

digital literacy

a range of abilities to use digital devices, communication applications, and networks to access and manage information

Once a niche skillset, digital skills are now a workplace essential. Across sectors, at least 80% of managers and professionals need basic digital abilities. In larger workplaces, as many as 50% are required to have specialist digital skills. Digital technologies are now commonplace in daily life and becoming embedded into working culture. Having a workforce that knows how to use them efficiently is key to a company's success.

What is Digital Literacy? When considering the digital skills gap, this question is not asked often enough. Cornell University defines digital literacy as 'the ability to find, evaluate, utilize, share, and create content using information technologies and the Internet'. Digital skills are any skills related to being digitally literate. Anything from the ability to find out your high-score on Minesweeper to coding a website counts as a digital skill.

What Digital Skills do I need for the modern workplace? Knowing how to answer your emails, to access a company's files on Google Drive, or to use mobile devices are all digital skills that are critical in today's job market. Digital literacy is a language; the more digital skills you have, the better you can speak it. Here is a list of the top digital skills used in the workplace:

Internet Internet skills are skills that students may come out of school with, however older employees may not have developed the range of digital skills to be able to efficiently utilize the internet for research. A good understanding is required of how to identify fake websites and fake news, as well as utilizing a range of search techniques to obtain required information.

Cyber and data security Loss of data through a cyber-attack or non-compliance of data regulations can be hugely damaging and can mean the end of a business. It's critically important that employees have an understanding of how to minimize the risks of a cyber-attack, maintain the safeguarding of their employer's data and ensure data compliance.

Storage and management of data A good understanding of storage and management of data is imperative. Nowadays all employees are likely to be saving, moving and deleting files, and sharing files with colleagues and customers. *Loss of data, hacked data, unstructured storage of data, and a lack of understanding of file sharing and version control can be very costly for a business.* Having trained staff in all aspects of data storage and management is critical.

Communication and collaborative digital tools Many organizations now conduct all their internal, supplier and customer communication and collaboration online, including meetings, task and project management, customer relationship management and email. Staff should know why, when and how these tools are used so that they understand not just how to use the tools, but why they are used and in what context.

Presentation of data The presentation of data using applications such as Microsoft Office tends to be the digital skills that are developed at school, but not always in the context of the workplace. For example, Microsoft Word for writing a report or meeting minutes, Microsoft Excel for calculating expenditure or sales, Microsoft Powerpoint for delivery of a presentation.

Mobile devices Mobile devices in the workplace are common, particularly in businesses with mobile workers where mobile devices increase productivity and reduce costs. However, they do present security risks to business and are why many employers have adopted strict usage policies to reduce these risks. All employees using a mobile device, should know if they need to know how to configure secure access, anti-virus software, use of wifi, storage of company data and use in line with company policy.

Social media for business Using social media for business is different than personal use and understanding of why, when and how it's used is important.

Easy Ways to Improve Your Digital Literacy:

1. Read books - For an in-depth insight on a particular digital topic, look for a GOOD book.
2. Read blogs - Whatever you'd like to learn more about and whatever level you're already at, there'll be a blog out there for you.
3. Watch YouTube - Another way to learn about digital, digitally! Easy and entertaining.
4. Find a "teacher" (anyone better than you at a given skill). For fairness, you could teach them something you know as well!
5. Take a course - If you find it hard to dedicate time to self-learning, then committing to a course – either online or classroom-based – might be what you need.
6. Teach others what you've learnt - 'Pay it forward' by teaching what you've learnt to others.
7. Use your hobby - Take a hobby or something you're passionate about and start your own digital project around it.
8. Be social - You might not want to post on Facebook or tweet on Twitter but watch what others are doing that works and what doesn't.

