

87% of U.S. Workers Agree Education Revolution is Needed to Prepare Students for Workforce

Calls for New Approach to Education

Lifelong Learning Crucial to Success

OKLAHOMA CITY, March 11, 2020 – With new jobs and industries emerging and constantly evolving in tandem with technology, nearly 9 in 10 employees (87%) say a whole new approach to education, skills training and learning, or an Education Revolution, is needed to better prepare people for the workforce.

This is according to a newly released survey conducted by The Harris Poll and commissioned by Express Employment Professionals.

Regardless of generation, majorities agree that what is taught in school does not always translate to career success. More than half of U.S. employees (54%) say that schools are not doing a good job of preparing the next generation of workers for what their needs are after school, and 4 in 5 (80%) say the education system has failed to evolve to meet the needs of the workforce.

“With an eye on the future, it’s time for educators, businesses and policymakers to come to the table and discuss where gaps exist in education and how to collaborate to bridge them,” said Bill Stoller, CEO of Express. “We recognize that teachers and professors do the best they can with the resources they are given, and we want to make sure their efforts are not in vain.”

Diving into one of the [hottest issues](#) of the 2020 presidential election with promises of free college and student debt relief, only 64% of U.S. workers see four-year colleges as the best avenue for career success, and who should pay for it is divided by generation. Just over half of baby boomers/seniors (52%) think the financial obligations of a college education rest on students with 54% of Gen Z saying the government should shoulder the cost.

But most employees (79%) agree that to remain competitive in their careers, learning can’t stop after graduation. According to [a report](#) presented at the World Economic Forum, to avoid a worst-case scenario of “technological change accompanied by talent shortages, mass

unemployment and growing inequality—reskilling and upskilling of today’s workers will be critical.”

The national survey of 1,206 U.S. employees ages 18 and older was conducted online by The Harris Poll between Dec. 5 and Dec. 30, 2019. It offers a detailed, in-depth look at education and how it translates into the workplace.

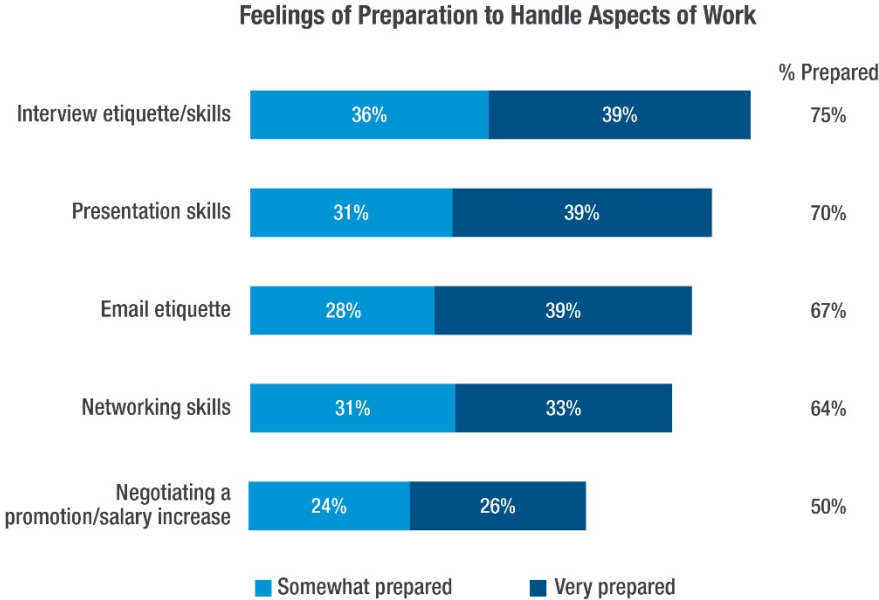
Work Experience Programs Lacking

Eighty-five percent of workers believe degrees should require on-the-job experience, not just coursework, yet close to half, 45%, say they did not participate in any work experience programs (e.g., internships, shadowing, apprenticeships, co-op placements) while in school. Of those who did take part in a work experience program while in school, most (87%) say it prepared them for the workforce.

When looking at higher education, 84% of employees agree that colleges place more emphasis on grades than actually preparing workers for a job. In fact, more than 4 out of 5 (83%) say job training certificates do a better job of preparing people for the workforce than college does.

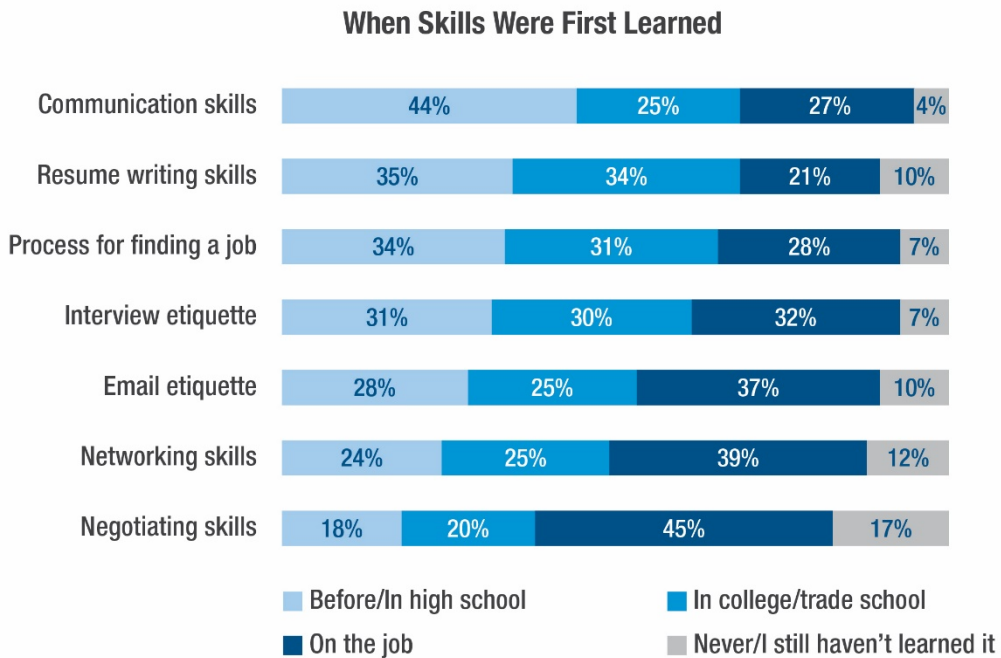
Skills Preparation

After entering the workforce following their highest level of education, the majority of U.S. workers say they felt prepared for various facets of work, but only 2 in 5, or less, said they felt very prepared.



Around one-in-three report learning several of the skills before or in high school, but a

significant number say they learned them while on the job or admit they have yet to learn them.



Given that many workers do not learn key skills until they are on the job, they also wish their high school would have:

- Taught how to handle real-life workplace situations — 56%
- Taught networking skills — 51%
- Offered interview tips/practice sessions — 50%

Few Use Education Daily at Work

Sixty-seven percent of American workers say they are employed in the same field/profession in which they received their degrees or certifications, but more than 3 in 4 (77%) agree that they never learned the majority of their day-to-day job duties in school. Consequently, more than 9 in 10 (92%) agree there needs to be more of a balance in education to match actual career options.

Specific resources employees most commonly cite as having access to in high school or college to help them find their career path include:

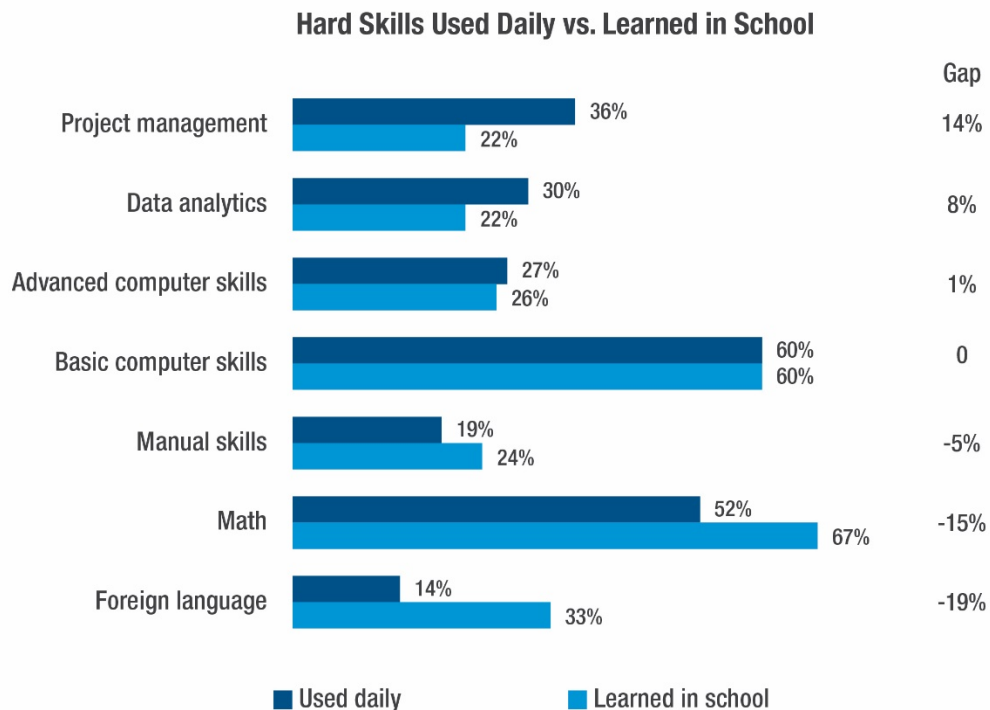
- Job fairs attended by potential employers — 33%
- Access to a career center — 30%
- Sessions with a career counselor — 28%

- Access to job readiness programs — 22%
- A predictive test about what job would be good for them — 22%

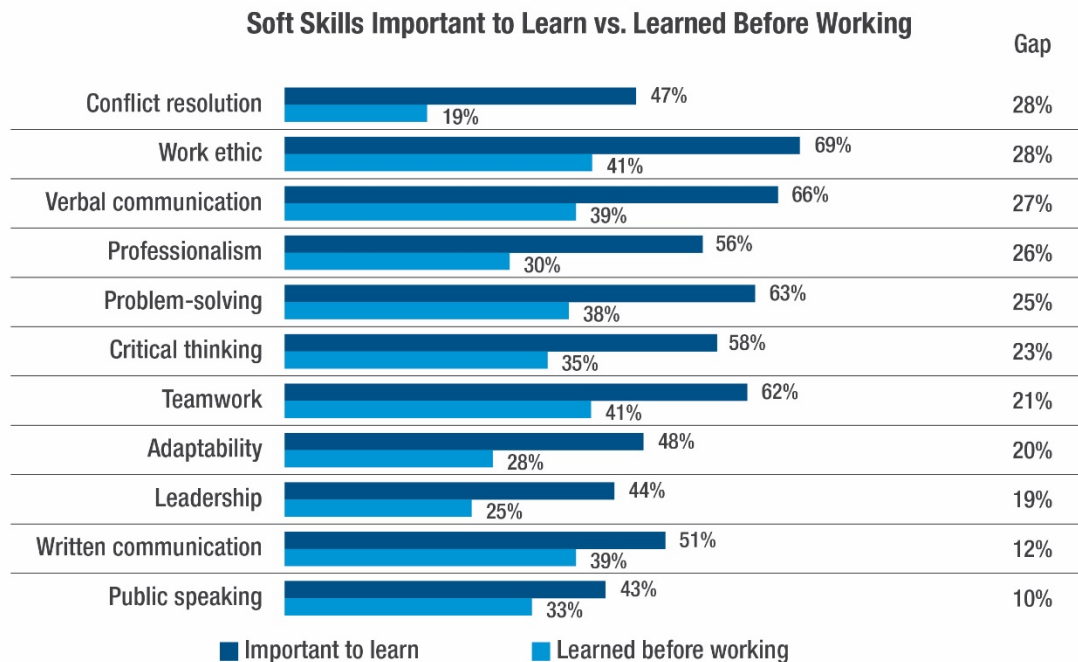
Beneficial vs. Useless School Subjects

Despite using various hard skills in the workplace, few say they learned these in school except for math (67%) and basic computer skills (60%). Employees note foreign language (33% vs. 14%) and math (67% vs. 52%) are more commonly learned in school but not used on the job. Project management (36% vs. 22%) and data analytics (30% vs. 22%) were more commonly used daily at work but not learned in school.

English (58%) and math (57%) are the most commonly reported school subjects used in daily activities at work. Employees most commonly say religion (38%), art (36%) and physical education (30%) are useless in preparing most students for the workplace.



Roughly half or more workers add that various soft skills are important to learn before entering the workforce, but fewer report having actually learned them in school.



The vast majority (87%) agree teaching basic economic skills like budgeting or managing finances are lacking in school today. More than three in five (61%) wish their high school would have taught money management skills to better prepare them for the workforce, while 51% didn't learn how to fill out a W-2 until on the job. Forty-seven percent would have liked to learn about filing taxes in high school to better prepare them for the workforce.

Advanced Degrees Helpful, but Not Essential

Although the majority of U.S. workers, 83%, say their education has been useful to their career, only 18% say it has been absolutely essential.

- 84% note it takes skills not typically taught in school to get a job
- 61% agree an education isn't necessary to be successful at their job
- 34% say they could have gotten their job without the education they have
- 30% say their education didn't provide them with many skills necessary to be successful in the workplace

Still, 7 in 10 (70%) appear to equate a degree with success as they say getting any degree is better than no degree at all. In 10 years, 68% believe advanced degrees such as master's degrees will be the new minimum requirement for many jobs. And while degrees are perceived to be useful, 75% feel educational institutions give students false hope about quickly climbing the career ladder after school.

Who Should Pay for College?

When considering who should pay for college, there is no clear consensus. Notably, views on the responsible party change across generations, with Gen Z the most likely to believe the government should foot the bill and boomers/seniors say students.

- Government: (Gen Z, 54%; millennials, 32%; Gen X, 23%; boomers/seniors, 14%)
- The student: (Gen Z, 26%; millennials, 33%; Gen X, 43%; boomers/seniors, 52%)

The majority of employees with at least some college education (94%) say they worked while attending school, with 74% reporting their employment included a full-time job. Broken down by generation, those who worked full-time in college include:

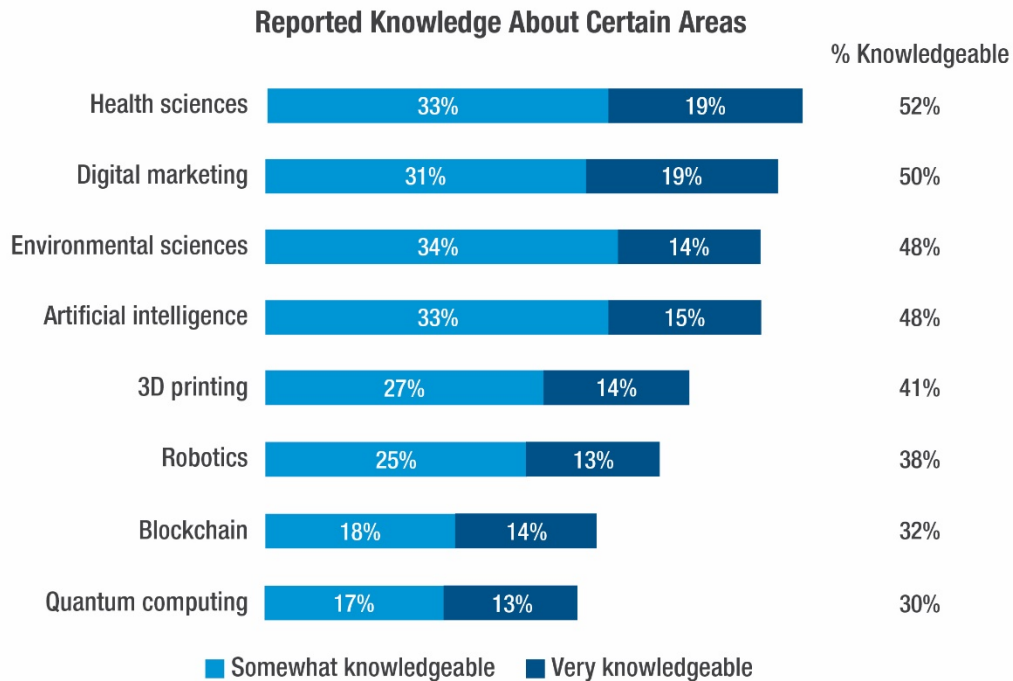
- Boomers/Seniors — 63%
- Gen X — 74%
- Millennials — 80%

Continual Learning is Essential

Nearly 4 in 5 (79%) agree anyone who doesn't continue to upskill in their career will be left behind in the workforce, but only 33% of U.S. employees have returned to school after entering the workforce. Reasons for going back to school include thinking it would lead salary increases (39%), to advance at a job (35%), to refresh existing skills (29%) or to change careers entirely (26%).

When it comes to employer-sponsored education, more than 2 in 5 workers (42%) report their employer currently offers courses or programs for upskilling, and 10% are not sure.

Seventy-three percent feel prepared for jobs of the future, but when asked about specific skills, only half or less are knowledgeable in these areas.



"The jobs of tomorrow won't wait for workers to take their time to learn the necessary skills," Stoller said. "The sooner we align what is taught in school and upskilling at companies with the demands of the workforce, the easier it will be to create large talent pools of workers necessary for a stable and successful economy."

Survey Methodology

The survey was conducted online within the United States by The Harris Poll on behalf of Express Employment Professionals between Dec. 5 and Dec. 30, 2019, among 1,206 U.S. employees (defined as adults ages 18+ in the U.S. who are employed full-time, part-time, or self-employed and have at least a high school degree). Figures are weighted where necessary by age, gender, race/ethnicity, region, education, income, marital status, employment, household size, and propensity to be online to bring them into line with their actual proportions in the population. No estimates of theoretical sampling error can be calculated; a full methodology is available upon request.

Generations defined as: Gen Z (ages 18-24), millennials (ages 25-38), Gen X (ages 39-54) and boomers/seniors (ages 55+).

About the Survey

- [Memo from The Harris Poll](#)
- [Study by The Harris Poll](#)

If you would like to arrange for an interview with Bill Stoller to discuss this topic, please contact Sheena Karami, 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 Professionals. Headquartered in Oklahoma City, the international staffing company has more than 825 franchises in the U.S., Canada and South Africa, and beginning in 2020 will expand to Australia and New Zealand. Since its inception, Express has put more than 8 million people to work worldwide.

About Express Employment Professionals

At Express Employment Professionals, we're in the business of people. From job seekers to client companies, Express helps people thrive and businesses grow. Headquartered in Oklahoma City, OK, our international network of franchises offer localized staffing solutions to the communities they serve, employing 552,000 people across North America in 2019. For more information, visit www.ExpressPros.com.