Research Capsules

A Study to Determine the Extent Computer Keyboarding Skills Are Needed by Business Professionals

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Abstract

The keyboard is currently the most widely used input device in communicating with computers. Even with voice input and other technological advances, the keyboard will continue to be a mainstay. Effective keyboard skills shorten input time and increase productivity, whether used by a business executive whose keyboard is a communication tool, or by an accountant who interacts with a computer for spreadsheet and database applications.

Keyboarding is different from hunt-and-peck typing. It is the act of placing information into a computer through the use of a typewriter-like keyboard, by placing fingers on designated keys on the middle, "home" row of the keyboard and moving the fingers as needed to depress other keys.

Business professionals cannot afford to waste time on inefficient keyboarding. If the computer is to be a tool for improving productivity, the user must be able to concentrate on the procedure for solving the problem at hand, rather than on mere operation of the equipment.

The goal of this study was to determine the extent to which computer keyboarding skills are needed by business professionals. A mail questionnaire comprising nine questions was used to gather data. The researcher surveyed people who graduated from Illinois State University's College of Business from 1981 through 1987, in the fields of accounting, business administration, finance and law, international business, management, and marketing. The research excluded graduates who had been trained for office-administration or business-education purposes.

One thousand questionnaires were mailed. Unemployed recipients were asked to return the questionnaires uncompleted. Participants returned 550 questionnaires, of which 527 were completed.

The author found that most business professionals use computers during a typical workday. But more than a third of the business professionals do not have keyboarding skills. All of the business professionals, even those who do not have keyboarding skills, said they consider such skills essential to increasing productivity while using a computer. Most of the companies in which the business professionals are employed do not offer keyboarding skills in their training programs. But most business professionals think keyboarding skills should be learned.

The information obtained from this study can be used by human resource development professionals when designing training programs and job descriptions for employees. It also provides valuable insight for business educators as they redesign their curricula and prepare students for the business world.

How To Lead Today's Technical Professional

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Abstract

Coaxing others to accept new work styles demands skills and approaches that most managers simply did not need in an earlier age. That appears to be particularly true in the area of technical leadership. But traditional management principles have had only minimal success when applied to technical professionals. The author believes that technical professionals are unique enough to warrant special training for the people who lead them.

The purpose of the study was to identify the skills that successful technical leaders employ. Research was conducted over a three-year period in 19 technologically oriented companies. More than 300 technical leaders were observed, interviewed, and surveyed, with the objective of analyzing and identifying strategies and behavior patterns that distinguish successful technical leaders.

The population included engineers, scientists, and data-processing professionals in computer hardware, software, pharmaceuticals, chemicals, manufacturing, electronics, aerospace, and consumer products.

Variations appeared in the patterns of effective technical leadership that emerged, but successful leadership strategies and tactics displayed more commonalities than differences. Successful technical leaders were better than others at

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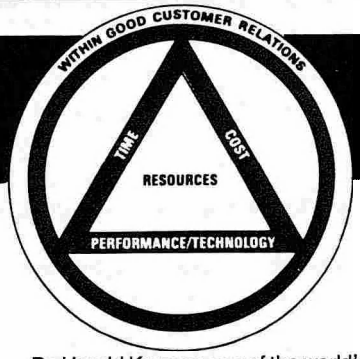
coaching for peak performance, running organizational interference, orchestrating professional development, expanding individual productivity through teamwork, and self-management.

It is evident that the high-tech age requires new levels of technical knowledge and skill. But this study makes it clear that this high-tech world also requires technical leaders adept at communicating, influencing, and motivating. Management must look within the organization to develop technical leaders who can address the special needs of professionals, so that innovation, teamwork, and sustained commitment can be realized.



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