



Generation X is more suspicious of employers than other cohorts are: Only 41% place a “great deal of trust” in their company, versus 46% of the general population.

“A GLOBAL SURVEY ON THE AMBIGUOUS STATE OF EMPLOYEE TRUST,” BY KARYN TWARONITE

## TALENT ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT

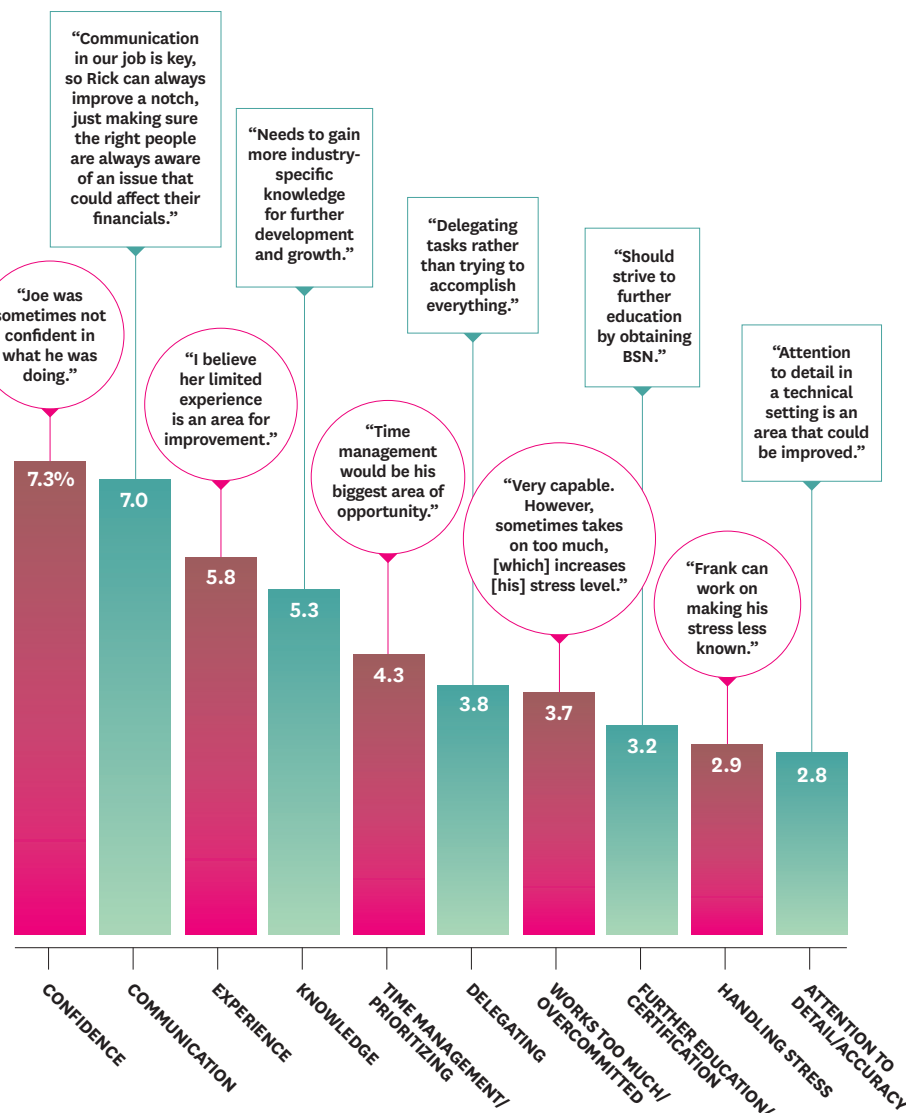
When a hiring manager checks references, one question can be especially challenging to answer: “What are the candidate’s weaknesses—the things he needs to work on?” SkillSurvey, a firm that conducts online reference checks, performed a textual analysis of 12,800 references and found 106 distinct areas cited for improvement. Here are the 10 most common, along with comments drawn from actual references:

relate to the CEO’s core business, that support drops: Only 20% say that speaking out is a good idea. As for purchase intent, risks can outweigh rewards when CEOs take a stand: 40% of respondents said they were more likely to buy from a firm whose CEO supports a political view in line with their own, but 45% said they avoid shopping in stores whose leadership opposes their views.

The researchers found some generational differences. Millennials were more aware than Gen Xers or Baby Boomers of activist CEOs, and they were more likely than other cohorts to view them positively and to increase purchase intent. For example, 46% of Millennials said they would be more likely to buy a brand whose CEO had voiced an opinion they agreed with, compared with just 35% of Baby Boomers.

Because CEOs whose views conflict with their consumers’ risk losing sales, one implication of the research is clear: It’s good for a firm to know what most of its consumers think about an issue before the CEO weighs in. “In order to reap the benefits and mitigate the risks, companies have to better understand the attitudes of internal and external stakeholders,” says Leslie Gaines-Ross, Weber Shandwick’s chief reputation officer. “Leaders also must articulate their motivations and commitments to the issues they’re speaking up about and clarify how they relate to the company’s values and business.”

**ABOUT THE RESEARCH** “The Dawn of CEO Activism,” by Weber Shandwick in partnership with KRC Research



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