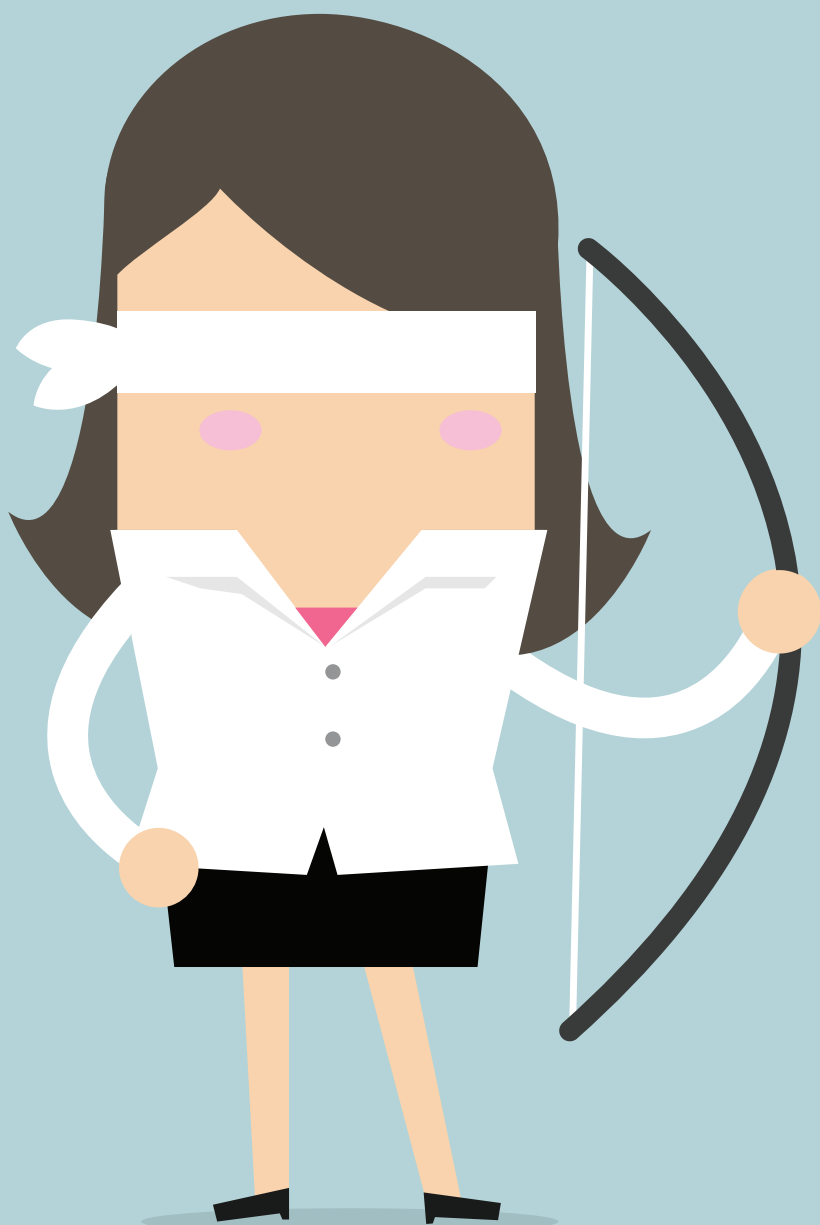


Who's to Blame for the Skills Gap



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Businesses, including staffing companies, continue to struggle in their search for candidates who fit the bill—those who have the needed experience, skills, and training to fill long-open jobs. Taking a step back, how did this disconnect between people and positions happen? New ASA research reveals shared blame, including schools, employers, and government—and job seekers, too. >>>

By Cynthia Poole



Exclusive Industry Research & Data



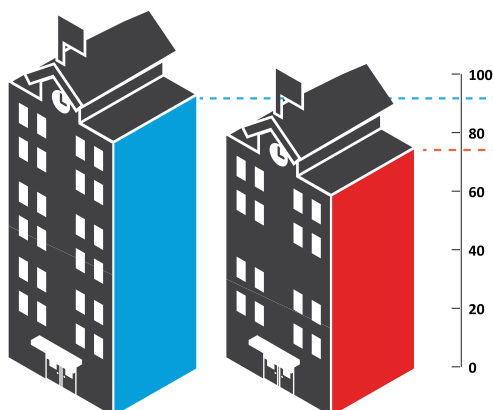
This issue's research-focused article summarizes additional findings from a recent ASA Workforce Monitor survey, which explored Americans' perspectives on what or who is responsible for the skills gap and what should be done to address the challenge. As the industry's research and data leader, ASA reports on timely industry data in every issue of *Staffing Success*. Get up-to-the-minute data and research-related information when you follow @StaffingData on Twitter.

The Skills Gap: Who's to Blame?

Schools, Employers, and Government
Are All Responsible—and Individuals, Too

Schools Need to Catch Up

Americans believe schools must better prepare youth for the world of work.



93% say schools need to do more to develop employable graduates

75% say inadequate education is a top factor responsible for the skills gap

Much has been said about the skills gap challenge in the U.S. and its effect on businesses and the labor market, but there is little, if any, buzz about the root cause of the skills gap. A recent ASA Workforce Monitor® survey explored that topic, and the findings have been creating a buzz of their own.

The vast majority of Americans say that institutions—schools, employers, and governments—all share responsibility for the skills gap in the U.S. However, individual accountability also is a top factor, Americans say.

The ASA Workforce Monitor is a periodic survey commissioned by ASA and conducted online by Harris Poll among 1,000 or more U.S. adults age 18 and older. For more information about the survey series, visit americanstaffing.net/workforcemonitor.

Schools Need to Catch Up

Three out of four Americans say one of the factors most responsible for the skills gap is schools failing to provide adequate education for 21st century jobs. And nine in 10 believe that high schools and colleges need to do more to develop employable graduates. To build a workforce that meets the needs of 21st century jobs, Americans believe that much more must be done to educate and train our youth and adult workforce to fill the voids in specific occupations and skill areas.

Individual Inaction a Top Factor

Americans also lay blame on themselves for the skills gap. While employers often have unrealistic expectations of the skills that job applicants should bring to the table, nine out of 10 Americans believe employees should continually update their skills for the changing work environment.

And, seven in 10 say students' failure to study in-demand fields (e.g., science, technology, engineering, and mathematics—called STEM) is a factor responsible for the skills gap. Many students entering the workforce today don't have the skills needed to succeed in a competitive job environment.

Employer Training Falls Short

The skills gap continues to be an issue recognized by both job seekers and employers. However, job seekers tend to believe skills will be learned on the job, while employers may be more likely to view candidates as lacking necessary skills.

Nonetheless, about six out of 10 U.S. adults cite several employer-driven failures as being responsible for the skills gap challenge:

- Failing to provide training

Individual Inaction Is a Top Factor

Americans realize that individuals, themselves, are accountable for the skills gap.



92% believe employees should continually update their skills

92%

72% say students' failure to study in-demand fields (e.g., STEM) is a factor

72%

- Not offering apprenticeship programs
- Not communicating expectations to employees
- Having unrealistic expectations of job candidates' skills

And, nine in 10 Americans (92%) say that employers should do more to train workers in skills the employers require.

Governments Can Do More

Americans say all levels of government also share responsibility for the skills gap challenge. More than half of U.S. adults assert that causes of the skills gap include the failure of federal or state and local governments to offer sufficient training programs. Another three in four Americans say the government should provide more incentives to businesses to offer training.

"The ASA Workforce Monitor findings support that there is no single cause nor solution to closing America's growing skills gap—blame for the root causes is shared, with individual accountability a key factor," says Richard Wahlquist, ASA president and chief executive officer. "People at all stages of their lives must commit to lifelong learning to maintain their future employability and ensure that the U.S. has the skilled workforce needed to sustain productivity-driven growth and competitiveness."

How to Bridge the Gap

ASA has developed resources to help staffing companies present a skills gap overview and to educate business groups and guide conversations with clients on this topic. These resources include case studies that focus on several approaches for bridging the skills gap.

The skills gap persists and doesn't appear to have narrowed significantly, nor is it expected to in the near term. Whether your staffing company is looking to deepen its own bench of talent or partner with a client to increase its pool of qualified candidates, taking a closer look at your approach to recruitment and retention may be the next step in addressing skills gap challenges. ■

To learn more about the ASA Workforce Monitor, visit americanstaffing.net/workforce-monitor. Follow @StaffingData on Twitter for up-to-the-minute information related to ASA surveys, research reports, and analysis.

Cynthia Poole is director of research for ASA. Send feedback on this article to success@americanstaffing.net. Engage with ASA on social media—go to americanstaffing.net/social.



About the ASA Workforce Monitor Survey

Harris Poll conducted this ASA Workforce Monitor survey online within the U.S. on behalf of ASA Aug. 10–14, 2017, among a total of 2,023 U.S. adults age 18 and older. Results were weighted on age, education, race/ethnicity, household income, and geographic region where necessary to bring them into line with their actual proportions in the U.S. population.

Employer Training and Expectations Miss Mark

About six out of 10 Americans cite employer shortcomings as responsible for the skills gap.



Failing to provide training



Not offering apprenticeship programs



Not communicating expectations to employees



Unrealistic expectations of job candidates' skills



Nine in 10 say employers should do more to train their workers.

Governments Can Do More

Americans say governments share the blame for the skills gap challenge.



77%
believe governments should provide more incentives to businesses to offer training

More than half assert that governments fail to offer sufficient training.



57%
STATE AND LOCAL



54%
FEDERAL

Source: American Staffing Association Workforce Monitor, an online survey conducted Aug. 10–14, 2017, among 2,023 U.S. adults age 18 and older by Harris Poll.