

The 2021 Workplace Learning Trends

Critical Soft Skills for Enterprise Organizations

The skills gap is not a new topic in the working world. According to Degreed's How Workers Learn Report, eight out of 10 CEOs say skill shortages threaten their companies' growth.

But in the past year, we've seen a major shift in this discussion. It's no longer only about IT or engineering leaders emphasizing the pace of technological change. The rapid shift to remote work and the uncertainty of the pandemic transformed the employee experience. Employers now recognize that soft skills will help employees thrive in the future. CIO Dive writes, "No longer just a resume differentiator, workplaces demand soft skills such as teamwork, adaptability, and conflict resolution from all employees."

What are the soft skills trends of 2020 and what do they mean for your team's learning plans for 2021? We turned to Udemy for Business 2020 course consumption data to investigate.



1 billion
people will need new skills
over the next decade.

— World Economic Forum

Self-mastery skills take the spotlight

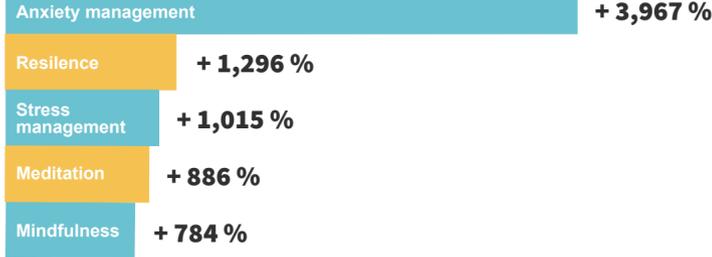
Mental health and wellness were once considered taboo topics in the workplace. But in 2020, they became major areas of focus for companies. For every dollar spent on wellness programs, companies can expect their healthcare costs to decrease by \$3.27. As the world (and workplace) becomes more unpredictable, self-mastery skills will be the key to employee success.

Employees responded to this year's challenges by focusing on skills like managing stress and adapting to change. Courses related to anxiety management, resilience, and stress management skills saw quadruple-digit growth in 2020.

Companies are discovering the value of resilience and empathy training for all employees. "We often focus on managers, but colleagues must also exercise empathy as people experience stress differently from one another," says Udemy instructor and workplace wellbeing consultant Ritu Riyat.

As working from home blurred the boundaries between the personal and the professional, the risk of overwork and burnout increased. Employees turned to courses on time management, motivation, and goal achievement to learn how to better cope.

Mental health and wellness skills



Course consumption percentage growth from 2019 to 2020

Everything relies on remote collaboration

The slow but steady shift to remote work over the last few years already called for a range of new behaviors and skills. But leaders had to rapidly prioritize solutions for effective remote collaboration in 2020.

"COVID-19 has accelerated the shift from 'remote-accessible' to 'remote-first' thinking in collaboration

design," says Sprintkick founder and Udemy instructor Evan Kimbrell.

Consumption of courses related to listening skills, business communication, and business writing all increased by more than 1,300% in 2020.

Take action **Remote work isn't going away**

You can help your organization succeed in a remote-first or distributed workplace with these three strategies:

1. Ensure employees have the right tools and technology to do their jobs from anywhere.
2. Establish company-wide norms for remote work, such as employees listing their working hours and time zones in email signatures.
3. Help employees develop communication skills to fill the gap in face-to-face interactions.

Data literacy is the new computer literacy

Data is now every employee's business. Foundational data skills are essential to a holistic employee training program. "Clear understanding of dashboards, visualizations, and analysis will soon become a default skill set required of any office worker," says Jose Portilla, Head of Data Science at Pierian Data and Udemy data science instructor.

New business analytics tools like Tableau, Power BI, and Qlik Sense also simplify data visualization. "Business intelligence software allows analysts to be more independent. Non-technical people can easily

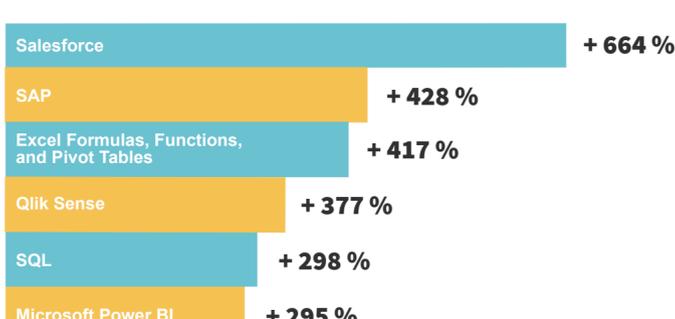
load data into the program and start playing with it right away," says Ned Krastev, Udemy instructor and Co-Founder of 365 Careers.

Employees who can interpret data, draw insights from data, and communicate with stakeholders will be invaluable. And workforces with strong data skills across all departments are more "data self-sufficient." The need for data literacy is akin to the moment when basic computer skills became a necessity for the workplace.

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Head of Data Science at Pierian Data & Udemy data science instructor

Business intelligence and data analysis



Course consumption percentage growth from 2019 to 2020

Set your organization up for success with soft skills training

Technical and role-related skills will always be important. But to set your workforce up for long-term success, you can't neglect the importance of soft skills and foundational competencies like data analysis.

Want to learn more about these trends and others that are shaping the landscape for 2021? Download the 2021 Workplace Learning Trends Report.

Preparing for the future with today's uncertainties can be especially challenging. Wondering what your next steps should be? Learn how we can help your employees prepare to tackle the wonders of tomorrow. Connect with a learning expert at Udemy for Business.

Methodology

The 2021 Workplace Learning Trends Report is based on data from the learning behavior of thousands of global companies using the Udemy for Business platform and a survey of over 500 Learning and Development Professionals.

Skills data compares the consumption of courses in the Udemy for Business collection from January 1, 2019–August 1, 2019 to January 1, 2020–August 1, 2020. All courses are associated with topics, with each course having up to five topics. These topics are what you see as the trending skills within the report. For courses with multiple topics, consumption minutes are divided equally across all topics associated with those courses.

From August 19, 2020 to September 10, 2020, 528 global Learning and Development professionals completed a 16-question survey on the current state of their companies' training programs.