The Importance of Digital Literacy in the Workplace

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Global Perspective

72% of large companies, and 49% of SMEs are suffering a technology skills gap

The digital universe is expanding due to the increase in online interactions, and the growth of the internet of things. In this era of digital transformation, it is important for employees to be ready for significant change. Given the uncertainty of the pandemic, there is an enhanced spotlight on technology to keep the world functioning.

As technology becomes a key component of doing business, digital transformation requires thinking about how talent will be supported. Digital literacy is the ability of an employee to embrace technologically driven innovation by changing the way they work. As such, employers must be able to accept the suggestions from digital tools like artificial intelligence, virtual reality and machine learning.
Digital literacy is the ability to use digital technology to find, create and evaluate information, allowing technology to be used to collaborate with colleagues, thus strengthening teamwork. With digital literacy, employees are able to analyse data and reach goals with ease and effectiveness.

A key component of digital literacy is the ability to use critical thinking, which leads to effective communication. There are 3 key components of digital literacy; project collaboration, digital etiquette and digital security.
Involves teams working together, overcoming challenges, increasing efficiency and productivity.

**Digital Etiquette**
Refers to how employees respond to digital reviews, comments and to clients online through emails. It is ultimately a set of social behaviour requirements for the internet.

**Project Collaboration**
Involves teams working together, overcoming challenges, increasing efficiency and productivity.

**Digital Security**
Refers to training employees to protect data and information in order to avoid costly cyber attacks.
“Digital literacy is the ability to create, collaborate and communicate effectively and to understand how and when digital technologies can best be used to support those processes”
"Disrupt or be Disrupted"

With digital literacy skills, one can adapt quickly to situations like the pandemic, we future proofing themselves and staying ahead of the game. The workforce needs to be trained, or they risk getting left behind.

As such technological knowledge and digital literacy is required. Digital literacy must be the foundation of employee’s skill set. Thus far, 15% of time is spent on inefficient communication. With digital literacy, communication skills and collaboration in enhanced in the digital workplace.

2019 IBM Report
120 million workers will need retraining due to intelligent automation like digitalisation and artificial intelligence.

2019 Oracle & Future’s workplace Study
36% of respondents believed AI will allow them to develop new skills and 20% says that it will allow for better workplace relationships.
Why is Digital Literacy Important?

The lack of digital skills exposes companies to a wide range of risks and vulnerabilities, one of them being cyber attacks. The lack of digital literacy skills leads to digital blind spots in organisations. The inability to assess information leads to a risk of intrusion. Furthermore, the lack of digital skills compromises personal data and increases the cost of cyber attacks. In 2020, the average cost of a data breach was $3.86 million, with 95% of them caused by human error.
In any job, especially those to do with technology, information and data is constantly given, and thus must be used efficiently.

**Digital Literacy = Information Literacy**

As digital literacy is linked to information literacy – the ability to find and use information – it is a survival skill in this digital era. Lack of digital literacy skills combined with limitless information leads to uncertainty and misinformation.

**Digital Literacy = Productivity**

Furthermore, 21% of productivity is lost via finding and managing information. When digital literacy is both present and enhanced, information is not only used more effectively, and employees are able to identify patterns, themes and trends in information.
“Disruption is a choice it either happens to you or because of you” – Brian Solis
Steps to Enhancing Digital Literacy Skills

It is vital for organisations to nurture digital literacy and aid those who are digitally marginalised.
Digital literacy is expected from clients as no client wants to deal with business that appears to be behind the times. With digital transformation, 60% of jobs will be influenced by technology, with 8/10 mid-level jobs requiring basic digital literacy. Thus far, 88% of organisations have not taken any action to tackle the lack of digital skills of employees. The pandemic has forced companies to take a greater look at the gaps within. There is a clear digital divide between those who have digital literacy skills and those that don’t. As such it is vital for organisations to nurture digital literacy and aid those who are digitally marginalised.
Company Culture

Creating an environment that promotes and encourages continuous learning. Communication and dedicated learning helps digital literacy become an integral part of company culture. Company culture is only able to effectively change when it comes from the top. Senior leadership must be fully engaged in learning opportunities.

Buddy Systems

Creating a buddy system whereby someone with strong digital literacy skills help those with low skills is a way of creating a safe environment for learning. In doing so, a safe environment for learning is created.

Opportunities & Incentives

With training for digital literacy, employees are less likely to feel left behind. The greater the opportunities for growth and development, the greater the confidence and productivity of employees. Productivity is further enhanced when employees are incentivised by promotions and personal growth.
Sources

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