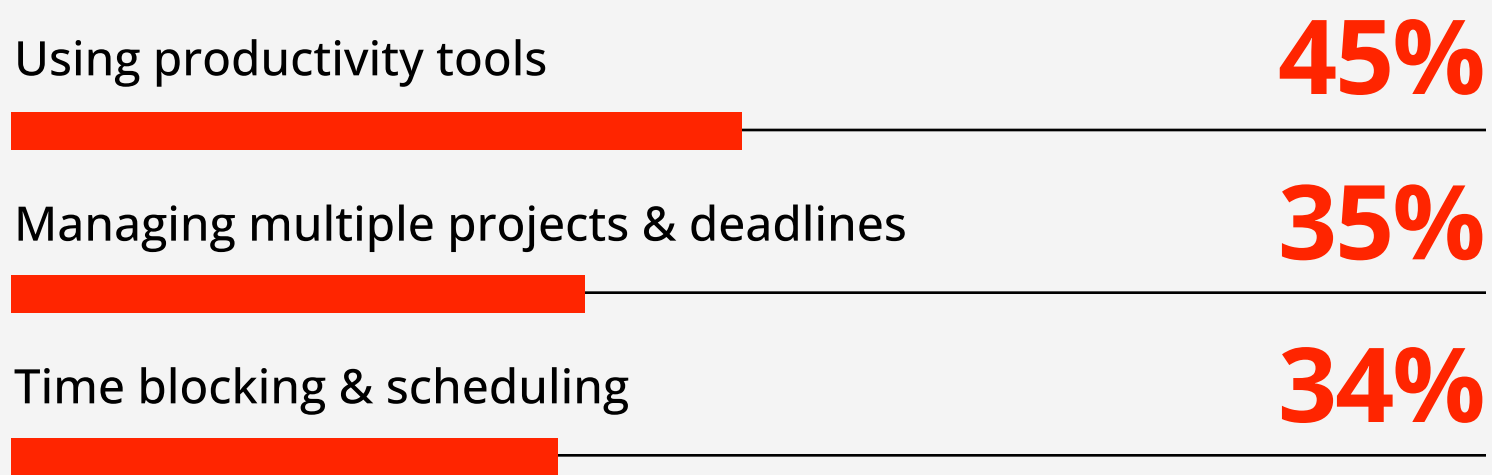
Leadership & team management



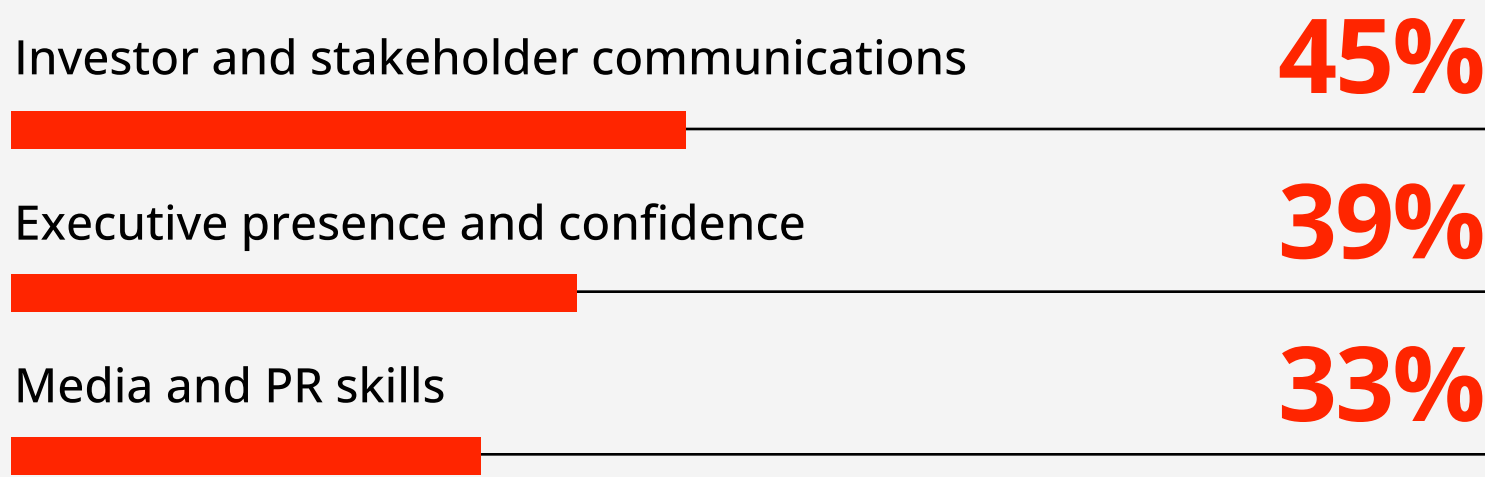
Conflict resolution & negotiation



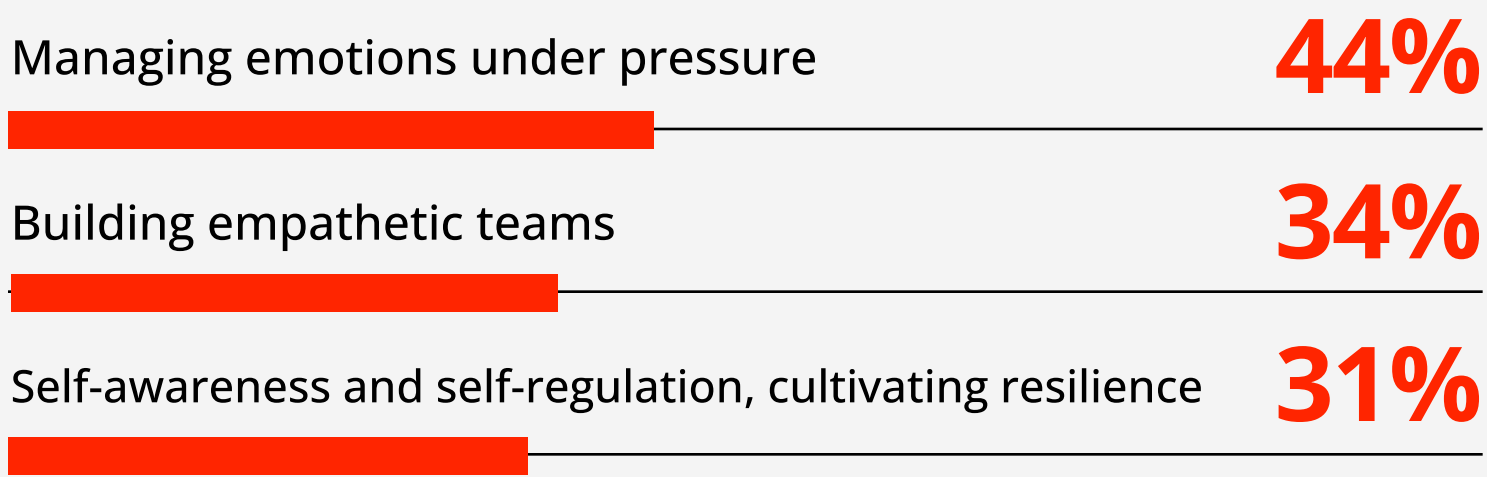
Time management & prioritization



Communication & public speaking



Emotional intelligence & empathy



The bottom line: **What leaders in the USA must act on today**

Make skilling role and career-relevant	Employees join programs expecting training to ladder into career pathways and project opportunities, not stay generic. 77% say they are more likely to complete training when it is linked to performance reviews.
Commit to blended, personalized learning	Stepping away from cookie cutter solutions and towards a modular framework that caters to learning preferences will help remove the format mismatch flagged by 57% as a barrier to completion.
Fund tech, business, and power skills in equal measure	AI/ML, data, UX/UI, and cybersecurity are clustered priorities, but sales (35% demand vs 7% trained) and leadership (53% vs 29%) are the largest supply gaps. Balance investments to build enterprise-wide fluency.
Eliminate operational blockers to participation	Manager approvals, scheduling inflexibility, clunky sign-ups, and poor comms block nearly half of employees. These are solvable process issues. Fixing them unlocks hidden demand before adding new content.
Capture external learning momentum	51% of professionals upskill outside work. Leaders must channel this intent by co-funding, curating, or recognizing external learning, so the ROI accrues to the enterprise, not outside it.

Acknowledgements

This report was informed by the inputs of professionals and leaders from across the United States of America. We are grateful to all respondents and team members for bringing this report to life.

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