

New Skills for the New Workplace

Meeting Increased Job Demands While Managing Change and Other Stressors

So much has changed in the workplace and the world at large since March 2020. Unfortunately, with the threat of Delta and Lambda variants, COVID-related concerns and precautions continue to affect organizational policies and everyday life. While focusing on moving forward and regaining a sense of normalcy, managers at all levels across industries face an immediate, critical challenge: understanding how the workplace is different, now and for the foreseeable future, and determining what their people need to get back on track, deliver results, stay motivated, and thrive—on the job and beyond.

AMA recognizes how the workplace has changed and how navigating the latest “new normal” for business is a work in progress for senior executives, project managers, team leaders, and individual contributors. As part of our professional development mission, we regularly provide timely insights to help managers overcome workplace

challenges and find solutions to a range of people-related challenges. In July 2021, AMA surveyed members and seminar participants nationwide about the new skills required for the new workplace. The results shed light on the increased demands placed on employees in the post-pandemic organization and call attention to the urgent need to close skills gaps and place a priority on people’s well-being.

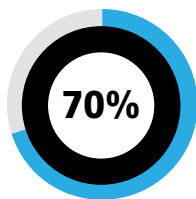
While constant change is a widely acknowledged workplace reality, the health crisis compounded the impact of rapidly advancing technology:

- Nearly 70% of survey participants reported an increase in job responsibilities since the beginning of 2020. What’s even more compelling, an overwhelming majority—nearly 80% of respondents—have found that the skills required to do their job effectively have changed in the past two years.

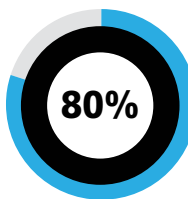
Along with an increase in job responsibilities, 74% of respondents

reported an increase in their workload from the amount before the pandemic. Correspondingly, more than 50% of participants stated that the number of their daily work hours has increased from their typical pre-COVID workday. A nine-hour workday is now standard for just over a third of respondents, while another third routinely work 10 hours or more per workday. These findings refute the common notion that remote workers, in addition to gaining back the time spent on commuting, work fewer hours than in-office workers.

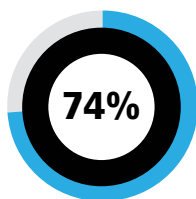
To provide further insight into specific skills gaps related to increased job responsibilities, participants were asked to rate the level of change in skill requirement—less, same, or more—that they have recently experienced across 10 areas, ranging from analytical capabilities to innovative thinking, from productivity to embracing and supporting diversity. Significantly, participants rated all 10 areas as demanding more skills in



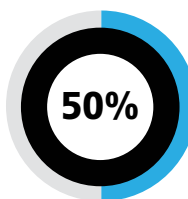
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Key Finding No. 1

Strategizing for a hybrid workplace is essential to maintaining effective teamwork and delivering results.

This strategizing is the No. 1 area for development, with 202 rankings from a total of 513 survey respondents. As significant numbers of workers will continue working remotely, the hybrid workplace is the new normal.

#1 202
Rankings
Strategizing for a
hybrid workplace

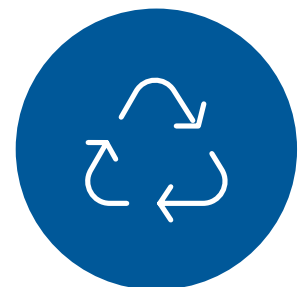


Key Finding No. 2

Change management needs to be an ongoing, organization-wide priority for professional development.

Change, while inevitable and prevalent, is a significant stressor in and of itself.

#2 195
Rankings
Change
management



Key Finding No. 3

Adaptability is vital to success in the new workplace and our uncertain world.

As automation, digitization, and globalization continue to evolve and disrupt work as usual, leaders, managers, teams, and individual contributors must quickly adapt to shifting priorities, demands, and pressures in order to maintain the focus, productivity, and workflow fundamental to meeting goals and keeping a business running.

#3 162
Rankings
Adaptability



today's workplace than ever before. Two areas stood out, flagged by more than 70% of respondents: *technology skills for working virtually* and *communicating across the organization*.

Skills gaps related to technology and aggravated by the pandemic were also evident in the results when participants were asked to rank the top three areas they most need to develop or improve.

KEY FINDING: Strategizing for a hybrid workplace (the No. 1 area for development, with 202 rankings from a total of 513 respondents) **is essential to maintaining effective teamwork and delivering results.** As significant numbers of workers will continue working remotely long-term, the hybrid workplace is the new normal. With hybrid teams, clear communication is critical but often challenging. For starters, members might be working from different time zones and on different schedules. To aggravate matters, Wi-Fi service and platform functions aren't always reliable, and even when they work flawlessly, many people find it difficult to concentrate and genuinely connect with colleagues and collaborators during virtual meetings.

KEY FINDING: Change management (No. 2, with 195 rankings) **needs to be an ongoing, organization-wide priority for professional development.** Change, while inevitable and prevalent, is a significant stressor in and of itself. According to a recent survey on the return to work conducted by The Conference Board, stress/burnout is the top well-being concern among workers today, particularly among women (who typically juggle working from home with caring for children), individual contributors, and Millennials.

KEY FINDING: Adaptability (No. 3, with 162 rankings) **is vital to success in the new workplace and our uncertain world.** As automation, digitization, and globalization continue to evolve and disrupt work as usual—and as variants of the coronavirus threaten to spread upheaval and anxiety—leaders, managers, teams, and individual contributors must quickly adapt to shifting priorities, demands, and

Given the many areas where employees feel the need and pressure to improve their skills, what immediate concern should organizations focus on?

- ▶ Nearly **46%** of respondents flagged investing in employee development as the most urgent priority.
- ▶ Nearly **41%** placed an emphasis on better communication to employees.
- ▶ **61%** affirmed the need for new skills to improve collaboration among remote and onsite team members in their organization.
- ▶ Only **43%** said their organization has invested in making hybrid teams more effective.

pressures in order to maintain the focus, productivity, and workflow fundamental to meeting goals and keeping a business running.

Given the many areas where employees feel the need and pressure to improve their skills, what immediate concern should organizations focus on? When asked to apply that question to their own company, nearly 46% of respondents flagged *investing in employee development* as the most urgent priority and nearly 41% placed an emphasis on *better communication* to employees. In addition, 61% of respondents affirmed the need for new skills to improve collaboration among remote and onsite team members in their organization, while only 43% said their organization has invested in making hybrid teams more effective.

As the survey's results strongly indicate, developing new skills for the new workplace isn't simply optional for motivated individuals, but absolutely essential for ongoing professional success and personal well-being—as well as to the whole company's ability to stay productive and competitive moving ahead. According to "The

Future of Jobs Report 2020" from the World Economic Forum, skills gaps will persist and remain high as in-demand skills across jobs change in the next five years.

In touch with the fast-changing workplace and responsive to the needs of today's professionals, AMA offers resources and tools to help individuals develop the skills crucial to doing their job. Whether they're part of a traditional in-office, fully remote, or hybrid workforce, and regardless of their positional power, nearly everyone could benefit from strengthening their ability to communicate up, down, and across an organization. Learning how to become a better listener and convey messages, whether spoken or written, with clarity and confidence is also vital to improving communication, both face-to-face and virtually. AMA also offers courses in project management, time management, leading with emotional intelligence, innovative thinking, and keeping yourself productive, among other valuable skills for reducing the stress of increased job responsibilities and easing the adjustment to a new workplace. [AQ](#)