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Isaac M. O'Bannon • Nov. 24, 2017

Nearly half of American workers are concerned about the changing nature of work, and although most report that they have the skills they need to perform their current job well, those without supervisor support for career development are more likely to distrust their employer and plan on leaving within the next year, according to a new survey released by the American Psychological Association.

The “[2017 Job Skills Training and Career Development Survey](#)” from APA’s Center for Organizational Excellence was conducted online by Harris Poll from Sept. 6-8, 2017, among 1,076 U.S. adults who are employed full or part time.

“Employee growth and development is a key element of a psychologically healthy workplace, but it’s often overlooked in employers’ workplace well-being efforts,” said David Ballard, PsyD, MBA, head of APA’s Center for Organizational Excellence. “Our surveys of the U.S. workforce consistently find that training and development is one of the areas employees are least satisfied with. The lack of opportunity for growth and advancement is second only to low pay as a source of work stress. In a rapidly changing work environment, making participation in job-related training and career development activities an expectation and preparing employees for a successful future are one way to protect workers and enhance our nation’s workforce readiness.”

For employees whose supervisors do not support and encourage their career development, only 15 percent say their employer provides opportunities for them to develop the technical skills they will need in the future, only 20 percent say their

employer provides training in necessary “soft skills,” such as teamwork and

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work (vs. 79 percent). Additionally, in the absence of supervisor support, more than half of U.S. workers say they do not trust their employer (56 percent) and intend to seek employment outside the organization within the next year (53 percent).

As talk of automation, artificial intelligence and skills retraining dominate conversations about the future of jobs, 43 percent of employed Americans say they are concerned about the changing nature of work. As a whole, 87 percent of working Americans report that they have the skills they need to perform their current job well, and 61 percent say their employer is providing opportunities for development of the technical and soft skills needed in the future. But fewer (52 percent) report they have adequate time for career development activities and only half (50 percent) say their employer provides career development opportunities that meet their needs and sufficient opportunities for advancement (50 percent).

The survey also found differences between how men and women view their opportunities for training and career development, with women faring worse than men.

Both men (89 percent) and women (85 percent) report that they have the technical skills necessary to perform their current jobs well, but fewer women than men report that their employer is providing them with opportunities to develop the technical, soft or leadership skills they'll need in the future. Sixty-eight percent of men said their employer provides training for technical skills needed in the future (vs. 53 percent of women), 65 percent of men report trainings for future-needed soft skills (vs. 56 percent of women) and 60 percent of men report opportunities for them to develop the leadership and management skills they'll need (vs. 47 percent of women).

Despite these differences, fewer women than men are concerned about the changing nature of work (37 percent of women vs. 49 percent of men) and women and men

equally (77 percent) feel motivated to do their best at work.

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employees and organizations benefit from an emphasis on growth and development,” Ballard said. “Our survey results also show that some groups may not be afforded the same opportunities as others. To achieve results, employers need to provide training and development opportunities that meet their workers’ needs. That requires carving out time for people to actually participate in these activities, ensuring that supervisors are actively supporting employees’ development and eliminating disparities, so that all employees have access to the resources they need to be successful in the future.”

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