

## State of the Workforce Survey 2023 Results

State of the Workforce 2023 from People 1st international examines the changing skills and labour market across the visitor economy sector. The second in a [series of themed reports](#), this edition looks at the effect that skills gaps and shortages are having upon the sector.

### 2: Skills gaps and shortages

Employers report that core/soft skills and behaviours are where they anticipate challenges both now and in the future. They also highlight that skills gaps are occupying one spot in a wider context of overlapping issues: high vacancies; churn; pay rises and inflation and staff shortages.

There is a continual move towards digital skills needs as new technology is used to drive efficiency and customer expectations shift towards digital interaction. Employers report there are still gaps in digital skills, especially for older demographics. On the other side of the coin, physical interaction with customers is still a need, and there is an expressed lack of interpersonal skills, especially among younger new starters.

Environmental skills are also highlighted as a strong development need, for entry level workers especially. Whilst energy saving and reducing carbon footprint tends to be a focus at central/planning level, the training at entry level isn't as widely available.

Rapid promotions into middle management are also shown to be causing large skills gaps in effective management and leadership skills.



# Assessment of current skills needs

Employers rated current skills development needs on these five overarching themes - customer service, digital, environmental, resilience and management skills. The following skills were identified as having a high development need:

## Customer service

 <p>Persuasive speaking skills</p>	 <p>Dealing with difficult customers</p>	 <p>Willingness to improve</p>	 <p>Time management</p>
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## Digital

- Marketing online
- Artificial intelligence/robotics
- Data analysis
- Cyber security
- Data visualisation
- Social media




## Environmental

- Use of environmentally friendly practices
- Promotion of environmentally friendly activities
- Ability to minimise the use of energy
- Knowledge of climate change



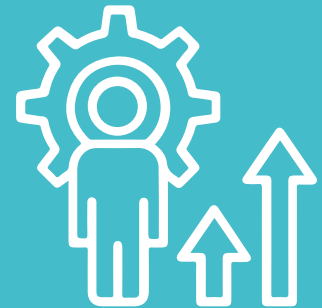
## Resilience

 <p>Problem solving</p>	 <p>Self-motivation</p>	 <p>Initiative</p>
 <p>Self-awareness</p>	 <p>Well-being</p>	 <p>Managing conflict</p>

## Management

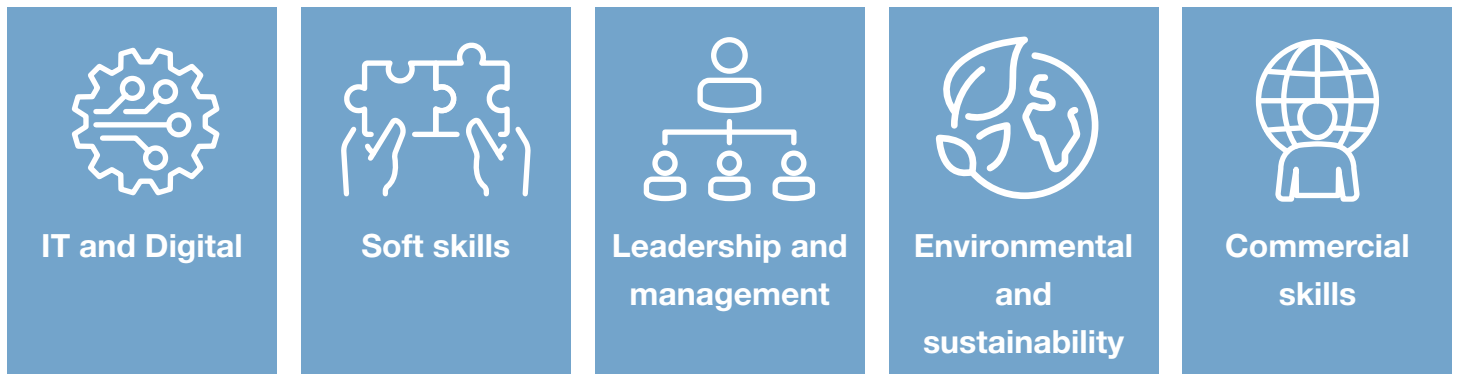
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## Emerging skills needs

Employers were asked to describe emerging skills needs in the next two years. The five most common themes were:



Taking a closer look at IT and digital and soft skills, the top referenced skills include:

### Digital



### Soft skills



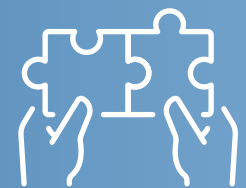
# People 1st International response

Core skills are becoming increasingly important in the modern workplace. There is a growing recognition that the development of the essential skills such as problem solving, initiative, teamwork and self-motivation are crucial to enabling employees to secure and retain a job and progress and adapt as they develop their skills in response to changes in technology or the workplace. Without essential core skills, businesses risk losing out on increased productivity, stronger interpersonal relationships, and more innovation.

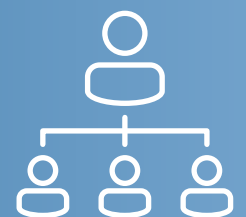
It's unsurprising that in a people-oriented industry, visitor economy employers continue to highlight that customer handling and communication skills are critical both now and in the future, and that competencies such as dealing with difficult customers and conflict resolution continue to rise in importance. These social skills, coupled with the growing importance of digital and environmental skills that reflect the ongoing technological transformations and the emerging opportunities related to sustainability have again been recognised as critical for both the current and future workforce. These findings align heavily with those of the [Next Tourism Generation research](#) which provides a European and National Blueprint Strategy to respond to the fast changing and increasing skills gaps in digital, green and social skills sets.

To tackle the current and skills challenges highlighted it is imperative that:

- **Core skills are embedded into education, pre-employment training, induction and on-going learning and development:** Core skills develop learners to be socially and culturally ready for work and for life, so they are not just technically able, but are rounded people. Integration of industry-relevant core skills into education and training at every level is critical for future talent and for the future of businesses. Incorporating these behaviours alongside knowledge and competencies will support transition from education to the workplace, increasing the likelihood for employees to progress on the career ladder with core skills that come naturally to them and ensure that they can perform well. It will also increase important transferable skills that support them for future job transformation into a new or changing role.



- **Leadership and management skills are prioritised to address the rise of the 'accidental manager':** As highlighted in the Recruitment and Retention edition of our State of the Workforce Survey 2023, the impact that 'accidental managers' with no formal management and leadership training have upon a businesses ability to recruit, retain and motivate employees is a growing concern. Identified by employers as critical for both the current and future workforce, developing management and leadership skills through effective training and on-going coaching will help to foster an environment where employees can flourish, helping to reduce turnover and improve productivity.



- **Customer handling skills are developed to foster high levels of service excellence:** In the rapidly evolving digital world, the concept of customer service and an enhanced customer experience is an increasingly critical consideration for businesses. Implementing the principles of high-quality service to customer-facing teams is paramount, supported through early training interventions at employee induction and ongoing upskilling to enhance service excellence at all levels. Assessing skills and performance through annual reviews with customer success factored into employee objectives is also important alongside company-wide measures of success.



- **Digital and green skills are built into education and training:** Skills to support the green transition and digital evolution are identified by employers as vital to promoting sustainable practices and supporting technological advancements. Addressing these through education and skills training to help prepare the workforce are vital and are supported by initiatives targeted at the service sector, such as the Next Tourism Generation - an eight-European-partner strong alliance that has created [a practical, free tool](#) for businesses and education providers to offer innovative, flexible and relevant learning and training modules within the core areas of digital, green and social skills to support training, performance management and recruitment.



## Effective approaches being adopted by employers include:



### Skills mapping and assessment:

- Develop occupational profiles that map out the knowledge, core and technical skills and behaviours for each specific role.
- Identify performance gaps within teams.
- Conduct skills needs assessments with employees to identify gaps.
- Develop learning plans to address skill gaps and enhance existing skills in order to improve performance levels and support role mobility.



### Greater communication between colleges and industry:

Engage with a local college and/or training provider to develop effective partnership working to support in building a skilled and robust future talent pipeline. Offering work experience for students, running masterclasses or guest lectures and providing CPD opportunities for college staff are just a few opportunities. In return colleges/training providers can offer access to work-ready staff and skills solutions to upskill existing employees.



### **Incorporate behaviours into job descriptions, induction and appraisals:**

Build in clear expectations around behaviours within job descriptions and the induction process. Support this with a common set of constructive workplace behaviours that are measured within performance reviews to create a sense of shared accountability in the team for their behaviours and impact.



### **Establish a culture of lifelong learning:**

Continually upskill and reskill the workforce to provide staff with up to date, flexible skillsets, enabling the organisation to stay competitive. Provide quality learning opportunities through flexible learning pathways, micro-credentials and hybrid learning.



### **Give managers access to continuous professional development:**

Support and develop staff with managerial responsibilities through a hybrid of learning formats including face-to-face and virtual training, e-learning and coaching to give them the skills to become competent managers that can lead on developing the talent pipeline.

### **Find out more**

Access further reports in this State of the Workforce 2023 series where we delve into the challenges and opportunities facing employers in terms of recruitment and retention and the approaches employers are taking to develop the skills of their workforce through training and development. [View more here.](#)

To discuss any of the challenges, approaches and potential solutions to tackle skills gaps and prepare for emerging skills needs, contact [info@people1st.co.uk](mailto:info@people1st.co.uk).

*We would like to thank the following organisations for their support in disseminating the skills survey and encouraging their employer networks to take part:*

*ABTA, ABTA Lifeline, Aviation Industry Skills Board, British Independent Retailers Association, Business Travel Association, HATS Network, Hospitality Action, Institute of Hospitality, Retail Trust, The University Caterers Organisation as well as regional tourism associations and People 1st International accredited colleges*