Employees Value Training, but Many Feel Overlooked

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With technology and the competitive landscape evolving at blistering speed, keeping professional skills sharp and employing a highly trained workforce have never been more crucial. But are organizations investing adequately in their talent through training and development? Is the training effective? And what about career advancement opportunities? Are they accessible? Is there a clear path, regardless of job level?

To explore these and other key career-development questions, the American Management Association (AMA) queried more than 1,100 people worldwide on a variety of metrics. Countries represented in the survey include more than a dozen of the world's largest economies.[1] We contrasted data among job levels, and compared US and global responses when differences were significant. (Unless stated otherwise, the data in this report reflects responses from all global participants.)

[1] **Countries surveyed include the US, China, Canada, Mexico, Australia, Brazil, France, Germany, India, Japan, Saudi Arabia, South Korea, Spain and the UK.**

Key findings include:

› When leadership training is offered, it's impactful.

› Nearly all respondents who had participated in such training found it to be valuable.

› About three quarters of organizations leverage training as a tool for career advancement, engagement and retention.

› Of respondents who lacked access to leadership training, two fifths said it was hindering their career.

› The vast majority of respondents were interested in advancing their career.

› Managers and senior leaders could benefit from being more proactive in recognizing their team members' accomplishments. Two thirds of individual contributors said their work lacked visibility.

› Having a clear process for transforming top performers into leaders appears to be a highly effective strategy, but nearly half of organizations lacked such a process.

› Respondents sought numerous types of training; particularly management, leadership, strategic thinking, and AI.
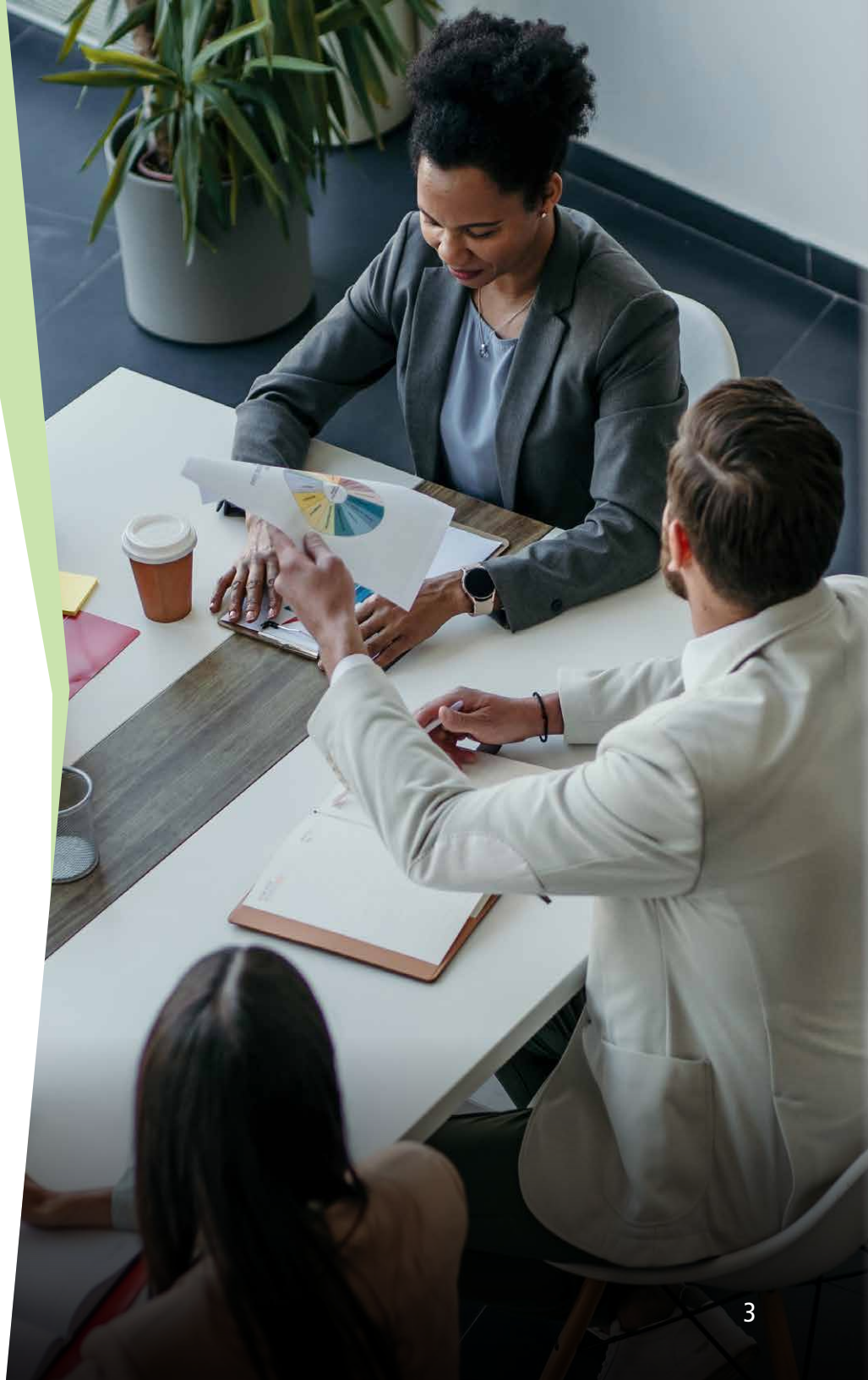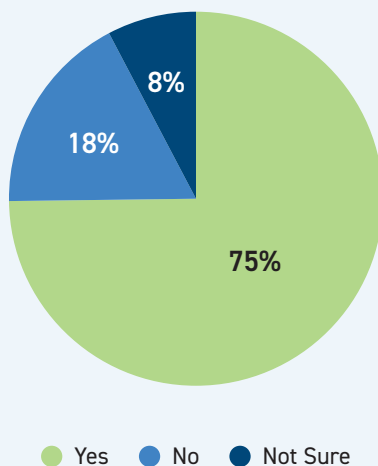
Access to Training and Development

AMA's 2025 career development survey revealed, in general, organizations are providing training and development opportunities, and employees value it. Three quarters of respondents (75%) said that most people in their organization had access to training and development opportunities. However, outcomes vary based on the organization's focus on supporting the training outcomes.

Eighteen percent of organizations surveyed did not offer training opportunities to their employees, while another 8% were unsure, suggesting their organizations failed to clearly communicate available options. Altogether this means more than a quarter (26%) of organizations are neglecting training, revealing a need to increase awareness about how high-quality behavior-change training boosts engagement and retention.

Q. Do most people in your organization have access to training and development opportunities?

8%
18%
75%

● Yes   ● No   ● Not Sure

Levels of Effectiveness in Training

Three quarters of organizations provide learning and development opportunities to their employees, but not all of this training is created equal. Learning can range from passive information sharing to active skill development and behavior change. Its value depends on several factors, including how aligned the training offerings are to organizational objectives and how deeply the learner engages with the material, and whether the knowledge and skills translate into real-world application. We've provided a summary of the levels of training, in order from least to most effective.

Awareness

Includes exposure to information and passive consumption. It introduces concepts but does not require engagement.

> **Examples:** articles, videos, keynotes, podcasts
> **Effectiveness:** awareness is useful for introducing new topics and sparking interest but does not generally lead to significant behavior shifts

Knowledge Sharing

Helps employees' understanding of new concepts, frameworks and theories.

> **Examples:** webinars, case studies, assessments
> **Effectiveness:** raises employees' level of understanding but may not result in sustained improvement unless the employee is self-motivated

Skill Development

Entails learning through experience and applying newly gained knowledge.

> **Examples:** participating in live workshops with role playing, engaging in hands-on learning and simulations in a classroom, practicing skills, and receiving feedback
> **Effectiveness:** enhances retention and confidence, and can lead to greater competence if the trainee practices consistently

Behavior Change

Involves sustained application of skill development in the real world, including ongoing practice, and use in everyday work, with continuous reinforcement and accountability.

> **Examples:** post-training coaching from a manager, on-the-job skill application, and ongoing feedback and follow-up from management on usage and implementation
> **Effectiveness:** behavior change is the highest level of learning, leading to effective and sustained improvement
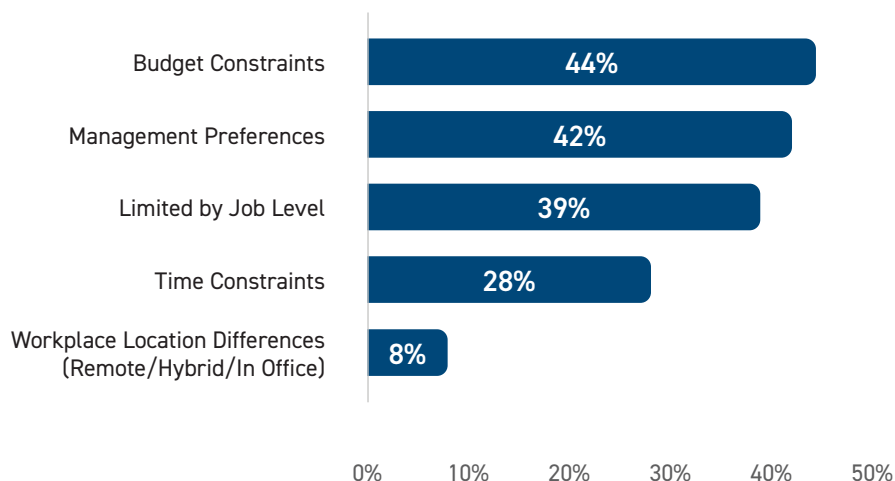
Not only are most organizations offering training and development, but a significant proportion of respondents are taking advantage of it. More than half of respondents (57%) had participated in management or leadership training in the past year. Participation differed substantially by job level. Individual contributors were the least likely to have received such training (33%), followed by managers (68%) and senior leaders (76%). Of those who had participated in leadership training, nearly all (90%) said it was valuable and beneficial to their career.

Among respondents whose organizations did not offer training and development programs to most employees, 41% said it was hindering their career growth. Nearly half of manager-level respondents believed this (48%), which is more than individual contributors (38%) and senior leaders (34%).

Respondents blamed the lack of training access at their organization primarily on budget constraints (44%). This is ironic, considering that recruiting, hiring, and onboarding new talent is typically more costly, while employees whose organizations invest in them tend to be more engaged and more likely to stay. Other top reasons organizations were not providing training included management preferences (42%), job-level limitations (39%) and time constraints (28%).

Q. Why is access to training and development unequal in your organization?

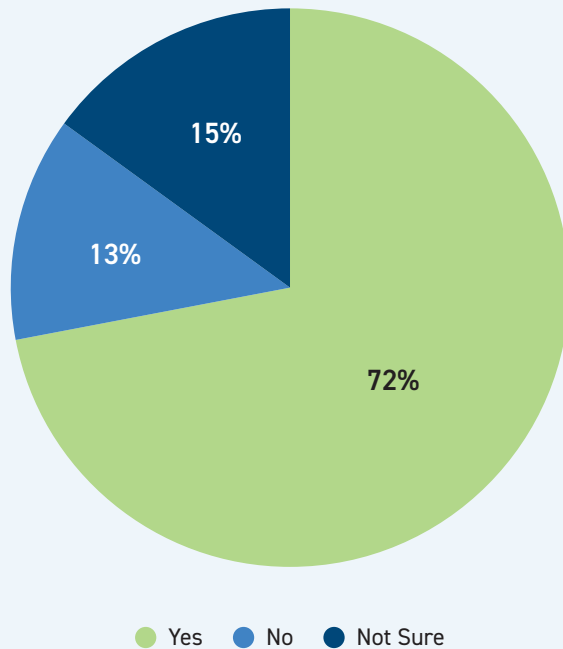| Category	Percent
Budget Constraints	44%
Management Preferences	42%
Limited by Job Level	39%
Time Constraints	28%
Workplace Location Differences (Remote/Hybrid/In Office)	8%

0%   10%   20%   30%   40%   50%

> **"** Of those who had participated in leadership training, **nearly all (90%)** said it was valuable and beneficial to their career. **"**
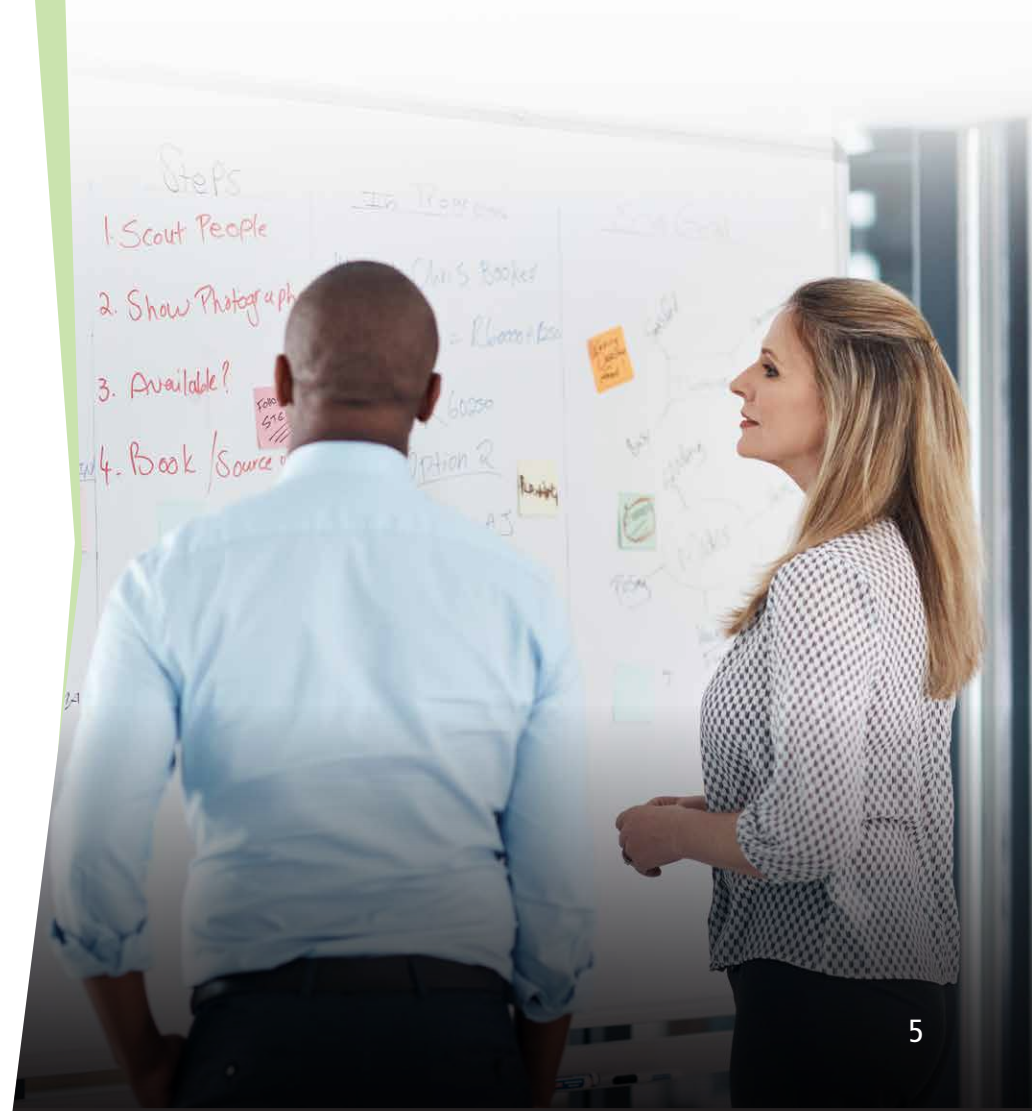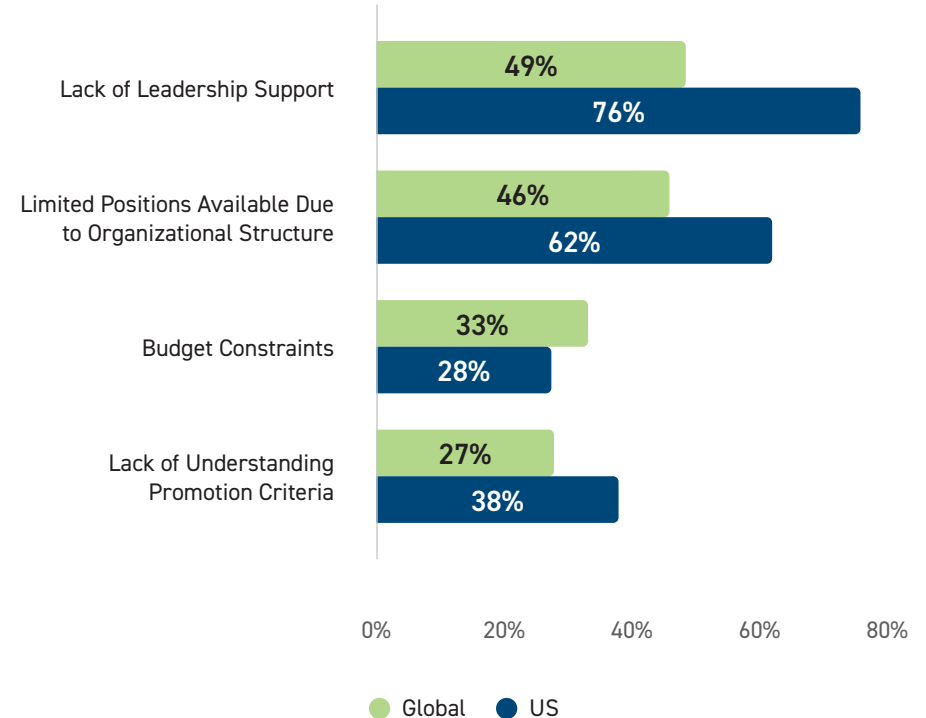
Advancement Opportunities

Nearly three quarters of respondents (72%) said advancement opportunities were accessible to employees in their organization who "qualified," meaning employees on an identified career track. Thirteen percent said such opportunities were not available, and 15% were unsure. Individual contributors were less likely to believe this (61% yes, 16% no, 23% unsure).

Among those who said their organization lacked advancement opportunities, the most common reasons were lack of leadership support (49%) and limited positions available due to organizational structure (46%), followed by budget constraints (33%) and a lack of understanding of promotion criteria (27%). A much greater proportion of US respondents cited the top two reasons. The survey also found a correlation between a lack of access to training and development opportunities and the perception that advancement opportunities were not accessible.

Q. Are advancement opportunities accessible to employees who qualify?

- 72%
- 13%
- 15%

Yes ● No ● Not Sure

Q. Why are advancement opportunities not accessible?

	Global	US
Lack of Leadership Support	49%	76%
Limited Positions Available Due to Organizational Structure	46%	62%
Budget Constraints	33%	28%
Lack of Understanding Promotion Criteria	27%	38%

● Global ● US

No Training, No Future?

Digging into the data, we found a correlation between training access and whether respondents believed that their organization made advancement opportunities available to employees who qualified. Among respondents whose organizations failed to provide training and development, fewer than half (45%) said their organization offered advancement. In comparison, of those who did have access to training and development, 82% said their organization offered advancement. Determining a causal relationship between these, while beyond the scope of this paper, is worthy of further research.

Q. Are advancement opportunities accessible?
(By whether the organization offers training.)
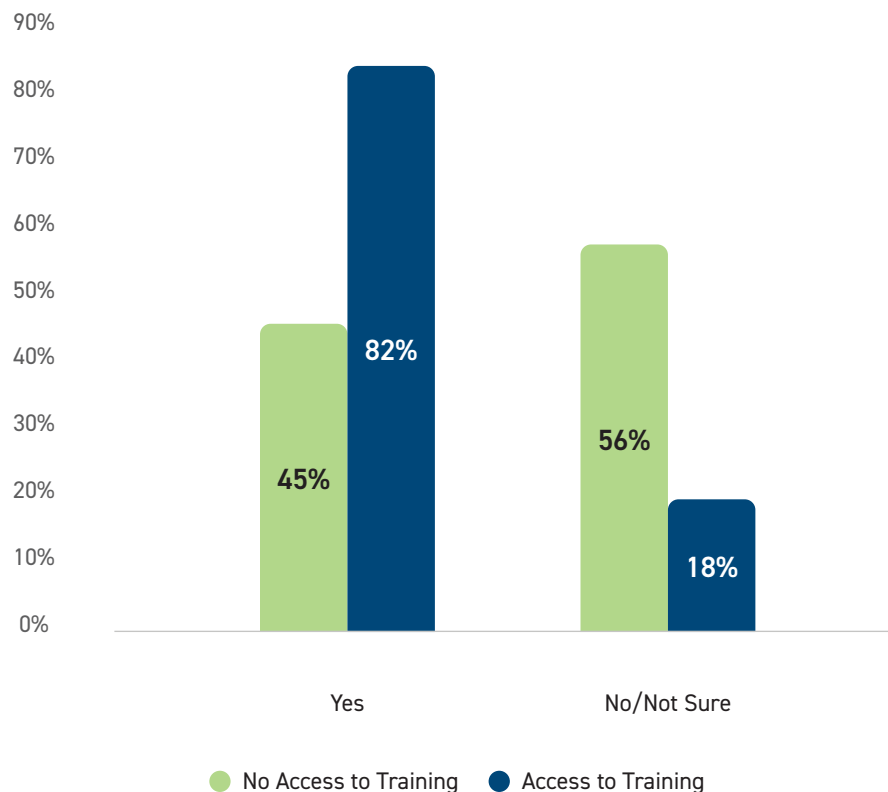
Bar chart showing:
- Yes: No Access to Training 45%, Access to Training 82%
- No/Not Sure: No Access to Training 56%, Access to Training 18%

Legend: ● No Access to Training ● Access to Training

> **Even when an individual contributor is content in their role, they report being motivated by recognition and visibility.**

Career Advancement and Motivation

On several career advancement metrics, the survey found significant differences among job levels. Individual contributors reported being less ambitious than managers and senior leaders. However, they are still concerned about recognition for work and visibility to senior leaders. Even when an individual contributor is content in their role, they report being motivated by recognition and visibility. They were less likely to feel as if their accomplishments were visible to supervisors, and they tended to believe that recognition was unequally distributed.

Q. Do you actively seek out career advancement opportunities?

|	Yes	No
Senior Leadership	88%	12%
Manager/Supervisor	83%	17%
Individual Contributor	62%	38%

0% 20% 40% 60% 80% 100%

● Yes ● No
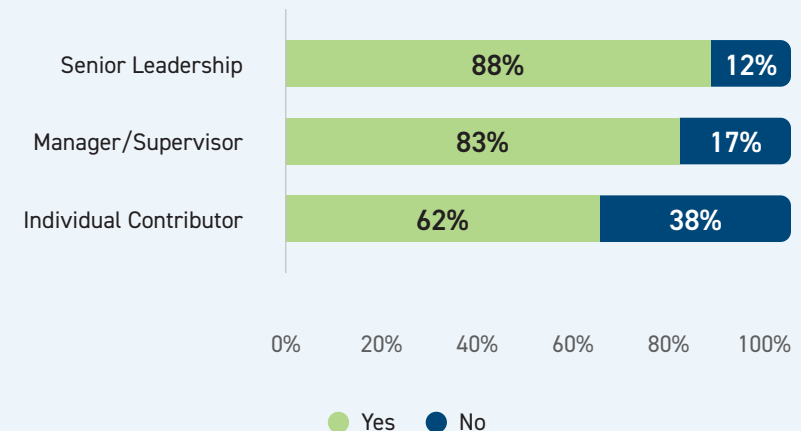
About three quarters of respondents (76%) said they actively pursued career advancement opportunities. Respondents with higher levels of responsibility were more apt to say they sought such opportunities. This could suggest that more ambitious employees tend to rise in the ranks, or that succeeding at advancement inspires people to pursue additional opportunities.
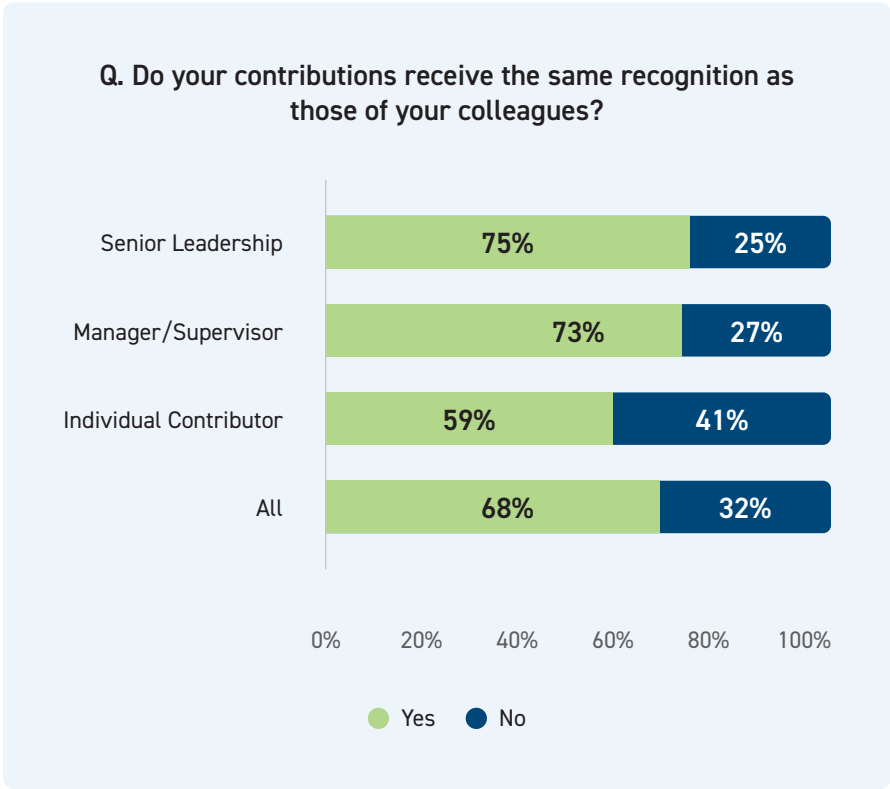
Recognizing accomplishments

The survey found leaders could do more to acknowledge their employees' work and their teams' accomplishments. We asked how much visibility respondents had with leadership to recognize their work and accomplishments. Nearly half (48%) said they never (7%) or only occasionally (41%) had visibility. Fifty-two percent said visibility often (39%) or always (13%) provided such exposure. Respondents at lower job levels reported significantly less visibility. Two thirds of individual contributors said they had no (14%) or only occasional (52%) visibility. About two fifths of managers (43%) said the same (4% no, 39% occasional visibility).
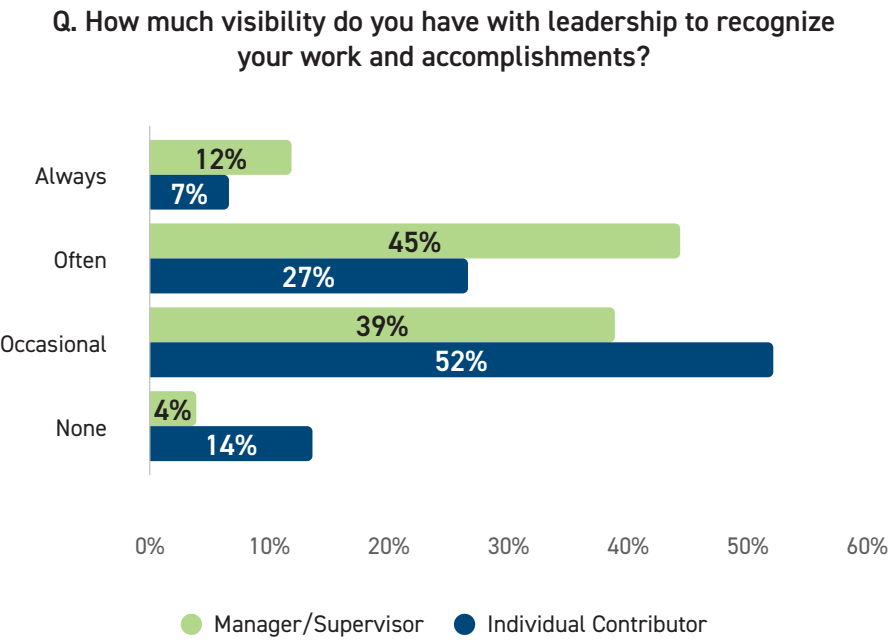
About two thirds of respondents (68%) said they felt as if they received the same levels of recognition as their colleagues. Three quarters of senior leaders (75%) and managers (73%) said this. Only 59% of individual contributors agreed, suggesting that about two fifths (41%) of individual contributors feel unfairly not recognized.

Q. How much visibility do you have with leadership to recognize your work and accomplishments?

	Manager/Supervisor	Individual Contributor
Always	12%	7%
Often	45%	27%
Occasional	39%	52%
None	4%	14%

● Manager/Supervisor   ● Individual Contributor

Q. Do your contributions receive the same recognition as those of your colleagues?

|	Yes	No
Senior Leadership	75%	25%
Manager/Supervisor	73%	27%
Individual Contributor	59%	41%
All	68%	32%

● Yes   ● No

Developing leaders

Nurturing top performers should be a priority for any successful organization. The survey confirmed that having a clear policy to support top performers for leadership roles can be an effective strategy. Among respondents who said their organization had a clear process, 70% said it had supported their own advancement to leadership; the proportion was marginally lower in the US (64%).

That proportion rose substantially when we filtered out individual contributors, whose advancement to leadership is still likely in its early stages. Globally, nearly all senior leaders (88%) and about three quarters of managers (78%) said a clear process for supporting top performers helped their advancement to leadership.

Despite the effectiveness, 43% of survey respondents perceived that their organization lacked a clear process for identifying and supporting top performers for leadership roles. The proportion rose to 54% among individual contributors and dropped to 34% among senior leaders. Senior leaders would naturally be more attuned to their organization's process since they may have been identified and supported to reach their current level. The fact that individual contributors are less aware of such a process suggests they may perceive a lack of support for their growth, which could lead to disengagement, frustration, or even attrition.

Q. Does your organization have a clear process for supporting top performers for leadership?

	Yes	No
Individual Contributor	46%	54%
Managers	62%	38%
Senior Leadership	66%	34%
All	57%	43%

● Yes   ● No
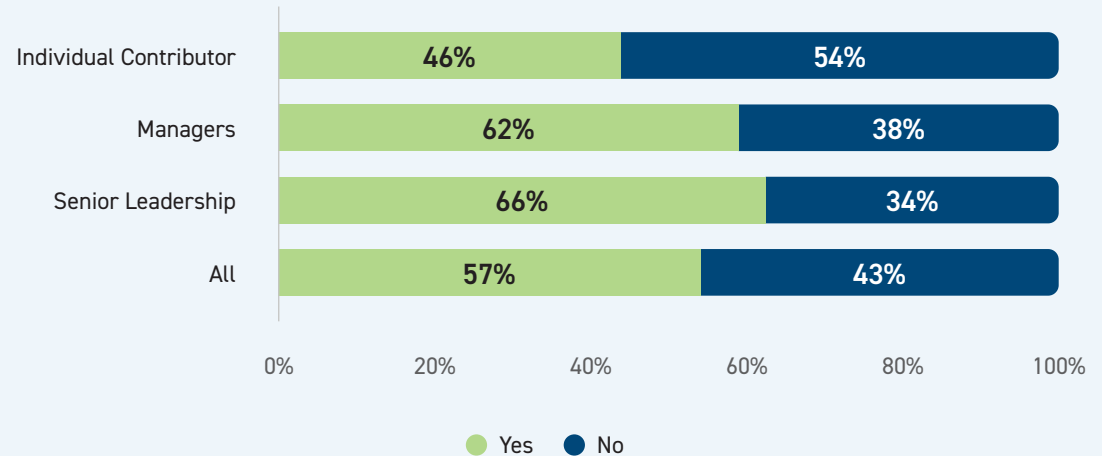
Q. Has your organization's process for supporting top performers helped you advance?

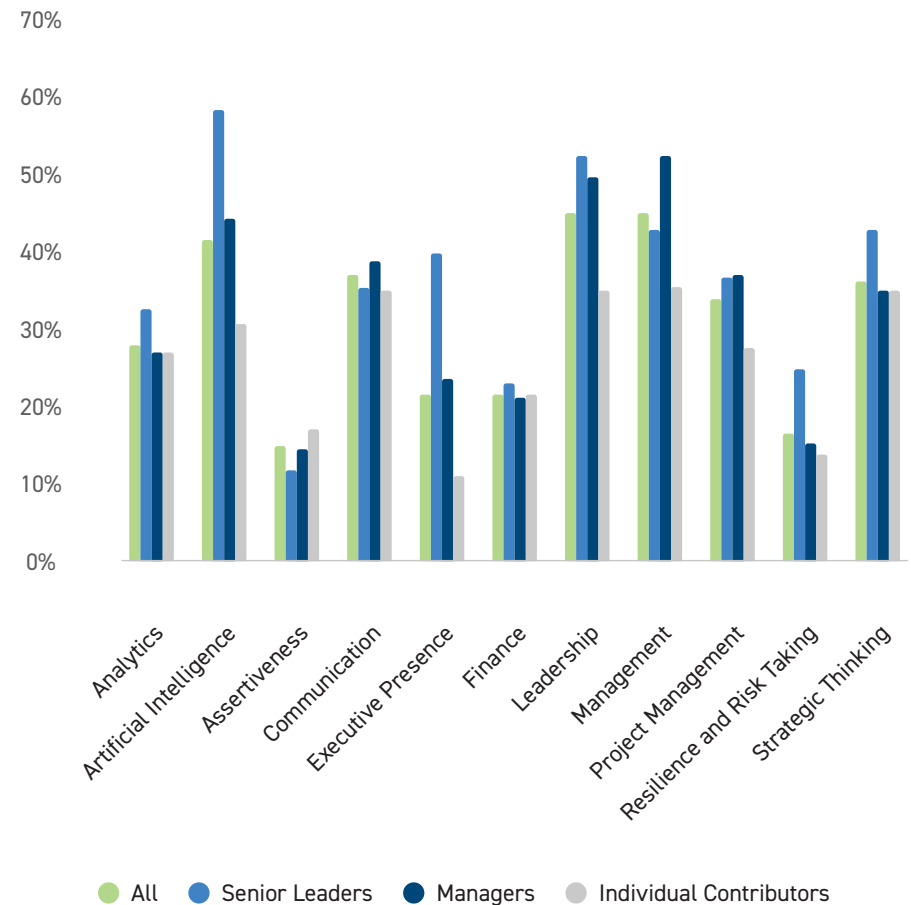|	Yes	No	Not Applicable
Managers	78%	13%	10%
Senior Leaders	89%	7%	4%

● Managers   ● Senior Leaders
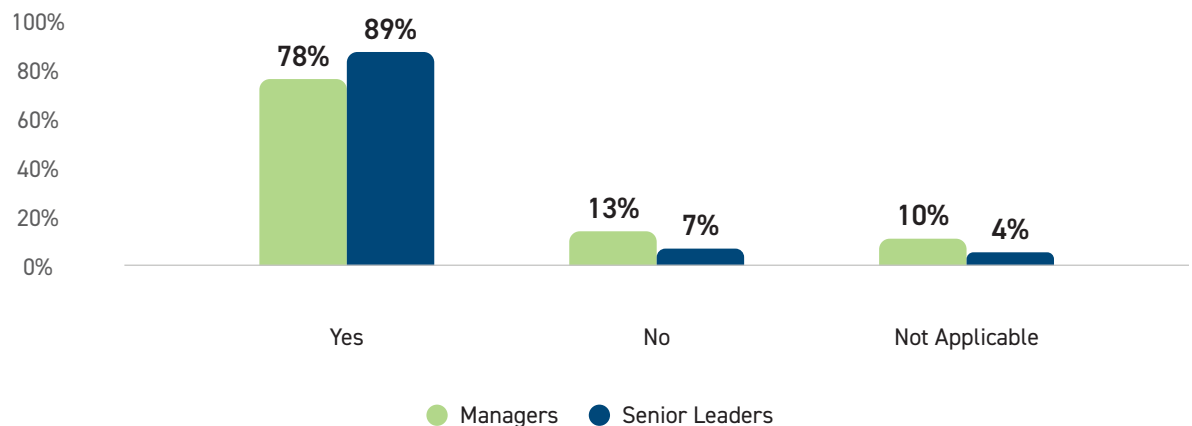
Targeting skill building

When asked what type of development would be most beneficial to their career growth, respondents most frequently valued leadership and management training, followed by artificial intelligence, communication, and strategic thinking. Senior leaders expressed a stronger interest in training. Far more of them thought they would benefit from AI training (58%) than managers (44%) or individual contributors (30%). They also sought training for leadership (52%), strategic thinking (43%), and executive presence (39%) in greater numbers than other employees.

Q. What training would most benefit your career growth?

Category	Percentage
Management	44%
Leadership	44%
Artificial Intelligence	41%
Communication	37%
Strategic Thinking	36%
Project Management	33%
Analytics	28%
Executive Presence	22%
Finance	21%
Resilience and Risk Taking	16%
Assertiveness	15%

Q. What training would most benefit your career growth (by job level)?

Legend: All · Senior Leaders · Managers · Individual Contributors

Conclusion and Calls to Action

AMA's findings on opportunities and career development uncovered numerous positive trends. Most organizations appear to be proactive in furnishing training opportunities for their employees, particularly at the upper levels of responsibility. Moreover, professionals value the training and development they are receiving and say it has helped advance their careers. While this may seem positive on the surface, the challenge still remains that there are organizational responsibilities that must be addressed to ensure a successful transfer from learning to practical application and installation of those skills. **There are, of course, opportunities for improvement:**

Supporting top performers

We found that organizations need to do a better job in the crucial area of identifying and supporting top performers for leadership roles. The finding that nearly half of US organizations lacked a clear process for supporting top performers suggests that they are insufficiently preparing for the future. Moreover, they are neglecting employees' ambitions, which may undermine motivation and contribute to higher turnover.

Recognizing individual contributors

The survey revealed that many individual contributors feel overlooked. They said leaders were not recognizing their work and accomplishments, and visibility was not evenly distributed. Appropriate levels of employee recognition can boost morale, increase performance, and improve retention. By addressing the recognition deficit, leaders could alleviate the low levels of ambition among individual contributors, nearly two fifths of whom were indifferent to career advancement opportunities.

Offering AI training to senior leaders

As we mentioned, nearly three in five senior leaders believed they would benefit from AI training, a rate significantly higher than other employees. We did not gather data on why this is the case. It's possible that they have a better understanding of the profound impact AI will have on their careers and organizations. Alternatively, senior leaders may be less comfortable with new technology. Regardless, organizations would be wise to accommodate this interest, particularly given the efficiencies and competitive advantages that AI can deliver.

Finally, we found a note of consistency in the types of training and development that employees seek. Worldwide, respondents remain hungry primarily for training in skills relevant to their role such as management, communication and strategic thinking. With the exception of training in AI, these skills were in higher demand than hard skills such as project management, analytics and finance. This suggests that despite the rapid evolution of technology and competition, strong interpersonal skills remain the most vital competency and valuable skillset.