



Canadian Employers Slow to Embrace Surge in Self-Taught Job Skills

With unconventional learning on the rise, companies face mounting pressure to separate genuine expertise from resume noise.

TORONTO, Feb. 25, 2026 — From YouTube crash courses to TikTok tutorials promising “job-ready skills in under 10 minutes,” self-taught learning is exploding, and it’s beginning to reshape resumes across the country.

A newly released Express Employment Professionals-Harris Poll survey shows 52% of job seekers and 51% of hiring managers believe skills learned through informal online platforms are credible. Yet with nearly one-third of job seekers (31%) now adding these self-taught skills to their resumes, employers say evaluating a candidate’s skills is becoming more challenging than ever.



This surge is especially pronounced among younger workers, as 60% of Gen Z report teaching themselves skills online, compared to 34% of millennials, 19% of Gen X and just 12% of boomers or seniors. Men (34%) are also more likely than women (27%) to include self-taught skills on their resumes.

A Growing Skill Set with Uneven Evaluation

Despite the rising prevalence of do-it-yourself digital learning:

- 61% of hiring managers still prefer formal education.
- 28% value formal and self-taught skills equally.
- 11% now favour self-taught learning.

Job seekers are similarly divided. While 14% say self-taught skills help them stand out, 19% believe they may hurt their chances.

Platforms Are Teaching Skills, but Employers Want Proof

With candidates absorbing skills through algorithm-recommended playlists and short-form tutorials, hiring managers say resumes alone often fail to provide meaningful clarity.

A striking 86% of hiring managers say demonstrating how skills were used, or how they would be applied, is more effective than reviewing a resume.

What boosts employer confidence, according to hiring managers?

- References who can speak to their work (46%)
- Demonstrated industry knowledge (42%)
- Completion of a work sample where self-taught skills were used (34%)
- Clear explanations of how self-taught skills were used (33%)

In today's hiring environment, binge-learning online is becoming more welcomed, but proof still outweighs platform.

Updating Hiring Playbooks

As self-taught skills become more mainstream hiring processes are evolving:

- 23% of hiring managers say their company has already updated hiring processes to recognize and verify self-taught skills.
- 41% say their company is planning to update their hiring processes.
- 36% say there are no plans to update their hiring processes to reflect the growing listing of self-taught skills on resumes.

Larger employers are leading these changes (30%) as they encounter self-taught candidates at a higher volume than medium- and small-sized businesses (both 19%).

Self-Teaching Fueled by AI

AI and automation are expanding the need for ongoing upskilling. As AI reshapes work, it's also reshaping how people prepare for it.

Two-thirds of job seekers (67%) say AI advancements make them more likely to pursue additional training:

- 66% believe it's appropriate to learn professional skills using AI.
- Men are more likely than women to pursue additional training (72% vs. 62%) and to endorse AI-based learning (72% vs. 58%).

"Self-learning is opening doors for workers everywhere, but it also raises the bar," said Bob Funk Jr., CEO, President and Chairman of Express Employment International. "Job seekers must be ready to demonstrate their abilities right away, and employers should update their hiring

practices to evaluate the skills people gain on their own. As self-taught learning becomes more common, refining how to assess these skills will help employers make better, more confident decisions about the talent they bring on board.”

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Survey Methodology

The Job Insights survey was conducted online within Canada by The Harris Poll on behalf of Express Employment Professionals from Nov. 3 - 19, 2025, among 504 Canadian hiring decision-makers.

The Job Seeker Report was conducted online within Canada by The Harris Poll on behalf of Express Employment Professionals from Nov. 7 to 21, 2025, among 502 adults ages 18 and older.

For full survey methodology, please contact Ana Curic at Ana@MapleLeafStrategies.com.

If you would like to arrange for an interview to discuss this topic, please contact Ana Curic at (613) 858-2622 or email Ana@MapleLeafStrategies.com.

About Robert (Bob) Funk Jr.

Robert (Bob) Funk Jr. is the Chief Executive Officer, President and Chairman of Express Employment International, a global staffing franchisor founded and headquartered in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. He leads a portfolio of workforce solution brands, including the flagship Express Employment Professionals franchise, along with several affiliated brands serving specialized markets. The Express franchise brand is an industry-leading, international staffing company with franchise locations across the U.S., Canada, South Africa, Australia and New Zealand.

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