



# Why Organizations Should Invest More in **Soft Skills Development**



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## Do soft skills matter more than hard skills?

Most HR professionals think so!

86%

say soft skills are more important than hard skills when it comes to long-term organizational success

And yet...

organizations are more than **2x** as likely to focus on hard skill training than on soft skill training

## Do hard or soft skills provide a higher return on investment (ROI)?



38%

say soft skills training has a higher ROI than hard skills training

40%

say the ROI is about equal for both

22%

say hard skills training has a higher ROI

## Good communication skills are especially rare



Just 36%

say two-sided conversations that build relationships and trust are frequent or fairly common

Just 33%

say overall employee communication is good or excellent

Just 32%

say leaders are good or excellent at having productive conversations with direct reports

Just 22%

say managers are good or excellent at having difficult conversations

## There are huge skill gaps in certain areas of communication



### Listening skills

85% say it is highly important

22% say the skills are common in their organizations

63 percentage-point gap



### Ability to give constructive feedback

78% say it is highly important

38% say it is common

40 percentage-point gap



### Openness

76% say it is highly important

42% say it is common

34 percentage-point gap

## Employers use different non-technological methods for teaching hard and soft skills



The most common non-technological methods for teaching **hard skills** are:

- ▶▶ On-the-job training
- ▶▶ Job shadowing

The most common non-technological methods for teaching **soft skills** are:

- ▶▶ Internal mentoring conversations
- ▶▶ Feedback conversations between managers and employees



## Organizations that excel at communication differ from others

Such organizations are far more likely to:

- 👍 measure the ROI of learning
- 👍 say that ability to build trust is common
- 👍 have two-sided conversations that build trust
- 👍 describe managers as being excellent coaches
- 👍 say managers demonstrate the behaviors they want from their direct reports



## Consider These Strategies



**Embrace** the distinction between soft and hard skills



**Consider** working harder at measuring ROI



**Measure** management skills



**Invest** in soft skills



**Take** advantage of various training modalities



**Remember** leadership behavior is a powerful form of communication



**Emphasize** two-sided conversations



**Teach** coaching skills

## About the Survey

The survey, called "Developing Hard and Soft Skills in Today's Workplace," ran in Q3 of 2020. There were responses from 261 participants with 187 responding to every question.

The participants are from a wide range of employers; and 53% of organizations have 500 or more employees.

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