

# Pandemic's Impact on Executive Skills

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Executives are always striving to stay relevant, now and in the future. It is a crucial aspect of managing a career and developing professionally.

What has recently been upended, however, is the backdrop against which executives are trying to maintain their relevance.

For the better part of the past two years, the pandemic has rapidly transformed the way businesses conduct their operations and thrown unforeseeable and **unprecedented obstacles** at organizations and their leaders.

How has the pandemic affected executives' skills and, in turn, their relevance? What can be done to emerge from the pandemic as a relevant leader armed with the right skills necessary to tackle the challenges that still lie ahead?

In our effort to learn more about the impact of the pandemic on executive skills, we conducted a survey in partnership with [The Official Board](#).

We received responses from over 3,000 executives representing a wide range of positions and industries from all over the globe. Our survey asked two simple quantitative questions:

- 1. On average, what percentage of your skills became obsolete or outdated during the pandemic?*
- 2. On average, what percentage of your skills became obsolete or outdated on a yearly basis before the pandemic?*

We asked only two quantitative questions in hopes that executives would also find time to provide qualitative feedback. Fortunately for us, 84% of respondents provided text responses, offering their insights and advice.

It was within those qualitative answers that we learned a more nuanced story about what executives were experiencing.

When comparing the means for each of our quantitative questions, we found that the rate of **skills obsolescence increased by 71.7 percent** during the pandemic.

When analyzing our qualitative answers, we found that executives explained this sharp increase in several different ways.

Some executives saw a type of exchange take place, in which some skills became obsolete while others were **acquired**. Others felt that certain skills evolved into more relevant skills, with previous skills serving as the foundation for newer ones.

Yet others noted that some skills were only temporarily made obsolete by the pandemic and would need to be honed again once the pandemic subsides.

**Communication skills** were the most impacted by the pandemic, according to executives' comments.

As executives transitioned to virtual platforms to interact with colleagues, employees and clients, they found that skills like reading nonverbal cues became essentially useless.

Learning how to **lead empathetically**, however, was a skill that many executives felt needed to be gained.

With the persistence of so much uncertainty in every aspect of people's lives, executives were charged with attending to employees' personal and mental health needs in ways they never had before.

Based on the executives' responses and our own research, we identified **three ways** that executives can help keep their skills relevant.

First, the traditional ways of **learning**—such as being coached, attending conferences and taking classes—remain as important as ever and can be done virtually.

Secondly, although face-to-face interaction is still limited for many executives, **connecting with others** is an important way to stay relevant. Whether learning skills or industry trends via other people's expertise or troubleshooting problems with trusted colleagues, there is much to be learned through conversation and innovative meetings, and executives must ensure that those continue to happen, even if it is only over Zoom.

Third and lastly, executives must **prioritize self-care**. Just as employees' mental health has become a priority, executives need to care for their own as well. Executives gave examples such as working out, getting fresh air and managing their time more closely as ways they kept themselves healthy and ready to face the challenges of the day.

In today's workplace, it is **every individual's responsibility** to keep their skills sharp and maintain their own relevance.

Understanding the pandemic's impact and intentionally developing strategies for how to stay relevant should be at the top of every executive's list of priorities.

For the full story, please click [here](#).