

Emerging Talent

Developing Early Career Employees

offer emerging talent opportunities for on-the-job learning

74%

assess the needs of emerging talent by interviewing their managers

71%

say that career discussions with emerging talent are ongoing

28%

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Executive Summary

Developing employees isn't easy, and that job can be even harder when it comes to developing those who have recently entered the workforce. This group—known as emerging talent—can be tricky to develop because they lack not only work experience, but also experience receiving and applying training in a workplace setting.

So why is developing emerging talent such an important issue? Rita Murray, CEO of Performance Consulting, which provides coaching and leadership development, says simply, “Emerging talent are our future and they will accelerate into leadership faster than ever.”

In *Emerging Talent: Developing Early Career Employees* (hereafter, the Study), ATD examines how talent development professionals navigate the challenges associated with emerging talent and offers best practices for doing so. The Study also aims to discover what makes this group unique and how talent development professionals can better work with them to accomplish their career goals. For the purposes of this study, the following definition of emerging talent was used:

Emerging talent describes those in the workforce with less than five years of full-time work experience in any workplace.

To get a better picture of the current employee development landscape, ATD research surveyed 215 participants, asking about the existing skills gaps in emerging talent, the training offered to close the skills gaps, and training delivery methods. Other questions asked about the occurrence of career discussions with emerging talent and opportunities for career development—defined as a planned process of interaction between an organization and an employee that allows the employee to grow within the organization with an eye toward their long-term goals. Notably, only 20 percent of participants said their organizations were highly effective at developing specific skills in emerging talent to meet immediate needs, while just 12 percent indicated that their organizations were highly effective at career development for emerging talent.

12%

of participants reported that their organizations were highly effective at career development for emerging talent.

Study participants noted that it can be challenging to develop emerging talent, a sentiment also reflected in their effectiveness ratings. Indeed, a common challenge cited by respondents was a lack of resources to develop emerging talent. Participants also reported that their organization lacked metrics to track the success of development. Another issue was that managers often failed to view developing emerging talent as a top priority.

Combined, these challenges can make it difficult to succeed in developing emerging talent. However, participants did acknowledge benefits to developing emerging talent. For example, a slight majority said that a primary organizational benefit associated with developing emerging talent was improved retention. Just less than half reported that a key benefit was increased engagement among emerging talent, and slightly fewer indicated increased overall organizational performance as a top benefit for developing emerging talent. Clearly, when done well, the benefits of developing emerging talent can outweigh the challenges.

Because of the importance of developing emerging talent and the existence of numerous challenges, several subject matter experts provided their insights into overcoming these issues, as well as how to improve the effectiveness of development efforts. They also offered recommendations to help talent development professionals who may be struggling to successfully develop emerging talent in their organizations.

Whitepaper

In *Emerging Talent: Developing Early Career Employees*, ATD Research sought to examine how organizations develop the emerging talent in their workforce. Specifically, the Study focused on the skills emerging talent most need and receive training on, as well as the delivery methods associated with such training. The Study also examined how today's emerging talent is different from groups that entered the workforce before them. Finally, it focused on the career development opportunities available to emerging talent.

About the Research

A survey was deployed in summer 2018 to talent development professionals asking about their organization's efforts to develop emerging talent. Overall, 215 participants completed the survey. The respondents represented a range of industries and company sizes: 37 percent of participants were from organizations with fewer than 1,000 employees in the workforce, while 29 percent were from companies with more than 10,000 employees. The majority of respondents were managers or above. Notably, about 29 percent of the workforces of organizations surveyed were considered emerging talent.

21%

of participating organizations reported that 50 percent or more of their workforce was composed of emerging talent.

Effectiveness of Developing Emerging Talent

Just 20 percent of participants reported that their organization was highly effective at developing specific skills in emerging talent to meet immediate needs (Figure 1). Instead participants were much more likely to report that their organization was moderately effective. Four in 10 participants said their organization was effective to a small extent or not at all.

Next, participants were asked how effective their organization was at career development for emerging talent. Only 12 percent of respondents indicated that their organization was highly effective, while 37 percent said their organization was moderately so (Figure 2). Taken together, Figures 1 and 2 paint a grim picture of developing emerging talent and highlight the need for significant

improvement in TD efforts for this group of employees, particularly when one considers that emerging talent is the future of the workforce.

These two measures were then combined to create a scale—ranging from two to 10—to determine an organization's effectiveness score in developing emerging talent. For example, if an organization was very highly effective at developing specific skills and providing career development, they would have a score of 10; if an organization was not at all effective, its score would be two. The average organizational score in the Study was 5.24, suggesting that, overall, organizations are not very effective at developing emerging talent. The organization effectiveness score is used throughout the Study to identify best practices.

FIGURE 1:
Effectiveness at Developing Specific Skills in Emerging Talent

How effective is your current organization at developing specific skills in emerging talent to meet immediate needs?

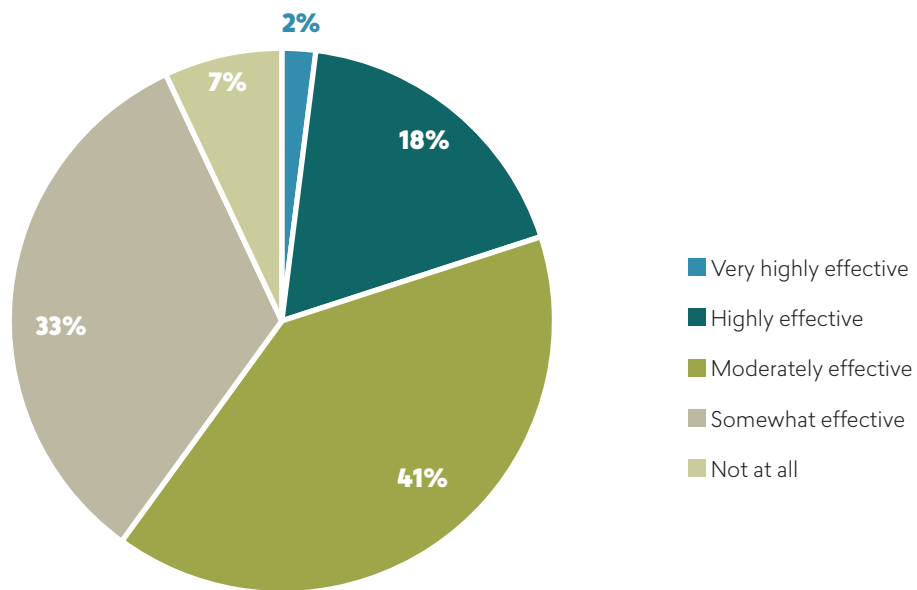
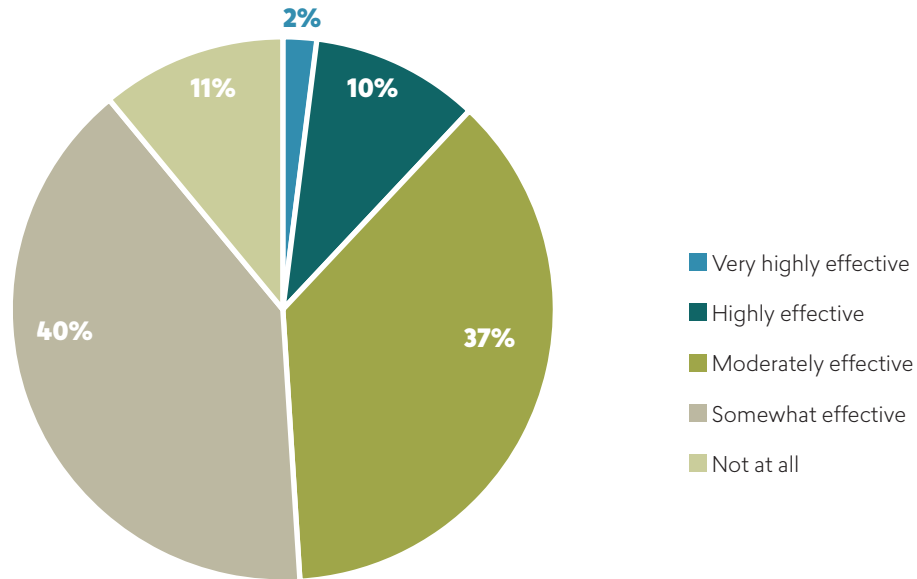


FIGURE 2:
Career Development Effectiveness

How effective is your current organization at career development for emerging talent?



Key Findings

Some key findings of this Study are:

- **The biggest skills gaps in emerging talent existed in future leader development, managerial and supervisory skills, process improvement skills, and critical thinking skills.** Although participants identified skills gaps in these areas, the training programs that organizations offered didn't always match. Only 28 percent offered future leader development opportunities to all emerging talent, and about half offered it to some.
- **Training for emerging talent occurred in myriad ways.** Nearly nine in 10 participants said their organization provided formal training for emerging talent through live, instructor-led classroom training, while about three-quarters offered self-paced online learning. Organizations that used live, instructor-led remote delivery were significantly more effective than those that did not.

- **Developing emerging talent has its challenges.** In fact, nearly a third of participants indicated that a top challenge was a lack of resources, such as staff and technology. Other common issues were a lack of metrics to track the success of development and that managers often failed to view developing emerging talent as a priority.

Identifying Statistically Significant Differences

In this report, we often note whether the difference between two groups is significant at a level of $p < 0.05$ or $p < 0.001$. A significance of $p < 0.05$ implies a less than 5 percent probability that the difference is a result of chance, and one can be 95 percent confident the results represent a statistically significant relationship. At the level of $p < 0.05$, it would be very likely to observe the same results if the research were repeated. A significance of $p < 0.001$ implies a less than 0.1 percent probability that the difference is a result of chance.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Overall, the Study found that organizations were not particularly effective when it comes to developing emerging talent. However, addressing this gap is made more difficult by the number of challenges faced by those who develop emerging talent. For example, nearly a third of participants reported that their organization faced a lack of resources when it comes to developing emerging talent; slightly fewer struggled with a lack of metrics to track the success of development or lack of support from managers who don't view developing emerging talent as a priority.

Taken together, these findings show that organizations need help to improve the experience for their talent development staff as well as their emerging talent.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the Study as well as insight from several subject matter experts, ATD Research offers the following recommendations.

Talk Directly to Emerging Talent

Organizations that used interviews with emerging talent to assess their needs were significantly more effective than those that did not use interviews; no other assessment method was this effective. Gabrielle Bosché believes emerging talent will respond well to being asked about their needs and experiences. She says, "They are an incredibly curious group that are more than happy to share with you what their needs are if you're willing to ask them."

Interviews with emerging talent could be done formally or informally, and they could also be combined with other methods to ensure you're getting the whole picture. For example, consider collecting data through several sources—known as triangulating data—such as interviews, surveys, and focus groups. It may take more time and effort, but the data collected will be much richer than if only a single source were used.

Consider Your Delivery Methods

Although emerging talent is usually associated with a desire to use technology, Rita Murray warns that entirely online and self-paced methods may make learners more inclined to “phone it in.” She explains, “I try to bring relevant e-learning data to the table that demonstrates that even emerging talent, who we think want a lot of online and self-directed training, may also dial it in, because they crave interaction and real-time feedback rather than just checking the box.”

Notably, results showed that organizations that used live instructor-led remote delivery were significantly more effective than those that did not. Although remote delivery involves technology that Rita cautions against, the live aspect allows for interactivity that would otherwise be lost. In *Virtual Classrooms Now: Using Technology to Reach Today's Workforces*, ATD Research (2016) found that organizations are using virtual classrooms for a variety of reasons. In fact, 46 percent of respondents cited the desire to enable live interactions between instructors and learners, while 33 percent reported improved employee engagement in learning.

To optimize results, TD professionals should consider using live instructor-led remote delivery methods. They are a great way to meet emerging talent where they are, while still engaging them by being present to ask and answer questions in real time.

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- **Danielle Buscher, CPLP**, Senior Learning and Development Specialist, Lumeris
- **Rita Murray, PhD**, CEO, Performance Consulting

About the Author and Contributors



The Association for Talent Development (ATD) is the world's largest professional membership organization supporting those who develop the knowledge and skills of employees, improve performance, and achieve results for the organizations they serve. Originally established in 1943, the association was previously known as the American Society for Training & Development (ASTD).

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Appendix: Survey Overview

Target Survey Population

The target survey population for this Study was talent development professionals from organizations in various sizes and industries. Overall, 215 unique participants completed the survey.

Survey Instruments

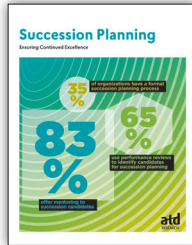
The survey was composed of a total of 28 questions, including those geared toward the demographics of respondents.

Procedure

ATD Research distributed a link to an online survey to the target population in August 2018. The survey closed in September 2018. In-depth interviews with subject matter experts were also conducted by phone and email in fall 2018.

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