Mind the Gap

A SIX STEP GUIDE TO ORGANIZATIONAL SUCCESS
Mind the Gap

The digital age has disrupted everything. The reason? Technology has been democratized and it no longer provides a distinct competitive advantage.

There is a new and more sustainable advantage and it has been right in front of us all along: the people.

People are the heart of any organization.

Success is achieved when you develop the people who orchestrate technology and business processes. In a “People, Process, Technology” world, technology plays the supporting role—it is only as powerful as the people who create and sustain it.

So what happens when technology’s constant change causes people’s once bleeding-edge skills to be considered basic, or worse, are on the way to becoming obsolete? Imagine being in a situation where you can’t do your job, address business challenges or seize market opportunities. In other words, you’re falling behind. This is happening today and there’s a name for this problem—skills gaps.

Six steps to a highly-skilled workforce

1. Identify skills gaps
2. Close skills gaps
3. Select a training provider
4. Build skills with Global Knowledge
5. Success looks like this
6. Continue learning
A shortage of necessary skills is currently plaguing IT. And the gap between the skills needed and the skills possessed is growing. Nearly 80% of global IT decision-makers report a lack of skills amongst their employees.

Skills gaps are disrupting organizations and professionals.

Skills gaps aren’t always right in front of you, but they can be hiding in plain sight. You may be falling behind and not even know it. Once you know what to look for, you’re on your way to closing them.
Symptoms of potential skills gaps

A key indicator of success is how proactive you are in recognizing the following red flags. Don’t wait for these issues to fester and make their way to you. You need to go to them.

- Project and deployment delays
- Peers or management expressing frustration about employee capabilities
- People being hired with new skills because the talent isn’t in-house
- Organization is afraid to move away from legacy systems
- Unhappy, maybe even disgruntled, workforce

- Employees are asking a lot of “how to” job-related questions
- A noticeable amount of preventable employee errors
- High employee turnover
- Hearing horror stories from other organizations and realizing your organization has similar issues

Data from the largest survey of IT professionals found that 79% of IT decision-makers around the globe say their teams have skills gaps, and it rises to 81% in North America. Why is this a big deal? Skills gaps have consequences.

39%
IT decision-makers who attribute skills gaps to a lack of training investment.

63%
IT decision-makers who say that skills gaps increase stress on employees.
Skilled employees deliver results

The signs of a skilled workforce are everywhere. The results delivered by skilled employees often align perfectly with organizational goals. If teams lack necessary skills, the following organizational outcomes are at risk:

- Quality objectives achieved
- Operating costs remain under control or decrease
- Revenue grows
- New products and services developed
- Happy and fulfilled employees
- Lower employee turnover

This is what success looks like. These results are measures of an organization’s health and enable the business to drive forward. If skills gaps are ignored, these indicators of success will deteriorate, leading to unsustainable problems.

An organization will have to face skills gaps eventually and the longer you wait, the uglier—and more expensive—they get. You need a skills strategy. Establish goals early and work toward them.

Learning Resources

**IT Skills and Salary Report**
Learn what’s happening in IT in this comprehensive and global guide.

**Self Assessments**
Quizzes and self assessments help identify areas for improvement.
Close Skills Gaps

When you need to learn, what do you do? Your answer should depend on the need and your ultimate goal. Both should be clearly defined before you move forward.

Do you need to complete a task or do you need to add a new skill set? What exactly will be accomplished with the new skill? Determining the criticality of the need will dictate your path to add skills.
You have three options to learn: experiential, social and formal

Experiential (e.g., challenging assignments, learning by doing) and social (e.g., asking a colleague, lunch-and-learns) are both informal learning methods. Formal learning (e.g., training course) is more structured and instructor-led.

Think of it like this: When you need to develop a less critical skill or need a speedy skills refresher, you probably turn to search engines like Google and YouTube. We all do it. It’s fast, typically easy to find what you’re looking for, and it’s a low investment.

But when there’s more at stake, such as learning a new skill set because your job or a project’s success depends on it, formal training is your best choice.

What we’re saying is: Embrace the fact that informal and formal training are not in conflict. In fact, we recommend a mix of the two.

What is the best ratio of formal and informal training? The answer varies for each organization. The OSF ratio is a Training Industry concept that breaks down the three learning sources: on-the-job (O), social (S) and formal (F). While the training breakdown may differ company to company, the OSF ratio emphasizes formal training as the foundation for on-the-job and social learning.

Skills Development Index™

The Global Knowledge Skills Development Index answers the question: What type of training do I need? Your optimal training type is dependent on the type of skill you need to add. First, define the criticality of your skills need. Then, use the Index to determine the formality of training you should pursue.
Based on priority, value and risk, the Skills Development Index classifies skills in five categories: Interesting, Emerging, Core, Cohort and Project.

For Interesting or Emerging skills, informal training options (e.g., blogs, videos, paid libraries) can suffice. For Core, Cohort or Project skills, formal training (e.g., blended learning, instructor-led courses) provides your best chance for success.
Formal training fulfills critical skills needs

If the success of a project hinges on a particular skill, experiential and social learning don’t provide the reliability required to ensure project success. When a skills need is a high priority for the business, you require a deeper training investment.

Formal, instructor-led training is essential when the skills need is critical. You don’t want to be left wondering, “Did I really learn it?” And you don’t want to waste too much time—weekly, monthly or yearly—searching online for reliable answers.

Instructor-led training fulfills critical skills needs better than self-study. For larger tasks that have a team- or organization-wide impact, formal training provides more structure and access to an expert. It’s your better option.

Learning Resources

6 Tips for Informal Learning
Ensure you’re investing your time in quality and credible resources.

Blended Learning for IT
Get the best of instructor-led and on-demand training.
Select a Training Provider

When you invest in training, you expect a return on your investment. So in a market full of training companies, how do you know which one is right for you?
Here are the seven criteria to consider when selecting an IT training provider:

1. **Does the training provider have the skill-building courses you need?**
   Look for providers that offer an extensive portfolio covering your areas of focus and the tech providers you work with on a daily basis.

2. **Do they provide access to subject matter experts (SMEs)?**
   There’s an advantage to learning from experts who draw from real-world experiences when teaching and answering your questions. Not only will students learn the most relevant material, but they’ll be learning directly from an expert who is still active and still working with the latest technologies in a production environment.

3. **Does the training provider work closely with technology providers?**
   Companies like AWS, Cisco, Microsoft, Red Hat, VMware and others are constantly evolving and investing in new technologies. You want a training provider that has its finger on the pulse to guarantee you receive the most up-to-date and accurate skills.

4. **How effective is their instruction?**
   If you can’t retain or apply what you learned, the training is not a success. Find out what other organizations and people say about the provider first. Also, look for any free courses or videos to get a feel for a provider’s platform and quality of instruction.

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**$10,000**

63% of IT decision-makers estimate the economic benefit of certified employees exceeds $10,000 a year.¹

**41%**

IT decision-makers who had formal training available last year, but didn’t authorize it.¹
5. **Do they have multiple delivery formats to meet your needs?**

Given learning preferences and specific skill needs, providers only offering one or two modalities might be limiting your success. Look for these leading formats:

- Instructor-led classroom
- Instructor-led virtual classroom
- On-demand
- Blended learning (mix of instructor-led + on-demand)

6. **How do they make your life easier—whether you’re buying for yourself or purchasing for others?**

- Provides access to experts focused on specific technologies. It’s not possible for one person to know everything—especially in IT. That’s why you want an advisor within the organization who can bring in SMEs to discuss needs.
- Creates resources and tools that make learning new skills easier.
- Helps manage the planning and scheduling of training.

7. **A proven track record with third-party validation**

Providers that deliver high-quality training receive awards from tech providers and industry publications recognizing their training methods and ability to provide customers with exceptional experiences.

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**Learning Resources**

- **Industry Awards**
  Check out Training Industry’s lists of top IT training and leadership companies.

- **Convince Your Manager of the Benefits of Training**
  You may know the value of training, but does your boss? Use this handy how-to guide.
It’s never been more critical to an organization’s success to have the right training partner. The room for error is next to zero.

TODD JOHNSTONE
Global Knowledge CEO
Build Skills with Global Knowledge

Your success is our focus.

That’s why for almost 25 years we’ve been helping organizations of all sizes, technology providers and governments build the skills that enable success.

Only a dedicated training organization specializing in technology can deliver this level of continued success—and we’re ready to provide it to you.
We know where skills gaps pose the biggest threat

Our course catalog is carefully curated. Our focus is on the job roles, industries and topics where the most opportunities for business success live. We know where the IT skills gaps exist, and it’s our job to help you remove them.

From foundational to advanced, you’ll find over 3,200 courses covering leading technology providers, in-demand topics and certifications, such as:

- Amazon Web Services (AWS)
- Application development
- Cisco
- Cloud computing
- Cybersecurity
- Google Cloud
- ITIL®
- Microsoft
- Project management and agile
- Red Hat®
- VMware

You’ll learn from the best subject matter experts in the industry

When you determine it’s time for formal training, you’ve recognized that it’s more advantageous to learn from an expert. Online resources aren’t enough. You need to connect with someone who has real-world experience.

Global Knowledge instructors are widely considered the best in the industry. Get real-time answers to your questions and feedback in our in-person or virtual classrooms.

Our subject matter experts also have their fingerprints all over our free, informal resources. Our resource library is filled with hundreds of articles, special reports, webinars, white papers and videos that are written by the same experts who teach our courses.
We understand that continuous learning is the antidote to skills gaps. After you complete a training course, the learning shouldn’t stop. That’s why our subject matter experts produce a variety of up-to-date resources that you can reference and revisit whenever you need a little help.

**We can help advance your career (and boost your salary!)**

It pays off financially for IT professionals to train and pursue career-relevant certifications. Our Global Knowledge IT Skills and Salary Report reveals that certified individuals earn more annually than their non-certified peers. They also report greater productivity, they perform their job faster and their expertise is more sought after within the organization.

**We offer flexible delivery formats and purchasing options**

We make it easier for you to train. You deserve courses that fit your schedule, not the other way around. That’s why, in addition to our classroom and virtual options, we offer blended and on-demand courses, allowing you to train when and where you want. We also have subscription programs and special offers to make sure you’re maximizing your training budget. Training and vendor credits are also accepted (e.g., Cisco Learning Credits, Microsoft SATVs).

Technology is always changing, but what won’t change is the quality of instruction and skills development you receive from Global Knowledge.

**Learning Resources**

*Get to Know Global Knowledge Instructors*
Our course instructors are subject matter experts inside and outside the classroom.

*How Organizations Buy Training*
Maximize your budget and know your options with this complete guide to purchasing training.
Global Knowledge courses focus on the job roles, industries and topics where the most opportunities exist for business success and where skills gaps present the largest threat.
Success Looks Like This

Revisit your goals and compare them to your actual results.

You defined what success looks like before you created a skills strategy. Now that you’ve completed your training, whether formal or informal, it’s time to evaluate success. Do not skip this step!
Success looks like this

Often we immediately move on to the next problem or assignment and ignore the review process. It’s critical to know what elements of your plan worked and what didn’t. That way you can adjust future training plans to ensure a greater chance of meeting your goals.

Answer the following questions when determining the success of training:

- Did it provide noticeable results?
- Did you reach your goal(s)?
- How does the result compare to your initial definition of success?
- How do you plan to maintain the skills?
- For managers:
  - Is your team overcoming obstacles or finding more efficient ways to deliver results?

It should be apparent whether training has been successful. The results should be impossible to ignore.

57%
Global Knowledge students who say that training increases employee retention.2

3.04
Hours saved per week by Global Knowledge students following training.2 Each day of training is repaid to the organization in less than three weeks in the form of productivity gains.
In our white paper, *How Workplace Training Drives Success*, we surveyed IT professionals who trained with Global Knowledge to see how training impacts skills gaps and business goals. Our findings indicate that Global Knowledge training delivers positive results on an organizational, professional and personal level.

97%  
Students already use—or will use—their new knowledge in their current job.

93%  
Students applied their course learning within four weeks of training completion.

94%  
Students said Global Knowledge training improved the quality of their work.

Learning Resources

**Training is an Investment, Not an Expense**  
Learn how training views have evolved.

**Top-Paying IT Certifications**  
Looking to boost your salary? Check out our annual list of highest-paying certifications.
Technology doesn’t stop. Neither can you.

You closed a skills gap today. But what about tomorrow?

In IT, skill-building should be continuous. You have to keep running to keep pace with technological changes, and you do that through continuous learning. Continuous learning is your ally in this constant evolution. And that’s the fun of IT, right? IT professionals are always learning innovative skills and solving problems. There’s always something new to discover—and that’s exciting.
Learning should never end. **Initial and ongoing training are solutions for skills gaps.** After training is complete, celebrate your success (we don’t do this enough) and continue to pay attention to the changing world around you.

Maybe you can already see what your next goal is. Think about what your specific need is, and where successful training might get you.

Think about a skill or set of skills—what training and resources do you need to fulfill your job function? You’ll likely need an array of formal training, informal resources, expert access and a distinct path to follow to accomplish that goal.

A Global Knowledge training course is only part of the solution. Skills need to be learned and kept fresh so they are second nature. Without continuous learning, your skill set will be outdated before you know it. Whether you require formal or informal training, let us be your continuous learning guide. We’ve got you covered.

We are invested in your success. When you need us, we’ll be here. In the meantime, we’ll be developing new content so when your organization has critical skills needs, you can trust you’ll receive the best possible experience and measurable results.
Learning Resources

Global Knowledge provides a wealth of informal training resources to help you when you need a quick fix. The following content is written and continually updated by our subject matter experts:

Articles

Quizzes

Special reports

Videos

Webinars

White papers

Footnotes:
2. How Workplace Training Drives Success, Global Knowledge white paper