

BCC: Shortage of digital skills hampering business productivity and growth

Today the BCC releases the results of our digital survey on skills.

7 April 2017

Digital skills are increasingly important to the operation of businesses in the UK but companies are facing a shortage of skills in their workforce which is hampering productivity, according to a new survey by the British Chambers of Commerce (BCC), released today (Friday).

The survey of more than 1,400 businesses across the UK found that 84% of firms say digital and IT skills are more important to their business than two years ago, with half (51%) saying these skills are significantly more important.

However, the survey also found that more than three-in-four businesses are facing a shortage of digital skills in their workforce, with 52% reporting a slight shortage, 21% a significant one and 3% a critical shortage.

The key findings of the survey are:

- The skills most important to companies are **basic computer skills** (72%), **communicating and connecting through digital channels** (71%) and **management of digital information** (69%)
- Skills shortages are having adverse effects on many firms including, **increasing workload on existing staff** (52%), **higher operating costs** (29%), and causing **difficulties in meeting customer requirements** (28%)
- Businesses regard **a lack of time for staff training** (41%), **difficulty in identifying appropriate training** (32%), and the **high cost of training** (25%), as the **leading barriers to rectifying these shortages**.

Adam Marshall, Director General of the British Chambers of Commerce (BCC), said:

“The evidence is clear: better digital skills make firms more productive, and a lack of digital skills holds them back.

“Businesses themselves need to do a lot more to tackle the digital skills shortages they face, and their leaders need to be alive to the fact that a failure to tackle this issue will have an impact on their bottom line. Too many firms are stuck in an unproductive cycle, where the failure to take action has serious consequences.

“Training providers can give firms a helping hand, by engaging with companies on their digital needs and helping them to free up resources for growth.

Government must help as well, by recognising that some of the high-level digital skills businesses need will come from overseas so a pragmatic immigration system needs to be in place to provide firms with access to the workers required to fill the gaps.”

Ends

Notes to editors:

The British Chambers of Commerce (BCC) surveyed 1,465 business people from all regions of the UK online in January 2017 to understand how businesses rate the overall reliability of their broadband connections, and how a more reliable connection could help their businesses. Of the businesses surveyed, 96% were SMEs, 22% operate in the manufacturing sector, and 78% operate in the services sector.

The British Chambers of Commerce (BCC) sits at the heart of a powerful network of 52 Accredited Chambers of Commerce across the UK, representing thousands of businesses of all sizes and within all sectors. Our Global Business Network connects exporters with nearly 40 markets around the world. For more information, visit: www.britishchambers.org.uk

Media contacts:

Allan Williams – Senior Press Manager

020 7654 5812 / 07920583381

Orla Hennessy – Press and Communications Officer

020 7654 5813 / 07825746812