



Presented by DeVry University

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Career Advisory Board Survey Reveals Soft Skills Gaps Exist Despite Focused Efforts to Create an Engaged Workforce

NAPERVILLE, Ill. – Dec. 17, 2018 – The [Career Advisory Board](#), established by [DeVry University](#), today announced the results of its 2018 Talent Activation, Employee Experience and Skills Development research, revealing a gap in soft skills such as communications, business acumen and customer service. These gaps persist despite proactive efforts to develop employee experiences designed to foster a highly engaged workforce. This effort, known as “talent activation,” occurs at the recruitment, onboarding, learning and development, and performance evaluation stages of an employee’s tenure.

The study surveyed 505 U.S.-based hiring managers at companies with 500 or more employees on how they are activating their employee talent. The highlights of the findings reveal the following:

- **Respondents are confident they are activating their talent** and providing strong candidate and employee experiences, yet they are still observing significant soft skills gaps at all levels, particularly in the following areas:
 - Technology/digital fluency (62 percent)
 - Communication (56 percent)
 - Business acumen (48 percent)
 - Diversity and cultural awareness (46 percent)
 - Customer service (42 percent)
- **More than 75 percent believe they provide their employees with learning and development programs featuring** the necessary information and tools to grow their skillsets and careers.
- **Sixty percent of responding employers practice continuous feedback**, or regular manager/employee check-ins to monitor progress, improve relationships and recognize accomplishments.

“Many large-scale companies are taking steps to activate their internal talent and are enhancing the employee experience along the way,” said Alexandra Levit, chair of DeVry University's Career Advisory Board. “However, evidently it’s not enough to close soft skills gaps that are present at all levels of an organization.”

The Career Advisory Board survey shows the lack of certain soft skills impact employees at all levels, but according to the respondents, lower paid employees are more vulnerable. Seventy-

one percent of participants said individual contributors or frontline employees don't have the necessary soft skills, while 63 percent see skills gaps in their supervisor population and 45 percent see them at the executive level.

Key Actions for Employers:

- **Identify the soft skills gaps in your current candidate and employee pool.** Consider new talent activation strategies that specifically address where your gaps are most significant. Update or replace the program(s) as needed.
- **Encourage a variety of learning strategies** by employing corporate training initiatives. Leverage a variety of formats, including onsite training or courses, and relevant external classes.
- **Reinforce the benefits of talent activation to leaders.** Because an activated workforce leads to improved business outcomes, crunch your data to illustrate why your organization is better off today than it was before employee experience was a priority.

"More than half of respondents cited budget as a barrier to closing the skills gap, so getting your senior leadership behind talent activation strategies is a good place to start," said Levit.

To read the research report and expert commentary, visit www.careeradvisoryboard.org

About the Career Advisory Board

Established in 2010 by DeVry University, the Career Advisory Board is comprised of leading representatives from business and academia who deliver valuable insights on today's most important career trends and provide actionable advice for job seekers. The Career Advisory Board generates original research and commentary, and creates tools, insights and resources to prepare job seekers for success. Its members include executives from DeVry University, Google, Apple, GE, and LinkedIn, as well as nationally recognized career experts. For more information, visit CareerAdvisoryBoard.org.

Survey Methodology

The Talent Activation research was conducted online within the United States by DeVry University on behalf of the Career Advisory Board in August 2018. Survey respondents included 505 US-based individuals (53 percent male, 47 percent female) with full-time positions at the supervisor level or above, in companies with more than 500 employees (mean company size was large at 15,000). Our respondents' primary job responsibilities include the hiring, development, and management of employees.

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