Digital Marketing Institute

Part of the **BPP** Education Group

Digital Marketing Skills Gaps
and Corporate Training in 2024

Insights & Actions from Marketing Leaders

Survey Highlights

35%

35% of Marketing, Sales, Human Resources (HR), and Learning and Development (L&D) leaders don't have a plan to address the skills gaps in their teams and business – versus 26% in 2023.

57%

57% of employers believe that upskilling and reskilling current employees is the #1 method to address the skills gaps – a 2% increase from 2023.

The most efficient training method is 'Bitesize Learning' through online short courses that focus on a particular skill.

85%

85% of leaders say that 'Time & workload pressure' is the key barrier to addressing the skills gaps – versus 62% in 2023.

#1

The **#1 skill** that teams lack is 'AI Strategy Development & AI in Digital Marketing' – a 4% increase from 2023.

86%

86% of employers are more likely to hire candidates with a DMI certification on their CV/resume – versus 75% in 2023.

Executive Summary

It will probably come as no surprise that the adoption of artificial intelligence (AI) is having a major impact on companies across industries.

Advances in AI technology have put extra pressure on decision-makers in not only Marketing, but also Sales, Human Resources (HR), and Learning and Development (L&D).

While AI was also a challenge in 2023, the arrival of generative AI offers new opportunities to grow and compete. The need to leverage AI-powered technologies for productivity, efficiency, and innovation means that companies require employees with AI skills or, as Microsoft describes it, 'AI aptitude'.

> This Scramble For AI Talent Is What Became Apparent In Our 2024 Survey Of Decision-Makers. 54% Rated 'AI Strategy Development & AI In Digital Marketing' As The Main Skill They Were Lacking, Followed By SEO (44%) And Data Analytics (42%).

In addition, marketers have to ensure their efforts have impact when time is precious and workloads are heavy. People need to refresh existing skills and acquire new ones. This means that any training initiatives must be effective in not only upskilling employees but also engaging them.

When we asked leaders about effective training methods, unsurprisingly on-the-job training is still highly rated – the same as in 2023. What did emerge is that online bitesize learning is seeing great results (voted by 46% as 'Highly efficient'), along with customized and self-paced courses.

For many decision-makers (68%), the training budget has remained the same. But this means that executives need to do more with the same budget as last year, despite increasing pressure to close the skills gap to achieve KPIs, improve role-related performance, and boost employee satisfaction.

The value of a certification to boost skills and encourage career advancement is still important to decision-makers. 93% said they valued professional certifications when hiring or promoting – a 2% increase on last year.

Certification can also help in recruitment because industry certifications can help with the CV filtering process so that employers can find potential hires with the skills they need.

In this report, we use insights from our 2023 report to analyze the digital skills landscape and see how it has changed in 2024.

We will explore the digital skills gap, the efficacy of different training methods, the challenges and shortcomings of training provision, and the value of certification. The report concludes with five recommendations on how to provide training that can empower and transform a workforce.

Methodology

This report is based on the results of a survey with 349 Marketing, Sales, HR, and L&D leaders.

The aims of the survey were to find out more about:

↗ The digital skills gap

↗ The types and efficacy of training programs

↗ The value of certifications to employers and employees

The respondents work across a range of industries:

↗ Finance and Banking

↗ Retail

↗ Technology

↗ Governmental

↗ NGO

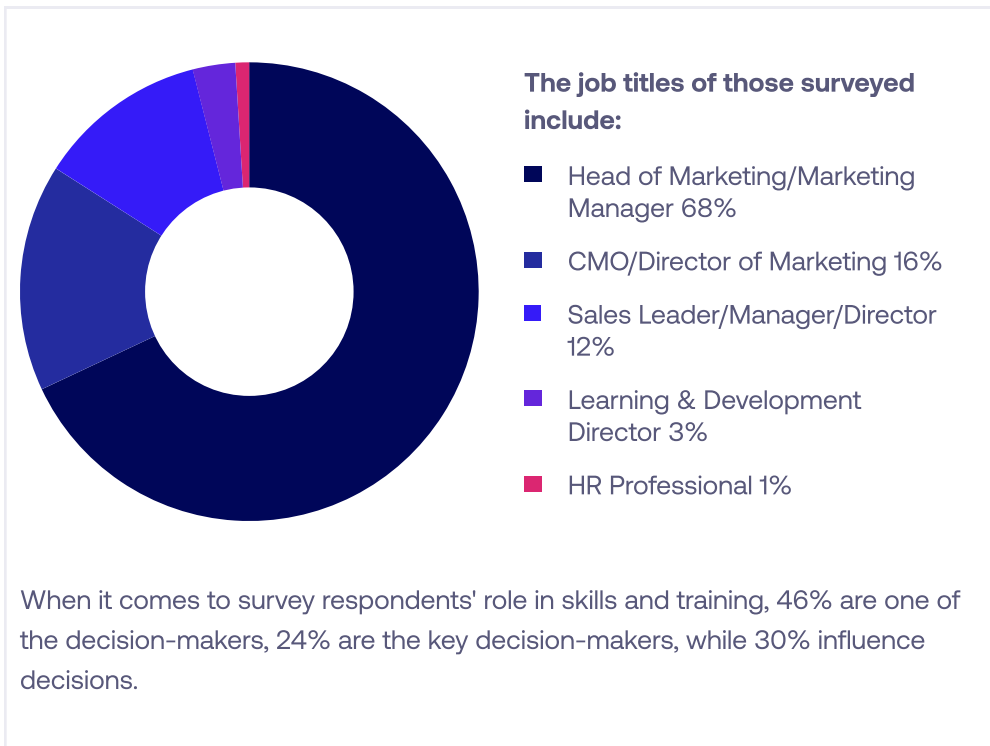↗ Healthcare, Pharma, & Medical

↗ Marketing, Advertising, & Agency

The job titles of those surveyed include:

■ Head of Marketing/Marketing Manager 68%

■ CMO/Director of Marketing 16%

■ Sales Leader/Manager/Director 12%

■ Learning & Development Director 3%

■ HR Professional 1%

When it comes to survey respondents' role in skills and training, 46% are one of the decision-makers, 24% are the key decision-makers, while 30% influence decisions.

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Key Skills Gaps in Teams & Businesses

The Digital Marketing Institute (DMI) has researched and reported on the widening global digital skills gap across industries for years.

This gap exists because many employers feel that employees (current and future) don't have the digital skills they need to succeed in an increasingly competitive online marketplace.

AI technologies are being widely adopted across businesses as they aim to increase productivity and drive efficiency. However, this means that employers have even more to contend with as they look to upskill teams so they can leverage AI.

The research presented here from our survey of Marketing, Sales, HR, and L&D leaders shows that the skills gap continues to be a challenge.

When asked if there were plans to address the skills gap in their organization, the majority (65%) stated 'Yes'. However, this also shows that 35% of leaders are still struggling or failing to take action to develop and nurture the skills required – an increase of 9% compared to 2023.

It's surprising that more leaders are not planning (or able) to address the skills gap because the lack of a strategy will hinder business growth and put companies at risk of falling behind competitors.
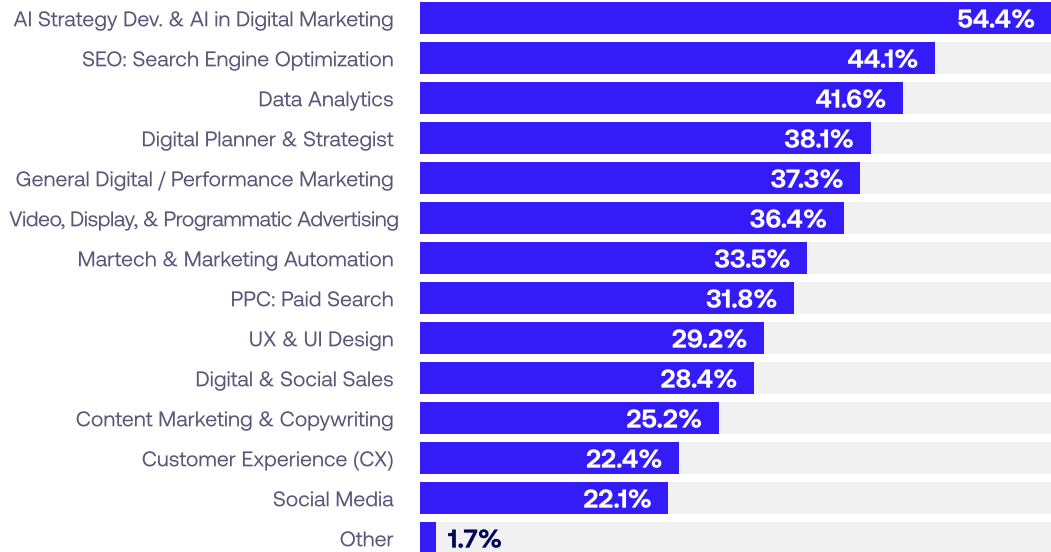
"6 In 10 Employees Will Need Training Before 2027"

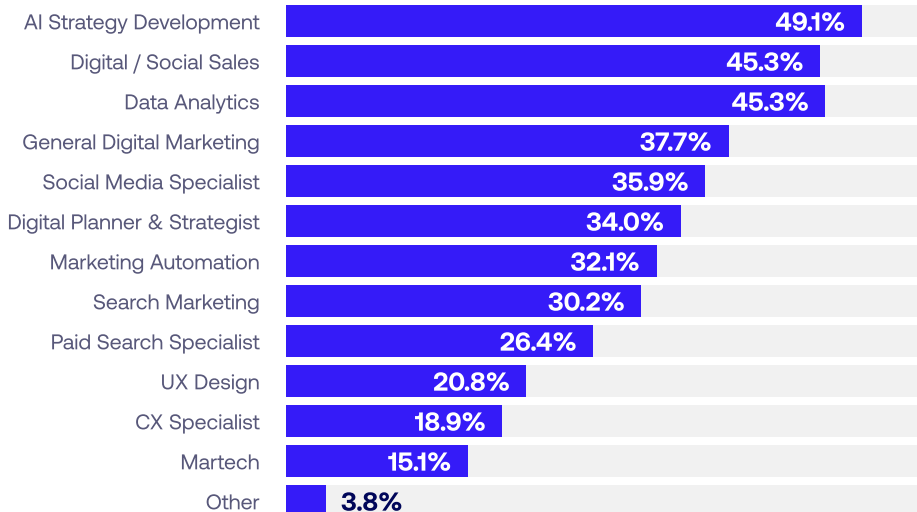*The Future of Jobs Report 2023, World Economic Forum*

2023 & 2024 Analysis: How Has The Key Skills Gap In Teams Changed?

The skills that employees need are constantly changing as new technologies emerge and businesses look to leverage new channels to drive productivity and make an impact on the bottom line.

Key Skills Gap in Marketing 2024

Skill	Percentage
AI Strategy Dev. & AI in Digital Marketing	54.4%
SEO: Search Engine Optimization	44.1%
Data Analytics	41.6%
Digital Planner & Strategist	38.1%
General Digital / Performance Marketing	37.3%
Video, Display, & Programmatic Advertising	36.4%
Martech & Marketing Automation	33.5%
PPC: Paid Search	31.8%
UX & UI Design	29.2%
Digital & Social Sales	28.4%
Content Marketing & Copywriting	25.2%
Customer Experience (CX)	22.4%
Social Media	22.1%
Other	1.7%

vs Key Skills Gap in Marketing 2023

Skill	Percentage
AI Strategy Development	49.1%
Digital / Social Sales	45.3%
Data Analytics	45.3%
General Digital Marketing	37.7%
Social Media Specialist	35.9%
Digital Planner & Strategist	34.0%
Marketing Automation	32.1%
Search Marketing	30.2%
Paid Search Specialist	26.4%
UX Design	20.8%
CX Specialist	18.9%
Martech	15.1%
Other	3.8%

The skills that employees need are constantly changing as new technologies emerge and businesses look to leverage new channels to drive productivity and make an impact on the bottom line.

For marketing teams, the biggest challenge in 2024 is the widespread adoption of AI technologies. That's why the #1 skill identified by leaders as important is **'AI Strategy Development & AI in Digital Marketing'** at 54%.

While ChatGPT used to grab the headlines, more AI technologies are being adopted for a range of activities.

There are many AI tools for content generation and optimization. However, marketers are also using AI-powered technologies for trend analysis and forecasting, customer engagement, sales automation, and social media management.

This follows on from 2023 when 'AI Strategy Development' was listed as the top skill that leaders felt was lacking, albeit with a lower percentage at 49%.
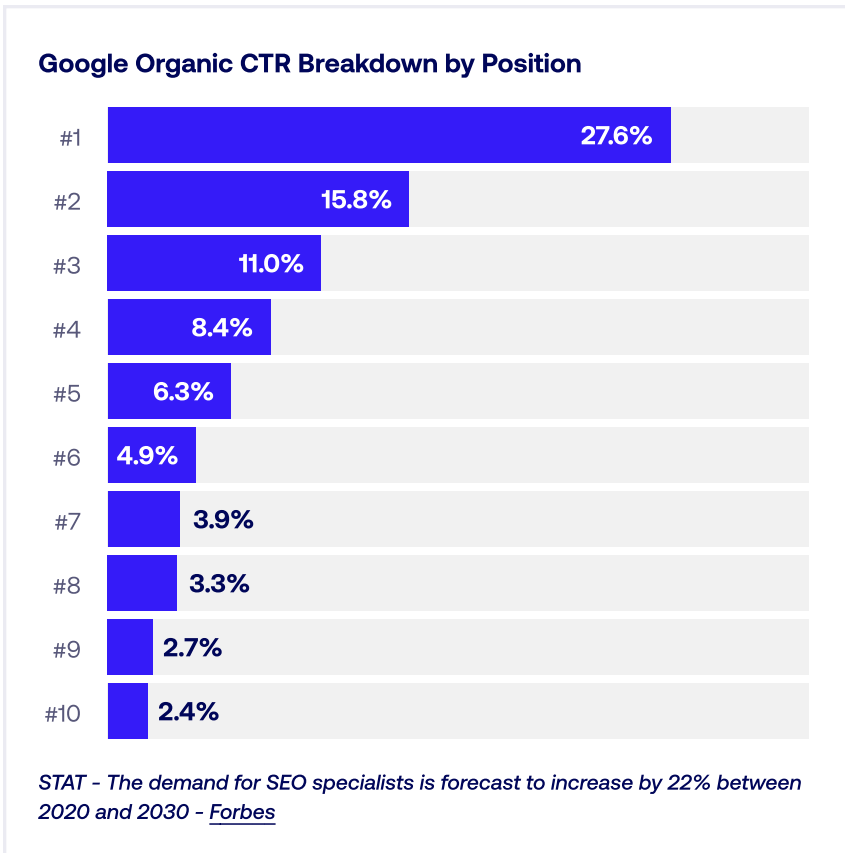
One of the biggest challenges this year, particularly for search marketers, is Google's AI Overviews (previously Search Generative Experience). This development is already changing search because it provides customers with AI-generated results that are deemed as more relevant and in-depth. It also reduces the likelihood of searchers clicking as they already have the information they want on the results page.

AI Overviews is currently being expanded to six countries, and it includes a save function, and even simplifies language.

This could be one of the reasons for **'SEO: Search Engine Optimization'** climbing up the ranks to claim the #2 spot at 44% on our 2024 list. In 2023 'Search Marketing' was only ranked eighth at 30%.

Another reason is that SEO drives organic traffic by tapping into search intent. Today's leaders know that where you feature on a search engine matters. Research by Backlinko found that results on page 1 of the Google SERP got an average clickthrough rate (CTR) of 27.6%, compared to page 2 at just 15.8%.

This graph from Backlinko shows the CTRs of content based on which order they appear on a Google search.

Google Organic CTR Breakdown by Position

Position	CTR
#1	27.6%
#2	15.8%
#3	11.0%
#4	8.4%
#5	6.3%
#6	4.9%
#7	3.9%
#8	3.3%
#9	2.7%
#10	2.4%

STAT – The demand for SEO specialists is forecast to increase by 22% between 2020 and 2030 – Forbes

Data Analytics takes third position, the same position as last year, which demonstrates the importance of data. This comes as no surprise as leaders want to get more from the data they collect and get insights from customer behavior to optimize digital channels and create a better customer journey. AI also enables organizations to collect and analyze huge amounts of data, so data analytics skills have become even more important.

Digital Strategy & Planning has gone from sixth position in 2023 to fourth this year. This change could be because more companies realize the need for a digital marketing strategy to drive growth and align marketing efforts with broader business goals and to adapt to AI.

Successful leaders know that the pace of digital is relentless. To keep up and compete, companies need a digital marketing strategy that helps them:

↗ Have a clear direction and focus

↗ Understand and set business objectives

↗ Know and engage a target audience

↗ Understand the digital channels available

↗ Track and monitor marketing activities and performance

↗ Drive optimization across channels

↗ Allocate budget to channels and campaigns that perform

↗ Gain competitive advantage (and know what competitors are doing)

Rounding up the top five skills is **General Digital / Performance Marketing** at 37%. Compared to 2023, the percentage of respondents that deemed this an important skill is the same, but it has moved down one position to fifth.

A marketer with general digital marketing skills or a generalist can benefit a company as they offer a range of skills. This means they can manage a number of tasks and know how to leverage several digital channels to get results.

This skillset is particularly important for small to medium-sized companies with limited budgets and finite resources.

Performance marketing involves paying for results from marketing campaigns, including clicks or leads from channels, such as search engines or social media. This skill can help a company focus on the channels that deliver results, saving time and money while helping to drive a return on investment (ROI).

When we look at the changes in skills gaps from 2023 to 2024, **Martech & Marketing Automation** stands out as one that has seen the biggest rise. While it was twelfth on the list in 2023, it is seventh on the list just a year later*.

This change could be influenced by the increased reliance on technologies to automate and optimize marketing activities. As new technologies such as AI become more important, so does the need for marketers with the skills to use and leverage them.

It's worth noting that marketing automation was seventh on the list at 32% in 2023, so the need for automation specialists has remained stable.

There are skills that leaders believe are no longer lacking. **Digital & Social Sales** took second spot in the digital skills gap list for 2023 at 45%. However, it has decreased in 2024 to feature tenth, rated by only 28%. **Social Media** is another area that has changed from 36% in 2023 to just 22% in 2024.

This difference in just one year could show that companies have already invested in social media and digital sales, so they now have the expertise to leverage those channels.

The growth in social commerce and adoption on platforms to schedule and post on social channels could also have taken away some of the legwork for marketers.

Other skills that decision-makers believe are important to the success of a business are:

- ↗ **Video, Display, & Programmatic Advertising** (36% in 2024) vs **Paid Search Specialist** (26% in 2023)
- ↗ **UX & UI Design** (29% in 2024 vs vs 21% in 2023%)
- ↗ **Customer Experience (CX)** (22% in 2024 vs 18% in 2023)

It's worth highlighting that **Content Marketing & Copywriting** was deemed by a quarter of respondents as a skills gap. This skill was not mentioned in 2023, so it may show the rise in the demand for marketers with content expertise and the ability to leverage AI copywriting tools.
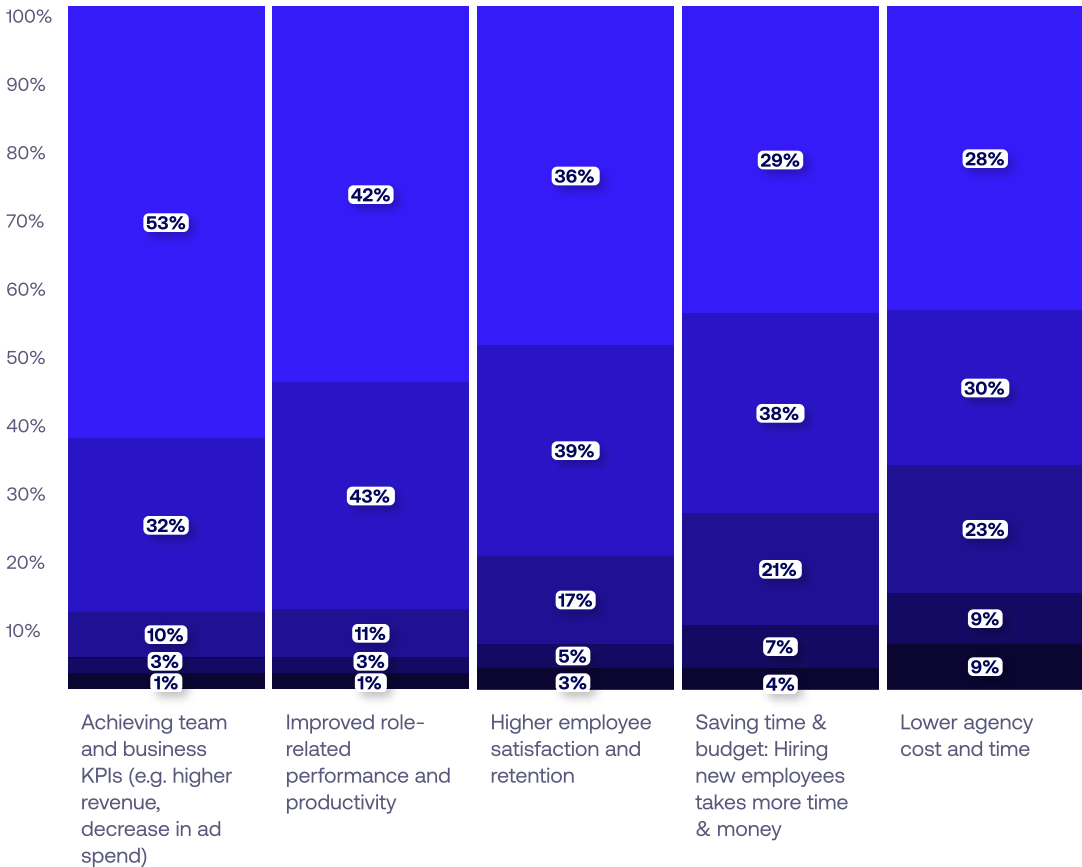
Why Should Companies Address The Skills Gap?

Our survey respondents stated that the three biggest values of addressing the gap in their business or team are:

1 Achieving team and business KPIs (53%)

2 Improved role-related performance and productivity (42%)

3 Higher employee satisfaction and retention (36%)

What will it be worth to your business if you can address these gaps?

Please score each item from 1 to 5. (1 lowest value created, 5 highest value created)   ■ 1 ■ 2 ■ 3 ■ 4 ■ 5

	Achieving team and business KPIs (e.g. higher revenue, decrease in ad spend)	Improved role-related performance and productivity	Higher employee satisfaction and retention	Saving time & budget: Hiring new employees takes more time & money	Lower agency cost and time
5	53%	42%	36%	29%	28%
4	32%	43%	39%	38%	30%
3	10%	11%	17%	21%	23%
2	3%	3%	5%	7%	9%
1	1%	1%	3%	4%	9%

In last year's survey, performance and productivity, along with employee satisfaction and retention, were also rated as the top two areas of value.

This year's leaders were asked about KPIs, which came out as the top priority. This shows the value of being able to measure and improve performance – an issue not addressed in the 2023 survey.

What Are The Main Barriers To Addressing The Skills Gap?

While training is one of the most effective solutions for closing the digital skills gap, there are challenges.
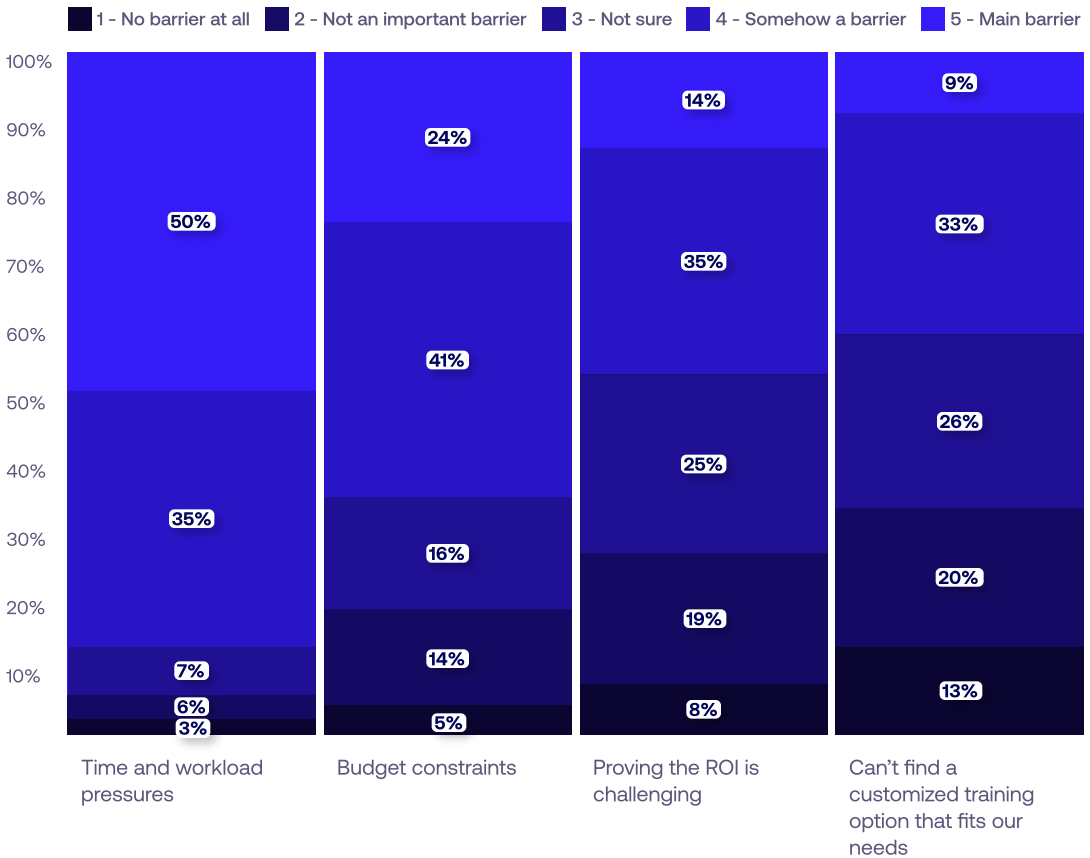
Unfortunately, there's no one-size-fits-all training solution. Every company and workforce is different, so it's about understanding what your employees need, the gaps you need to fill, and what types of training can work within your business.

84% 84% Of Employees Expect Their Employer To Provide The Training And Education They Need To Stay Up To Date With Changing Skills In Their Industry - EdX

Our respondents were clear on what the main barriers were to training provision. 85% of leaders cited **Time and workload pressure** as the key barrier when scores were combined for 'Somehow a barrier' and 'Main barrier'. This is an increase of 23% when compared with responses in 2023*.

Main barriers to address the skills gaps within your teams & company

Legend: ■ 1 - No barrier at all ■ 2 - Not an important barrier ■ 3 - Not sure ■ 4 - Somehow a barrier ■ 5 - Main barrier

	Time and workload pressures	Budget constraints	Proving the ROI is challenging	Can't find a customized training option that fits our needs
5 - Main barrier	50%	24%	14%	9%
4 - Somehow a barrier	35%	41%	35%	33%
3 - Not sure	7%	16%	25%	26%
2 - Not an important barrier	6%	14%	19%	20%
1 - No barrier at all	3%	5%	8%	13%

The second most common challenge is **Budget constraints**, according to a quarter of decision-makers, while 41% see it as 'Somehow a barrier'. This is also an increase from the previous year, when 38% of respondents cited budget constraints as the top challenge.

While 68% of decision-makers say their budget didn't change in 2024 compared to 2023 (43%), that's not necessarily good news.

The most common training budget was between €1,000 and €5,000 at 38%, followed by between €6,000 and €10,000 at 17%. Only 1% had over €50,000 for training in 2024.

Upskilling in such challenging times and in the face of AI could mean that budgets are stretched – and, if not adapted to the needs of a workforce, ineffective.

18% of leaders say their budget decreased, compared to 34% in 2023. And 16% saw a 0%–25% decrease in their budget (vs. 38% in 2023).

A lucky 14% received more budget for training, although this was a drop of 9% when compared to 2023. Over half of those who got more budget received an increase of between 0% and 25%.

The other two barriers to providing training are **Proving the ROI** with 49% (the same figure as in 2023) and **Can't find a customized training option** (42% vs 45% in 2023).

It's important to note that only numeric figures were given as answer choices in 2023. Offering choices such as 'Not a Barrier' and 'Not Sure', etc. may have an impact on results.

# How Are Companies Providing Training (and What's Effective)?

Decision-makers can take different approaches to fill the skills gaps. When asked "How do you address the skills gaps within your team?", respondents cited three effective tactics.

Upskill and reskill current employees was the most commonly used tactic (57%), a slight increase from 55% in 2023.'

The second tactic companies used to provide training is **Outsource via agency or freelancers** (28% in 2024 vs. 25% in 2023). This slight increase could be attributed to budget cuts or layoffs that require companies to fill the gap with expertise in key areas such as content marketing, SEO, or social media.

The third tactic used is to **Hire experienced specialists** at 12%. Interestingly, this is a slight decrease from 2023 at 15%.

Primarily, how do you address the skills gaps within your team?

■ Responses

Category	Value
Hire experienced specialists	12.32%
Outsource via agency or freelancers	27.51%
Upskill and reskill current employees	57.02%
Other (Please specify)	3.15%
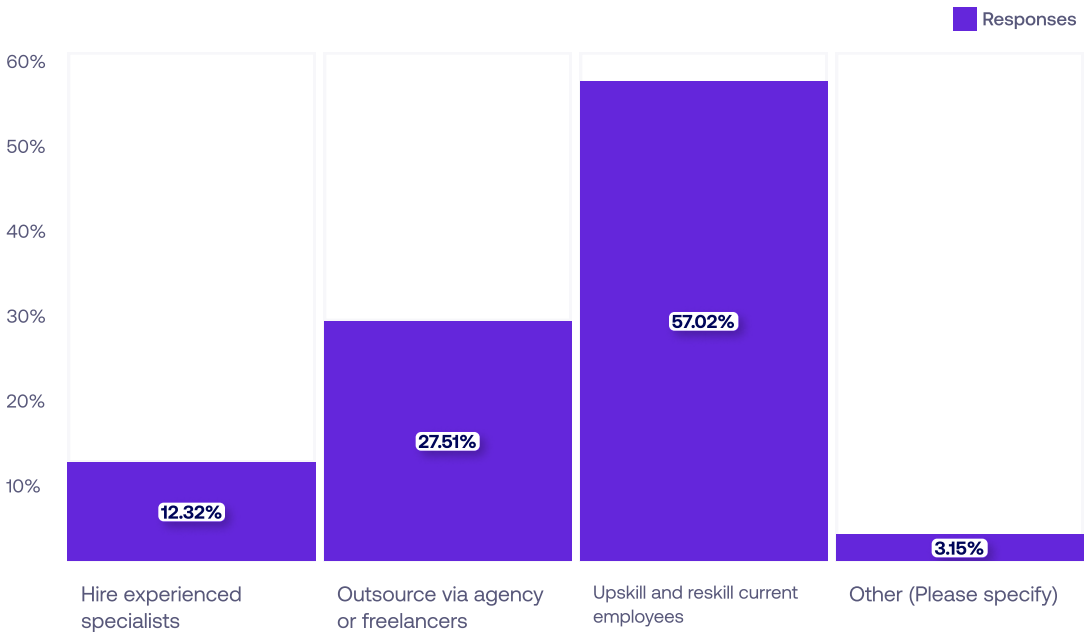
This feedback makes sense because when people need skills, the most obvious way to ensure they have them is to provide training to upskill or reskill. Also, employees are now prioritizing training when they look to stay or move to a new role.

67% Of Employees Would Consider Switching Employers In The Next 12 Months To Learn New Skills - PwC
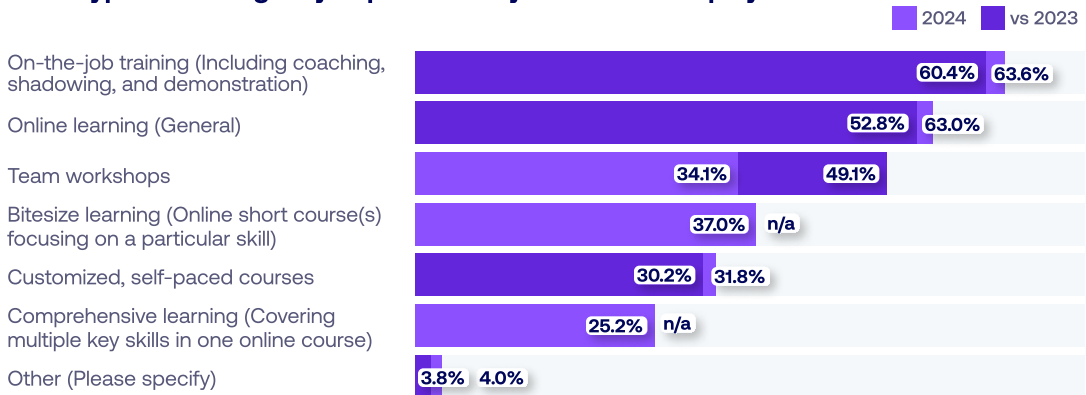
But there are many different types and levels of training, such as certification. The six types of training that our surveyed decision-makers currently provide are:

↗ On-the-job training

↗ Online learning

↗ Team workshops

↗ Bitesize learning

↗ Customized and self-paced training

↗ Comprehensive learning

When we compare the type of training provision and effectiveness of each from year to year, we can gain some interesting insights.

What type of training do you provide for your team & employees?

Legend: 2024 | vs 2023

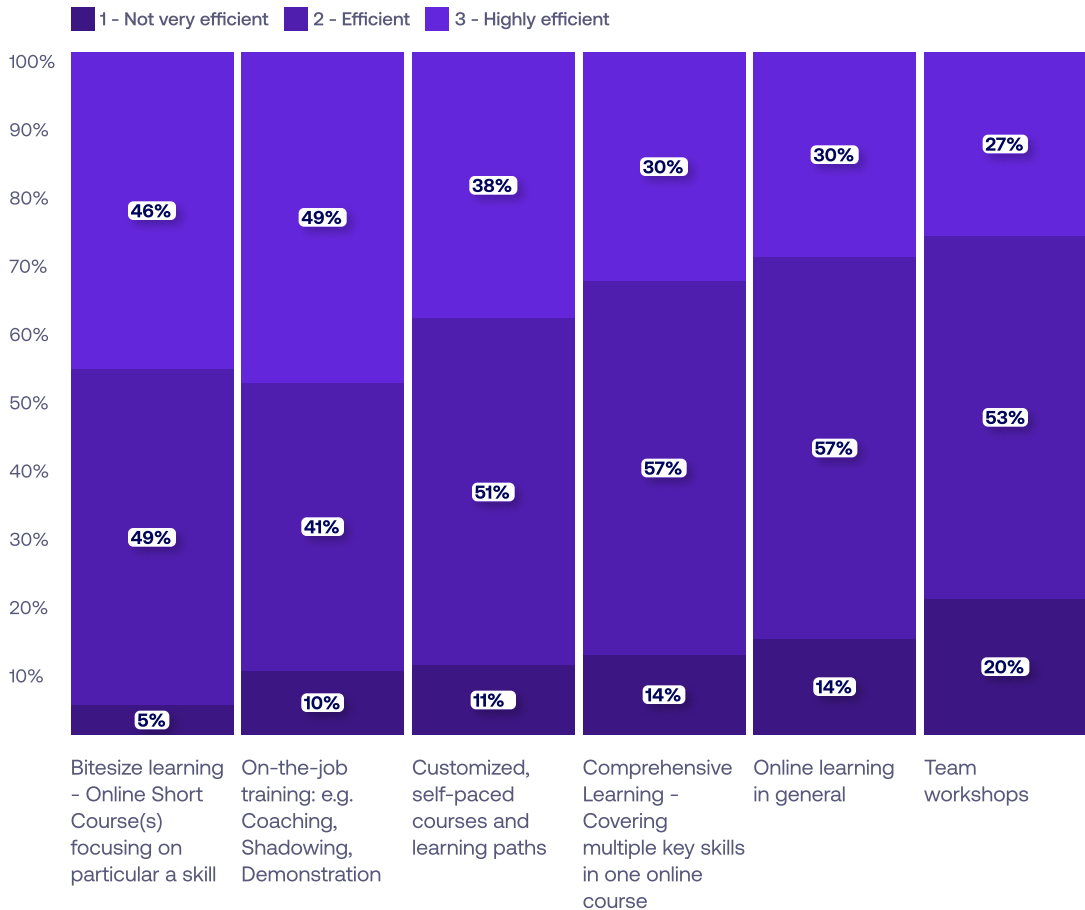| Training Type	2024	vs 2023
On-the-job training (Including coaching, shadowing, and demonstration)	60.4%	63.6%
Online learning (General)	52.8%	63.0%
Team workshops	34.1%	49.1%
Bitesize learning (Online short course(s) focusing on a particular skill)	37.0%	n/a
Customized, self-paced courses	30.2%	31.8%
Comprehensive learning (Covering multiple key skills in one online course)	25.2%	n/a
Other (Please specify)	3.8%	4.0%

In 2023 and 2024, **On-the-job training** (which includes coaching or shadowing) and **Online learning** were the most popular types of training used by over 60% of leaders.

49% of decision-makers believe **On-the-job training** was 'Highly efficient', while 41% said it was 'Efficient'. This compares to 48% for both efficiency categories in 2023, so it's a training type that seems to be having a positive impact in the workplace.

In 2024, the use of **Online learning** as a training method increased to 63%. This increased adoption shows that employers are using online methods to train staff because this approach can offer a flexible, accessible and easy way to learn.

Online learning was seen to be 'Efficient' by 57% of respondents and 'Highly efficient' by 30%.

What type of training would be more efficient for your team & employees?

- ■ 1 - Not very efficient
- ■ 2 - Efficient
- ■ 3 - Highly efficient

	Bitesize learning – Online Short Course(s) focusing on particular a skill	On-the-job training: e.g. Coaching, Shadowing, Demonstration	Customized, self-paced courses and learning paths	Comprehensive Learning - Covering multiple key skills in one online course	Online learning in general	Team workshops
3 - Highly efficient	46%	49%	38%	30%	30%	27%
2 - Efficient	49%	41%	51%	57%	57%	53%
1 - Not very efficient	5%	10%	11%	14%	14%	20%

The reason for a lower score in 'Highly efficient' could be the difference in quality offered through online learning.

For example, an employee can access a free online digital marketing course (such as a MOOC), but if the content is outdated or does not include real-life examples, then it won't have value to a learner or be seen as efficient.

Revenue In The Online Education Market Is Projected To Reach $239 Billion By 2027 - Statista

A tactic that has seen a significant drop is **Team workshops** – down from 49% in 2023 to just 34% in 2024.

This could be due to the rise in hybrid and remote working, with teams coming together less often, making group workshops a challenge. This method could also be less efficient as it can be difficult to teach people who have different levels of knowledge and skill. People also learn differently, so it's a format that may not suit everyone.

Team workshops were ranked by 20% of leaders to be 'Not very efficient', although over half still see them as 'Efficient'. However, it could work for large corporations with big workforces that are returning to the office.

Customized, self-paced courses remained at the same level, used by nearly a third of decision-makers. This method is also seen as 'Efficient' by 51% and 'Highly efficient' for 38%.

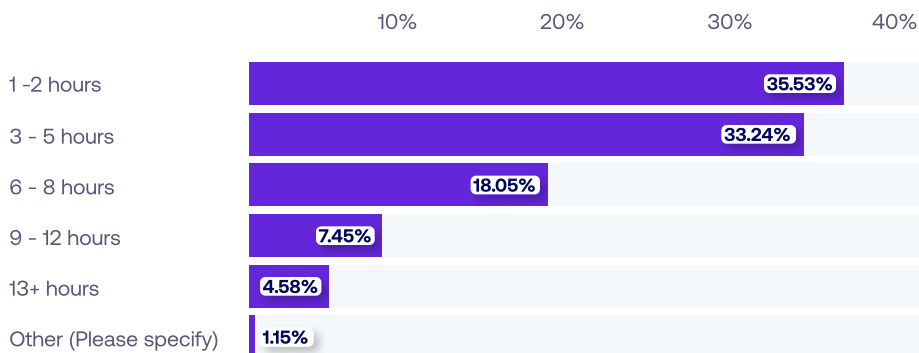In 2024, our respondents revealed two other training methods that we didn't see in the previous year.

Bitesize learning, or microlearning, that uses online courses focused on a particular skill is used by 37% of leaders in our survey.

It's also the most efficient method of training (even ranking above on-the-job training). 46% rank the method as 'Highly efficient', while 49% believe it's 'Efficient'.

This shows that companies are using short online courses to fill skill gaps in particular areas, such as AI or SEO. A flexible and accessible method (especially with a hybrid workforce), bitesize learning can also be used to upskill new hires or refresh the skills of existing employees.

When we asked what the **ideal length or time commitment for a bitesize course** would be for employees, 36% of respondents said between 1 and 2 hours. This was followed by 33% at 3–5 hours, and 18% for between 6 and 8 hours.

In your opinion, what should be the ideal length of a Bitesize Course that focuses on gaining a particular skill e. g. UX Design, Email marketing, SEO etc.?

Length	Percentage
1 -2 hours	35.53%
3 - 5 hours	33.24%
6 - 8 hours	18.05%
9 - 12 hours	7.45%
13+ hours	4.58%
Other (Please specify)	1.15%

A quarter of Marketing, Sales, HR, and L&D leaders also use **Comprehensive learning** as part of their training. This type covers multiple skills in one online course, providing staff with a number of key skills to help close the digital skills gap.

Comprehensive learning is seen by respondents to be 'Highly efficient' (30%) and 'Efficient' (57%). The ideal length for a comprehensive course either covering multiple skills or focusing on one discipline at an in-depth level should be between 26 and 30 hours or 26 and 40 hours (both 26%).

It should be noted that 64% of survey respondents **partnered with an external training provider** to offer online, customized, self-paced courses to their teams. This is slightly down from 70% in 2023.
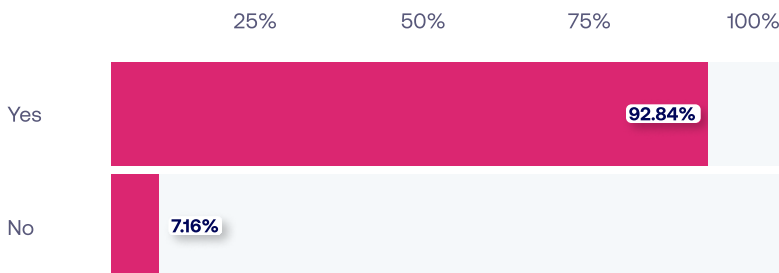
The Value of Certification

When hiring a new candidate or promoting an existing employee, department and team leaders have a lot to take into consideration.

With a lot of CVs or resumes to sift through and pressure to find staff with the 'right' skills, a professional certification can help a candidate stand out.

That's why 93% of leaders we surveyed said they valued professional certifications when hiring or promoting. This is a slight increase up from 91% in 2023.

Do you value professional / industry skills certifications when hiring or promoting?

|	25%	50%	75%	100%
Yes				92.84%
No	7.16%			

This shows the continued value of industry-aligned certifications to employers, as they provide a simple way to demonstrate a certain level of knowledge and skills. It also provides assurance that a certified candidate should be able to apply what they know instantly to a role.

Plus there are huge benefits to gaining a certification for employees, such as:

↗ Higher pay

↗ Career opportunities

↗ Gaining a competitive edge

↗ Learning and honing new skills

↗ Boosting credibility

↗ Investing in personal development

67% of respondents also value exam-based industry certs from training providers more when hiring or promoting. However, 31% didn't see the difference between free and exam-based certifications.

When asked "When hiring someone for your team or business, would having a skills or industry certification from the Digital Marketing Institute on a CV increase a candidate's chance of getting hired?", 86% of Marketing, Sales, HR, and L&D leaders said 'Yes', an increase of 9% from 2023.

When hiring someone for your team or business, would having a skills or industry certification from the Digital Marketing Institute on a CV increase a candidate's chance of getting hired?

■ Yes 86%

■ No 14%
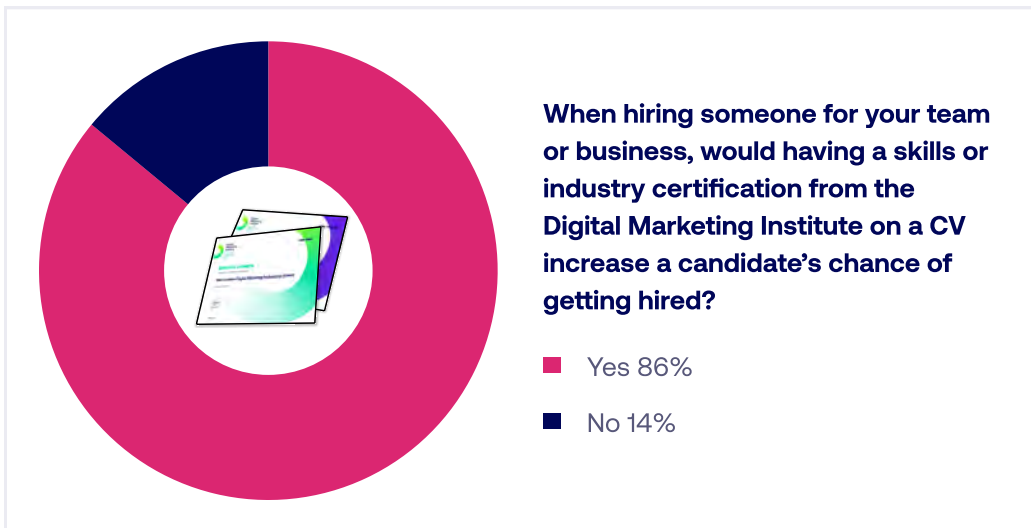
This demonstrates the continued value of a Digital Marketing Institute (DMI) certification as employers look for people with key digital marketing skills aligned with the needs of industry that can have a positive impact on a business.

# How Is Artificial Intelligence Reshaping Work?

While marketers have used AI for years through automation and tools like chatbots, the technology is advancing at a rapid rate.

Also, the way people work is changing. There's more data, more tools to master, and more digital channels to leverage. This can make employees feel overwhelmed as the pace of work seems to keep increasing.

Used in the right way, however, AI can help people manage this relentless pace.
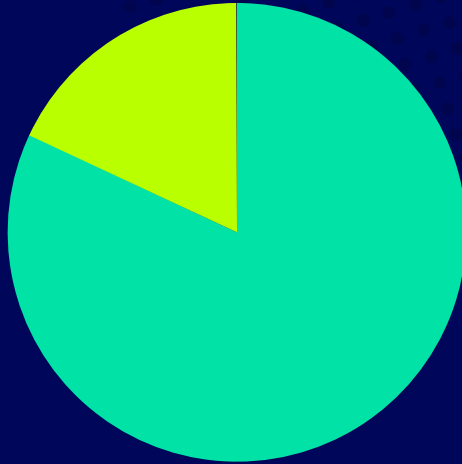
82% Of The Global Leaders Say Their Employees Will Need New Skills To Be Prepared For The Growth Of Generative AI

Microsoft Work Trend Index Annual Report

According to a <u>recent survey with DMI members,</u> digital marketers believe the key benefits of integrating AI into their activities are:

↗ Automation of Routine Tasks (68%)

↗ Improved Customer Experience (46%)

↗ Improved Targeting & Segmentation (45%)

↗ Enhanced Personalization (44%)

↗ Predictive Analysis (39%)

But the challenge for leaders and companies is a lack of AI skills across the business. 54% of marketers in the DMI member survey believe the current level of AI skills on their team is low.

In addition, over a third reported having no AI strategy in their business, while 30% are currently developing one.

This deficit in AI skills and lack of strategy could mean that many companies fall behind. Organizations that embrace AI can not only leverage it to stay ahead of competitors, but also gain the potential to unleash creativity and unlock productivity in the workplace.

This means employers want to hire people with AI skills. Microsoft reported that the share of US job postings on LinkedIn mentioning GPT is already up 79% year-over-year (as of March 2023).

And this is a requirement across all departments in a business, not just siloed to technical or customer-facing roles. Everyone in the workforce needs 'AI aptitude'.

This is also confirmed by our member survey, which found that 64% of leaders are more likely to hire an employee who had an AI certification versus someone who didn't.

> ## *"AI is a tool, it's a technology. It's as useful as the person putting it to work"*
>
> - Clark Boyd, Founder At Novela & Marketing And Management Professor Said On A Recent DMI Podcast

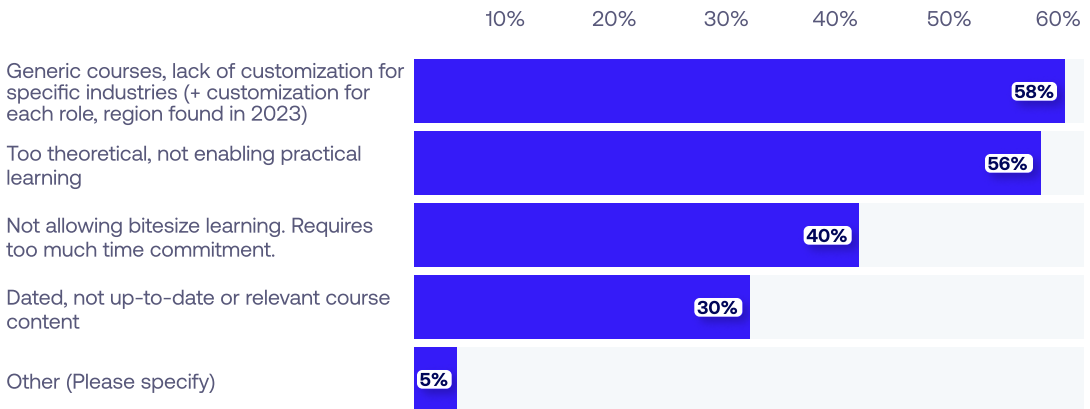# The Shortcomings of Marketing and Sales Training

While it's clear that the decision-makers involved in our survey provide training for staff (using a variety of effective methods), we wanted to find out any issues or shortcomings that could be addressed.

Along with the main barriers to addressing the skills gap, 58% of Marketing, Sales, HR, and L&D leaders called out **'Generic courses, lack of customization for specific industries'** as the main shortcoming or issue with current training provision.

As digital marketing continues to become more specialized and complex, companies require employees with specific skills. This means that general or generic courses that fail to cover subjects or topics in depth will not be helpful.

Additionally, different industries face different challenges and require a different set of skills. For example, the retail sector would value social media and social commerce expertise, while the pharma sector is likely to require staff with AI or UX know-how.

Shortcomings of Digital Marketing & Sales Training

Generic courses, lack of customization for specific industries (+ customization for each role, region found in 2023)	58%
Too theoretical, not enabling practical learning	56%
Not allowing bitesize learning. Requires too much time commitment.	40%
Dated, not up-to-date or relevant course content	30%
Other (Please specify)	5%

The next shortcoming was that training is **'Too theoretical, not enabling practical learning'** (56%). The rise in employers seeking out practical skills such as critical thinking and problem solving may be the reason for this.

While theory is useful, it's the application of theory and knowledge that leaders really want. Ultimately, they want an employee to make an impact in their role using the skills they have acquired through training.

40% of survey respondents believe that current training methods are **'Not allowing bitesize learning'** and the alternative method **'Requires too much time commitment'**. With time and workloads being the main barrier to addressing the skills gap, employers want training that can fit into staff's busy schedules, not add to them.

The final shortcoming is **'Dated, not up-to-date or relevant course content'** (30%). This is an understandable complaint as decision-makers are investing in training to upskill staff. The least that should be expected is that the content is relevant and up to date.

This data is difficult to compare to 2023 as this question was open-ended. But the most common answer to the biggest shortcoming of training was 'lack of customized training for specific industries, regions and roles'.

5 Ways to Bridge the Skills Gap in Your Workforce

It's clear there are challenges for Marketing, Sales, HR, and L&D leaders when it comes to providing effective training.

Managers and employees are under pressure to ensure their marketing efforts deliver and perform.

This means that people do not have a lot of time and need training that can provide relevant and easily applicable skills in a way that fits into their schedule – and doesn't become a chore. Leaders want to do as much as possible with the limited budget available for training.

In addition, the advancement of AI is having an impact with many companies scrambling to catch up so they can leverage the technology. That's why many report lacking employees with AI strategy and development skills.

With all that in mind, here are five recommendations to get the most out of your training programs and budget.

1 **Assess your staff's skills:** Any training you provide will be ineffective if it's not tailored to the needs of the business. Assess the digital skills (including AI) in your workforce to identify your weak spots and see any growth opportunities – an external provider like DMI can help you do this.

2 **Choose the right learning method:** There are now a number of training methods to choose from. For example, bitesize learning that focuses on a particular skill is proving effective (46% voted it 'Highly efficient') along with on-the-job training (49% said it was 'Highly efficient'). With so much pressure on people's time, employees may benefit from short and specialized courses that offer value quickly.

3 **Embrace alternative credentials:** Professional certifications can help upskill employees in a specific area that can add value to the business. Employees may be more willing to take part and complete a course if there's the benefit of earning an industry-aligned qualification that will enhance their career.

4 **Work with a training provider:** It can be difficult to know your team's strengths and weaknesses, along with understanding skill gaps. That's why 64% of survey respondents partner with an external training provider to offer customized training to their teams. Find a training provider that can guide you from the assessment stage through to implementation of a relevant training program.

5 **Be clever with your budget:** With 68% of respondents having the same budget as last year but with added pressure to deliver, it's about being smarter with what you have. Review your training program performance and see if there could be a better way to use your budget. For example, if your company lacks AI skills, invest in a short course that can upskill staff quickly.

Are you looking to enhance your team's digital skills with a tailored on-demand learning platform? Learn how DMI for Business Plans can help!

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"The DMI training has been pivotal in achieving our KPIs. With a deeper understanding of data and analytics, we're making more data-driven decisions that impact revenue positively. These improvements have not only boosted our customer relationships but also fostered better collaboration and skill sharing within our team, contributing to a holistic improvement in our KPIs"

Philipp Karbun
Key Account Manager

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