



Future Skill Requirements for Legal LIS Professionals

Maribeth Eisenmann
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Executive summary

- The results of the survey provide varying perspectives and insights into the future skills requirements of LIS professionals as well as raising some very provocative questions as to how as a profession we may acquire the skills needed for the future
- Leaders surveyed perceive a number of skill gaps in their existing teams and new graduates
- Their key concerns are around skills in four broad categories
 - Analysis
 - Technology
 - Communication
 - Information management
- Existing skill development efforts are inadequate
 - LIS programmes are perceived as requiring further focus on core skills as well as commercial awareness
 - Professional development provided by organisations are perceived as not focused, coordinated or ubiquitous enough to drive the “right” skill development
- Evolving expectations around services and value provided has increased pressure to provide more content/sector knowledge and requires team members who can easily flex across numerous skill areas

Key questions for further discussion

1. How do small teams find capacity to develop skills to provide more value-added outputs? (analysis, data visualisation)
2. What is the right balance between specialists and generalists in the future legal research team?
3. How can leaders drive professional development efforts in their organisations to better align with future skill requirements?
4. How can LIS programmes teach students about commercial awareness?
5. Should the profession be looking to hire outside of LIS and Law disciplines to acquire new skills (analytic, technology...)?
6. What part of technology initiatives should our profession “own”?

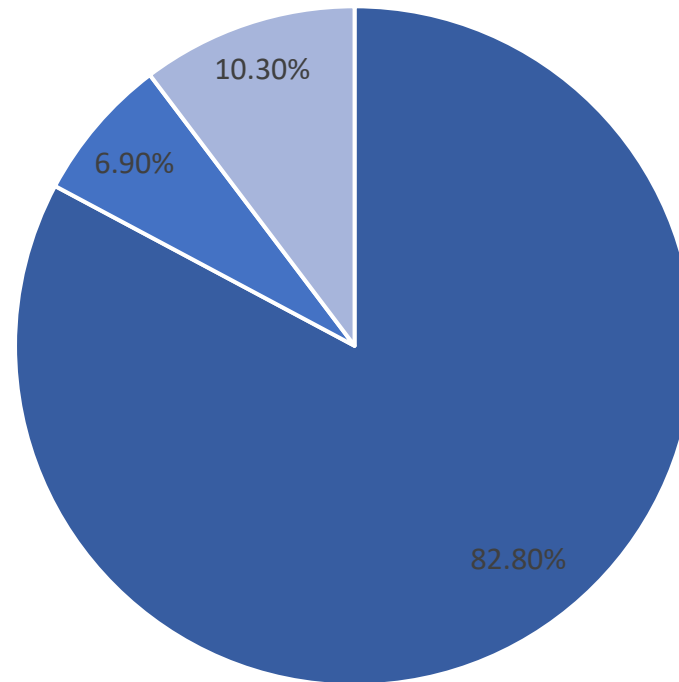
Survey methodology

- Conducted from 5 March to 9 April 2018, using Survey Monkey
- 75 potential participants were identified as heads of research or libraries at law firms, academic institutions and organisations
- Individuals identified were sent the survey link by email. A link to the survey was also posted on SLA Legal Connect board
- As the survey was anonymous, there was no intent or ability to identify individual participants who responded
- Analysis was conducted using widely available numerical and text analysis tools
- Number of respondents are not adequately representative of all potential respondents to be statistically significant, yet provide some consistent themes and insights worthy of further study and discussion

About the respondents

- Heads of research and libraries at UK law firms, legal academic and public sector organisations were targeted as respondents
- 29 responses were received, representing a response rate of approximately 38%
- Law firms, particularly large ones, are over-represented in the sample
- A large majority of respondents have small teams (10 or less team members) supporting a large number of primary users (>250)

Q1: What is your type of organisation?

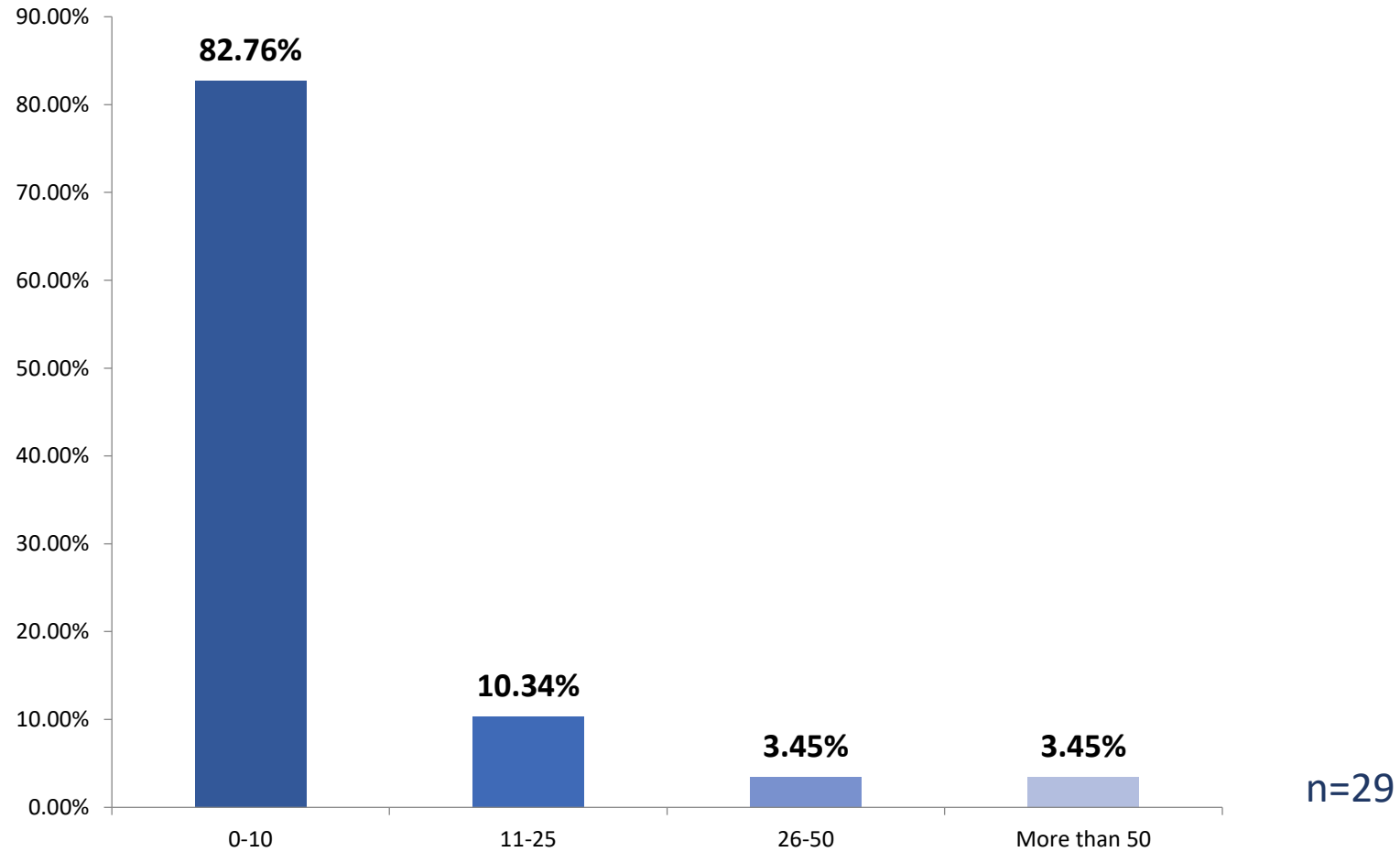


■ Law firm ■ Academic ■ Other

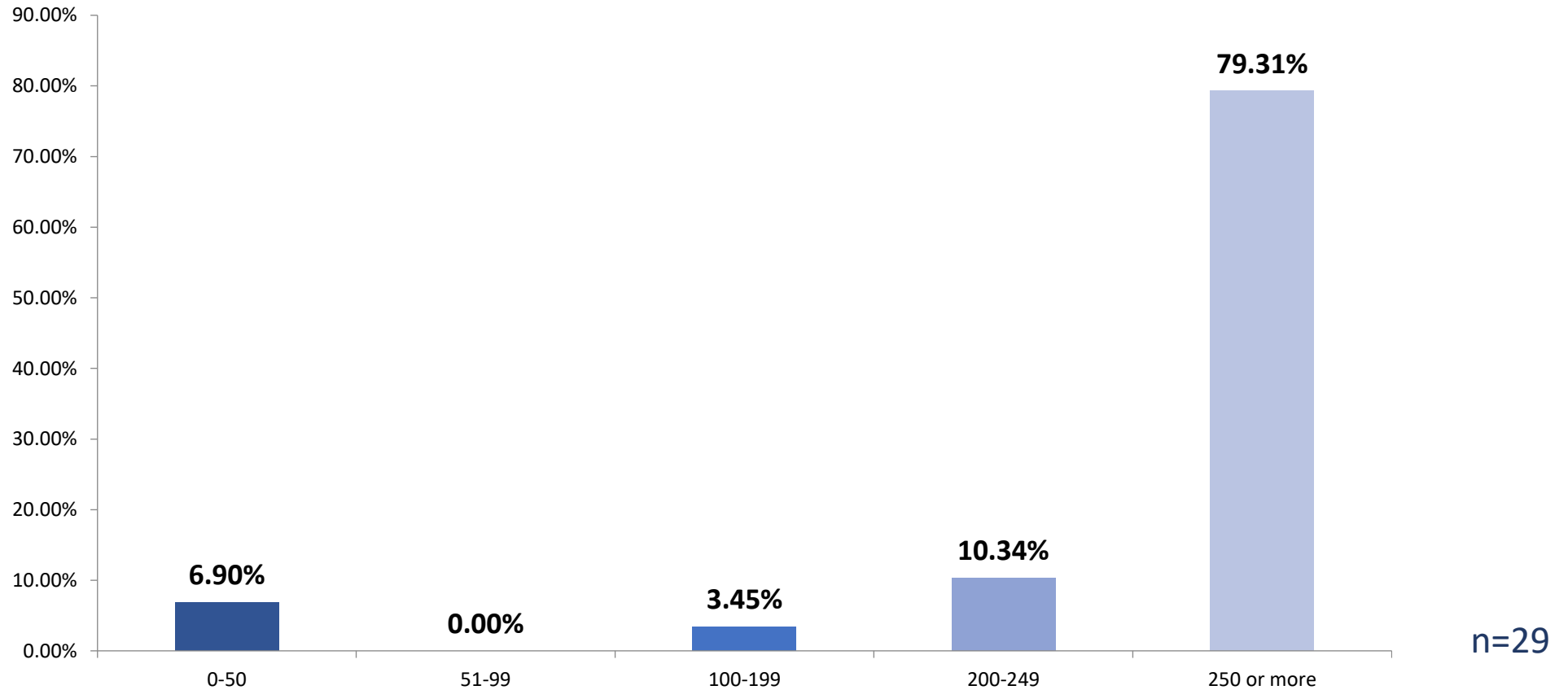
*Other includes government and organisational bodies

n=29

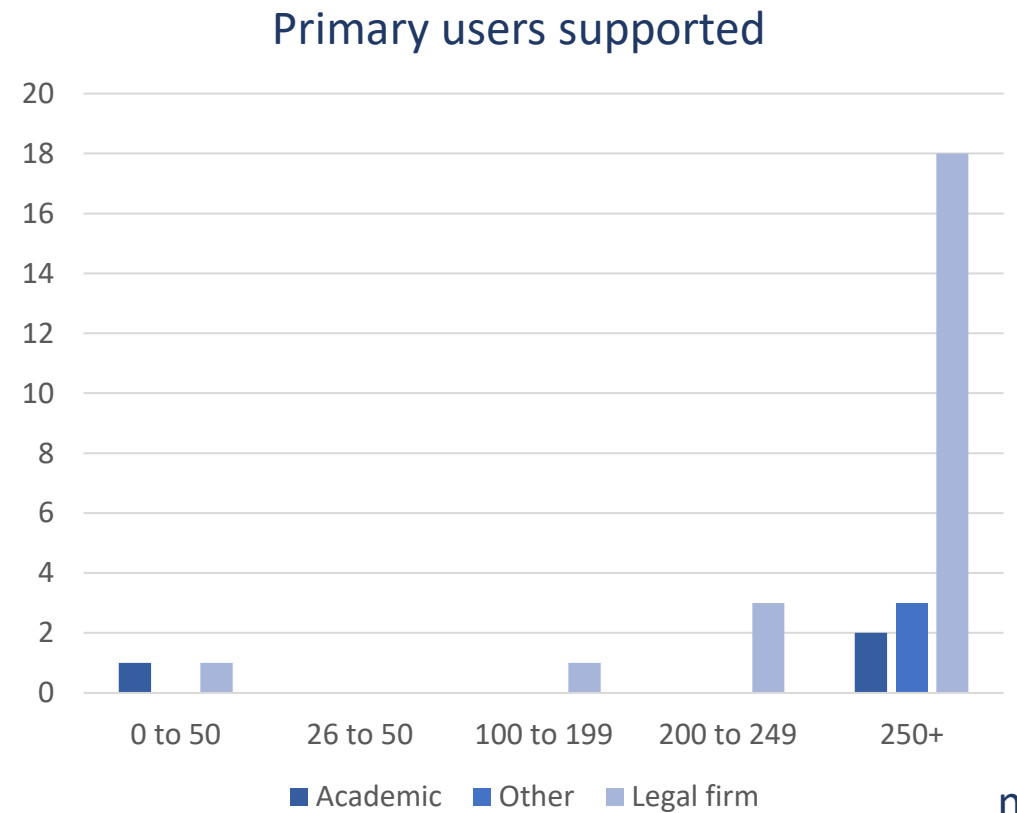
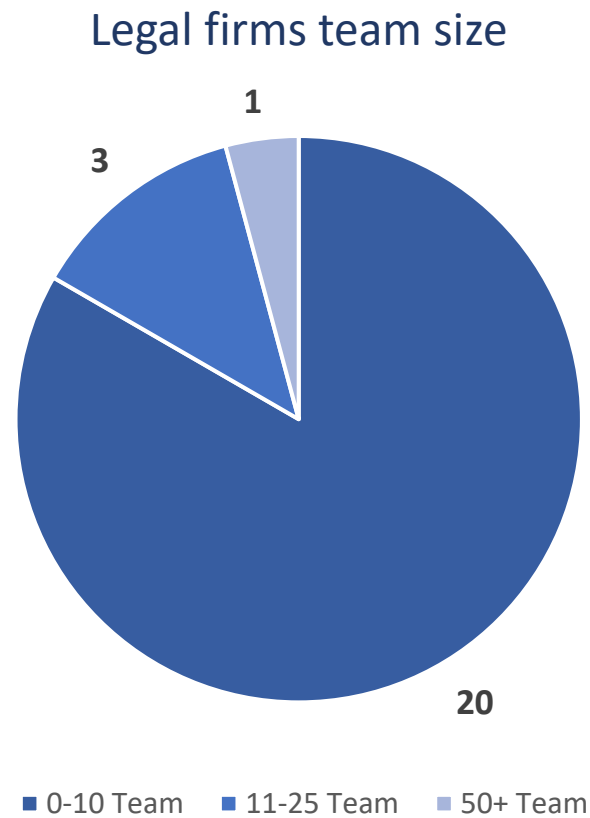
Q2: What is the size of your team?



Q3: How many professionals/primary users does your team support?



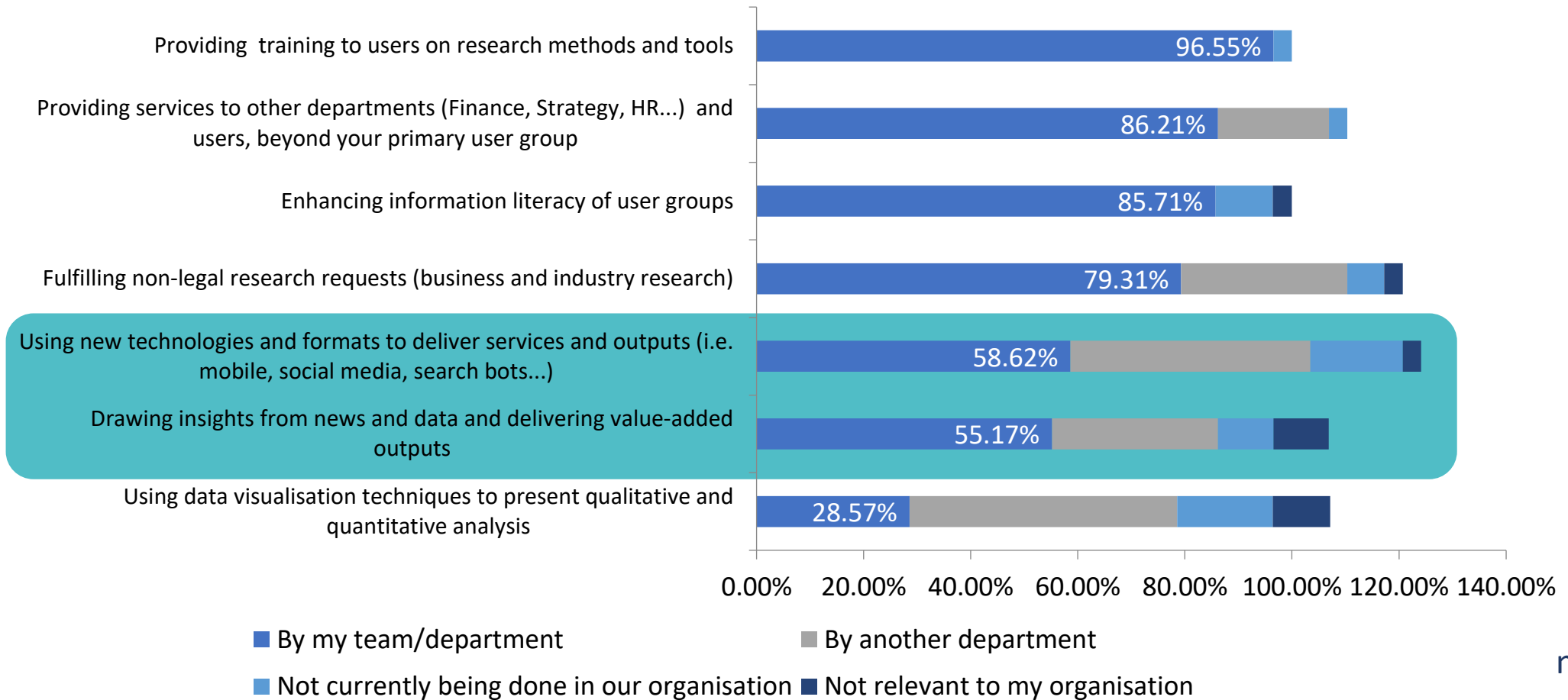
The majority of respondents have small teams who serve a very large number of users



Current activities

- Top activities carried out by the majority of teams include:
 - Training users on research tools and methods (97%)
 - Providing services for other departments (86%)
 - Enhancing information literacy (85%)
 - Fulfilling non-legal research requests (79%)
- Less prevalent
 - Using new technologies and formats (59%)
 - Drawing insights and delivering value-added outputs (55%)
- Least prevalent activity
 - Using data visualisation by only 29% of respondents, with other departments more often providing this for the organisation (50%)

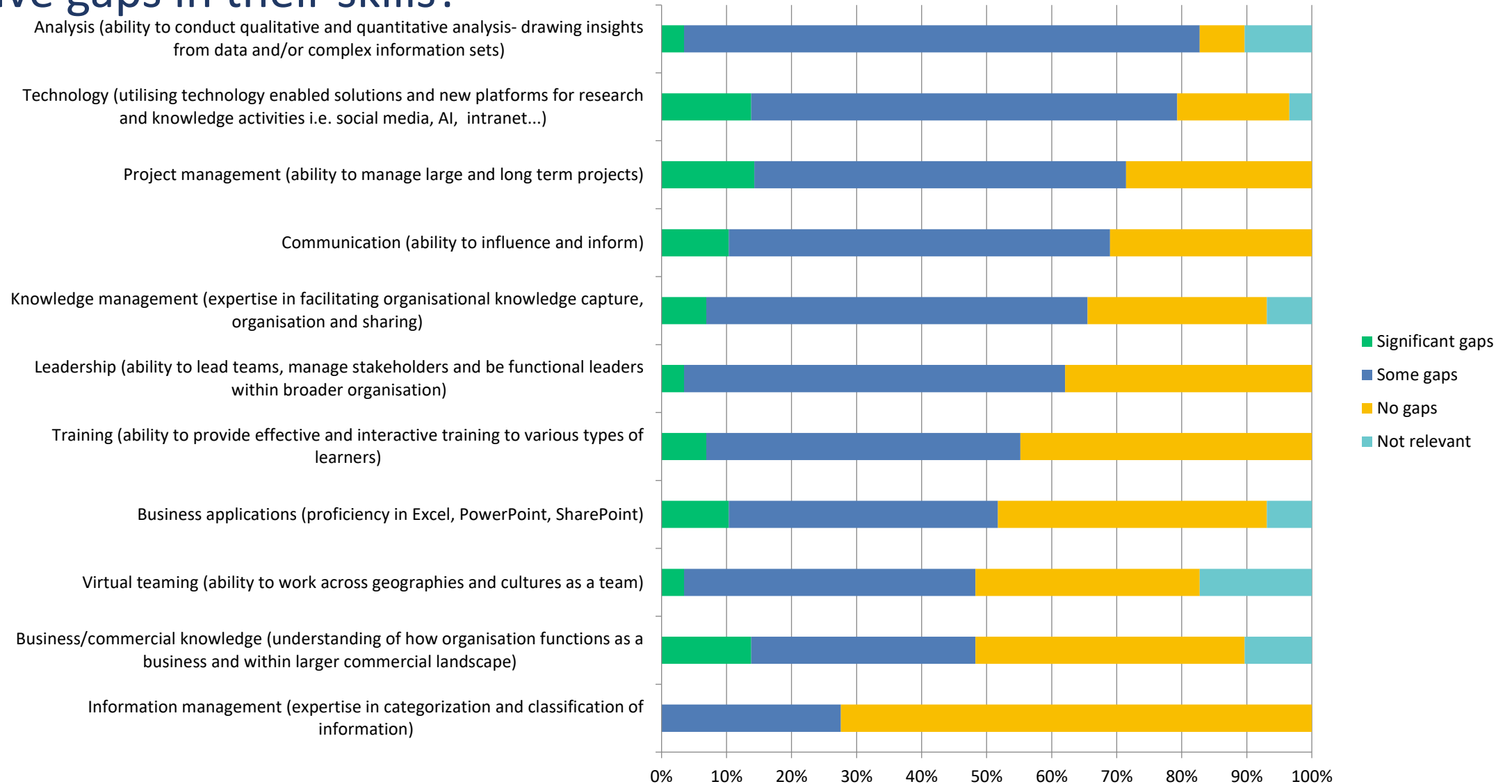
Q4: Which of the following activities are currently carried out in your organisation and by whom?



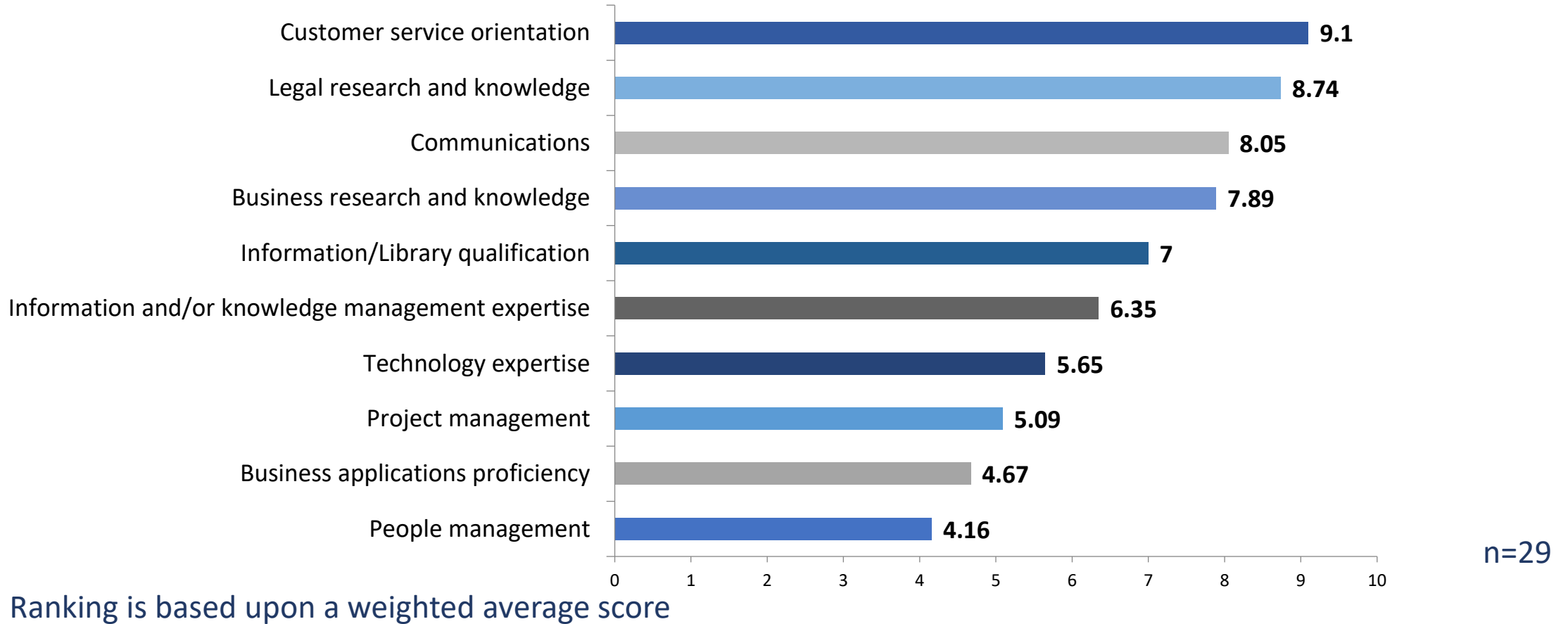
Skill gaps and valued skills

- Largest perceived gaps
 - Analysis
 - Technology
 - Project management
- Most valued attributes in new hires
 - Customer service orientation
 - Legal research capability
 - Communications

Q5: Considering your team members collectively, in which areas do you perceive gaps in their skills?



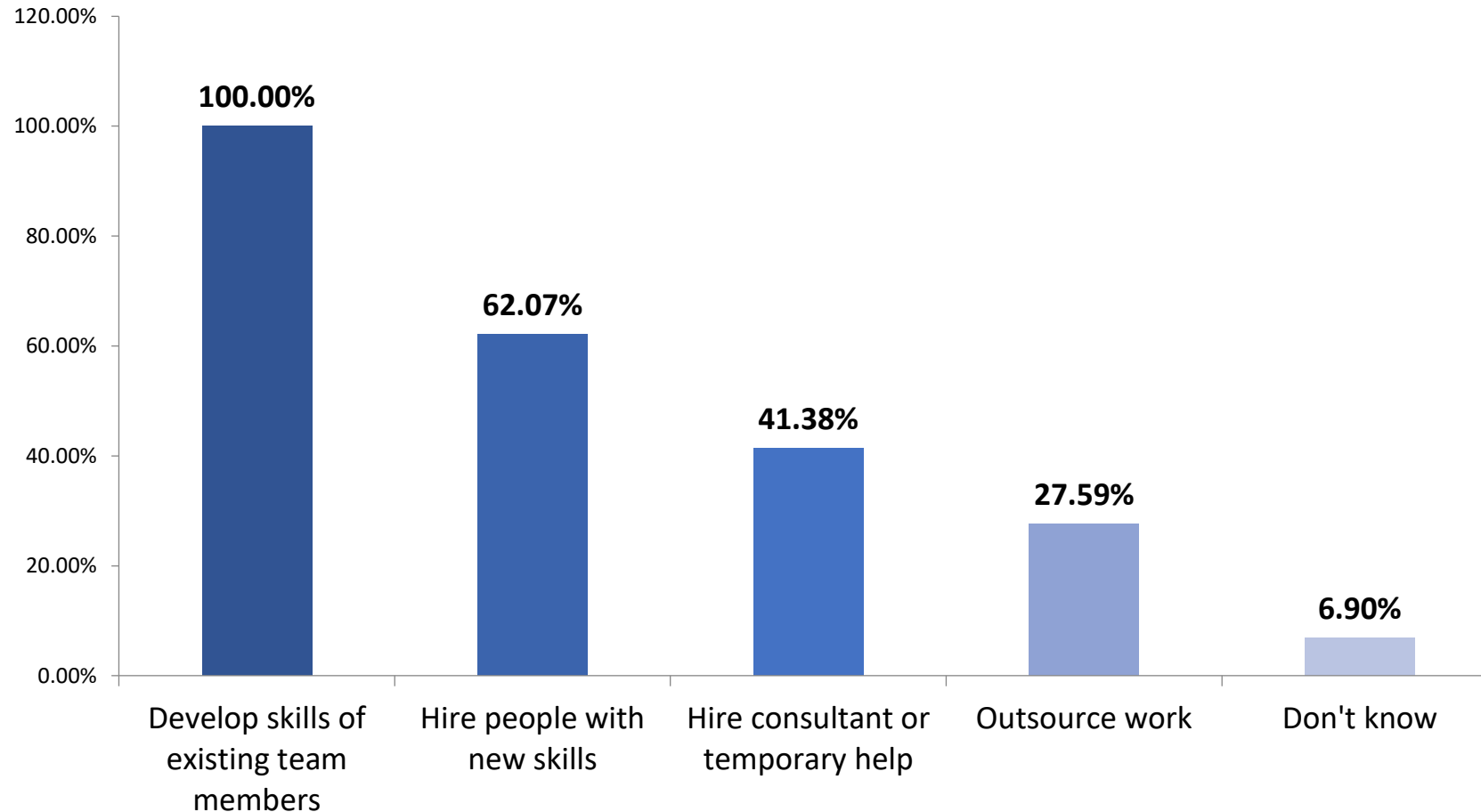
Q6: Considering team members you have recently hired or plan to hire, rank in order the skills you value(d) most in candidates



Professional development

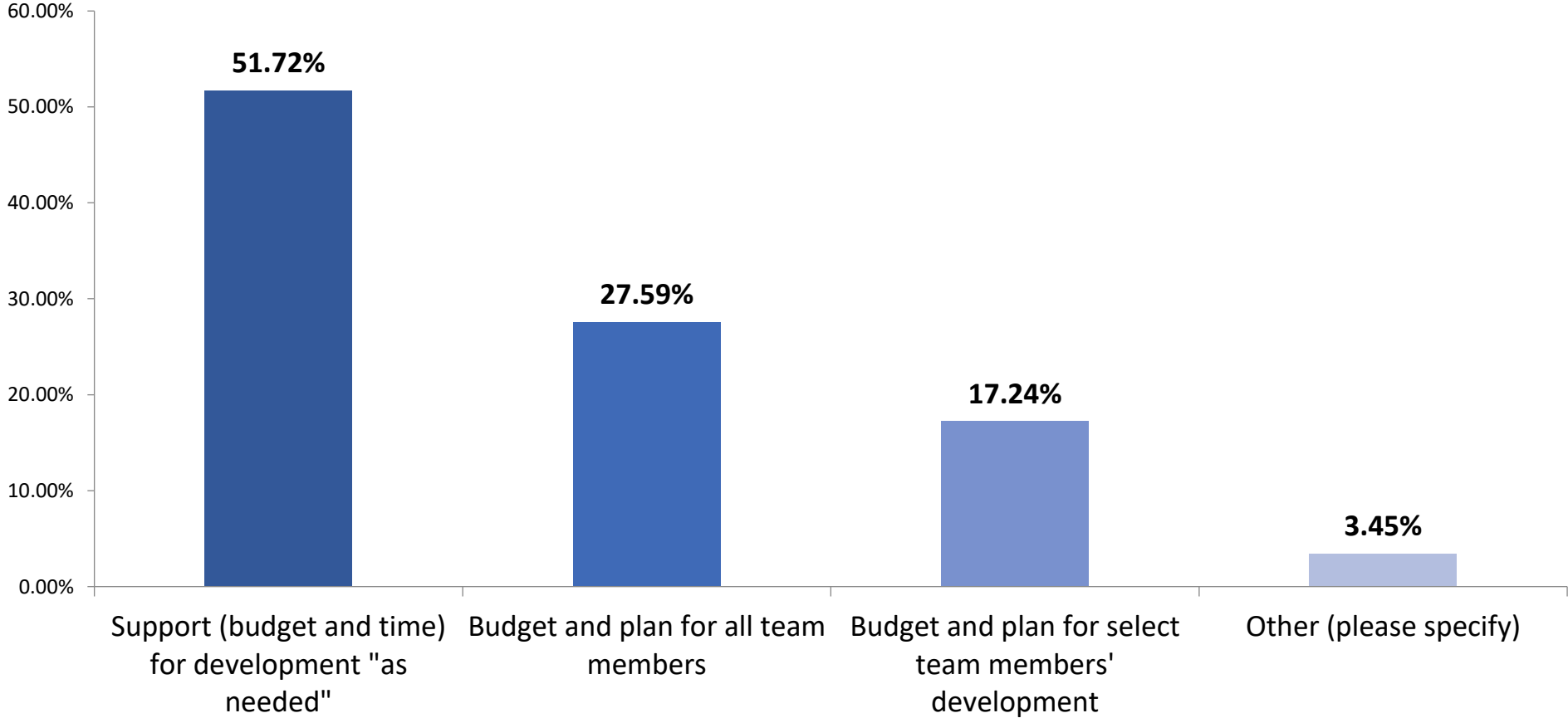
- Preferred method of acquiring new skills is to develop existing team members
- Budget for professional development in most organisations is “as needed” and with only over a quarter (28%) committed to a plan for all team members
- Training opportunities and types vary significantly
 - In-house offerings often focus on managerial, technical (job specific) and “soft skills” ...
 - External training provided for some team members at conferences and company “away days” covering large range of topics- change management, GDPR, compliance, law and legal research...

Q7: If you needed to add new and/or specialised skills to your team how would you acquire them?



n=29

Q8: Which best characterises your organisation's commitment to professional development?



Q9: In the last year, what sort of training/instruction have your team members received?

Mixed in-house and external training strategy- representative comments:

"Attendance at relevant conferences (BIALL, RBSCG, COSI)"

"Attendance at relevant conferences and seminars, training on legal information resources; in-house training on risk related items - online security, GDPR etc"

"Peer to peer, supplier training, external courses/conferences, networking events"

"Detailed programme for executives in business services with elected modules in a wide range of topics"

"Ongoing training within the team on our key systems and processes, plus attendance at external training seminars/courses"

"Night classes on law, time to undertake relevant MOOCs, attendance at events, conferences and tours of other organisations"

"Advanced enquiry handling, intro to AI, CRM/Account management, influencing skills, time mgmt, refresh on key internal and external tools, teamwork & delegation skills, career planning and feedback"

"Internal training on soft skills, external training and conferences for business/technical skills."

n=28

Q9: In the last year, what sort of training/instruction have your team members received?

Technology and technical-representative comments

"Legal research"

"We are woefully behind. Presently, only professionals received training. The training was in a new learning management software"

"Internal training on new technology and training to meet the firm's regulatory requirements"

"Practical LIS training e.g. databases, KM but very little on soft skills, leadership, impact & presence, influencing, project management etc and those only taken up by senior members of the team though offered to all"

"Share point for intranet and collaboration"

"Lots of on the job / skills training - but nothing else (other than Sharepoint) info services specific"

"Specific database / technology training"

"New databases"

Q9: In the last year, what sort of training/instruction have your team members received?

Soft and other skills-representative comments

“Communications; personal presence; financial markets; speed reading”

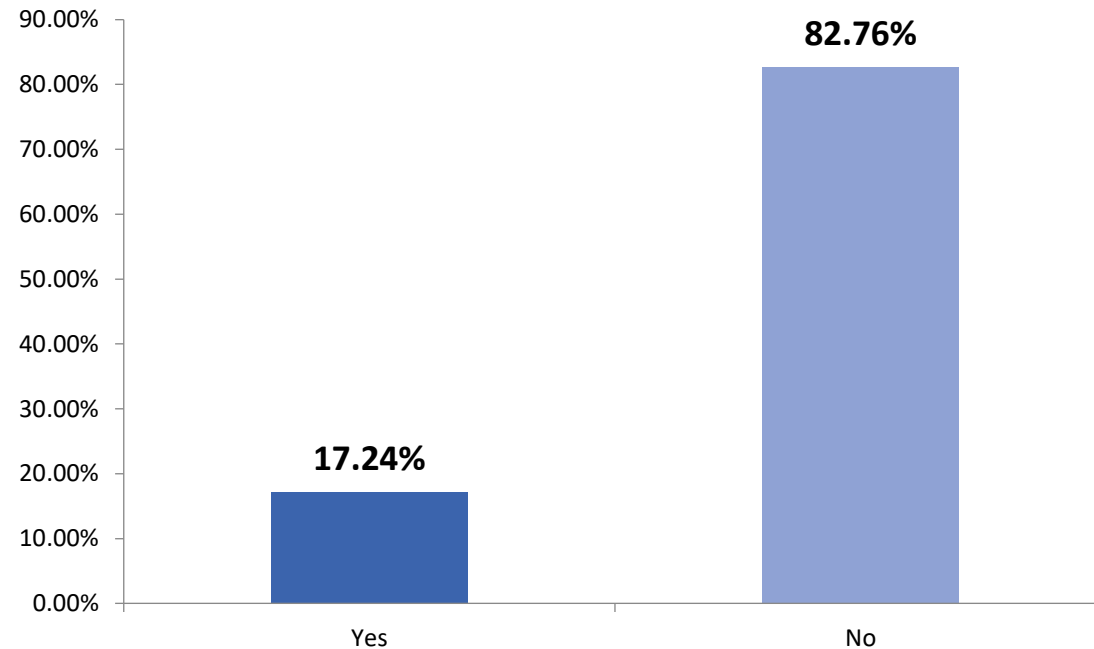
“Presentation skills; Train the trainer; Press Association writing course; Dealing with difficult people; Time management; Project management”

“Management and soft skills training. We have budget for formal training but haven't seen a relevant session being run”

LIS program hires

- Only 3 respondents had hired from another discipline, all from law
- Those hiring from LIS programmes (n=5), responded that new graduates:
 - Met or exceeded their expectations in soft skills- *communication and interpersonal*
 - Did not meet expectations in *information management and commerciality*
- A large number of respondents (n=24) provided their perspective on what skills graduates should gain in LIS programmes, including:
 - Commercial awareness and business acumen
 - Technology
 - Project management
 - Communication

Q10 In the last year have your hired any new graduates from library or information programs



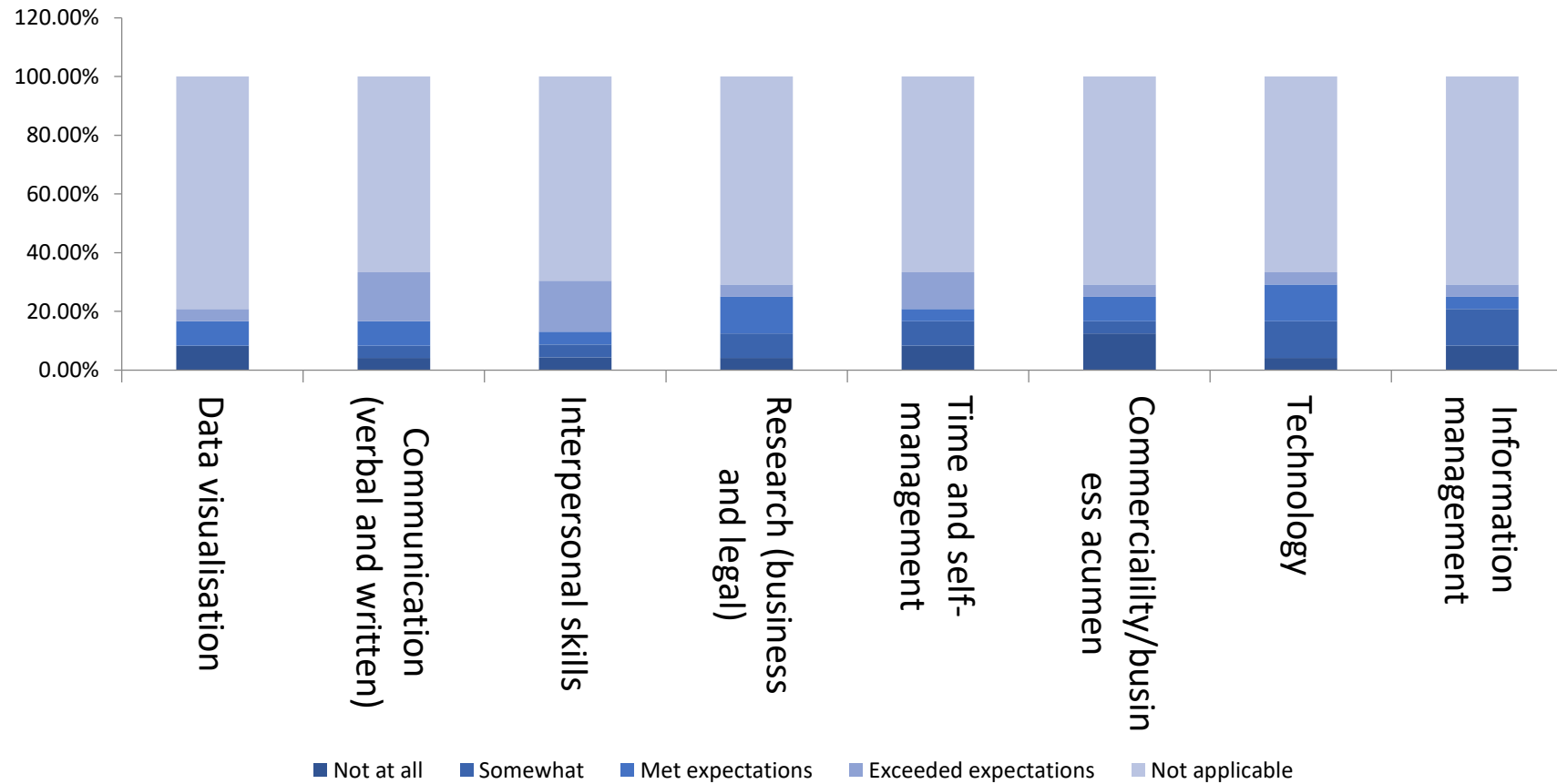
n=29

Q11: In the last year, have you hired new graduates from other disciplines?

- Out of 24 respondents, 3 had hired from Law, no other disciplines were identified by those responding

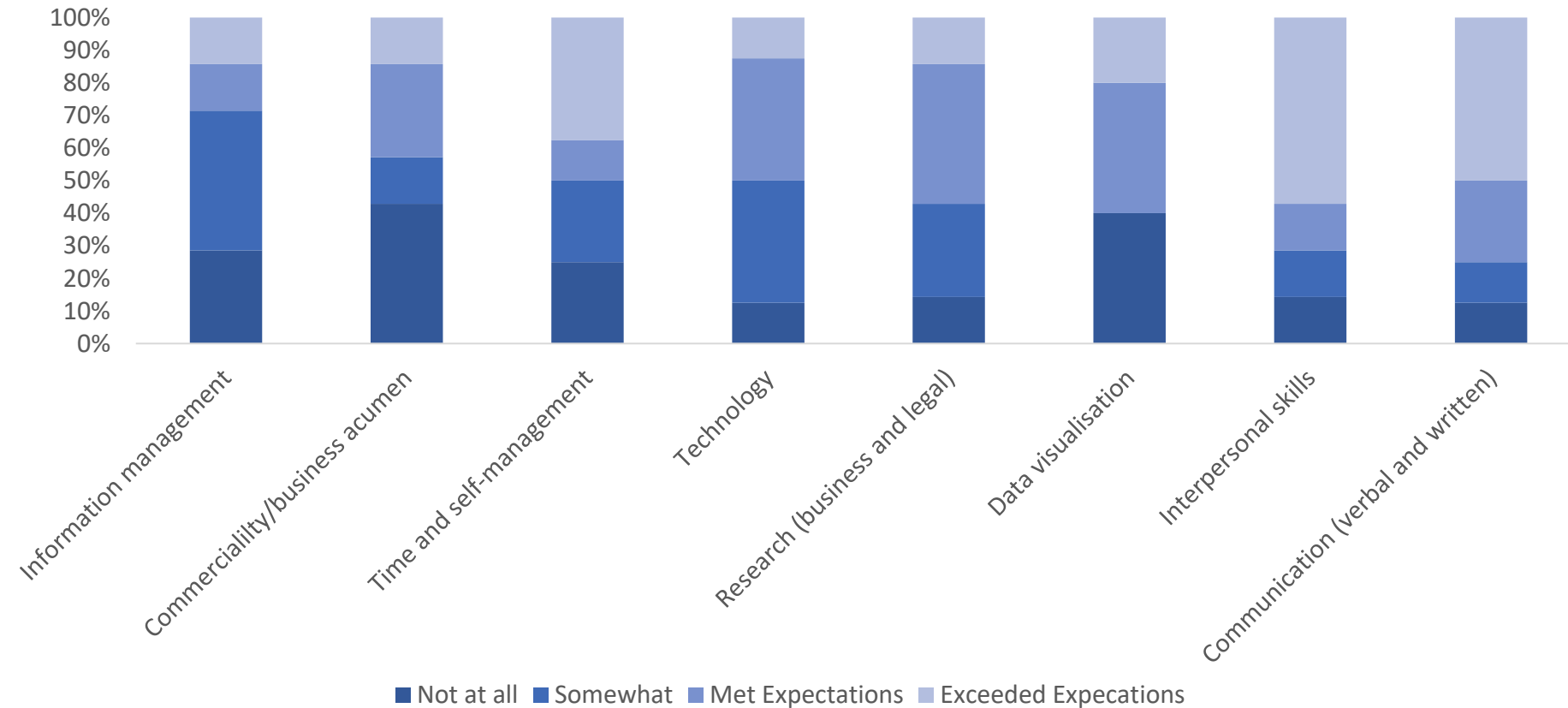
n=24

Q12: How well did the new graduates meet your expectations in the following areas?



n=24

Eliminating N/A responses provides more insight into expectations from those hiring new graduates



n=8

Q13: Given your experience with new LIS graduates, what skills would you specifically want them to gain in library/information programmes?

Technology Future Ability Able
Project Management Research Methodology
Business Customer Service
Management Skills Soft Skills Finance
Commercial
Environment Awareness

n=24

Representative comments:

“Some commercial knowledge of working in a fee pressured environment. Financial training for budgeting, some soft skills for dealing with people.”

“Commercial awareness - business strategy, budget / cost awareness Client / customer service skills Technology - KM, AI, Machine Learning”

“Research methodology skills, proficient in Microsoft office tools, awareness of emerging legaltech, creative thinking”

“Technology, organisational learning, facilitation skills, project management skills, standard cataloguing, classification, research etc”

Future skill requirements and key concerns

- Largest concerns around future skills were in four primary areas:
 - Analysis
 - Technology
 - Communications
 - Information Management
- Other more general concerns surfaced include:
 - Specialist versus generalist trend
 - Need for experts, but who have flexibility to work across disciplines

Q14: Overall, considering your organisation and potential future requirements of your team what skill area(s) do you have the most concerns about and why?

Analysis

“Increased ability to conduct in depth analysis. Looking to move almost towards a consultancy level of analytical ability, which many in the industry are lacking so it is difficult to come by”

“Appropriate skills to collect, manage, analyse and interpret data. Deep sector knowledge. Ability to impress in front of senior leadership”

“Require more data visualisation and financial modelling expertise”

“Business research and analysis. Writing succinct summaries of companies, sectors, competitors etc”

n=24

Q14: What skill area(s) do you have the most concerns about and why?

Technology

“Digital resources. We are unsupported and often blocked by IT from accessing or developing skills with current online tools and resources (web collaboration, virtual learning environments). My organisation is large, slow to change, and bad at supporting users of technology and therefore we often have to fill that gap, while being unsupported ourselves”

“New technology - need to show that our content management skills are of value to tech projects”

“Information professionals of the future will need to be multi skilled and flexible. As ever technology is driving the delivery of information so they need to be tech savvy and prepared to have a go at anything under a very wide knowledge umbrella”

“New technologies for the delivery of legal information services. Access to business/competitor intelligence information.”

Q14: What skill area(s) do you have the most concerns about and why?

Communication and Interpersonal

"A lack of commercial awareness to run the library as part of the business"

"Lack of proactive personnel with limited or undeveloped communication skills"

"Lack of leadership and influencing skills. Would like team members to be aware of technological developments and be proactive in spotting opportunities for efficiencies or innovation"

"Communication and presentation skills. It is crucial that all members of the team who deal with members provide the highest level of service and are perceived as professionals."

Q14: What skill area(s) do you have the most concerns about and why?

Information management

“Knowledge of how to deliver document automation and workflows for key transactions”

“Following out of responsive and aligned information and research functions”

“Basics - such as good research skills and ability to deal with clients requirements whether expressed or unexpressed. Being swamped by more glamorous ‘IT’ based skills?”

Q15 Any other comments:

“Training is only one element of a good graduate. I've been lucky to find a great addition to my team, but much of that is down to the person rather than her qualifications.”

“Our issue is that we may not have a full time role in one discipline so we need people who are experts but also flexible. I don't think these types of people are readily available within our industry.”

“The move to specialists rather than generalists continues in the KM sector”

“Teams are being 'split' (north-shore; near-shore; off-shore; global) - all staff will need good communication and interpersonal skills. Teams may employ more non-professional staff who will then be 'trained up' to take on 'professional research tasks' as well as the admin tasks. What is the future of Graduate Training Contracts roles?”

n=10