



# NATIONAL SKILLS COALITION

Every worker. Every industry. A strong economy.

## New fact sheets: The Business Case for Upskilling

Two fact sheets being released today distill key findings from NSC's recent *Foundational Skills in the Service Sector* report.

The first, [The Business Case for Upskilling](#), makes the case that companies have a powerful stake in the skills of their frontline employees, and highlights one employer example that demonstrates the economic benefits of investing in worker skill building.

The [second fact sheet](#) provides select highlights from the report for a general audience.

Get all the details in NSC's [latest Skills Blog post](#).

### THE BUSINESS CASE FOR UPSKILLING: HOW COMPANIES BENEFIT WHEN SERVICE WORKERS IMPROVE THEIR SKILLS

Limited math, reading, and technology skills are an understudied challenge among US workers, an obstacle to NSC's Foundational Skills in the Service Sector report. But companies that invest in their workers' skill building can see payoffs not only for the workers themselves, but for the business bottom line.

**THE CHALLENGE: DEDICATED EMPLOYEES WITH LIMITED SKILLS**

Over 100 U.S. specific, cross-industry assessment show that the foundational skills are prevalent across the service sector. 67% of American workers in the target occupations have low English literacy skills, 70% have low numeracy, and 70% have limited digital proficiency skills.

Of the same time, many workers with all three low skill and low digital employees in majority (70%) have been with their current employer for at least three years, including 50% who have been with their employer for at least 10 years.

**WORKERS WHO ARE INTERESTED BUT DON'T PARTICIPATE IN LEARNING ACTIVITIES OR HAVE BARRIERS ARE LACK OF TIME, MONEY**

Technical skills	20%
Foundational literacy skills for non-technical workers	20%
Foundational numeracy skills for non-technical workers	20%
Foundational digital skills for non-technical workers	20%
Language proficiency skills for non-technical workers	20%
Other	20%
Cost of training	20%
Time of training	20%

**THE SOLUTION: INVESTING IN SKILLS**

Companies can replicate in their employees' interest in upskilling by facilitating their participation in learning opportunities, training, coaching, mentoring, job shadowing, and other barriers to participation.

Businesses that are successfully addressing skill gaps in their workforce are doing so through a variety of factors. Many involve partnerships with other training partners, such as community colleges, workforce development centers, or other training partners. Some businesses offer on-site training to workers during the work day or after their shifts, which often support the ability of their employees to attend classes off site.

Examples of employer skill building investments include:

- Establishing an apprenticeship program for existing hires
- Investing in the design of a community college program for customer service technicians
- Offering a blended learning program that allows individual workers to participate in both the on-site and on-line classes to enhance their skills without necessarily need open scheduling (fixed schedules)

### LOW SKILLS ARE WIDESPREAD IN SERVICE SECTOR, BUT INVESTMENTS IN WORKER UPSKILLING CAN PAY OFF

**THE CHALLENGE: A MAJORITY OF SERVICE WORKERS LACK KEY SKILLS**

Low skill skills are a widespread problem among service sector workers. 67% of American workers in targeted occupations in retail, hospitality, and healthcare have limited literacy skills. An even higher 70% have low numeracy, and 70% have limited digital problem solving skills.

**LOW SKILLS ARE PREVALENT AMONG SERVICE WORKERS**

Low literacy	67%
Low numeracy	70%
Low digital	70%

Such skill gaps can carry heavy costs for individual workers and the companies that employ them. Workers with low foundational skills may struggle to complete basic requirements of their jobs, such as job task training, equipment maintenance, and financial calculations.

**DESPITE THEIR SKILL GAPS, MANY WORKERS WOULD ASK TO TAKE THESE READING, WRITING, AND MATH IN THE JOB**

Would like to take these reading, writing, and math in the job	77%
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**THE OPPORTUNITY: WORKERS ARE EAGER TO BUILD SKILLS**

In recognition of their skill gaps, these workers are frequently asked about their foundational skills on the job. Nearly three in four workers report that they most regularly complete tasks that require reading or short foundational skills.

**WOULD LOW SKILLED WORKERS HAVE BEEN WITH THEIR EMPLOYER FOR AT LEAST 3 YEARS**

Would like to take these reading, writing, and math in the job	77%
Would like to take these reading, writing, and math in the job	77%
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Improving worker skills can also have positive ripple effects beyond the individual employee, as nearly 1 in 3 (29%) of low-skilled workers are supervising others.

**NEARLY 1 IN 4 LOW SKILLED WORKERS ARE SUPERVISORS**

Supervising others	29%
Supervising others	29%
Supervising others	29%
Supervising others	29%
Supervising others	29%

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 1730 Rhode Island Avenue NW, Suite 712, Washington DC 20036  
 Phone: 202.223.8991 · Fax: 202.318.2609