Research Instruments

SME Management Development Research Group

2020

SME Manager Skills and Practices Survey (2020)

Deirdre McQuillan
Technological University Dublin, deirdre.mcquillan@tudublin.ie

Thomas M. Cooney
Technological University Dublin, thomas.cooney@tudublin.ie

Ciara Nolan
Technological University Dublin, ciara.nolan@tudublin.ie

See next page for additional authors

Follow this and additional works at: https://arrow.tudublin.ie/smemanres

Part of the Business Administration, Management, and Operations Commons

Recommended Citation

Authors

Deirdre McQuillan, Thomas M. Cooney, Ciara Nolan, Osa Godwin Osaghae, Wael Rashwan, and Lorraine Sweeney

SME Manager Skills and Practices Survey (2020)

Improving management development standards in SMEs in Ireland. A project funded by the European Union via the Directorate General for Structural Reform Support (DG REFORM) - No SRSS/C2019/051

INTRODUCTORY, TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT NEEDS QUESTIONS:

1. **How long has this organisation been established in Ireland?**

(Tick only one)

☐ a) less than one year ☐ b) 1-3 years

☐ c) 4-9 years ☐ d) 10+ years

2. **Who is the largest shareholder in this organisation?**

(Tick only one)

a) Founder individual ☐
b) Entrepreneurial Team (2 or more founders) ☐
c) Family (+2nd generation) ☐
d) Private investors ☐
e) Private equity (venture capital- e.g.angel investors) ☐
f) Joint Venture – 2 companies ☐
g) International parent ☐
h) Other ☐

3. **Has this organisation changed ownership over the last ten years?**

(Tick only one)

a) Yes ☐
b) No ☐

4. **How many managers in this organisation?**

(Tick only one)

☐ a) Only one ☐ b) 2-5 managers

☐ c) 6-10 managers ☐ d) >10 managers

5. **How many levels of management in this organisation from the CEO/Owner down (in Ireland)?**

(E.g. level 1 is CEO/Owner, Level 2 senior management, Level 3 middle management team)

(Tick only one)

☐ a) Only one ☐ b) 2 levels

☐ c) 3 levels ☐ d) >3 levels

6. **Are you as owner of this organisation directly involved in day-to-day management of the firm?**

(Tick only one)

a) Yes ☐
b) No ☐
c) Not applicable- I am not the owner ☐

7. **How would you rate the level of technological intensity of this organisation?**

(Technological intensity is defined as the level of technology incorporated in the production of your organisation's products or services. This indicator is typically measured by dividing the average spending on research and development (R&D) by the firm's revenue).

(Rate on scale from 1 to 5)

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Well below average   Well above average

8. **Which of the following types of management training has this organisation undertaken over the past 3 years?**

(Tick all appropriate)

a) Internal formal classroom based training delivered by internal staff ☐
b) Internal formal classroom based training delivered by external expert ☐
c) Learning through day to day experiences ☐

d) External formal classroom based training delivered by external expert (e.g. Skillnet) ☐

e) College-based programmes or similar (e.g. university, institutes of technology, enterprise training boards) ☐

f) Updating professional skills (e.g. Continuing Professional Development (CPD)) ☐

g) No formal training and development activities ☐

h) Professional external coaching or mentoring ☐

i) Other ☐

9. If this organisation had no formal training for the management team in the past three years, how important were the following factors in preventing training?

(Rank in order of important from 1 (most important) to 8 (least important))

a) Time constraints ☐

b) Financial resources to conduct training ☐

c) Lack of perceived relevance of training ☐

d) Local unavailability of training and development opportunities ☐

e) Insufficient information on training and development opportunities ☐

f) Fear that mangers will leave the organisation upon completion of training ☐

g) Lack of support from owner manager/CEO ☐

h) Other ☐

i) None of the above applicable – this organisation has undertaken management training over the past three years ☐

10. How would you rate the level of management skills in this organisation at this time in terms of ability to achieve its business goals?

(Rate on scale from 1 to 5)

☐ 1   ☐ 2   ☐ 3   ☐ 4   ☐ 5

Very Ineffective   Very Effective

11. Thinking about this organisation's business goals in the next year, what management and leadership skills are required to realise them?

(Tick all relevant)

a) Skills to lead the business ☐

b) Skills to manage people effectively ☐

c) Front line supervisory skills ☐

d) Skills to encourage creativity and innovation ☐

e) Skills to implement organizational change (e.g. project management skills) ☐

f) Skills in resource planning (e.g. in finance, in operations) ☐

g) Skills to formulate business goals and objectives ☐

h) Skills to manage external relationships and customers ☐

i) Other skills ☐

QUESTIONS ABOUT PERSONAL AND LEADER DEVELOPMENT:

12. Thinking about your own personal development, what skills do you need to develop?

(Rank in order of importance from 1 (most important) to 6 (least important))

a) Skills to be an effective leader of your organisation ☐

b) Skills to manage time effectively ☐

c) Skills to manage stress and competing priorities ☐

d) Skills to communicate effectively with internal and external stakeholders ☐

e) Planning and organising skills ☐

f) Other skiills ☐

13. Thinking about your attitudes to learning and development in this organisation, please indicate your agreement with the following statements.

(Rate each statement on a scale from 1 to 5)

a) Developing management and leadership skills is an important strategic priority for this business:

☐ 1   ☐ 2   ☐ 3   ☐ 4   ☐ 5

Strongly Disagree   Strongly Agree

b) Developing management and leadership skills is a necessity rather than a perk:

☐ 1   ☐ 2   ☐ 3   ☐ 4   ☐ 5

Strongly Disagree   Strongly Agree

c) I continually communicate positive messages about management and leadership development in my organisation:

☐ 1   ☐ 2   ☐ 3   ☐ 4   ☐ 5

Strongly Disagree   Strongly Agree

d) I set specific personal goals for management and leadership development each year:

☐ 1   ☐ 2   ☐ 3   ☐ 4   ☐ 5

Strongly Disagree   Strongly Agree

e) I have a need to develop my confidence to be an effective leader:

☐ 1   ☐ 2   ☐ 3   ☐ 4   ☐ 5

Strongly Disagree   Strongly Agree

f) I have a need to develop my skills and to think strategically:

☐ 1   ☐ 2   ☐ 3   ☐ 4   ☐ 5

Strongly Disagree   Strongly Agree

QUESTIONS ABOUT USE OF DATA AND DECISIONMAKING:

14. Consider all sources of data available to you and rate how frequently each source was used in your decision making over the past year.

(Select only one for each source)

a) Performance indicators from IT systems:

☐ Daily   ☐ Weekly ☐ Monthly ☐ Yearly   ☐ Never

b) Formal or informal feedback from managers:

☐ Daily   ☐ Weekly ☐ Monthly ☐ Yearly   ☐ Never

c) Formal or informal feedback from non managerial staff:

☐ Daily   ☐ Weekly ☐ Monthly ☐ Yearly   ☐ Never

d) Data from outside the firm (e.g. suppliers, customers, outside data providers):

☐ Daily   ☐ Weekly ☐ Monthly ☐ Yearly   ☐ Never

QUESTIONS ABOUT KNOWLEDGE SHARING AND KNOWLEDGE SEEKING PRACTICES:

15. To what extent are the following knowledge sharing and seeking activities engages in this organisation?

(Task is defined as a piece of work to be done or undertaken)

(Rate each statement on a scale from 1 to 5)

a) We seek task knowledge and experience from my work colleagues:

☐ 1   ☐ 2   ☐ 3   ☐ 4   ☐ 5

Very Rarely   Very Often

b) We seek expertise from my work colleagues:

☐ 1　　☐ 2　　☐ 3　　☐ 4　　☐ 5
Very Rarely　　　　　　　　　　Very Often

c) We seek task tips and know-how from colleagues:

☐ 1　　☐ 2　　☐ 3　　☐ 4　　☐ 5
Very Rarely　　　　　　　　　　Very Often

d) We seek expertise and knowledge from customers and suppliers:

☐ 1　　☐ 2　　☐ 3　　☐ 4　　☐ 5
Very Rarely　　　　　　　　　　Very Often

e) We seek specialist knowledge from customers and suppliers:

☐ 1　　☐ 2　　☐ 3　　☐ 4　　☐ 5
Very Rarely　　　　　　　　　　Very Often

f) We share task knowledge and experience with work colleagues:

☐ 1　　☐ 2　　☐ 3　　☐ 4　　☐ 5
Very Rarely　　　　　　　　　　Very Often

g) We share expertise with work colleagues within the organisation:

☐ 1　　☐ 2　　☐ 3　　☐ 4　　☐ 5
Very Rarely　　　　　　　　　　Very Often

h) We share task knowledge and tips with work colleagues:

☐ 1　　☐ 2　　☐ 3　　☐ 4　　☐ 5
Very Rarely　　　　　　　　　　Very Often

i) We share knowledge with customers and suppliers:

☐ 1　　☐ 2　　☐ 3　　☐ 4　　☐ 5
Very Rarely　　　　　　　　　　Very Often

QUESTIONS ABOUT INNOVATION AND INNOVATION OUTCOMES:

16. During the last three years has this organization achieved any of the following innovation outcomes?

(Tick either Yes or No for each one)

a) The market introduction of a technologically new product or service developed in total or in part by the firm: ☐ Yes | ☐ No

b) The market introduction of a technologically improved product or service developed in total or part by the firm: ☐ Yes | ☐ No

c) Extensions of existing products or service lines: ☐ Yes | ☐ No

d) Changes introduced to existing products or services that resulted in significant improvement: ☐ Yes | ☐ No

e) Development of new lines/ranges of products or services: ☐ Yes | ☐ No

f) Breakthrough innovations that disrupted the marketplace: ☐ Yes | ☐ No

g) A major technological advance in a product or service: ☐ Yes | ☐ No

h) The development of product or service that represented a major improvement in functioning compared to what previously existed: ☐ Yes | ☐ No

17. During the last three years has this organisation introduced any process innovations (e.g. new or significantly improved methods of manufacturing, distribution methods, accounting systems?

(Tick only one)

a) Yes ☐
b) No ☐
c) Don't know ☐

18. Has this organisation invested in Research and Development (R&D) over the last three years?

(Tick only one)

a) Yes ☐

b) No ☐

c) Don't know ☐

19. If this organisation has invested in R&D was it funded through?

(Tick only one)

a) Internal sources ☐

b) External sources ☐

c) Jointly through internal and external sources ☐

d) Did not invest in R&D ☐

QUESTIONS ABOUT STRATEGISING SKILLS AND PRACTICES:

20. Does this organisation have a clearly articulated business strategy?

(Tick only one)

a) Yes ☐

b) No ☐

21. Do you apply Project Management approaches in your work in this organisation?

(e.g. Agile methods, critical path method, formal project planning)

(Tick only one)

c) Yes ☐

d) No ☐

e) Don't know ☐

22. Which of the following approaches do you use to develop strategy in this organisation?

(Tick all appropriate)

a) Informally as you encounter day to day problems ☐

b) Interactions with customers and suppliers ☐

c) Interactions with employees ☐

d) Formal planning workshops ☐

e) The use of external consultants and faciliators ☐

QUESTIONS ABOUT OPERATIONAL PRACTICES:

23. In 2019, which one of the following comes close to the approach this organisation generally took when problems arose with its production or service provision process?

(E.g. – slow or late delivery of service, a piece of technology breaking down)

(Tick only one)

a) We resolved them but did not take further action ☐

b) We fixed the problem(s) and took action to ensure it/they did not happen again ☐

c) We fixed the problem(s) and took action to make sure that it/they did not happen again, and had a continuous improvement process to anticipate problems like these in advance ☐

d) No action was taken ☐

24. In 2019 how many key performance indicators were monitored in this organisation?

(E.g. – sales, cost, quality, customer satisfaction, waste)

(Tick only one)

a) 1-2 key performance indicators ☐

b) 3-9 key performance indicators ☐

c) 10 or more key performance indicators ☐

d) No key performance indicators ☐

25. In 2019 how frequently was progress against key performance indicators reviewed by managers and non-managers in this organisation?

(A manager is somebody who manages people and has employees reporting directly to them with whom they meet regularly. Non-managers are all other employees)

(Tick only one for each of Managers and Non Managers)

a) Annually ☐ Managers | ☐ Non-managers

b) Quarterly ☐ Managers | ☐ Non-managers

c) Monthly ☐ Managers | ☐ Non-managers

d) Weekly ☐ Managers | ☐ Non-managers

e) Daily ☐ Managers | ☐ Non-managers

f) Hourly or more ☐ Managers | ☐ Non-managers

g) Never ☐ Managers | ☐ Non-managers

26. In 2019, which one of the following best describes the main timeframes for achieving targets within this organisation?

(A Target is a goal or objective that has been set by an organisation to achieve and is often related to financial or sales performance. Examples of targets include: rates of on time delivery, value of sales)

(Tick only one)

a) Main timeframe was less than one year ☐

b) Main timeframe was more than one year ☐

c) Combination of timeframes of less than one year and more than one year ☐

d) No targets ☐

27. In 2019 how easy or difficult was it for this organisation to achieve its targets?

(Tick only one)

a) Possible to achieve without much effort ☐

b) Possible to achieve with some effort ☐

c) Possible to achieve normal amount of effort ☐

d) Possible to achieve with more than normal amount of effort ☐

e) Possible to achieve with extraordinary effort ☐

<u>QUESTIONS ABOUT MANAGING PEOPLE:</u>

28. In 2019 how were managers and non-managers usually promoted within this organisation?

(A manager is somebody who manages people and has employees reporting directly to them with whom they meet regularly. Non-managers are all other employees)

(Tick only one for each of Managers and Non Managers)

a) Promotions were based solely on performance and ability ☐ Managers | ☐ Non-managers

b) Promotions were based partly on performance and ability and partly on other factors such as length of service or restructuring ☐ Managers | ☐ Non-managers

c) Promotions were based mainly on factors other than performance and ability such as length of services or restructuring

☐ Managers | ☐ Non-managers

d) None were promoted

☐ Managers | ☐ Non-managers

29. In 2019 what best describes the timeframe within which an action was taken to address underperformance among managers and non-managers?

(A manager is somebody who manages people and has employees reporting directly to them with whom they meet regularly. Non-managers are all other employees)

(E.g. reassignment, demotion, dismissal, probation, training, informal action to address underperformance issues)

(Tick only one for each of Managers and Non Managers)

a) Within six months of identifying underperformance

☐ Managers | ☐ Non-managers

(continued next page)

b) After six months of identifying underperformance

☐ Managers | ☐ Non-managers

c) No formal action taken to address underperformance

☐ Managers | ☐ Non-managers

d) There was no underperformance

☐ Managers | ☐ Non-managers

30. In 2019, who would normally make decisions over the hiring of permanent full time employees?

(Tick only one)

a) Only the owner(s) and/or managing director (or equivalent) ☐

b) Mostly the owner(s) and/or managing director, but some input from other employees ☐

c) Jointly the owner and/or managing director and other employees ☐

d) Other employees ☐

e) Mandated by other organisations (e.g. regulatory bodies) ☐

f) Other ☐

31. Does this organisation actively engage with workplace excellence awards and accreditations?

(e.g. Great Place to Work, SFA Small Business Awards)

(Tick only one)

a) Yes ☐

b) No ☐

c) Don't know ☐

32. How would you rank your digital literacy compared to others?

(Digital literacy refers to an individual's ability to find, evaluate and compose clear information through writing and other mediums on various digital platforms)

(Tick only one)

a) Much better than others ☐

b) Slightly better than others ☐

c) About average compared to others ☐

d) Slightly worse than others

e) Much worse than others ☐

33. Which of the following electronic communication sources do you use for work?

(Tick all appropriate)

a) Email ☐

b) Facebook ☐

c) Twitter ☐

d) LinkedIn ☐

e) WhatsApp ☐

f) Video conferencing software (e.g. Google Meeting, Skype) ☐

g) Instagram ☐

h) Other ☐

34. When making decisions in this organisation please indicate the extent to which the following approaches are used?

(Rate each statement on a scale from 1 to 5)

a) We rely primarily on personal experience:

☐ 1   ☐ 2   ☐ 3   ☐ 4   ☐ 5

Very Rarely   Very Often

(continued next page)

b) We rely on the experience of technical specialists in the organisation:

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
Very Rarely   Very Often

c) We rely on advice from work colleagues on the management team:

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
Very Rarely   Very Often

d) We make use of intuition and gut feelings about situations:

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
Very Rarely   Very Often

e) We make use of information derived from external bodies such as professional bodies, suppliers and customers:

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
Very Rarely   Very Often

f) We make use of data, facts and insights derived from management information systems:

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
Very Rarely   Very Often

g) We make use of knowledge acquired through the use of advanced analytics generated within the organisation:

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
Very Rarely   Very Often

h) We make use of the most up to date technological advances in data generation and analysis:

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
Very Rarely   Very Often

QUESTIONS ABOUT FINANCIAL LITERACY:

35. How would you rate the level of financial literacy among SME owner/managers in Ireland?

(Tick only one)

a) Little knowledge ☐
b) Some knowledge ☐
c) Modest knowledge ☐
d) Good knowledge ☐
e) Expert knowledge ☐

36. How would you rate your own level of financial literacy?

(Tick only one)

a) Little knowledge ☐
b) Some knowledge ☐
c) Modest knowledge ☐
d) Good knowledge ☐
e) Expert knowledge ☐

37. When was the last time you read monthly accounts for this organisation?

(Tick only one)

e) This week ☐
f) This month ☐
g) Within the last 6 months ☐
h) Rarely ☐
i) Never ☐

38. How did you use the monthly accounts when you last used them?

(Tick only one)

a) Never use them ☐
b) Cannot recall ☐
c) To see how much money we had ☐
d) Because the bank needed information ☐

(continued next page)

☐

e)   Because the accountant needed information ☐

f)   To help make a business decision ☐

g)   Other ☐

39. What level of financial management training have you received?

(Tick only one – highest level attained)

a)   Not received any training ☐

b)   Received some short-course training (e.g. 1 day, 2 day, 3 day courses) ☐

c)   Received some intensive training (e.g. 4 day, 5 day, 2 week courses) ☐

d)   Took course as part of Leaving Certificate (or international equivalent) ☐

e)   Took finance module as part of degree course ☐

f)   Majored in finance for my degree ☐

g)   Fully qualified accountant ☐

CLOSING QUESTIONS:

40. Over The past 3 years have you participated in formal training or skills development from any of the following support agencies or bodies?

(Tick all appropriate)

a)   Enterprise Ireland (EI) ☐

b)   Local Enterprise Office (LEO) ☐

c)   Industrial Development Authority (IDA) ☐

d)   Skillnet ☐

e)   Small Firms Association (SFA) ☐

f)   The Irish SME Association (ISME) ☐

g)   Education and Training Boards (ETB) ☐

41. Over The past 3 years have you received funding from any of the following support agencies or bodies?

(Tick all appropriate)

a)   Enterprise Ireland (EI) ☐

b)   Local Enterprise Office (LEO) ☐

c)   Industrial Development Authority (IDA) ☐

d)   InterTrade Ireland ☐

42. From this organisation established in Ireland, what percentage of sales are derived from countries outside the island of Ireland?

(Tick only one)

a)   0% ☐

b)   1-20% ☐

c)   21-50% ☐

d)   >50% ☐

43. Does this organisation plan to internationalise its business or export in:

(Tick Yes, No, Don't know as appropriate)

a)   The next 12 months ☐ Yes | ☐ No

b)   The next 3 years ☐ Yes | ☐ No

c)   Don't know ☐

44. What are this organisations growth prospects for sales over:

(Tick only one for both a) and b))

a)   The next 12 months

☐ Positive | ☐ Negative | ☐ Stay the same

b)   The next 3 years

☐ Positive | ☐ Negative | ☐ Stay the same

45. What are this organisations growth prospects for employee numbers over:

(Tick only one for both a) and b))

a)   The next 12 months

☐ Positive | ☐ Negative | ☐ Stay the same

b)   The next 3 years

☐ Positive | ☐ Negative | ☐ Stay the same

46. Do you have a formal budget for development management and leadership in this organisation?

(Tick only one)

a)   Yes ☐

b)   No ☐

c)   Don't know ☐

This survey draws on questions and adapts partial scales from a range of national and international surveys as follows:

Question 14 source:

Management and Organizational Practices Survey (2015), United States Census Bureau. Available at: https://www2.census.gov/programs-surveys/mops/technical-documentation/questionnaires/ma-10002_15_final_3-2-16.pdf.

Question 16 source:

López-Cabrales, A. Pérez-Luño, R. Valle Cabrera (2009). Knowledge as a mediator between HRM practices and innovative activity. *Human Resource Management*, 48 (2009), pp. 785-1503. (Adapted scale from this source)

Question 17 source:

Longitudinal Small Business Survey (2018), Dept Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (UK). Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/720346/LSBS_2017_technical_report.pdf.

Questions 22 to 29 source:

Management and Organizational Practices Survey (2015), United States Census Bureau. Available at: https://www2.census.gov/programs-surveys/mops/technical-documentation/questionnaires/ma-10002_15_final_3-2-16.pdf and

management practices of manufacturing businesses in Great Britain (2016), Office for National Statistics. Available at: https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/labourproductivity/articles/experimentaldataonthemanagementpracticesofmanufacturingbusinessesingreatbritain/2016.

Question 34 source:

Garavan, T., McCarthy, A., Sheehan, M., Lai, Y., Saunders, M. N. K., Clarke, N., Carbery, R. and Shanahan, V. (2019). Measuring the organizational impact of training: The need for greater methodological rigor. Human Resource Development Quarterly, 30(3), 291-309. (partial scale adapted)

Questions 35 to 39 source:

Financial Literacy amongst Irish micro, small and medium-sized businesses Survey (2019) commissioned by Small Firms Association together with Technological University Dublin, Microfinance Ireland, the SBCI and Skillnet Ireland. Available at: file:///C:/Users/Deirdre/Downloads/SFA%20Financial%20Literacy%20Amongst%20Irish%20SME.pdf.