

Skilling Up!

Leveraging Full and Micro-Credentials for Optimal Skilling Solutions



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Table of Contents



CLICK BELOW TO NAVIGATE TO EACH SECTION IN THIS DOCUMENT.

In This InfoBrief	3	Scenario- and Project-Based Skills Are Used Increasingly to Hire and Move Employees Up.....	11
Survey Demographics.....	4	Why Micro-Credentials?	12
Situation Overview	5	Selecting a Service Provider for Micro-Credential Programs.....	13
A Growing Divide.....	6	Survey Respondents and Customers Talk About Role- and Scenario-Based Credentials	14
Where to Start?.....	7	Essential Guidance	15
Credentials Matter	8	About the IDC Analysts.....	16
Full Credentials: Still Critical After All These Years	9	Message from the Sponsor.....	17
Micro-Credentials: Validating Scenario- and Project-Based Skill Sets	10		

In This InfoBrief

Amid widening skills shortages at organizations, this InfoBrief examines the **importance of technology-based and emerging scenario-based credentials** to help employees prove their skills for role- or project-based needs.



Full credentials, such as role- and technology-based certifications, continue to be critical tools for recruitment, upskilling, and reskilling.



Micro-credentials (scenario- or project-based) are increasingly in demand due to their focused validation, just-in-time skills, and hands-on experience.

The IDC 2024 *Digital Skilling Survey*, sponsored by Microsoft, explores attitudes about skilling and credentials among line-of-business and IT leaders at 154 North American organizations.



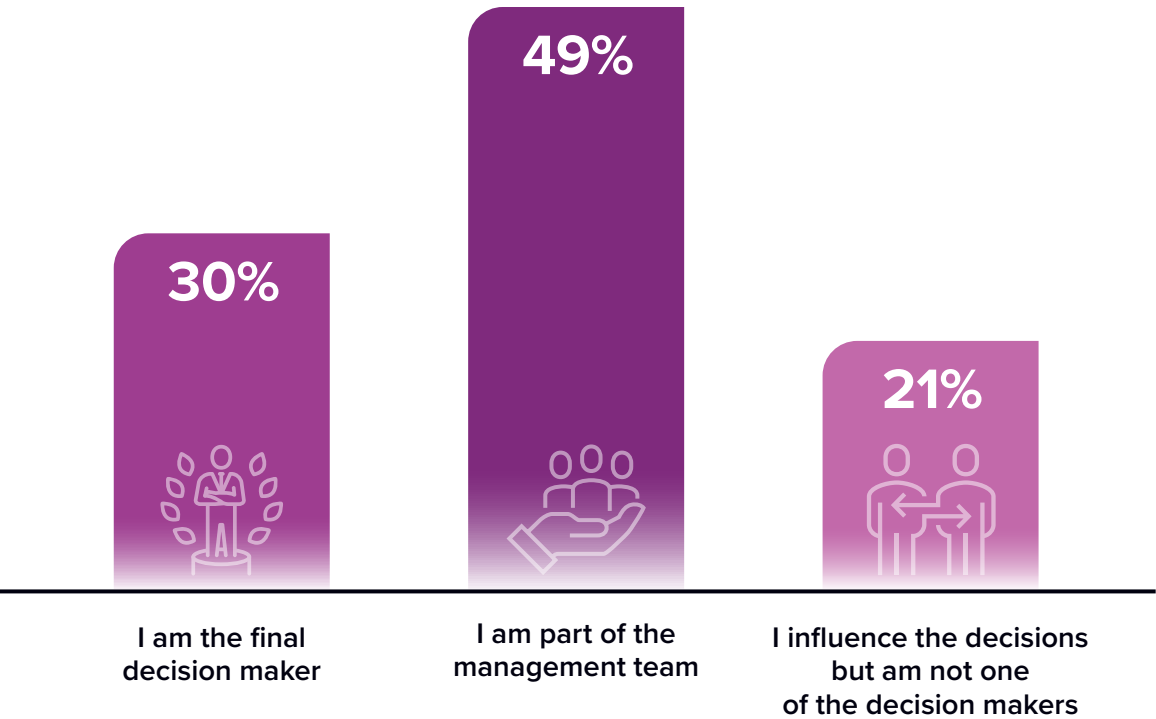
Survey Demographics

SURVEY SAMPLE CRITERIA

154 respondents | 15-minute survey, 30 questions

SPECIFIC ROLES

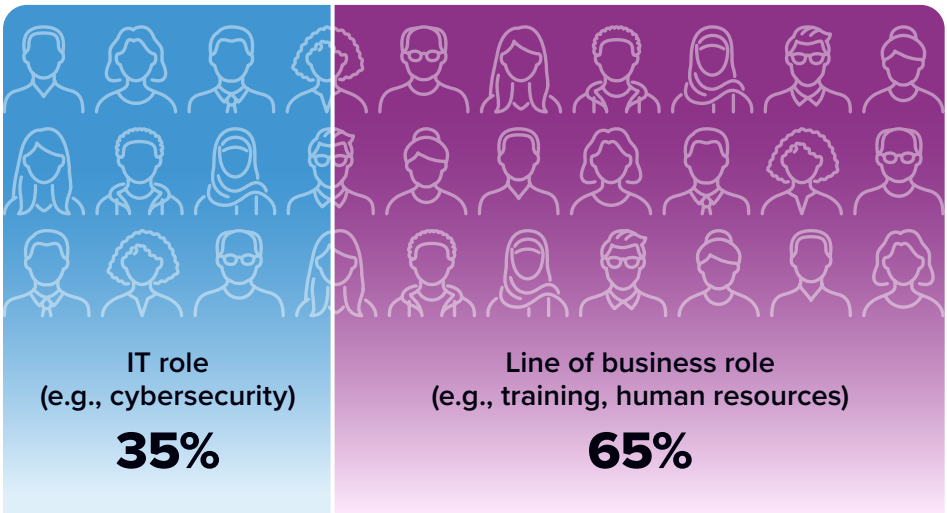
Regarding the hiring processes and design of IT or technical training services



ORGANIZATION SIZE



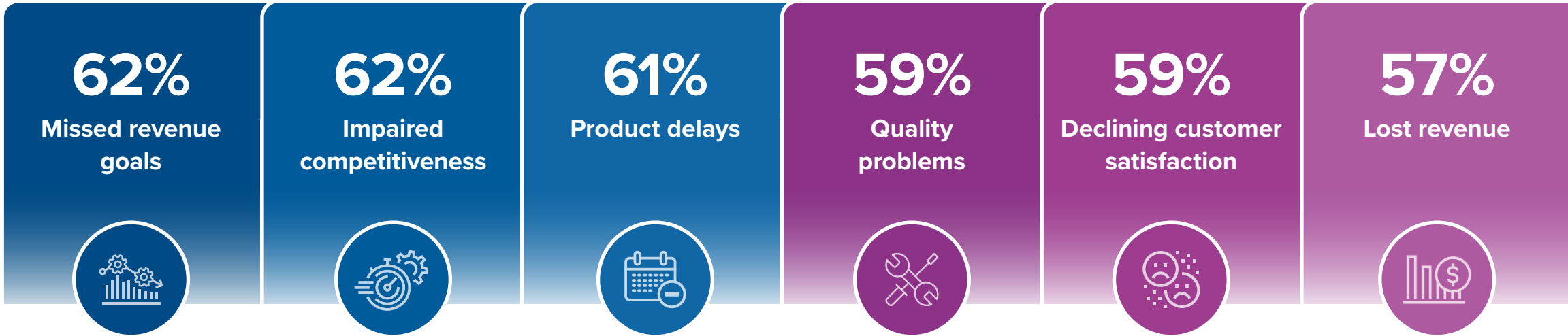
RESPONDENT ROLES



Situation Overview

IT leaders have always struggled with a shortage of IT skills. But now, with accelerating tech advances, the shortage is widening in both impact and severity. Some **62% of IT leaders** tell IDC that **a lack of IT skills is delaying DX projects** at their organizations by an average of 3–10 months.

Please indicate the degree to which you agree with the following statement: “A lack of skills has caused our organization ...”



In addition, with the advancement of AI, **58% of CEOs worldwide are most concerned about gaps in AI-based skills** to deliver on their planned AI initiatives over the next 12 months.

n = 811; Source: IDC's North American 2024 IT Skills Survey, February 2024

A Growing Divide

IDC predicts that by 2027, **90% of organizations will feel the pain of the widening IT skills shortage**, costing some **\$5.5 trillion globally in losses** caused by product delays, impaired competitiveness, quality issues, missed revenue goals, and declining customer satisfaction.

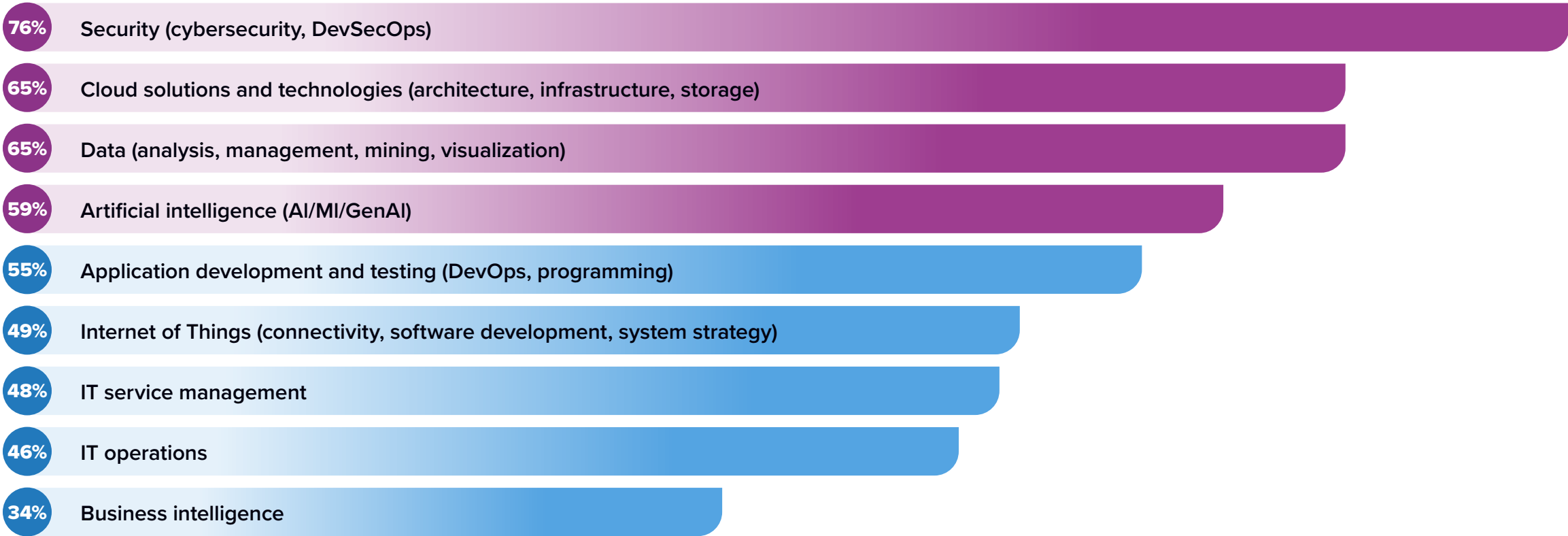
- ✓ Organizational skill gaps are growing, too. To narrow the delta between the skills that companies need and the skills their people have, **organizations must shift toward skills-based hiring and a way to validate those skills.**
- ✓ If there's a silver lining, it's that **online training platforms and courses are increasingly popular**, driven by remote and hybrid work realities.
- ✓ **Coupling full role-based credentials with scenario-based credentials** can ensure that organizations have the necessary skills to remain competitive.



Where to Start?

Security, cloud solutions, and AI are among the most in-demand skills. Respondents say they are also among the hardest to find and train for.

Which of the following technical skills are hardest to recruit for and retain?

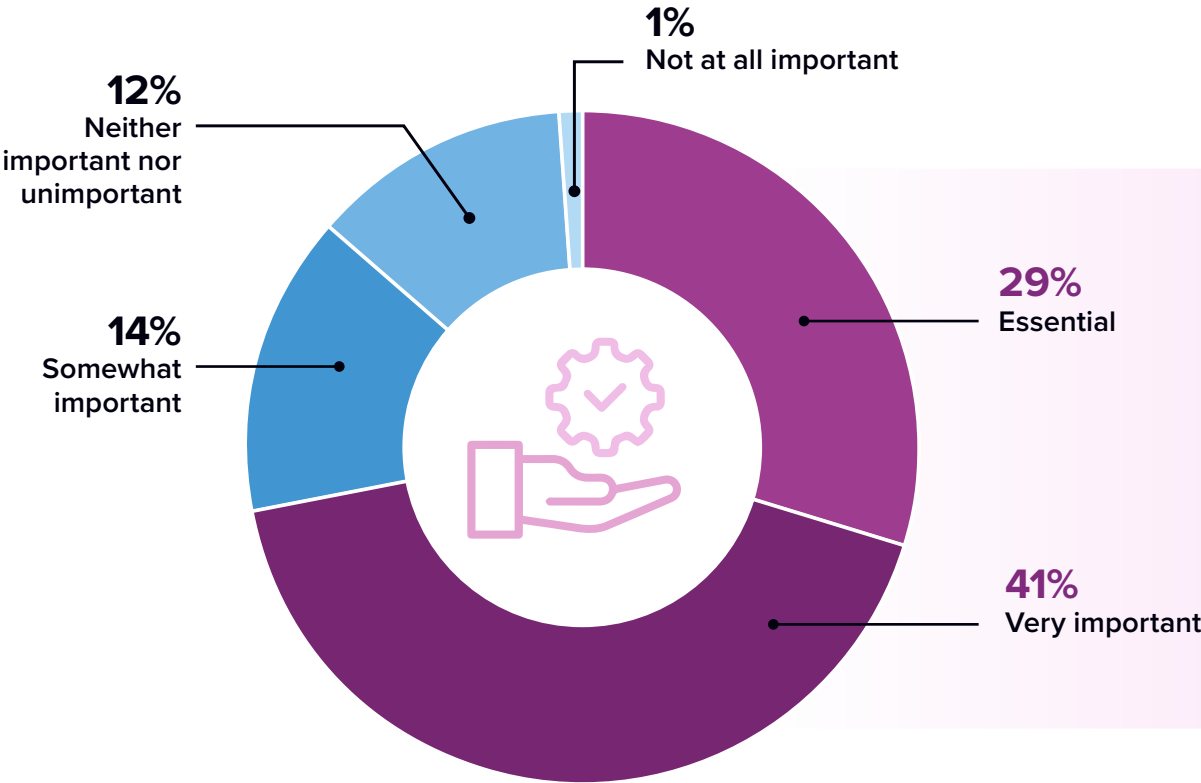


n = 154; Source: IDC's 2024 Digital Skilling Survey, March 2024

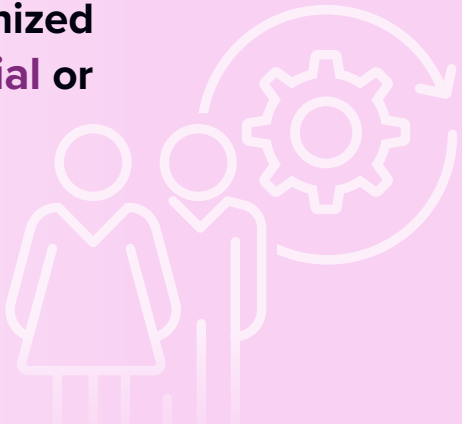
Credentials Matter

Organizations and their employees derive strong benefits from credentialing, whether it takes the form of full credentials or via micro-credentials.

How important is it that candidates for technical positions have credentials?



More than **70%** of organizations believe **industry-recognized credentials** are **essential** or **very important** tools for skills training.

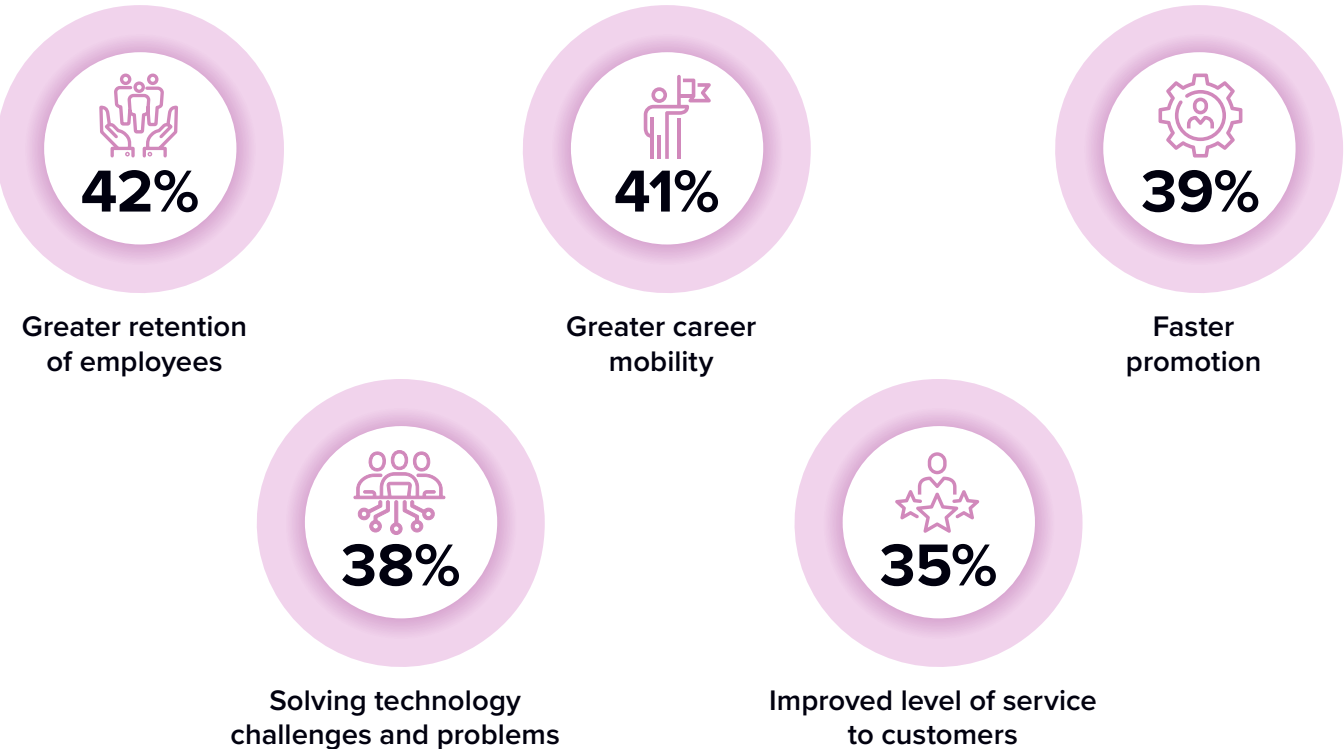


n = 154; Source: IDC's 2024 Digital Skilling Survey, March 2024

Full Credentials: Still Critical After All These Years

Full credentials, whether for roles or technology-based certifications, have long been critical to organizational hiring, upskilling, and reskilling.

In your experience, how do technology vendor certifications impact professional/career outcomes?



Some **80%** of organizations say full credentials reduce hiring time, improve employee retention, and make them more confident in a new hire's capabilities.



n = 811; Source: IDC's North American 2024 IT Skills Survey, February 2024

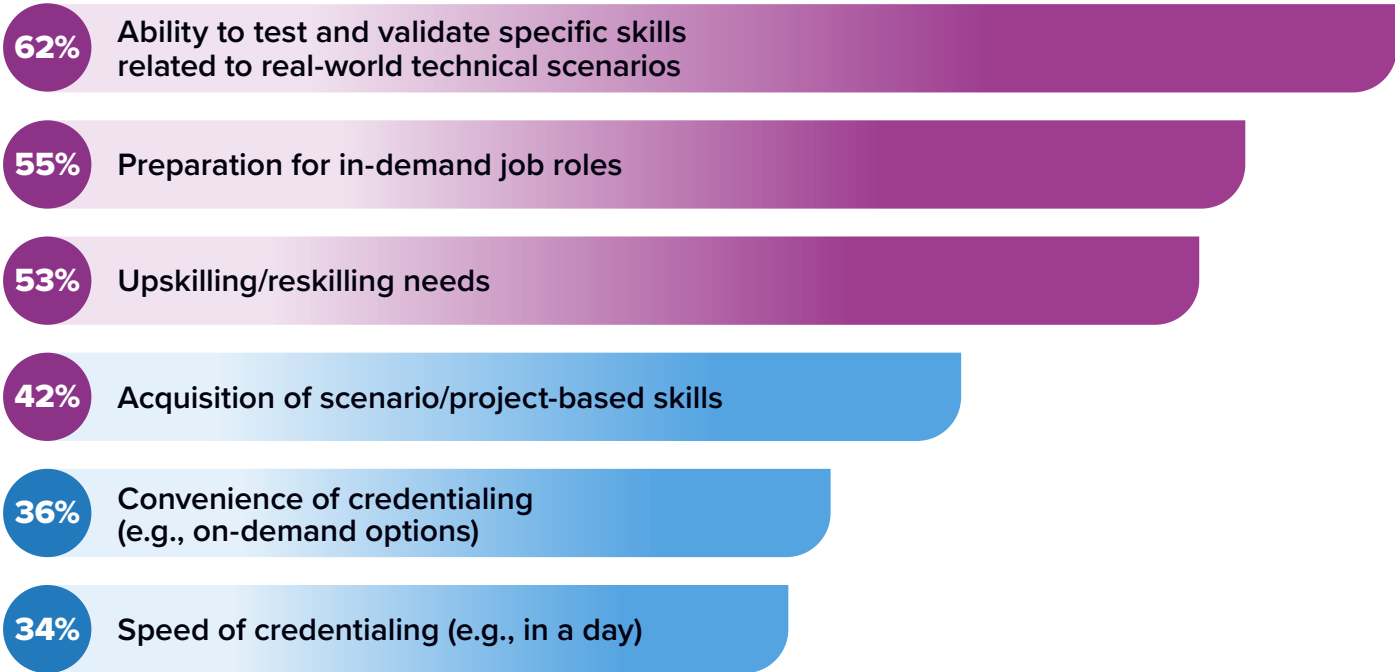
Micro-Credentials: Validating Scenario- and Project-Based Skill Sets

In addition to full role- and technology-based certifications, organizations find **specific project-based micro-credentials** to be increasingly useful.

More than **60%** of organizations highlight that **micro-credentials** let them test and validate specific skills related to real-world technical scenarios.



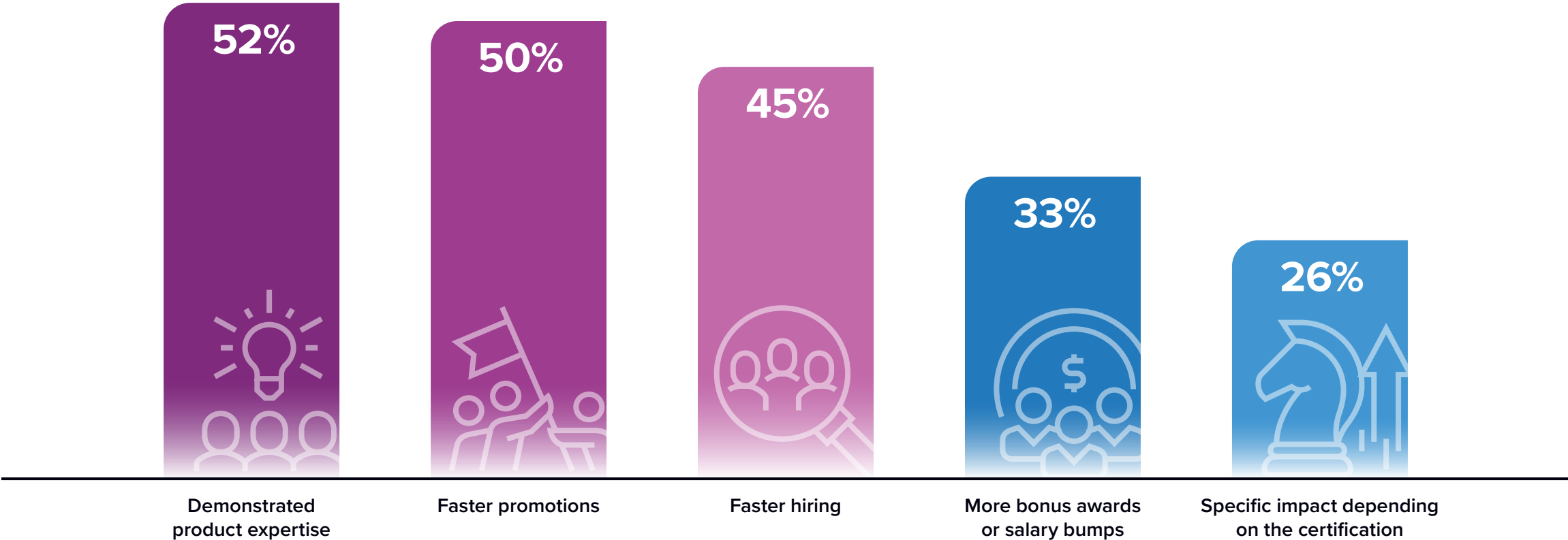
What are the main factors driving the consideration of the use of micro-credentials?



n = 154; Source: IDC's 2024 Digital Skilling Survey, March 2024

Scenario- and Project-Based Skills Are Used Increasingly to Hire and Move Employees Up

What are the main impacts micro-credential programs have on your organization’s technical employee work contributions?



n = 154; Source: IDC's 2024 Digital Skilling Survey, March 2024

Why Micro-Credentials?

Micro-credentials or project-based credentials are **offered complimentary to full certifications** and are a **great value addition to employees**.



Interactive, hands-on lab experience

Project-based credentials can validate an individual's ability to implement critical technologies through these hands-on lab-based experiences.



Speed and convenience

As technology and change accelerate, organizations must ensure their people can quickly acquire and apply new skills, reducing the time to deliver projects.



Industry recognition

Credentials from recognized industry leaders highlight individual skills to current and potential employers in the industry.

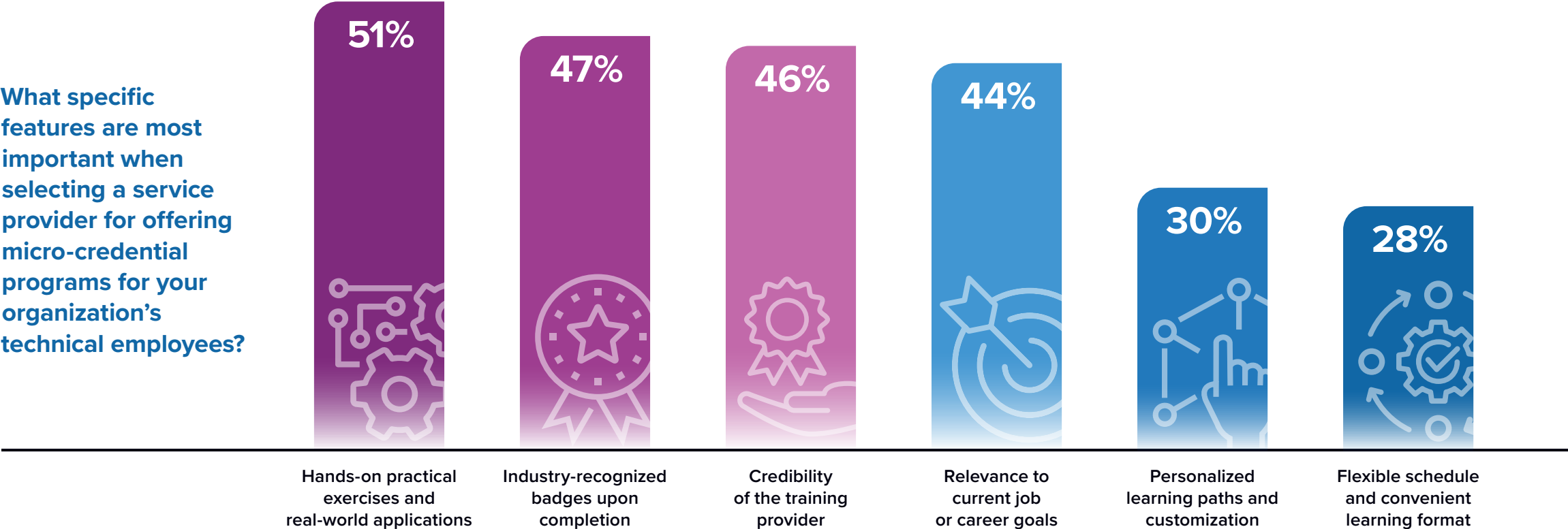


Continuous skilling

Micro-credentialing helps organizations quickly identify new tech demands and the skills required to master them, reducing the time to hire.

Selecting a Service Provider for Micro-Credential Programs

Consider which type of credentials are most important in **new hire assessments and upskilling/cross-skilling of existing employees.**



n = 154; Source: IDC's 2024 Digital Skilling Survey, March 2024

Survey Respondents and Customers Talk About Role- and Scenario-Based Credentials

Many learners have taken the opportunity to earn these credentials, whether for role-based or specific, scenario- or project-based skill sets. Because they **validate skills related to real-world technical scenarios**, they're increasingly popular with employers.

“It saved us time and money. Now we don't have to hire from outside.”

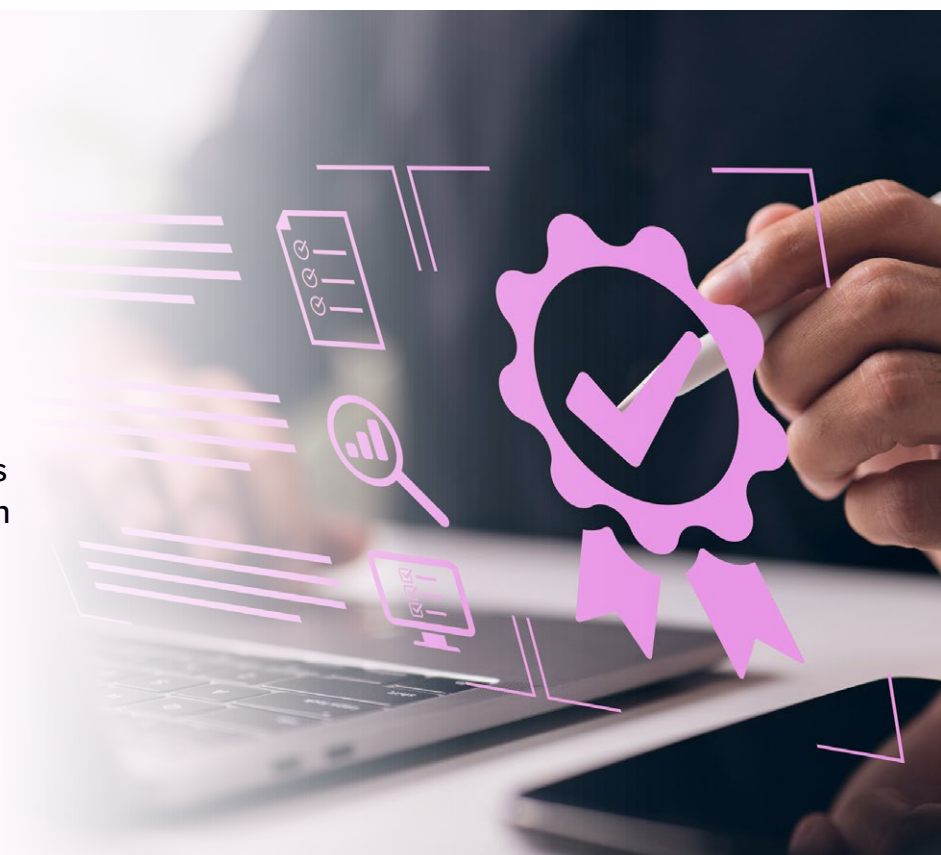
“Certification provides immediate professional credibility, and they show great work ethic.”

“It might help retain more than 90% of the new hires.”

“Certification, if from accredited vendors, provides proven results and staff satisfaction.”

“Having the skills we require without having to train for an extended period.”

“One important benefit of credentials is that they equip employees to maintain and effectively use AI as a major tool in technology advancement and daily workflow processes.”



n = 154; Source: IDC's 2024 Digital Skilling Survey, March 2024

Essential Guidance

To remain competitive, organizations must ensure their workforces have the skills they need.

Full credentials and micro-credentials together allow organizations to determine where skill gaps lie and create a plan of action to skill up employees on the technologies and projects on which they rely.

- 
Engage stakeholders
 Involve key stakeholders across departments to get buy-in and ensure the program addresses diverse needs throughout the organization.
- 
Choose reputable providers
 Partner with established and respected credentialing organizations to add credibility to your program.
- 
Recognize achievement
 Publicly recognize and reward employees who attain new credentials to encourage participation and celebrate on social platforms like LinkedIn.
- 
Create clear career paths
 Design clear career pathways that show how reskilling with micro-credentials and certifications can align with company goals and lead to promotions and other company perks.
- 
Promote continuous learning
 Foster a culture of continuous learning and professional development to keep skills current. Update the program with industry trends and emerging technologies to maintain its relevance.
- 
Measure impact
 Regularly assess the program's effectiveness in closing the skills gap and adjust as necessary.

About the IDC Analysts



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As a research director at IDC, Gina Smith is responsible for producing research in the IT Skills and Training sector. Gina has more than 25 years of experience in technology, journalism, publishing, and tech startup management. She was CEO of Oracle founder Larry Ellison’s network computer startup in 2000, served ABC News as its first on-air technology correspondent, and was editor-in-chief of BYTE magazine.

[More about Gina Smith](#)



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Anu Mehta is a senior research analyst and is responsible for managing the research agenda, field research, and custom research projects for IDC’s Future of Work research program. She is focused on expanding the research portfolio around frontline workers, industry comparative assessments, skills, and hybrid work maturity. Prior to joining IDC, she worked with FTI Consulting and Ernst and Young as a senior research analyst in their telecom, media, and technology area. She has largely been focused on analyzing the key performance, business, and financial metrics of the players in the technology industry.

[More about Anu Mehta](#)

Message from the Sponsor



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Learn more at learn.microsoft.com/credentials



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