



# REPORT RESEARCH

**FOCUS GROUP  
- MANAGERS ENG**



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# KEY FINDINGS FROM FOCUS GROUPS HELD WITH MANAGERS IN THE ADMINISTRATIVE, EDUCATIONAL, AND ECONOMIC SECTORS

Focus groups serve as a vital instrument in the development of education and training programs, providing comprehensive insights directly from stakeholders.

This methodology has demonstrated significant value in the development of targeted Vocational Education and Training (VET) programs.

The comprehensive insights gathered from the recent focus groups will significantly influence the design of the VET programme, which will emphasize the development of skills and competencies in the administrative, educational, and economic sectors.

This report encapsulates the findings of three focus groups, comprising 10 managers from various companies and organizations within the administrative, educational, and economic sectors. The objective of these focus groups was to ascertain the essential skills, experience, and qualifications necessary in the labor market across these sectors.

The insights obtained will provide a basis for the development of a Vocational Education and Training (VET) program customized to the requirements of these industries.



# KEY FINDINGS FROM FOCUS GROUPS HELD WITH MANAGERS IN THE ADMINISTRATIVE, EDUCATIONAL, AND ECONOMIC SECTORS

## Methodology

Data from these focus groups addresses tangible challenges and opportunities, ultimately facilitating the cultivation of a more skilled and adaptable workforce.

A focus group is a qualitative research method employed to obtain comprehensive insights and opinions from a diverse array of participants regarding a specific topic or issue. It generally comprises 6 to 12 participants and is led by a facilitator who guides the discussion based on a predetermined set of questions.

This research method was selected to foster creative thinking and brainstorming. Participants frequently build upon one another's ideas, potentially resulting in novel concepts or solutions that may not arise from individual interviews or surveys.

By assembling a cohort of participants with analogous characteristics or experiences, focus groups can facilitate the identification of trends, patterns, and shared themes that may be overlooked in more quantitative research methodologies.

## Participant Selection

As part of the research, we selected managers from across Poland and recruited a total of 30 participants who hold managerial positions in the administrative, educational, and economic sectors.

This facilitated the establishment of three focus groups, each comprising ten participants, with each session lasting a total of four hours. Every participant was provided with an invitation and a set of questions.

## Invitation to the Focus Group

Dear Participant, We are delighted to invite you to take part in our focus group, which aims to identify critical skills for the labor market in the administrative, educational, and economic sectors.

We seek the perspectives of managers regarding the skills, experience, and qualifications essential for effective performance in these sectors.

Our objective is to assemble a diverse cohort of managers from various companies and organizations within the administrative, educational, and economic sectors to acquire a comprehensive understanding of the necessary competencies and market trends.

During the focus group, we will invite you to share your experiences, opinions, and observations regarding the essential skills. The discussion will take place in a cordial environment, and your insights and perspectives will be immensely valuable to our research.

Based on the conducted research, a report will be produced in three languages, to which you will have access. This report will serve as the foundation for the development of a VET program tailored for employees involved in the project.

Should you have any inquiries or concerns, please do not hesitate to reach out to us.

We appreciate your interest in our research and eagerly anticipate your participation in our focus group.

## Questions for the Focus Group

### **Each focus group comprised the following questions:**

1. Which technical skills do you regard as the most sought after in these industries?
2. In your view, are there particular interpersonal skills that are essential for the success of employees in these sectors? If so, what are they?
3. What work or educational experience is favored when recruiting in these industries?
4. Are there emerging trends or technologies that are influencing the necessary competencies in these sectors? If so, what are they?
5. Which interpersonal skills are especially significant in these industries?
6. Are there particular certifications or courses that are esteemed in these sectors? If so, what are they?
7. What time management and organizational skills are essential for professionals in these industries?
8. What analytical and problem-solving skills are essential in these sectors?

9. Are there specific communication skills that are essential for professionals in these industries? If so, what are they?
10. Are there particular prerequisites regarding proficiency in computer programs or technological tools within these industries? If so, what are they?

## Facilitating a Focus Group

An experienced moderator was appointed to each session, capable of effectively steering the discussion, maintaining participant engagement, and managing group dynamics.

Each four-hour session commenced with a concise introduction that delineated the purpose, objectives, and structure of the discussion. The moderator recorded notes from the focus groups, which were subsequently utilized to formulate the key findings presented in this report.

## Key Insights from the Question Set

Following focus group discussions with managers across the administrative, educational, and economic sectors, we identified ten key findings that provide valuable insights into the essential skills and qualifications required for effective performance in these industries.

### Application 1

**Technical skills:** The significance of sector-specific technical skills was prominently highlighted across all three groups:

- **Administrative Sector:** Expertise in advanced Excel, data management software, and enterprise resource planning (ERP) systems was emphasized as essential.
- **Education sector:** Proficiency in digital pedagogy, familiarity with e-learning platforms, and the capability to utilize digital assessment tools were deemed essential.



- **Economic sector: Financial modeling, statistical analysis, and proficiency in specialized software were frequently highlighted.**

## Application 2

**Soft skills are widely recognized as essential for success across all sectors.**

- **Flexibility and adaptability:** In response to a swiftly evolving labor market, the capacity to adjust to new technologies and methodologies has emerged as a crucial attribute.
- **Teamwork and Collaboration:** There is a strong emphasis on the capacity to collaborate effectively within diverse teams, especially in project-oriented settings.
- **Communication skills:** Clear and effective communication is deemed essential. This encompasses both written and verbal abilities, particularly in collaborative contexts.

### Application 3

**Interpersonal skills:** Communication abilities are deemed essential across all sectors. Furthermore, the capacity to resolve conflicts is regarded as especially significant within the education sector.

### Motion 4

**Certifications and courses:** Certifications in data analysis, project management (e.g., PMP), and financial management (e.g., CFA) are regarded as highly valuable across various sectors. Furthermore, additional courses demonstrate a commitment to continuous learning and adapting.

### Motion 5

#### **Time management and organizational skills:**

Participants highlighted that prioritization and delegation are crucial for effective management, particularly in administrative positions. Furthermore, goal setting and planning were deemed vital for attaining success in long-term projects.

## Motion 6

**Analytical and problem-solving skills:** The capacity to analyze data and make informed decisions has been emphasized as a crucial competency, particularly within the economic sector.

## Motion 7

**Communication skills:** Emphasis was placed on competencies such as conflict resolution, effective negotiation, and public speaking, particularly within the framework of managerial positions.

## Motion 8

### **Professional and educational experience:**

- **Administrative sector:** It is essential to possess experience in project management and administrative positions, typically validated by certificates or a diploma in management.
- **Education Sector:** The significance of educational experience was emphasized, especially for candidates possessing expertise in curriculum development.

**Economic sector: Prior experience in financial analysis, economic research, or consulting, along with qualifications such as CFA (Chartered Financial Analyst), were considered.**

## **Motion 9**

**Emerging trends and technologies:** Participants recognized trends and technologies that influence necessary competencies:

- **Administrative sector: The growing significance of digital transformation and automation tools.**
- **Education Sector: Enhancing the integration of artificial intelligence in education.**
- **Economic sector: Employing data analytics and big data for economic forecasting and to facilitate critical decision-making.**

## **Motion 10**

**Computer Systems and Tools:** Proficiency in utilizing tools such as Microsoft Office, specialized educational software, and financial management applications was deemed essential across the sectors. Excel was regarded as one of the most critical tools.

These findings will inform the development of a Vocational Education and Training (VET) program designed to enhance the skills and competencies of employees in the administrative, educational, and economic sectors. We extend our gratitude to all managers who participated in the focus groups and contributed to this important study.

## Comprehensive analysis and focus group findings

Focus groups held with managers in the administrative, educational, and economic sectors yielded further insights into the essential skills and qualifications required for effective performance in these industries.

**Certifications and courses:** Certifications in data analysis (e.g., Microsoft Certified: Data Analyst), project management (e.g., PMP), and financial management (e.g., CFA) are regarded as highly valuable. Pursuing additional courses demonstrates a commitment to continuous learning, particularly in relation to emerging market trends and essential soft skills such as big data analysis and public speaking.

**Professional/Educational Experience:** In the administrative sector, it is essential that experience is complemented by pertinent certifications, training, and education. A Bachelor's or Master's degree in management is highly esteemed.

In the education sector, teaching experience is paramount, and administrators favor candidates with expertise in curriculum development. The business sector prioritizes prior employment in financial analysis, economic research, or consulting, along with credentials such as the CFA (Chartered Financial Analyst).

### **Computer programs and technological tools:**

Proficiency in computer programs and technological tools, including Microsoft Office, Google Workspace, and specialized software tailored to specific institutions, is deemed essential across various sectors. Excel is particularly highlighted as a crucial tool in all industries, especially within the administrative and economic domains.

**Trends and Technologies:** Managers have observed emerging trends and technological advancements that influence the necessary competencies. In the administrative sector, the significance of digital transformation and automation tools is on the rise. In the educational sector, the integration of artificial intelligence in education is expanding. In the economic sector, the application of big data and analytics in economic forecasting and critical decision-making processes is becoming increasingly apparent.

**Analytical and problem-solving skills:** Analytical and problem-solving skills are regarded as essential, particularly in the business sector, where the capacity to analyze complex data and make informed decisions is crucial. Problem-solving skills are frequently emphasized in the education sector, owing to the diverse needs of students and large groups, while analytical skills hold greater significance in the administrative sector due to the necessity for meticulous attention to detail.

**Interpersonal skills:** Communication abilities were highlighted in every instance, particularly those pertaining to conflict resolution and active listening with both external and internal stakeholders.

**Soft skills:** Soft skills have been recognized as crucial for success across all sectors, often deemed more significant than hard skills, as managers assert that hard skills can be acquired. Clear and effective communication, both written and verbal, is considered essential, especially in collaborative settings. Additionally, flexibility and adaptability are emphasized in response to a rapidly evolving environment and the necessity to embrace new technologies and methodologies.

### **Time management and organizational skills:**

Managers emphasized that the capacity to prioritize and delegate tasks effectively is essential for efficient work management, especially within management positions. This was particularly evident in administrative roles, though it was also noted in other sectors.



As a result of the focus group, managers from each sector—administrative, educational, and economic—identified particular technical skills desired by managers.

## **The results are categorized by sector:**

### **Administrative division:**

- Proficiency in project management software - Competence in utilizing tools such as Microsoft Office.
- Financial Software Proficiency - Expertise in QuickBooks, Oracle, AccountsIQ, or other financial management applications.
- Creating Management Documents - Proficiency in tools such as SharePoint, Adobe, and DocuSign. Capability to produce clear and concise documentation and reports.
- Cybersecurity Awareness - Comprehending fundamental cybersecurity principles and practices, along with legal regulations such as GDPR.
- Advanced Excel proficiency - Capability to construct pivot tables and employ intricate formulas.

- Database Management - Proficiency in SQL, Oracle, or Microsoft Access.
- Online Collaboration Tools - Proficiency in utilizing platforms such as Microsoft Teams or Zoom for remote work and meetings.

## Education Sector:

- Data Analysis for Educational Outcomes - Proficiency in utilizing statistical software to analyze student performance.
- Utilizing contemporary technology in the classroom - Competence in operating interactive whiteboards, projectors, tablets, and various other technological devices.
- Educational Software and Tools - Proficiency in platforms such as Kahoot! and Quizlet.
- Course Design - Proficiency in developing effective and engaging courses.
- Learning Management Systems - Proficiency in utilizing platforms such as Canvas, Blackboard, or BrightSpace.
- Assistive Technology - Comprehending tools that facilitate various learning requirements, including speech-to-text software.

- Digital Educational Content Creation - The capacity to develop multimedia materials, including videos and interactive resources, for educational objectives.

## **Economic Sector:**

- Economic Data Analysis - Expertise in the analysis of economic data through the application of statistical tools and specialized software.
- Economic Modeling and Analysis - Proficiency in developing and analyzing financial models utilizing Excel or specialized software.
- Economic Policy Analysis - The capacity to assess and analyze the effects of economic policies through the application of suitable methodologies and software.
- Market research methodologies - Proficiency in techniques for gathering and analyzing market data.
- Forecasting Techniques - Proficiency in predictive modeling and the analysis of economic trends.

- Data Visualization - The capacity to generate data visualizations through the use of charts and images.
- Risk Management - Comprehending the instruments and methodologies for evaluating and mitigating financial risks.
- Regulatory Compliance - Familiarity with economic regulations and compliance instruments. Awareness of specific directives is advantageous.

These skills are highly sought after due to their alignment with the needs and technological advancements within each sector. Although there are numerous similarities across industries, including the necessity for proficiency in Microsoft Office, organizations frequently have distinct requirements and systems customized to their core operations.

Managers also identified particular soft skills within the administrative, educational, and economic sectors.

## The findings revealed ten essential soft skills:

**Active Listening:** The capacity to attentively listen and discern critical information from spoken discourse, alongside the analysis of the speaker's body language and tone, has been recognized as especially vital in the administrative and educational fields.

**Flexibility:** This is crucial for adapting to emerging technologies and systems, modifications in software tools, as well as evolving educational and economic policies, regulations, and best practices.

**3. Work ethics:** Adherence to essential administrative procedures, commitment to elevated ethical standards, and diligent execution of responsibilities were emphasized as crucial across all sectors.

**4. Creativity:** Regarded as highly valuable in the development of engaging educational content, particularly for students with diverse needs and learning styles, and also crucial for innovative solutions in the field of administration.

**5. Critical Thinking:** Essential for analyzing and presenting data, facilitating informed decision-making, and assessing the efficacy of various tools and methodologies.

**6. Problem Solving:** The capacity to address software issues, enhance workflows, or rectify data inconsistencies while engaging in diverse projects.

**7. Collaboration and teamwork:** A skill regarded as more valuable than the capacity for independent work, owing to the functional dynamics of teams.

**8. Communication Skills:** Crucial for articulating technical concepts, presenting data analyses, and collaborating effectively with team members and stakeholders.

**9. Time management:** Essential for efficiently overseeing multiple projects, adhering to deadlines, and balancing technical tasks with administrative or strategic duties.

Attention to Detail: Guarantees precision in data analysis, financial modeling, the flow of financial documents, and the utilization of sophisticated software tools, particularly within the administrative and economic domains.

## Recommendations

Drawing from extensive findings from focus groups with managers across the administrative, educational, and economic sectors, we offer ten recommendations to inform the advancement of Vocational Education and Training (VET) programs:

**Dedicated communication skills training:** Develop a communication training program that emphasizes both verbal and written skills, encompassing presentation and negotiation techniques, as well as the distinctions between in-person and online communication.

**Providing specialized training programs:**

Implementing training centered on advanced Excel functionalities, CRM systems, and ERP systems.

**Offering Course Design Workshops:** Create workshops focused on the development of effective online courses and training, emphasizing essential elements of interactive content applicable in both educational and economic sectors.

**Introduction of specialized problem-solving techniques:** Incorporation of dedicated resources for addressing common issues through a range of methodologies.



**Emphasis on the development of soft skills:** Design components of the VET program that reinforce essential soft skills, including active listening, teamwork, problem-solving, and time management. This entails incorporating interactive workshops, exercises, and team projects to cultivate these skills.

**Strengths-Based Team Design:** To facilitate seamless collaboration among teams and employees, incorporating strengths analysis to identify employees' preferred roles within the team, thereby enhancing both individual and collective performance.

**Fostering employee creativity:** Promoting innovative thinking through the facilitation of brainstorming sessions and problem-solving workshops.

**Workshops on time management and organizational skills:** Covering effective calendar utilization, the significance of work-life balance, prioritization techniques for various roles, and project planning.

**Risk Management Education:** An introduction to both theoretical and practical aspects of risk management, highlighting its universal applicability across all sectors. Furthermore, it encompasses sector-specific knowledge of risk management.

**Regulatory Acquaintance:** Incorporating modules and training on fundamental cybersecurity principles. Furthermore, other legal considerations that employees should understand, including GDPR, Waste Directive, CSRD, or other industry-specific legal matters.

By adopting these recommendations, a Vocational Education and Training (VET) program can effectively bridge the skills gaps identified in the focus groups, equipping participants with the essential technical and soft skills required for success in their respective sectors.

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## AUTHORS OF THE ARTICLE:

Grzegorz Sokołowski

Jakub Chruściel

Damian Bogacz

## FEDE AUTHORS:

Marek Dabkowski

Krzysztof Kuboń

Karolina Bogucka





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