

## Everything DiSC® Pulse: The Relevance of Training — A Result That Might Surprise You

Here's a test. Below is a list of training course offerings. Select the courses that would greatly increase your effectiveness at work. (Courses are listed alphabetically)

- Building emotional intelligence
- Communication skills
- Computer skills
- Critical thinking skills
- Dealing with conflict or difficult people
- Financial skills
- Innovative thinking skills
- Leadership skills
- Management skills
- Negotiation skills
- Project management
- Sales skills
- Stress management
- Technical knowledge related to my job
- Time management
- Working more effectively on a team

What did you pick as your top three? We asked 5,945 recent training participants about the types of courses that would greatly increase their effectiveness at work. We expected that technical knowledge related to the job would be high on the list. And it was. It was ranked number three overall with 47 percent of people selecting it. This suggests that nearly half of survey participants saw some gap in their technical know-how. Additionally, 86 percent of those surveyed said they'd attend a class on this topic if it was available.

We also thought leadership skills would be in the top three. It came in at number-one with 56 percent of people selecting it. In fact, leadership skills ranked higher than management skills. Our anecdotal experience suggests that even among people who have a hard time distinguishing between management and leadership, leadership is a more enticing offering. In the organizational psyche, leadership often is linked with promotion, compensation, and influence — that's an intriguing path for almost all of us. It's no wonder that 81 percent of people said they'd attend a class on this leadership if it was available.

So, what was number two? It wasn't one of our predictions. Dealing with conflict or difficult people came in second overall, with 53 percent. That's right, getting along with people at work is seen by learners as a significant opportunity for improving effectiveness — even more than technical skills and ahead of buzz topics like critical thinking (#7) and innovative thinking (#8). So, how can we explain the lack of alignment



between executives, who did rank critical thinking and innovative thinking skills as important, and managers and non-managers, who did not? Perhaps executives view interpersonal skills as too “old school” and less relevant in the age of social networks and constant interconnectedness. Or, perhaps executives assess their own skill level and believe their employees are at that same level.

In any case, our survey paints a different picture. The need for interpersonal skill development in the workplace hasn’t been fully met and learners see this as a pressing need. In addition to conflict, communication skills were also seen as important, rounding out the top five with 42 percent of people selecting it. Nearly two-thirds of those surveyed said they would attend a class on communication or conflict if it was available.

So what does this mean for trainers and organizations? Creating training offerings requires balancing the needs of the learner and the needs of the organization. And from the learner’s perspective, balancing cognitive-based skills with interpersonal capability remains an important requirement for success.

#### **About the authors**

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