

# Business Skills Census 2019

/ Content and  
/ Creative

/ Data

/ Channels

/ Management

/ Strategy

I Institute  
of Data &  
Marketing  
DM

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# / Introduction

**Welcome to the first edition of the Business Skills Census 2019.**

**Last year, we focussed the Professional Skills Census on the gap between professionals' existing proficiencies and those they need to gather to progress up the ladder.**

In our latest research, we put organisations under the microscope. We want to know what marketing skills are already in play within businesses; how does this relate to business success; and what learning programmes should organisations have in place to help their employees develop?

The results give valuable insight into how marketers feel about the level of skills within their organisation, beyond just their own abilities.

Our investigation shines a light on the key developments in learning that are happening in the marketing industry today. There is huge interest among our respondents in professional learning, and the vast majority of employer organisations are delivering to those who are keen to upskill.

The survey also reveals, however, that marketers feel the depth of skills needed to stimulate and maintain success aren't always accessible within their organisations. Areas such as programmatic and AI/machine learning are not as well represented as others.

Training is essential not just to breed success for business and the individual, but also as a means to attract and retain the best talent. As our data shows, respondents expect professional development as part of their role - but don't always get it, or even know if the organisation they work for offers such a benefit.

External learning programmes are deemed far more successful than those delivered internally, and in an industry that never stands still, businesses and marketers need to be equipped with the latest skills. Learning and development offered by the DMA, through our Institute, is here to drive the industry forward by empowering individuals and teams with the confidence, expertise and globally-recognised qualifications to advance their careers and shape the future of their businesses.

## **Andy Dorling**

General Manager – Institute of Data & Marketing, Data & Marketing Association

# / Executive Summary

- Out of a total of 33 skills, just three were deemed relatively unimportant by a majority. The top ten responses were all chosen by at least nine out of ten respondents, from 93% saying 'Copywriting' and 'Optimising campaigns' were crucial, to 90% selecting 'Project management'
- Data and content skills were prevalent in the top ten. However, at the other end of the scale, 'Social media' (46%), 'Event planning' (45%) and 'Direct marketing' (40%) were cited as less important
- Among the five skills groups, 'Data' skills (87%) were deemed the most important for business, followed by 'Management' (86%) and 'Content & creative' skills (84%)
- On the other hand, individuals chose 'Strategy' (64%) as first, then 'Management' (52%), then 'Channels' (50%) as the areas most important for their current role
- Skills in each of the five groups were available to 79% or more of respondents. 'Content & creative' skills were the most prevalent (97%), closely followed by 'Management' skills (94%) and 'Strategy' (93%)
- However, data skills were available at 79% and lagged behind the other skills groups due to the introduction of new technology which requires skills that aren't universally available yet
- When it comes to the source of available skills, there's a vibrant creative pool on offer outside organisations: 'Video production' (46%), 'Digital/web development' (45%), 'Graphic and web design' (44%), and 'Producing content or creative work' (35%). 'Public Relations', 'Compliance and legal' support were also high on the outsourcing list
- The biggest increases in the gap between current and future importance of skills were in 'Direct marketing' (47%), 'Social media' (42%) and 'Search marketing' (27%)
- 70% of organisations provided learning opportunities – data reveals that learning's relevance to business's success will be greater in the future (66%) than it is deemed at present (57%)
- Marketers said they would like to be able to tap into continuous learning programmes, mainly to improve their personal knowledge (95%), to stay up to date (85%) and to boost their professional image (49%)
- Organisations seem to not have a main owner of learning and decisions are split evenly across senior leaders, line managers and the individuals themselves (27% each)
- Despite only 13% of organisations' learning programmes is controlled by HR, 38% of respondents said HR holds the budget, whereas the rest mostly (42%) sits with individual departments

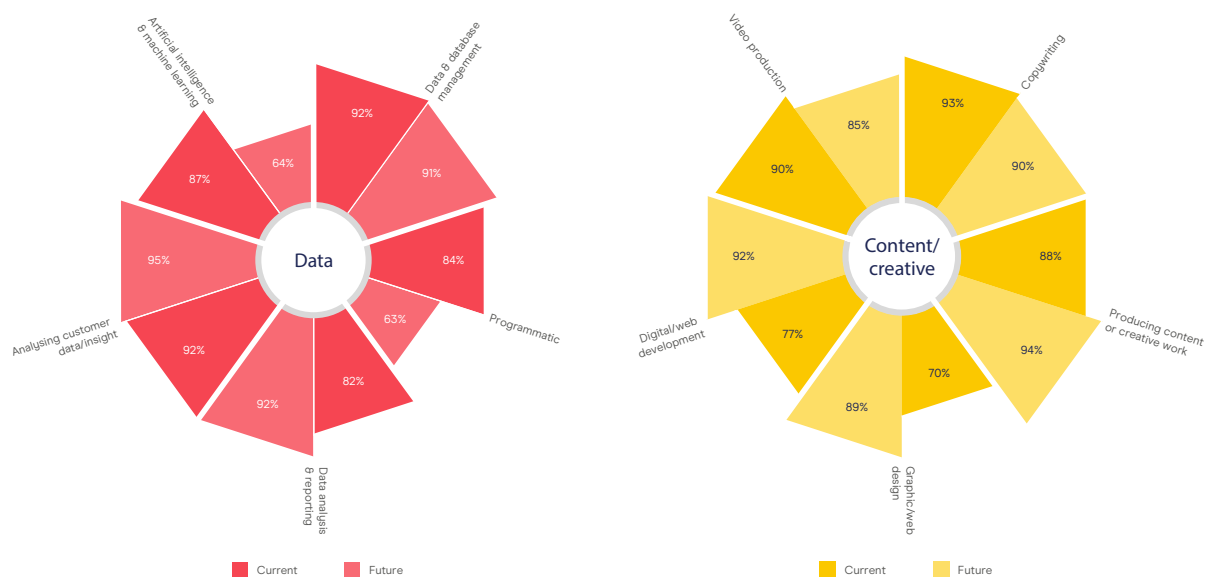
# / Importance and Availability

Out of a total of 33 skills we listed, just three were deemed relatively unimportant by a majority. The top ten responses were all chosen by at least nine out of ten respondents, from 93% saying 'Copywriting' and 'Optimising campaigns' were crucial, to 90% selecting 'Project management'.

'Data' and 'Content' skills were prevalent in the top ten. However, at the other end of the scale, 'Social media' (46%), 'Event planning' (45%) and 'Direct marketing' (40%) were cited as less important.

It is possible marketers don't consider the likes of 'Event planning' to be part of their day-to-day role. 'Social media' and 'Direct marketing', meanwhile, could be seen as catch-all terms. Marketers are, of course, aware these skills should be part of their mix, but it might that these particular areas are not key to every organisation.

To what extent do you think the following skills are important for the current & future success of your organisation?





We then grouped these 33 skills under five headings ('Data', 'Management', 'Strategy', 'Channels' and 'Content & creative') to ask marketers what types of skills they believe are currently available within their organisation - and which ones they consider key to the success of the business.

'Data' skills (87%) were deemed the most important for business, closely followed by 'Management' (86%) and 'Content & creative' skills (84%). It's a slightly different story among individuals, who chose 'Strategy' (64%), then 'Management' (52%), then 'Channels' (50%) as the areas most important for their current role.

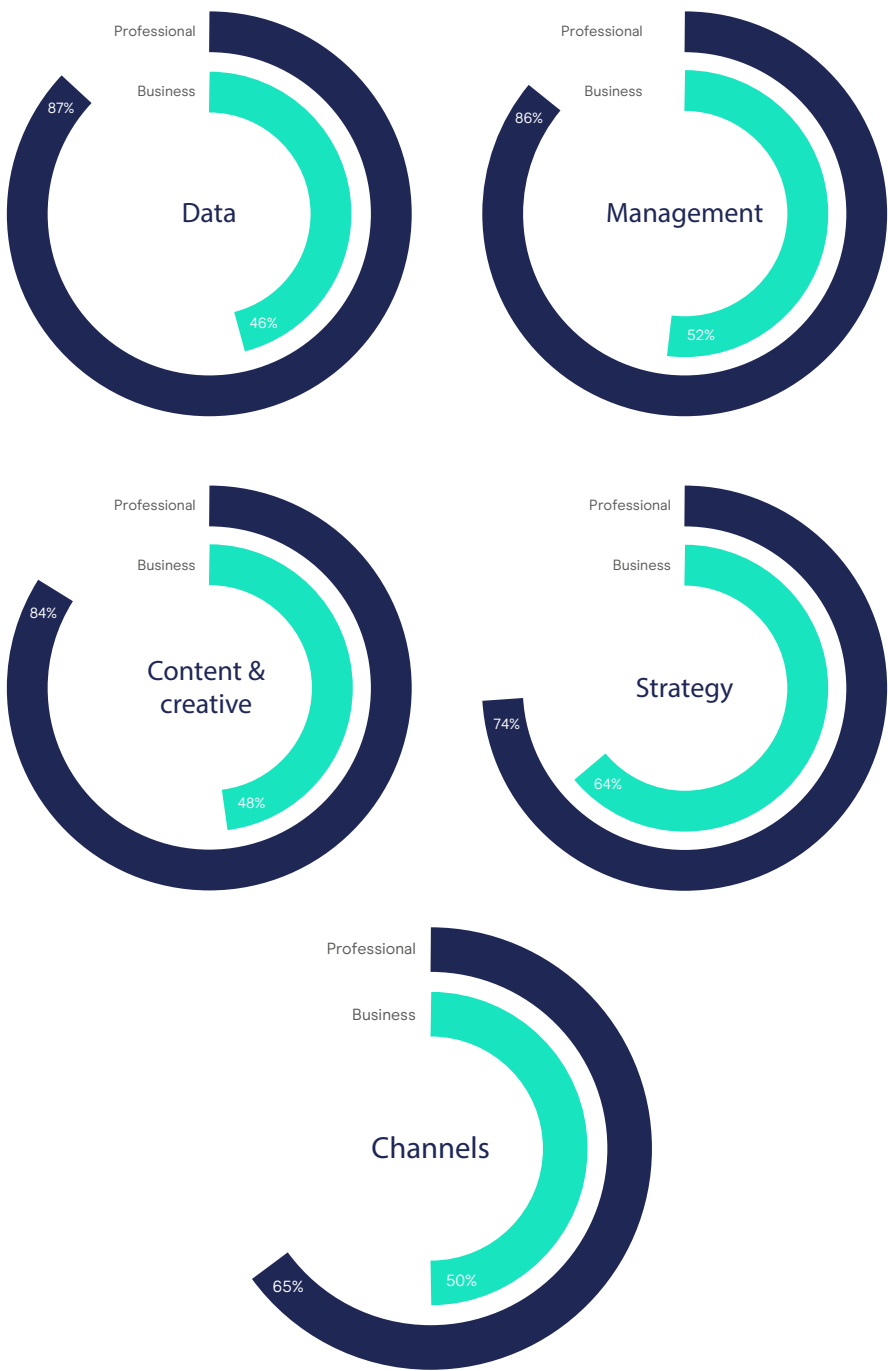
To what extent do you think the following skills are important for the current success of your organisation? (Grouped categories)



These results suggest professionals are aware 'business as usual' for their wider organisation is underpinned by 'Data' and 'Content & creative' skills, plus a focus on 'Compliance'. Meanwhile, as individuals, respondents were keen to build their strategic and management skills to progress.

Skills in each of the five groups were available to 79% or more of respondents. 'Content & Creative' creative skills were the most prevalent (97%), closely followed by 'Management' skills (94%) and 'Strategy' (93%). However, 'Data' skills were available at 79% and lagged behind the other skill groups.

To what extent do you think the following skills are important for the current success of your organisation? & How important are the following skill areas in your current role, day-to-day?





This is likely to be a reflection of the fact new technology has emerged, including 'AI and machine learning', but as yet the skills to harness these developments aren't universally available. Similarly, 'Programmatic' was given as part of the 'Data' group, and this is an area under scrutiny following recent media stories about transparency concerns.

There was further evidence of this when unavailable skills were ranked individually: 'AI and machine learning' (55%), 'Programmatic' (34%), 'Affiliate marketing' (32%) and 'Mobile marketing' (28%) topped the list. However, as we'll see, that doesn't mean the skills aren't desired by respondents.

Which of these skills are available to your organisation, either via members of staff or through an agency/supplier?



When it comes to the source of available skills, there's a vibrant creative pool on offer outside organisations. The skills most commonly sourced externally included 'Video production' (49%), 'Digital/web development' (45%), 'Graphic and web design' (44%), and 'Producing content or creative work' (35%). 'PR', and 'Compliance and legal support' were also high on the outsourcing list. The skills most commonly contained within organisations were generally linked to business management or finance, with 'Appraisals', 'Stakeholder management' and 'Sales' in the top five.

When looking at the five groups of skills, it appears even more evident that 'Content & creative' skills are the main outsourced among all (40%) whether 'Strategy' skills seem to be the most available among individual teams (58%) and 'Management' skills, more generally, within organisations (53%).

# / Skills for a Successful Future

Of all the skills chosen by respondents as being important for the success of their organisation, only 'Affiliate marketing' really split opinion (50% saying important). The rest scored 63% or more, proving that a diverse marketing skill set is required for any business to succeed. 'Communications planning/strategy' (96%) came top, followed by 'Data analysis' (95%) - interesting in the context of the comparative lack of data skills within respondents' organisations.

Which of these skills do you think are important for the future success of your organisation?



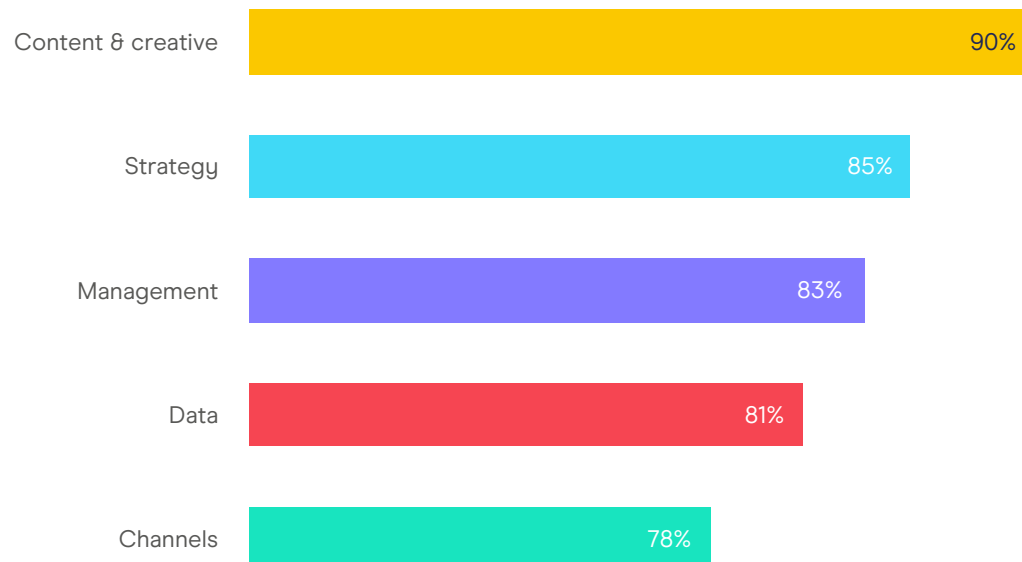
One of the more surprising responses was 'Mobile marketing', down the list at 74%. While still a good score in its own right, the channel perhaps still isn't being utilised to its full potential.

Meanwhile, 'Content & creative' skills were deemed the most crucial to business success by nine out of 10 respondents - although it was considered the least important factor in career progression by individuals. Overall, the skills predicted to be least vital in the future included 'Affiliate marketing' (31%), 'Public speaking' (30%) and 'Briefing/evaluating agencies' (30%).

There may be a facet of needing to look externally for creative resource - particularly specialisms - even though many organisations attempt to build in-house creative teams. 'Programmatic' and 'Affiliate marketing' skills also featured at this end of the scale. We believe organisations should still attach importance to developing these skills as part of the overall marketing mix.

Respondents also seemed confident about existing skills in channels such as 'Email' and 'Direct marketing.' It's our view, however, that learning programmes will 'top up' their proficiency with new techniques that might otherwise be overlooked.

#### And which of these skills do you think are important for the future success of your organisation? (Grouped categories)

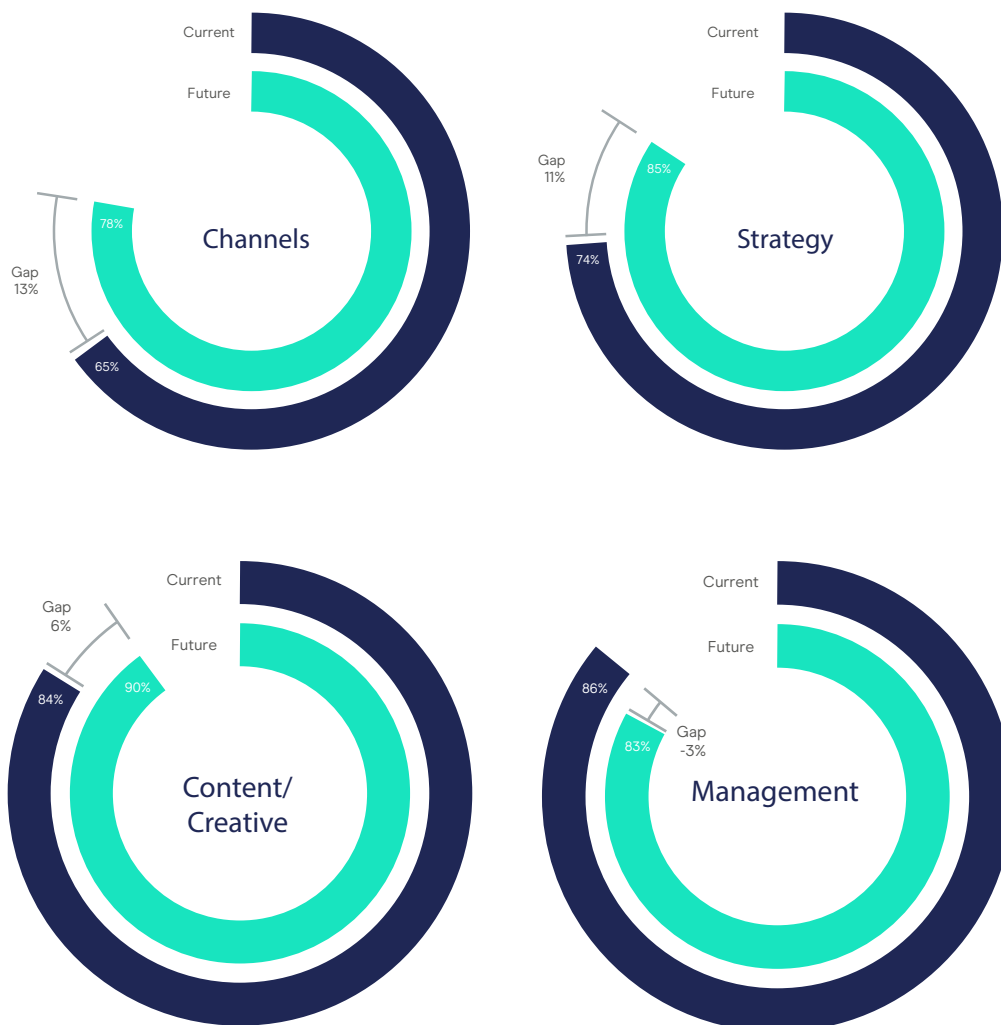


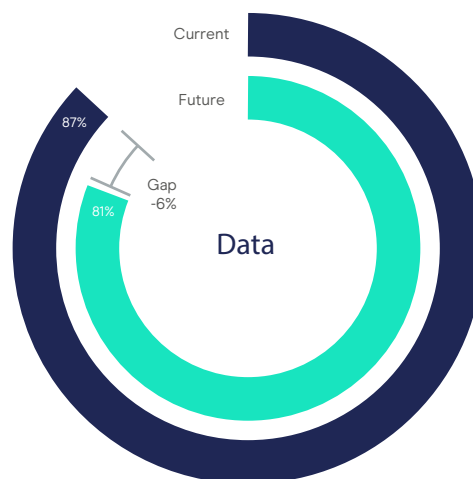
It was a similar story with data analysis and reporting: just 3% of respondents felt this wouldn't be a vital area to have covered. Despite GDPR training taking part in a majority of organisations, it's just the beginning. Learning about compliance and best practice should be an ongoing pursuit.

# / Skills Gap

Returning to our grouped skills, those in 'Channels' (13%) and 'Strategy' (11%) were considered to have the largest gap between their current and future importance (12%). Around two-thirds said these two categories of skills are important today, with another one in ten adding that they would be integral to the future success of their organisation.

To what extent do you think the following skills are important for the current and future success of your organisation? (Grouped categories)





Respondents reported Content and creative skills will also increase in importance, with the current skills gap at 6%. Perhaps surprisingly, 'Data' skills showed a reverse of this gap (-6%), meaning most marketers felt their organisations will need these skills slightly less in the future. Meanwhile, 'Management' skills will remain at a similar level of importance in the coming years (-2% skills gap).

The seeming decline in importance for 'Data' skills may be a by-product of the extensive training around the incoming General Data Protection Regulations, as well as reflection that what will be needed in the future is the creativity and strategy with which to harness the full power and value that data can offer.

The fact skills fluctuate in importance as new marketing techniques emerge is further highlighted by the biggest gaps between current and future requirements for individual skills. The biggest increases in the gap between current and future importance of skills were in 'Direct marketing' (47%), 'Social media' (42%) and 'Search marketing' (27%) – clearly highlighting the continued importance of a multi-channel marketing approach in the future.

Meanwhile, those skills with a perceived lessening in importance are 'Affiliate marketing' (-42%), 'AI/machine learning' (-23%) and 'Programmatic' (-20%). Given notable transparency concerns from large brands like Procter & Gamble and Unilever triggering public discourse and uncertainty around certain areas of the online ad market, it may come as no surprise that some organisations report this decline in importance.

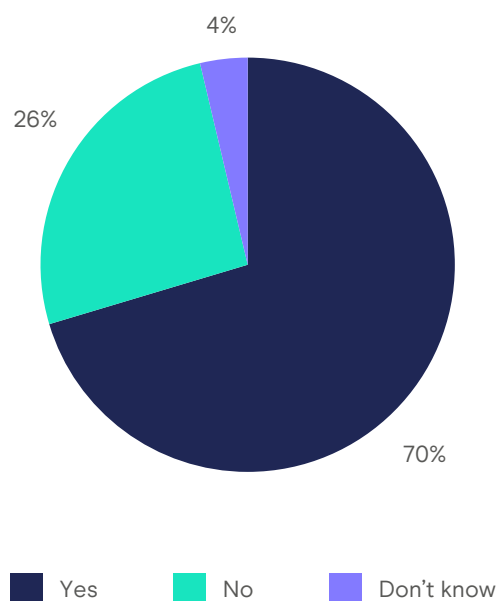
However, the feeling that 'AI/machine learning' may be viewed as less important in the future is a surprise and potential concern. In order for brands to truly capitalise on the opportunities this technology has to offer, they will need to not only set up these systems in the coming years, but also continue to check-on and develop them to ensure they are acting in the best interest of both the business and the customers.

# / Learning

Regular learning isn't just essential to marketers keeping abreast of industry knowledge and best practice. It also has the potential to become a differentiator in recruitment, with talent attracted by the opportunity to learn new skills, backed by the business.

According to our survey, 70% of organisations provided learning opportunities for respondents or their colleagues during the last year. This was in line with what marketing professionals told us 12 months ago. However, that means almost a third revealed that organisations either didn't offer the chance to upskill or still hadn't made it clear whether learning was available or not.

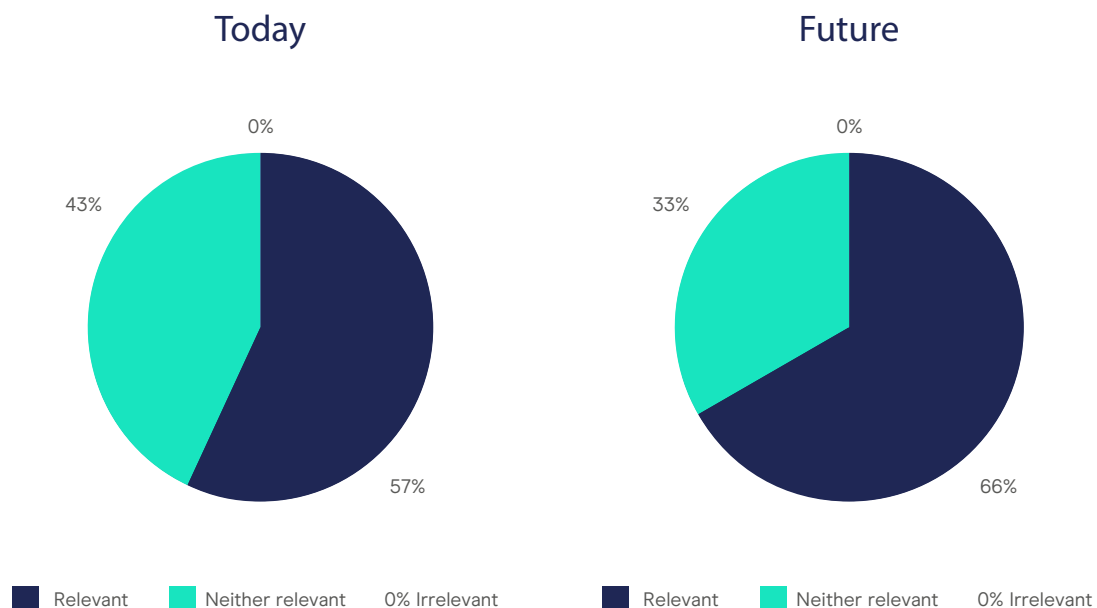
**Has your organisation provided any training courses for you or your colleagues within the past year?**



Most businesses reviewed employee learning requirements once a year (42%), although a third did so multiple times over 12 months. Some 7% never reviewed learning.

On a positive note, no respondents considered learning either now or in the future to be irrelevant. The proportion suggesting learning's relevance to their business's success will be greater in the future (66%) than it is deemed at present (57%). This could be a perception that effort put in today will reap rewards tomorrow.

Thinking about the training provided by your organisation, how would you rate its relevance to the success of your business today? & Thinking about the training provided by your organisation, how would you rate its relevance to the success of your business in the future?

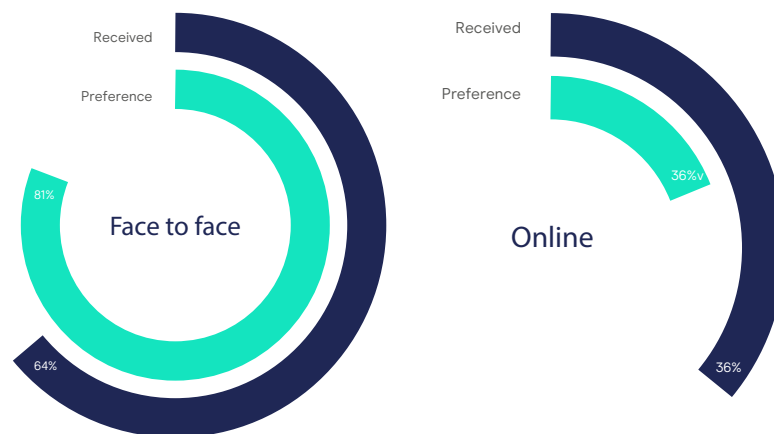


External learning providers, such as the IDM, were seen as the most effective source of learning programmes (74%). Internal learning provision ranked third with 60% rating it effective. Overall, the vast majority of learning options listed received approval.

Overwhelmingly, individuals preferred face-to-face learning (81%) to online courses (19%). However, more than a third (36%) learned new skills digitally. Wisdom suggests the latter delivery method will only grow, but it'll be important to remember many employees enjoy learning from a person. Meaning a blended model may be the most effective.



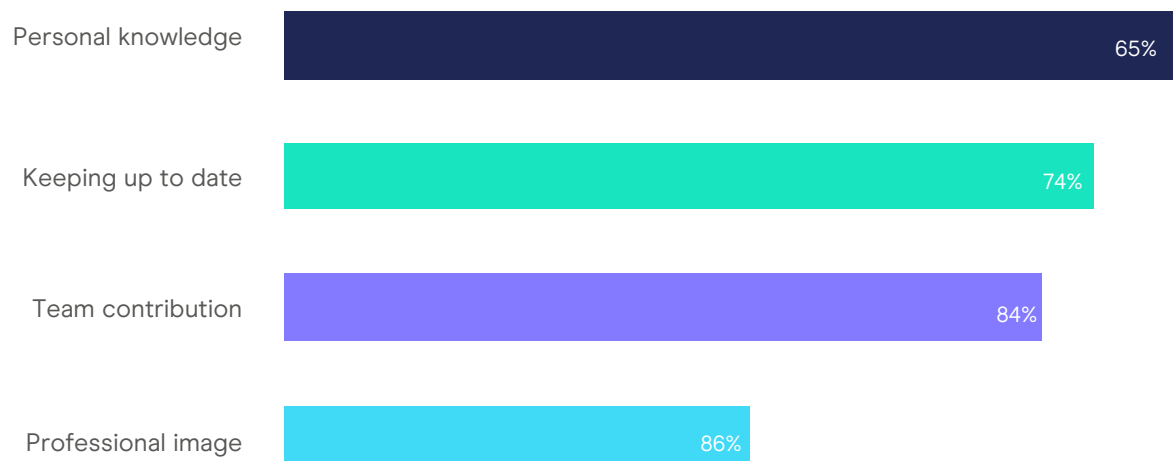
Thinking about the training provided by your organisation, how is this most commonly delivered? & Which method do you, personally, prefer?



Meanwhile, almost three-quarters of marketers (74%) believed their organisations embrace a culture of learning and development. Still, that means a quarter didn't feel encouraged to learn. And, despite 97% believing they should have access to continuous learning through their employer, 47% thought their organisation could invest further in learning programmes. This 'learning gap' could eventually lead to a talent retention problem, or brain drain, if not fixed.

Marketers said they would like to be able to tap into continuous learning programmes for a variety of reasons, chief of which was improving their personal knowledge (95%), followed by staying up to date (85%). Less than half wanted to do so to boost their professional image (49%). Finally, 80% were keen to draw on learning to make a meaningful contribution, in other words improving business performance, which in turn delivers ROI for the organisation's investment.

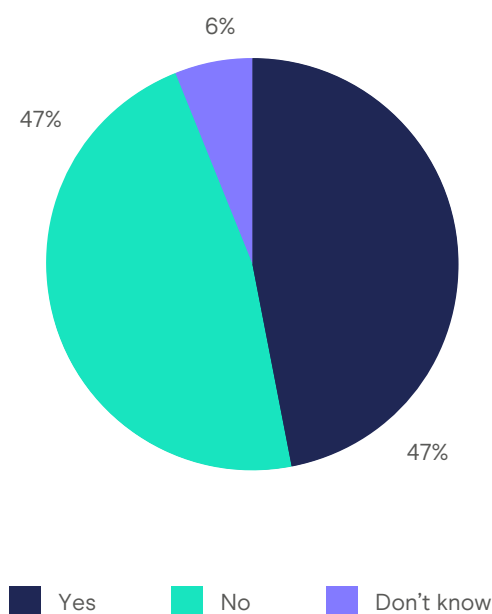
You mentioned you believe continuous opportunities to develop are important, with this in mind, which of the following statements do you agree with?



Despite all these positive benefits and motivations, well over half the respondents (58%) either said their organisation did not promote continuous professional development (CPD) or they weren't sure if it did.

Mid-level respondents were the most likely to say they didn't have access to CPD (66%), while senior marketers were the most likely to know it was on offer (42%). Furthermore, 31% discovered information about CPD from their organisation HR or line manager (25%), with most (49%) relying on their own online research.

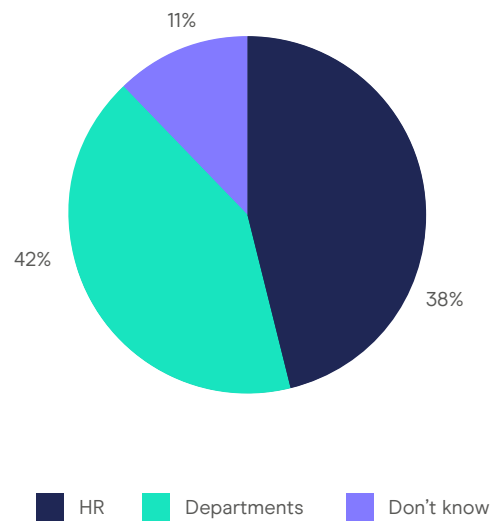
Do you think your organisation invests enough in skills and training for its employees?



Overall, there seems much confusion. The industry would do well to invest in CPD to put it on a level playing field with other areas of the professional services sector; again, it could be a differentiator for organisations in the race for talent attraction and retention.

Meanwhile, around half the marketers said they either didn't know their employer's annual learning budget or the business didn't have one.

### Where does this budget sit within your organisation?



There appears to be no main owner of learning in organisations, as decisions were split evenly across senior leaders, line managers and the individual (27% each), with only 13% of organisations' learning programmes controlled by HR. Yet despite this, 38% of respondents said HR holds the budget, whereas the rest mostly (42%) sits with individual departments.

# / About the Data & Marketing Association

The Data & Marketing Association (DMA) comprises the DMA, Institute of Data & Marketing (IDM) and DMA Talent.

We seek to guide and inspire industry leaders; to advance careers; and to nurture the next generation of aspiring marketers.

We champion the way things should be done, through a rich fusion of technology, diverse talent, creativity, insight – underpinned by our customer-focused principles.

We set the standards marketers must meet in order to thrive, representing over 1,000 members drawn from the UK's data and marketing landscape.

By working responsibly, sustainably and creatively, together we will drive the data and marketing industry forward to meet the needs of people today and tomorrow.

[www.dma.org.uk](http://www.dma.org.uk)

# / About Institute of Data & Marketing

The Institute of Data & Marketing (IDM) – part of the Data & Marketing Association (DMA) – advances the careers of marketers through world-class learning.

For over 30 years we have driven marketing excellence through a totally customer-centric learning approach, helping over 100,000 marketers get better at what you do.

Our learning syllabus is crafted by our tutors – handpicked, marketing practitioners – and underpinned by DMA best practice guidance and award-winning case study content.

Our full learning portfolio offers study options for individuals and business corporate packages, with short and long study options that include professional qualifications, certificates and awards.

Everything you need to boost your career, under one roof.

# / Methodology

'Business Skills Census 2019' is an initiative undertaken by the DMA.

Between October 2018 and January 2019, the DMA conducted an online survey consisting of a maximum of 42 questions.

There were 148 respondents and they represented a balanced range of industries, business types and sizes. Respondents were mostly mid-level marketers (50%), mainly working for B2B businesses (43%).

The Business Skills Census Survey looked into 33 skills grouped into five categories: 'Content & creative', 'Data', 'Channels', 'Management' and 'Strategy'. The skills gaps were calculated based on the percentage difference between how important the skills were for the businesses' current vs. future success.

Unless referenced, all data included in this report is taken from this survey.

The data were collated and analysed by the DMA Insight Department.

The report was written by the DMA Marketing and Insight departments.

The report was proofed and designed by the DMA's in-house Brand and Content Team.

If you have any questions about the methodology used in the report, you can contact the DMA's research team via email: [research@dma.org.uk](mailto:research@dma.org.uk).

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During the past 30 years, the IDM have trained over 100,000  
digital, direct and data-driven professionals in over 30 countries.

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