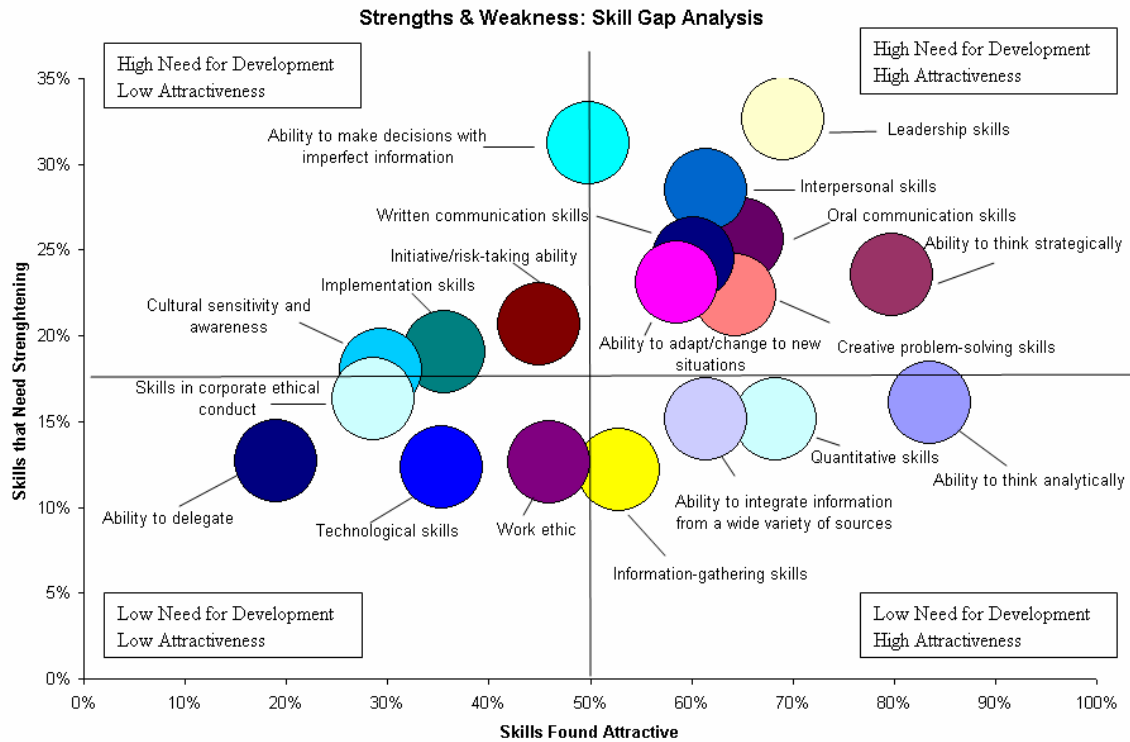


## Employer Assessment of MBA Students

Employers were asked to indicate which skills they found to be well-developed among MBA graduates and identify areas where graduates could use further training. The chart below summarizes what respondents said in the form of a gap analysis.



Clearly, employers value and are pleased with the quantitative and analytical development of MBA students. However, employers are hinting strongly that MBA students and their schools need to show more concern for strategic thinking, communication, and leadership abilities—the “soft” skills that employers value most and report lowest satisfaction with in MBA students. The extent to which these can be addressed within an MBA program, or should be evidenced in pre-MBA professional qualifications, is not known.

## Industry-specific Skill Needs Assessment

Industries vary significantly in terms of their assessments of MBA student skill needs, but across industries, the abilities to think analytically and strategically are the skills employers find most attractive in MBA graduates. Although oral communication skills are also highly attractive in the consulting, energy/utilities, and finance/accounting industries, employers in these industries also say this skill should be strengthened. Similarly, employers in the finance/accounting, health care/pharmaceutical, high technology, manufacturing, and products/services industries say they find the leadership skills of MBA graduates attractive, but would like to see them further developed.

TOP FIVE SKILLS THAT ARE ATTRACTIVE IN MBA GRADUATES, BY INDUSTRY							
Consulting	Energy/ Utilities	Finance/ Accounting	Health Care/ Pharmaceutical	High Technology	Manufacturing	Non-profit/ Government	Products/ Services
Ability to think analytically	Ability to think analytically	Ability to think analytically	Ability to think analytically	Ability to think strategically	Ability to think analytically	Ability to think analytically	Ability to think strategically
Ability to think strategically	Ability to think strategically	Ability to think strategically	Ability to think strategically	Ability to think analytically	Ability to think strategically	Ability to think strategically	Ability to think analytically
Quantitative skills	Quantitative skills	Quantitative skills	Leadership skills	Leadership skills	Leadership skills	Creative problem-solving skills	Leadership skills
Creative problem-solving skills	Ability to integrate information from a wide variety of sources	Oral communication skills	Oral communication skills	Oral communication skills	Quantitative skills	Information-gathering skills	Creative problem-solving skills
Oral communication skills	Oral communication skills	Leadership skills	Interpersonal skills	Quantitative skills	Creative problem-solving skills	Oral communication skills	Oral communication skills

TOP FIVE SKILLS THAT SHOULD BE STRENGTHENED IN MBA GRADUATES, BY INDUSTRY							
Consulting	Energy/ Utilities	Finance/ Accounting	Health Care/ Pharmaceutical	High Technology	Manufacturing	Non-profit/ Government	Products/ Services
Ability to make decisions with imperfect information	Leadership skills	Leadership skills	Leadership skills	Leadership skills	Leadership skills	Leadership skills	Leadership skills
Leadership skills	Interpersonal skills	Ability to make decisions with imperfect information	Ability to make decisions with imperfect information	Ability to make decisions with imperfect information	Ability to make decisions with imperfect information	Ability to adapt/change to new situations	Ability to make decisions with imperfect information
Interpersonal skills	Ability to adapt/change to new situations	Interpersonal skills	Interpersonal skills	Interpersonal skills	Interpersonal skills	Cultural sensitivity and awareness	Interpersonal skills
Oral communication skills	Oral communication skills	Ability to adapt/change to new situations	Ability to think strategically	Initiative/risk-taking ability	Ability to think strategically	Written communication skills	Ability to think strategically
Written communication skills	Creative problem-solving skills	Oral communication skills	Written communication skills	Written communication skills	Oral communication skills	Skills in corporate ethical conduct	Initiative/risk-taking ability

### Selection of New MBA Hires

MBA graduates' quantitative and management skills are only one area employers assess when recruiting new MBA hires. Employers also evaluate the candidates' work experience and cultural fit within the company. Those recruiting MBA students view work experience in two distinct ways: in terms of its direct relevance to the job and with regard to what it shows about the candidate's leadership experience and on-the-job performance. Such views are consistent with the gap analysis described earlier, in which employers are looking for improved performance—most notably in communication and other soft skills.

The following factors, on average, are rated as very important attributes by employers.

1. Strong communication/interpersonal skills
2. Proven ability to perform
3. Cultural fit with company
4. Evidence of adaptability
5. Quantitative knowledge/technical skills acquired in MBA program
6. Management knowledge/skills acquired through MBA program
7. History of increased job responsibility
8. Prior work experience related to industry, job, or company
9. Reputation of MBA school
10. History of leading teams
11. MBA academic success factors

### Assessment Methods

To assess attributes of MBA candidates, employers primarily use behavior-based interviews. A little more than half of the employers use case or situational interviews, whereas a little more than a third use evaluations of knowledge, ability, or experience. One-quarter use career interest and job fit assessments.

<b>FORMAL METHODS USED TO ASSESS MBA CANDIDATES*</b>	
	<i>n</i> = 1,300
Behavior-based interviews	79%
Case or situational interviews	53%
Knowledge, ability or experience evaluations	36%
Career interest and job fit assessments	25%
Performance/work sampling	19%
Mathematical problem solving	16%
Interactive assessments	14%
Personality testing/inventories	12%
Computer-assisted interviews	4%
Other	4%
Do not use formal assessment methods when I interview and/or evaluate candidates	8%
Don't know	3%
*Percentages do not total 100% due to multiple responses.	

GMAC® is a registered trademark of the Graduate Management Admission Council (GMAC®). All rights reserved.