

Europe's Tech Sector Significantly Disadvantaged by an AI Skills Shortage, Reveals New IBM Research

- **Nearly 7 in 10 tech job seekers and tech employees believe that potential recruits lack the skills necessary for a career in AI**
- **Problem solving is considered the most critical soft skill needed for tech roles**
- **AI skills shortage could undermine digital innovation and suppress economic activity**
- **UK tech employees are given fewer training opportunities compared to their colleagues in Spain and Germany**

LONDON, 25th April, 2022 - A new IBM (NYSE: IBM) study has revealed the size of the AI skills gap across Europe. The comprehensive research, which surveyed employees, recruiters and applicants within tech in Germany, Spain and the UK, found that the sector is struggling to find employees with adequate AI knowledge or experience. This deficit has the potential to stifle digital innovation and hold back economic growth.

IBM's report, 'Addressing the AI Skills Gap in Europe', exposes a worrying shortfall in skills required for a career in AI. Although technical capabilities are vital for a career in the sector, **problem solving is considered the most critical soft skill needed for tech roles** among all survey participants (up to 37%). However, around a quarter of tech recruiters (23%) have difficulty finding applicants with this aptitude along with shortfalls in **critical and strategic thinking**.

As AI moves into the mainstream, specialist tech staff are working more closely than ever with business managers. In order to secure the best possible outcomes, the soft skills of interpersonal communication, strategic problem solving and critical thinking are required across all disciplines to help ensure the most beneficial personal interactions. Demonstrating these skills can greatly improve employability and career developments in AI.

"It's clear that the lack of skills and training could have a massive impact at a time of increasing global competition," said Sharon Moore MBE, Global Technical Lead for Government, IBM Technology. "The report showed that offering education and skills training is seen as a top priority for companies looking to improve AI recruitment in the future. As a result, we have already taken proactive steps to help applicants and employees enhance their AI skills. SkillsBuild is a free programme which contains an [AI skills module](#) for secondary education students and adults seeking entry-level employment."

Developing AI Skills

Along with soft skills, 40% of tech job seekers and employees noted that **software engineering and knowledge of programming languages are the most important technical capabilities** for the AI/tech workforce to have.

"The growing importance of AI across so many industries should provide ample scope for tech sector growth. Unfortunately, a shortage of AI skills means that these opportunities can be hard to seize," Moore said. "There's a clear and disadvantageous gap in the education syllabus so for now in-house training from big tech companies, like IBM, needs to be prioritised."

Despite some companies working towards this goal, the survey reveals that there's still room for improvement. Tech employees in Spain and Germany (42%) are given training opportunities on topics including programming languages, data engineering/analysis and software engineering. The UK falls behind, though. Just 32% of staff receive such training, with 27% specifically focusing on software engineering, a key AI-related skill.

"AI is changing the world by automating decisions, predicting outcomes and optimising employees' time. Yet advances in AI are being slowed by the shortage of workers with skills and experience in areas the report has brought to light," Moore said. "With the right training, education and upskilling, we'll be able to leverage AI to its full potential and as a result generate further value for companies and society."

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Methodology: This study was carried out by Morning Consult on behalf of IBM between 23 March and 4 April, 2022. It was conducted among a sample of 500 tech job seekers, 300 tech employees and 200 tech recruiters in each country (UK, Spain and Germany). The interviews were conducted online. The margin of error is +/-3 percentage points at a 95% confidence level.

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