



# FOOD & BEVERAGE INDUSTRY 2024 Upskilling Report



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# 2024

FOOD & BEVERAGE INDUSTRY

## Upskilling Report

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## Introduction

In the ever-evolving landscape of food manufacturing, investing in worker skills and knowledge is critical for maintaining a competitive edge and ensuring long-term success. Upskilling not only enhances productivity and efficiency, but also fosters a motivated and engaged workforce.

This summer, we conducted a survey of food industry leaders to better understand both the challenges and the most effective approaches to upskilling in the industry.

Nearly 70% of respondents said their employees were eager to learn new skills. On-the-job training and mentorship was by far the most effective method for teaching those skills, followed by off-site and in-house programs. However, time constraints and scheduling conflicts, differences and learning styles, and costs often get in the way of delivering upskilling opportunities.

Dive into the report for more on how food and beverage companies are implementing upskilling initiatives and measuring the impact.



PART 1:

# Assessing Upskilling Needs

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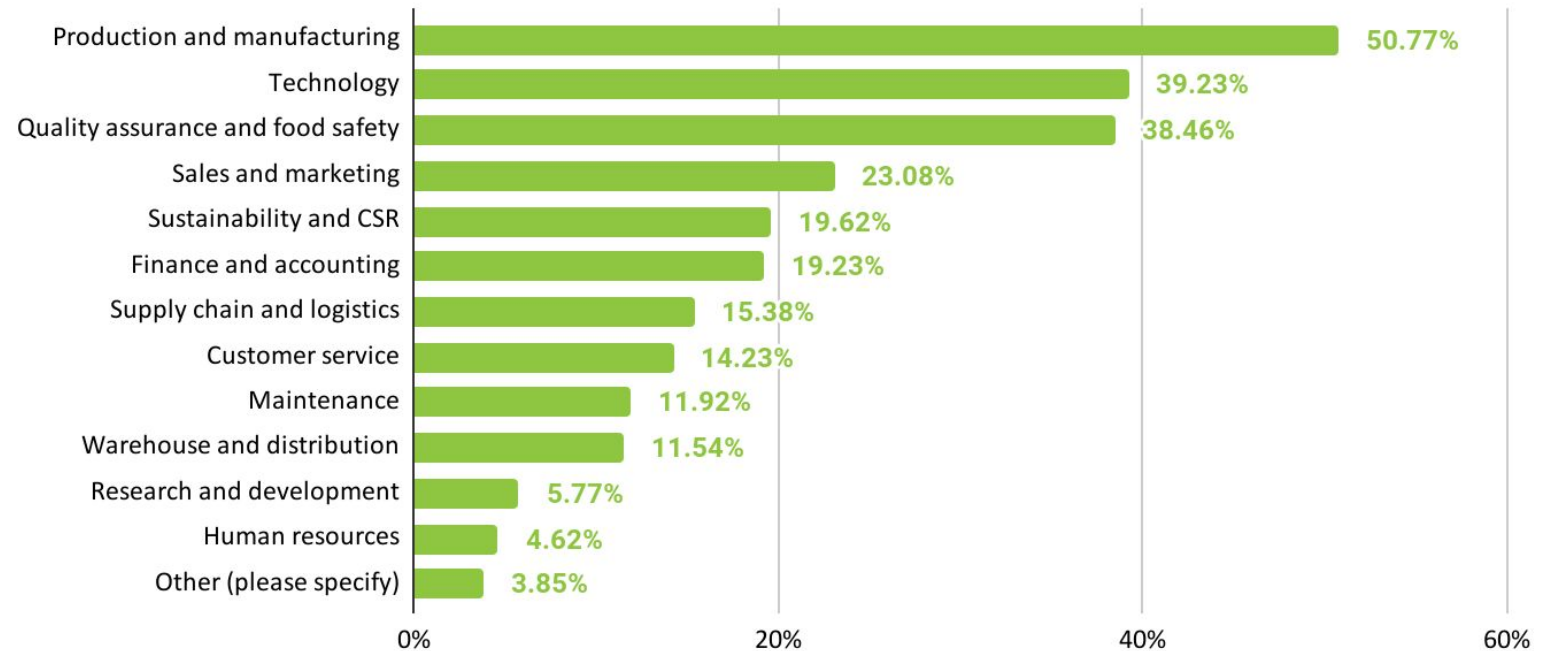
# Areas of greatest need



Not surprisingly, half of respondents said production, manufacturing was one of their top three areas of greatest need for upskilling.

Other critical areas included technology (39%), quality assurance and food safety (39%), and sales and marketing (23%).

In which areas do you see the greatest need for upskilling your workforce? (Select the 3 most critical.)



## Non-technical skills

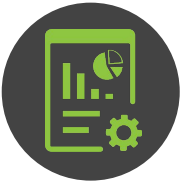
When asked to rank the importance of non-technical skills, respondents prioritized communication and interpersonal skills, customer service / relationship management, and problem-solving / critical thinking. Stress management and mental health ranked as least important.

### Most important non-technical skills

*(ranked from most important to least important)*

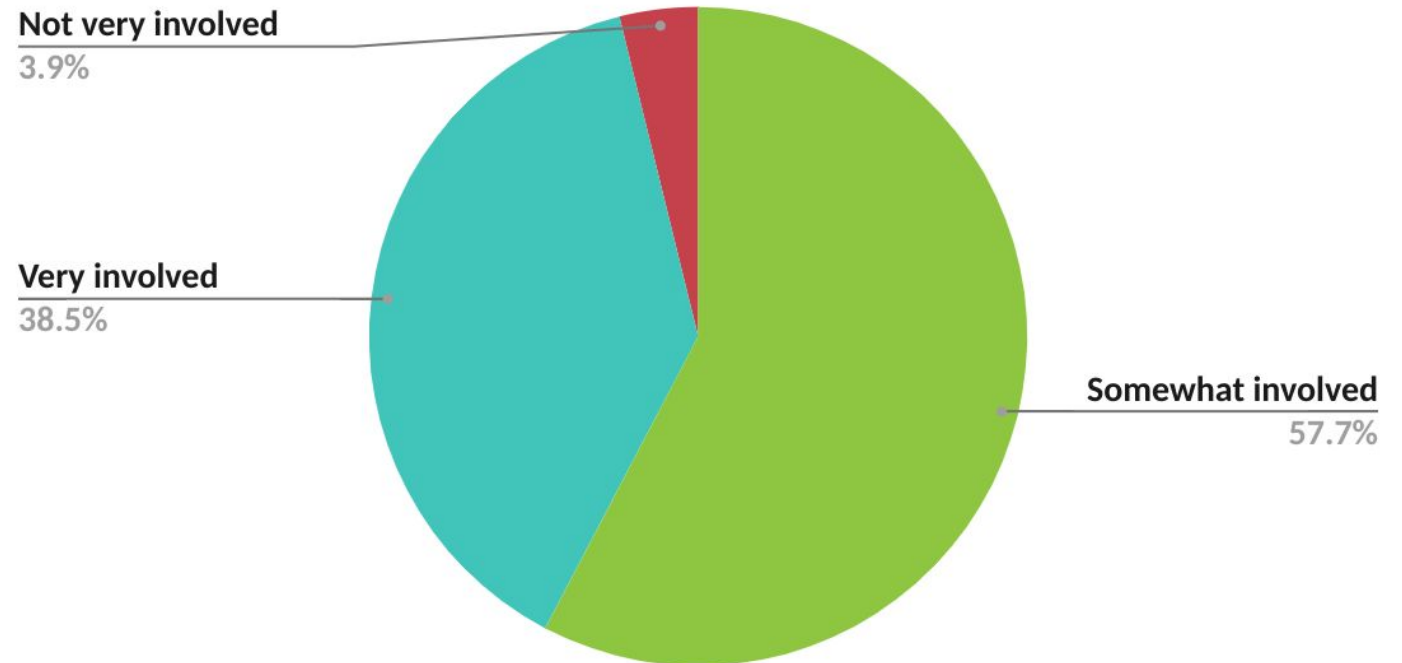
- 1.** Communication and interpersonal skills  
*(19% ranked this as #1)*
- 2.** Customer service / relationship management  
*(19% ranked this as #1)*
- 3.** Problem-solving / critical thinking  
*(14% ranked this as #1)*
- 4.** Adaptability and change management
- 5.** Leadership / management development
- 6.** Creativity and innovation
- 7.** Teamwork / positive workplace culture
- 8.** Time management and organization
- 9.** Safety and compliance
- 10.** Stress management and mental health

## Leadership involvement



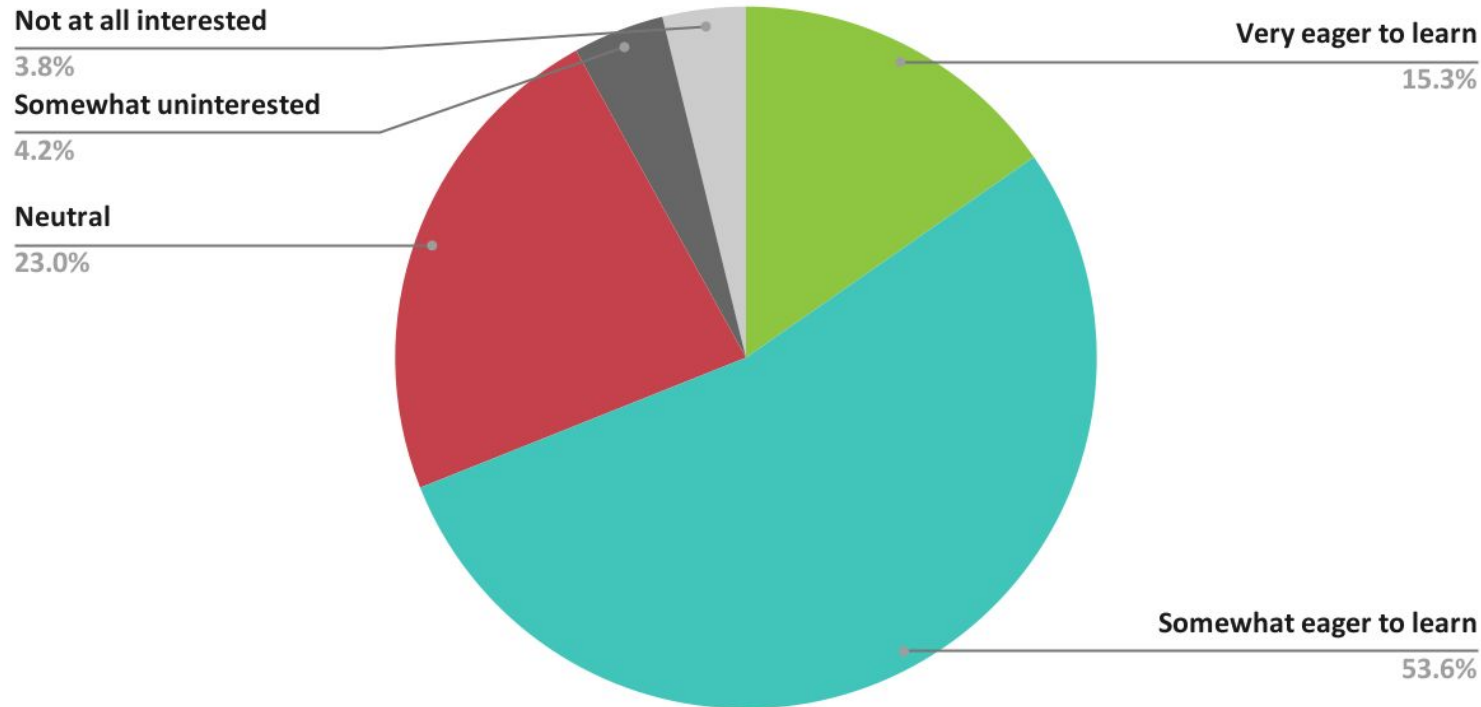
Almost 40% of respondents said their leadership team was very involved in supporting and promoting upskilling initiatives, while 58% said their leaders were somewhat involved. A small percentage (4%) reported low involvement, and no one said their leaders weren't involved at all.

How involved is your leadership team in supporting and promoting upskilling initiatives?



# Employee receptiveness

How receptive are your employees to learning new skills?



Nearly 70% of respondents reported that their employees were at least somewhat eager to learn new skills. Few (8%) said their employees were uninterested.



PART 2:

# Effective Upskilling Strategies

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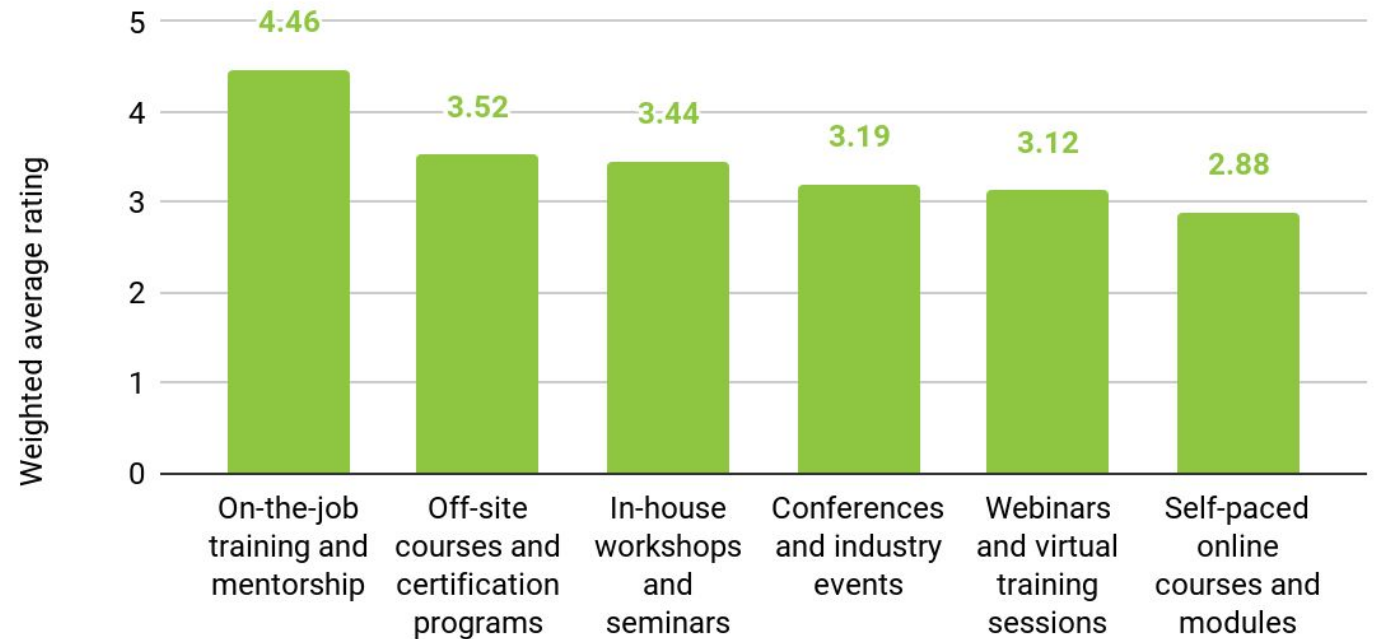


## Training methods



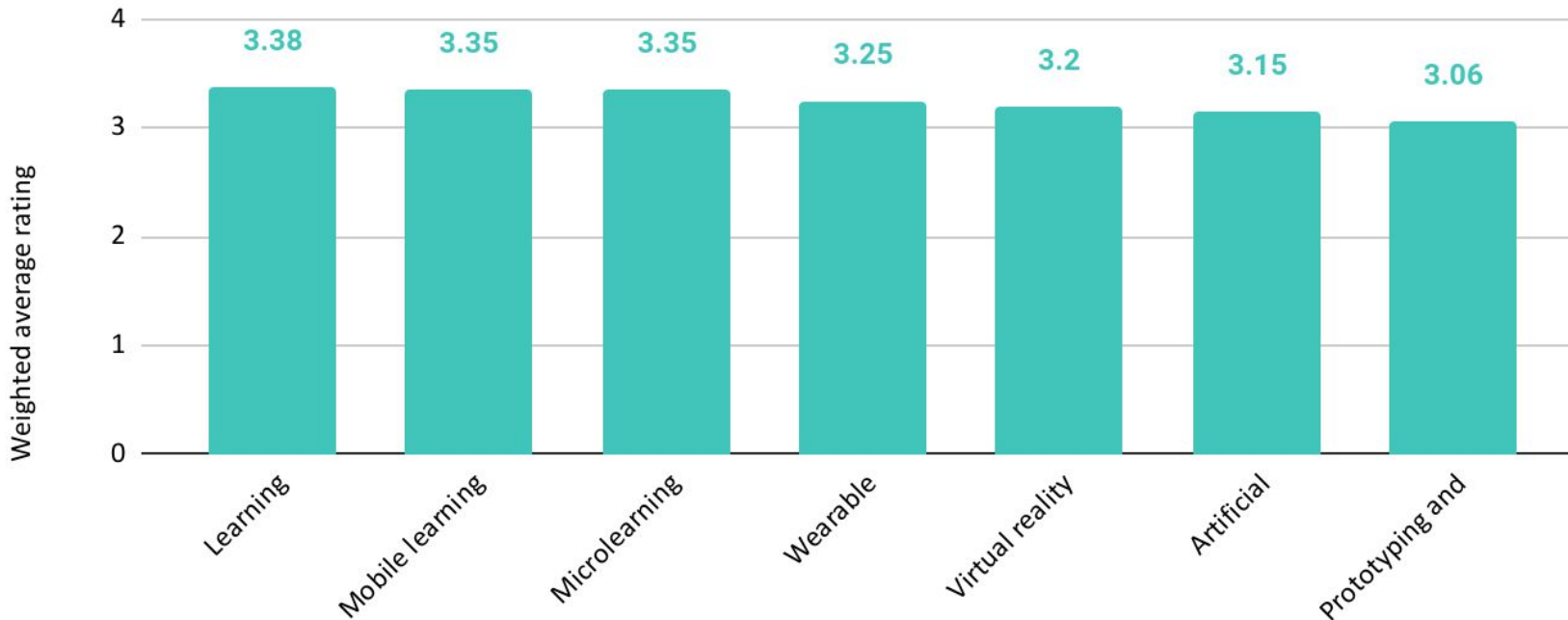
On-the-job training and mentorship came out on top as the most effective training strategy, followed by off-site courses and in-house workshops.

How would you rate the effectiveness of the following training methods? (from 1 = very low to 5 = very high)



# Technology

How would you rate the effectiveness of the following technologies to deliver upskilling programs to your employees? (from 1 = very low to 5 = very high)



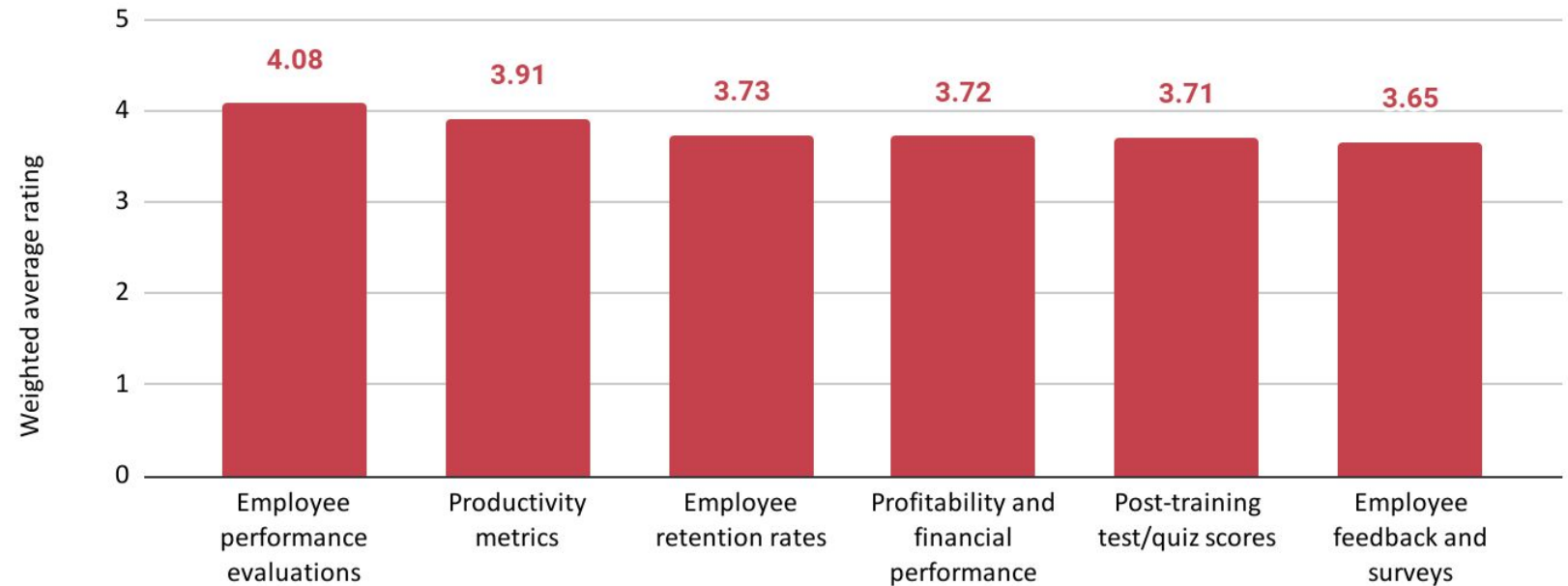
Overall, technologies for delivering upskilling programs — including learning management systems, mobile learning apps, and microlearning platforms — were almost equally effective.

# Measuring impact



Respondents rated employee performance evaluations as the best way to measure the impact of their upskilling initiatives. Productivity metrics were a close second.

How would you rate the effectiveness of the following methods for measuring the impact of upskilling on your business? (from 1 = very low to 5 = very high)





PART 3:

# Challenges & Future Plans

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# Challenges



When it comes to implementing upskilling initiatives, respondents found time constraints and scheduling conflicts to be the most challenging, followed by different learning styles and training costs.

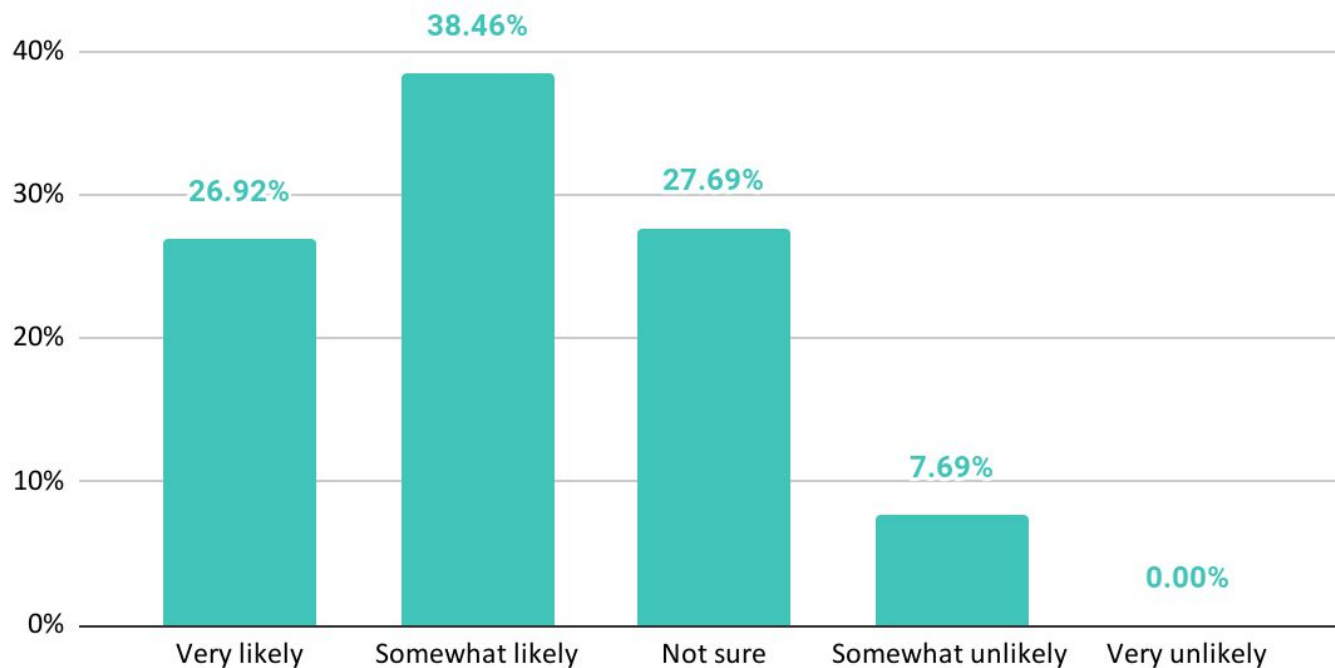
Some respondents were also experiencing additional challenges, like availability of qualified candidates and content creation efforts.

How challenging are the following when implementing upskilling initiatives? (from 1 = not at all challenging to 5 = extremely challenging)



## Upcoming investments

How likely are you to increase investment in employee upskilling in the next 12 months?



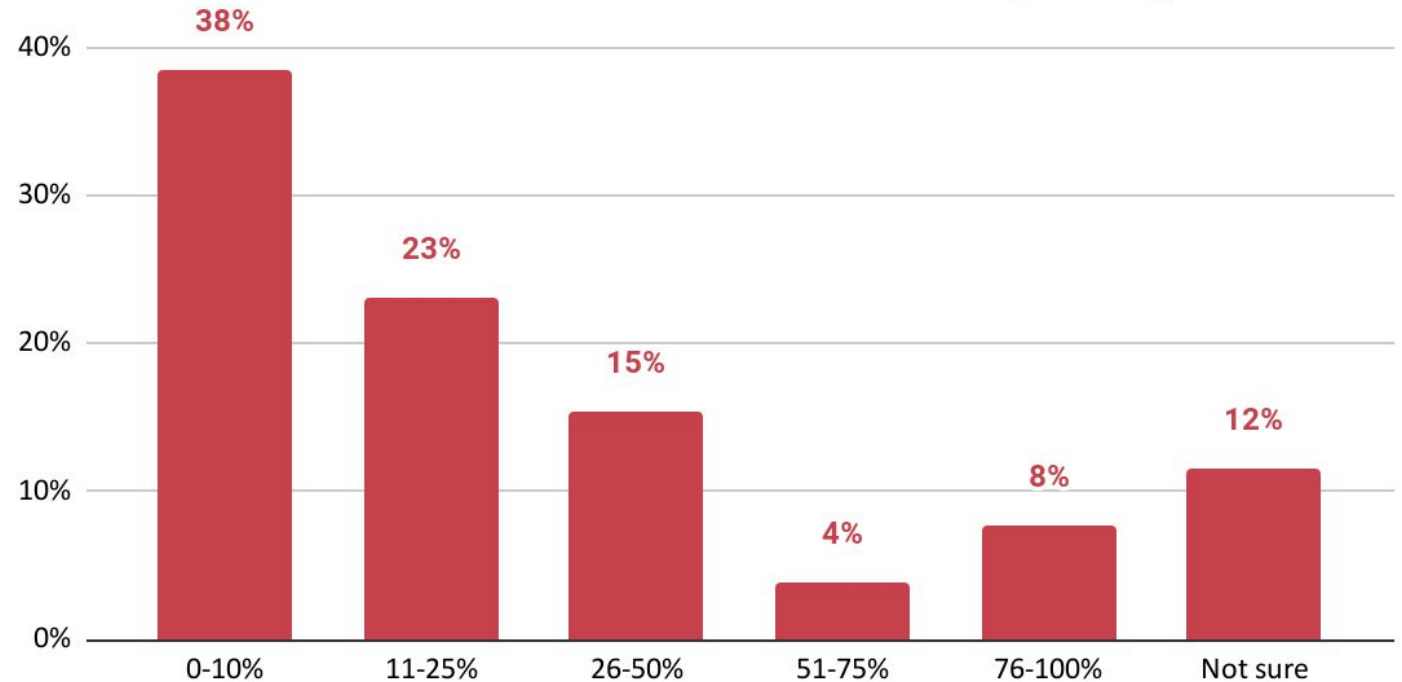
Nearly two-thirds (65%) of respondents said their company is likely to boost its investment in employee upskilling over the next year.

## Budget



Almost 40% of survey participants said they designated less than 10% of their training budget for upskilling. Close to a quarter (23%) allocated 11-25% of the budget, and 15% earmarked 26-50%.

What percentage of your overall training budget is allocated towards upskilling initiatives?





PART 4:

# Who Took the Survey

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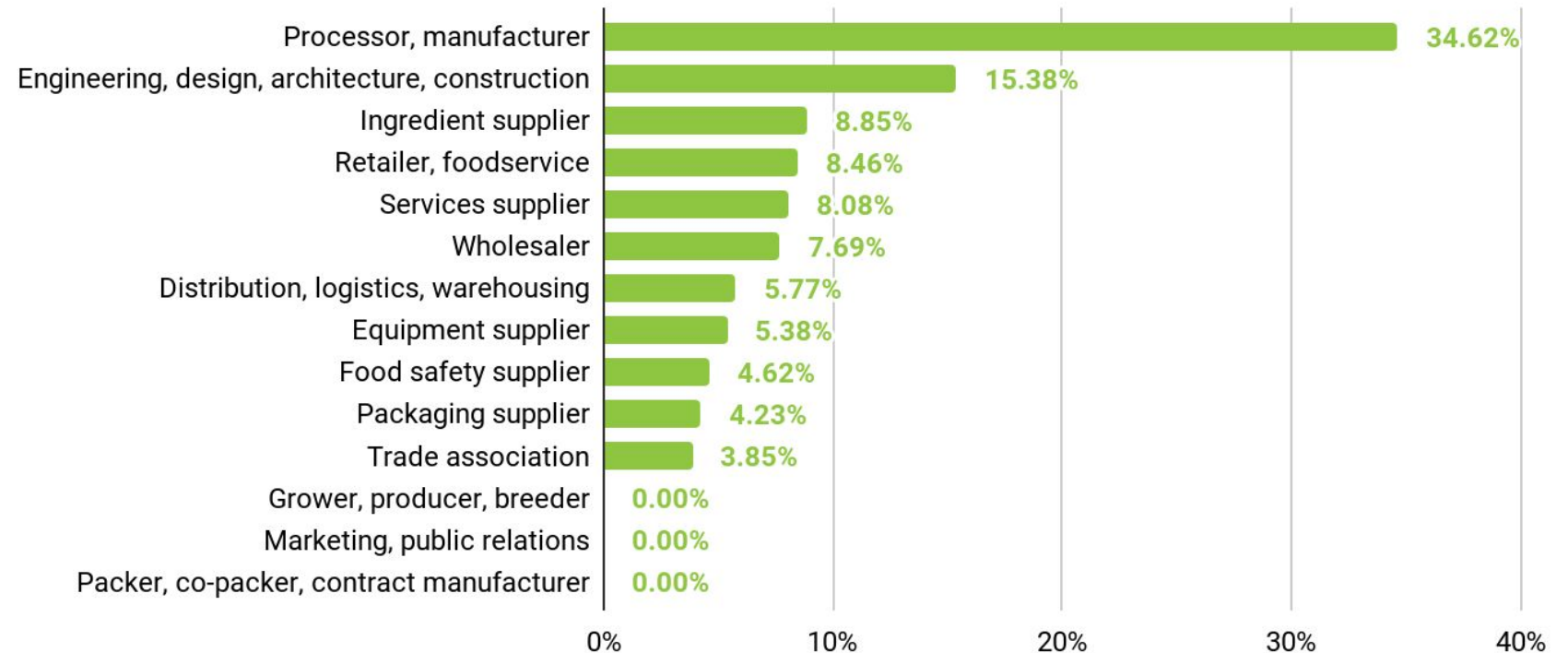


## Company type



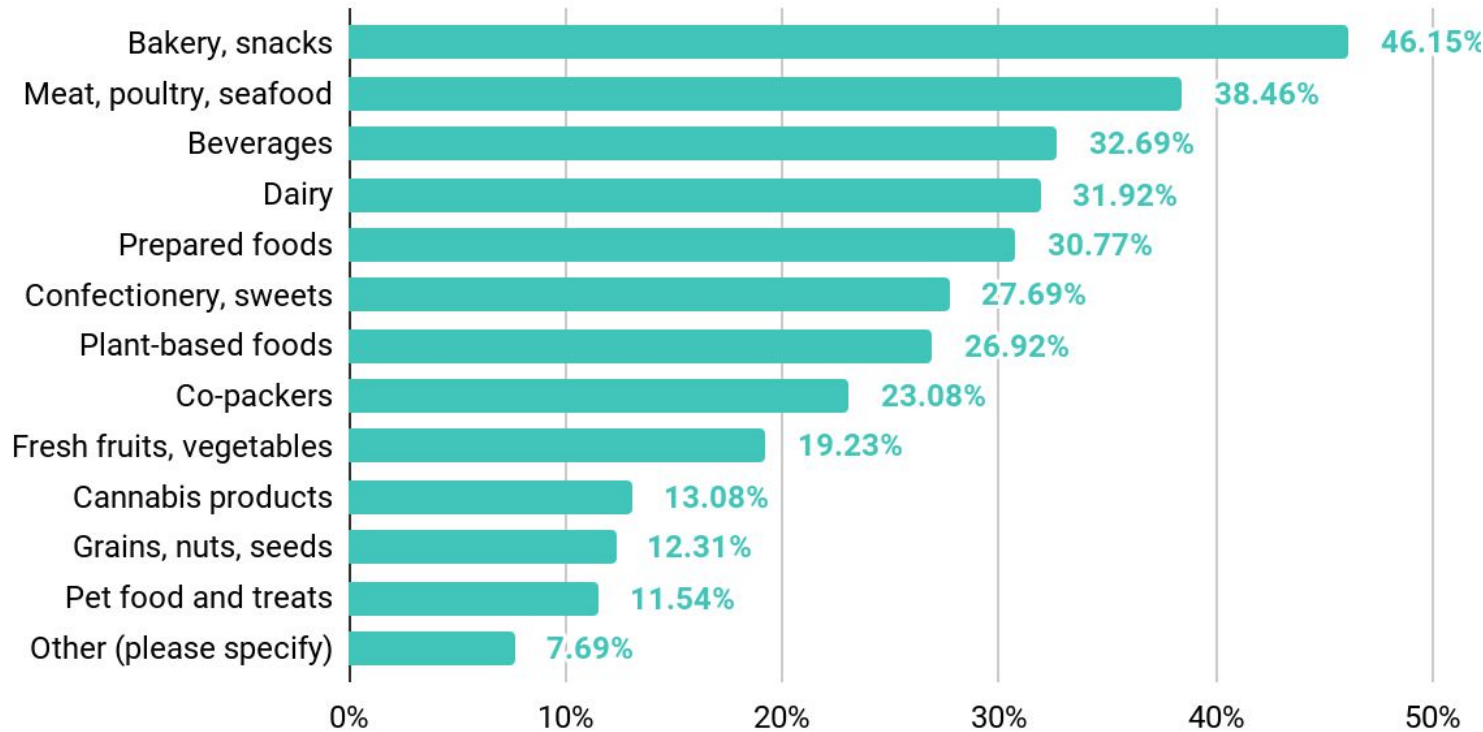
Most survey respondents represented processors and manufacturers (35%).

What type of company do you work for?



# Verticals served

What vertical(s) does your company serve? Select all that apply.



The most common verticals served included:

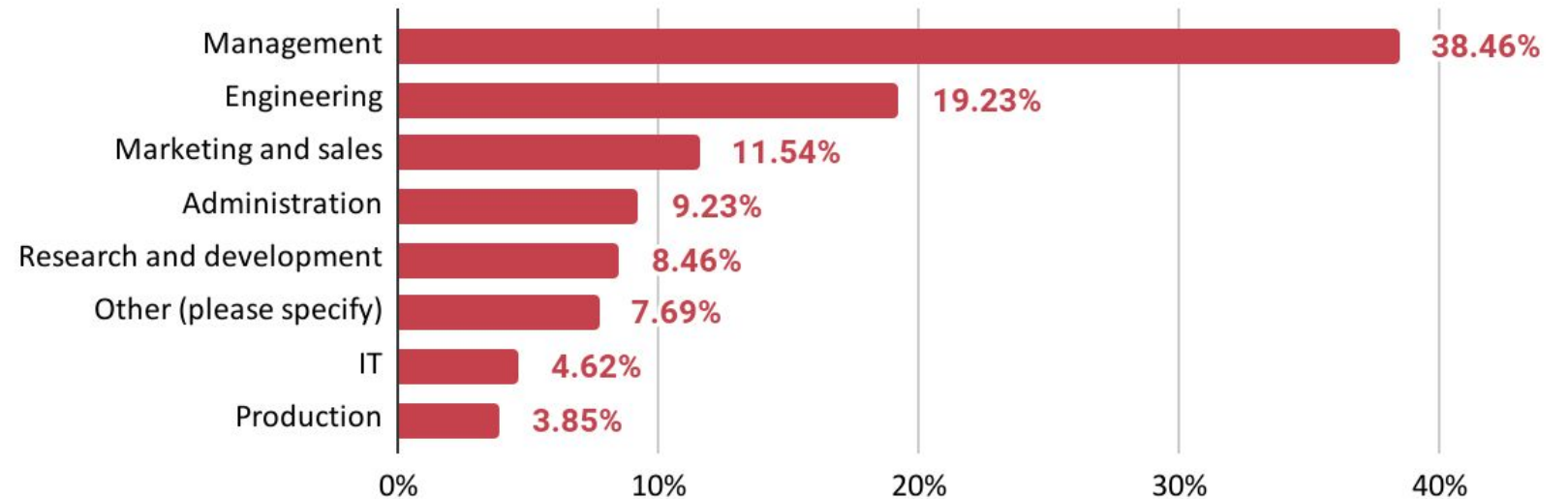
1. Bakery, snacks (46%)
2. Meat, poultry, seafood (38%)
3. Beverages (32%)
4. Dairy (32%)
5. Prepared foods (31%)

## Company role



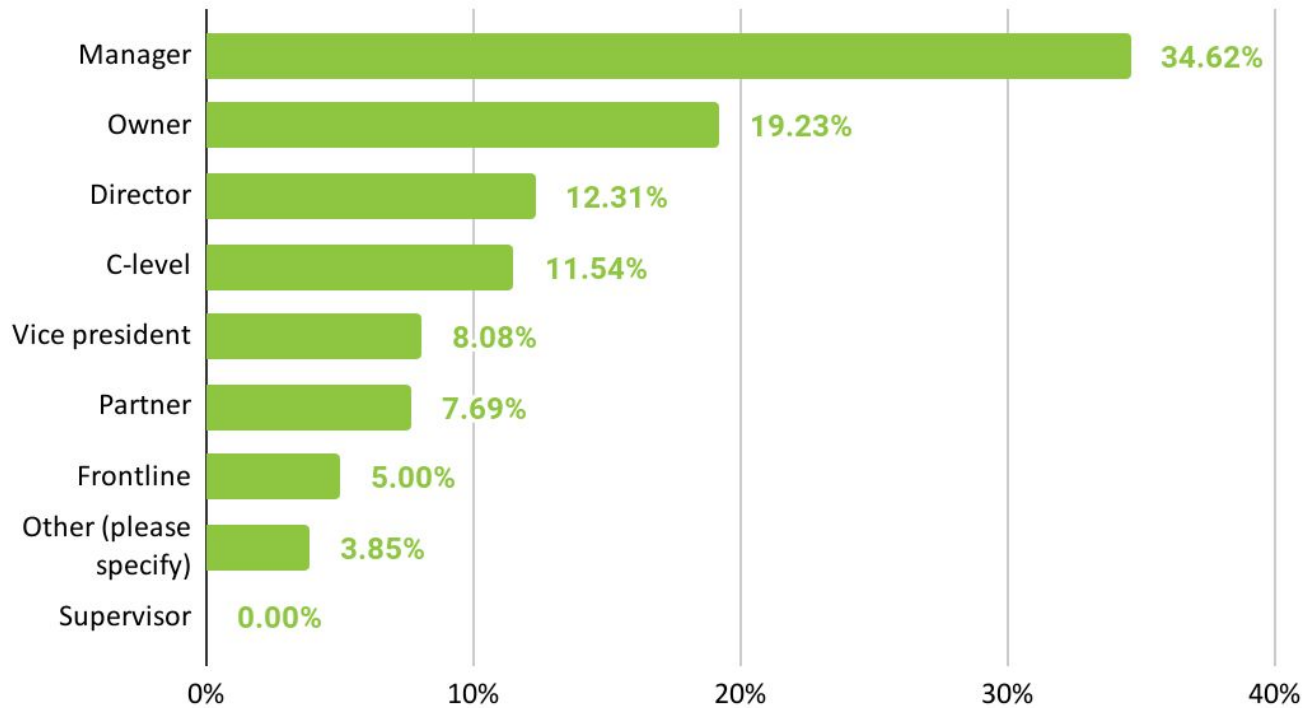
Nearly 40% of respondents held managerial positions at their company.

What best describes your role in your company?



# Job seniority

What best describes your job seniority?



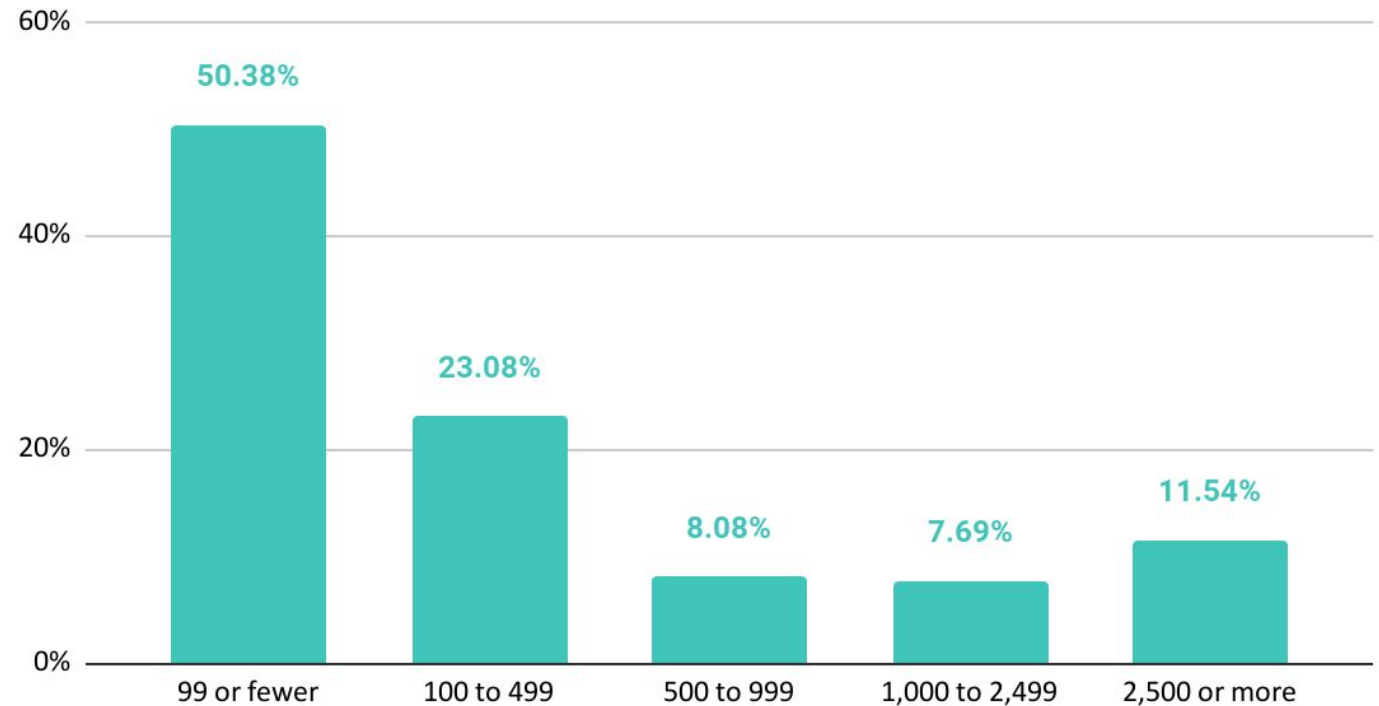
The majority of respondents were at manager level or higher, with 19% being company owners, 12% being directors, and 12% holding C-level roles.

## Company size



Half of respondents represented small companies (99 or fewer employees). On the other side of the range, 12% of respondents were from companies with 2,500 or more employees.

How many employees are at your company?



# Put Your People First

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- Learning & Development
- Total Rewards
- Organizational Design
- Technology
- Shared Services
- Center of Excellence



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# Start Your Upskilling Journey

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*From Matt Wessels,  
Human Capital Practice Lead at Catena Solutions*

Upskilling employees is vital for food and beverage organizations that want to stay competitive in a challenging market. As automation, data, analytics, and AI become increasingly integrated into operations, workers need skills that enable them to understand complex initiatives and thrive during change. Upskilling employees to better adopt new systems also enhances organizational productivity and leads to a greater ROI. Additionally, with consumer preferences constantly evolving in the food and beverage industry, workers who are agile and comfortable making data-driven decisions are priceless.

Most importantly, however, upskilling fosters employee retention and engagement. In an industry known for high turnover rates, offering training and development opportunities makes a significant difference in attracting and retaining talent.

Employees who feel valued and see a clear path for career progression are more likely to stay with their company, reducing recruitment costs and increasing morale. By investing in continuous learning, companies not only improve operational efficiency but also build a more motivated, innovative workforce that's better equipped to navigate the complexities of the modern food and beverage landscape.

*For support during your organization's upskilling initiative, Catena Solutions can help. Contact us at [info@catenasolutions.com](mailto:info@catenasolutions.com) to start the conversation.*



# Thank You!

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