# Survey reveals concerns over employer investment in staff development



A recent survey conducted by talent solutions expert Robert Walters has unveiled significant concerns regarding employer investment in staff development across the United Kingdom. The findings reveal that 70% of UK employers acknowledge that they are not sufficiently investing in their employees' personal growth, amid a backdrop where 66% of professionals report feeling increased pressure to upskill compared to a year ago.

The research highlights a pressing issue: with over three-fifths of organisations facing skills shortages, driven in part by advancements in artificial intelligence and sustainability reporting, there is an urgent demand for upskilling initiatives leading into 2025. This is reinforced by the Government’s previous policy changes designed to promote new skills development.

Chris Eldridge, CEO of Robert Walters UK & Ireland, addressed the gravity of the situation, stating, “A combination of the UK’s aging workforce and tightening budgets have further compounded the pressure from things like advances in AI and sustainability reporting, catapulting the UK towards an ever-increasing key skills shortage. The only way out is a concerted effort to upskill, train and develop professionals across industries, something which requires the cooperation of all employers.”

The report reveals that 54% of professionals are unaware of any personal development opportunities provided by their employers. While skills-based courses are the most commonly sought after development opportunities, only 20% of respondents indicated that such options are available in their current organisation. Employers cite various constraints preventing them from expanding training and upskilling resources, with 45% stating organisation-wide cost cuts as a limiting factor. Additionally, 22% mention a lack of time to implement these programmes and 18% express concerns about the return on investment.

The struggle for companies to prioritise staff development may have implications for their recruitment strategies. More than half (57%) of junior professionals indicated they would be more inclined to accept job offers that included personal development funding, yet only 35% reported receiving such initiatives in their current roles. Moreover, 48% of professionals under 30 stated they rarely receive opportunities to develop new skills.

Eldridge commented on the implications for early-career professionals, saying, “It seems that the professionals most at risk of employers tightening their training and development budgets are those who would receive the greatest benefit from them. The skills you develop in the initial years of your professional career provide a foundation for the experience you’ll build throughout.”

The demand for specific skill sets is evolving, particularly within the realm of professional services. Job listings reflect a marked increase in calls for expertise in green technology (+32%) and AI (+77%) compared to last year. Furthermore, essential soft skills such as emotional intelligence (+29%), innovative thinking (+56%), and adaptability (+47%) are becoming increasingly prevalent, particularly in leadership and management roles.

“For certain skills becoming more common amongst professionals, the pace at which this is happening is being dwarfed by the rising demand,” Eldridge remarked. “Due to that pace, skills that were seen as ‘nice to haves’ 1-2 years ago have now turned into essential indicators of a professional’s ability.”

In a bid to foster sustainable growth, the Robert Walters survey has highlighted a growing demand for coaching and mentorship opportunities, with 39% of professionals stating that it is the personal development initiative they would find most beneficial. However, only 12% reported that their current employer offers such support. Other development initiatives cited include skills programmes (28%), accredited short courses (25%), and tuition contributions (8%).

Eldridge added, “Offering relevant courses is a great place to start and will directly address certain technical skills shortages. However, mentorship and coaching interventions don’t only give professionals a chance to upskill, knowledge share, and stimulate career growth; they also help improve team dynamics and boost employee confidence.”

In summary, the findings from the Robert Walters survey underscore a significant gap in employer investment in staff development amidst increasing skill demands due to technological advancements and changing workforce dynamics. As organisations look towards the future, the establishment of a culture of learning may be vital in bridging these gaps and preparing the workforce for emerging challenges.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.robertwalters.com/content/dam/robert-walters/country/united-kingdom/files/whitepapers/Robert-Walters-Cultural-Fit-Whitepaper.pdf> - This whitepaper from Robert Walters discusses the importance of workplace culture in recruiting and retaining top talent, which aligns with the broader theme of employer investment in staff development and cultural fit.
2. <https://www.peoplemanagement.co.uk/article/1886633/job-security-overtakes-pay-top-priority-employees-survey-finds> - This article highlights a survey by Robert Walters showing job security as a top priority for employees, which is relevant to the context of employee development and job satisfaction.
3. <https://www.robertwaltersgroup.com/content/dam/robert-walters/group/news/thought-leadership/rw-hybrid-working-guide.pdf> - This guide from Robert Walters on hybrid working touches on the importance of employee development and the need for employers to provide opportunities for growth in a hybrid work environment.
4. <https://www.robertwalters.com/content/dam/robert-walters/country/united-kingdom/files/whitepapers/Robert-Walters-Cultural-Fit-Whitepaper.pdf> - This whitepaper further emphasizes the role of workplace culture in attracting and retaining professionals, which is crucial for addressing skills shortages and upskilling initiatives.
5. <https://www.peoplemanagement.co.uk/article/1886633/job-security-overtakes-pay-top-priority-employees-survey-finds> - The survey mentioned here indicates that economic factors and job security concerns are influencing employee decisions, which can impact their willingness to engage in upskilling and development programs.
6. <https://www.robertwaltersgroup.com/content/dam/robert-walters/group/news/thought-leadership/rw-hybrid-working-guide.pdf> - This guide discusses the importance of measuring outputs and providing training for managers to maintain productivity in hybrid teams, which is relevant to the discussion on employer investment in staff development.
7. <https://www.robertwalters.com/content/dam/robert-walters/country/united-kingdom/files/whitepapers/Robert-Walters-Cultural-Fit-Whitepaper.pdf> - The whitepaper highlights the benefits of a good cultural fit, including improved job performance and greater job satisfaction, which are outcomes of effective staff development strategies.
8. <https://www.peoplemanagement.co.uk/article/1886633/job-security-overtakes-pay-top-priority-employees-survey-finds> - This article mentions the impact of economic factors on job decisions, which aligns with the discussion on the constraints faced by employers in investing in staff development due to budget cuts and other economic pressures.
9. <https://www.robertwaltersgroup.com/content/dam/robert-walters/group/news/thought-leadership/rw-hybrid-working-guide.pdf> - The guide emphasizes the need for employers to provide clear communication and support for hybrid working arrangements, which is essential for fostering a culture of learning and development.
10. <https://www.robertwalters.com/content/dam/robert-walters/country/united-kingdom/files/whitepapers/Robert-Walters-Cultural-Fit-Whitepaper.pdf> - This whitepaper stresses the importance of clear communication about company culture and expectations to avoid misleading new starters, which is crucial for effective staff development and retention.
11. <https://www.peoplemanagement.co.uk/article/1886633/job-security-overtakes-pay-top-priority-employees-survey-finds> - The survey findings here underscore the changing priorities of employees, including a greater emphasis on job security, which employers need to consider when designing development programs.
12. <https://news.google.com/rss/articles/CBMimgFBVV95cUxOZVpUbjU4YUdwWjVjcHIxTHdGd19kaXg4dWdpWmZkYmgxUjFHa2xDVVB6dzlrWmszaGR3Rnk1a2VkYTBUR05oWWhyenFxRjRJYkxFWWl5b2dQQng0RFNmOUhGaE1meUxuRU1fVTRiQlBsU3c2QTgteE1VbzRDUk00bUlpampYVmd2ckw2WEZkSHRQYTdzWmlqM1Fn?oc=5&hl=en-US&gl=US&ceid=US:en> - Please view link - unable to able to access data