

NEWS YOU CAN USE

Information Underload

By Eva Kaplan-Leiserson

We didn't expect that you'd get a handle on it quite so quickly. In February, *T+D's* cover story was on information overload. We told you that the amount of existing knowledge is doubling every five years and that the average office worker spends two hours a day processing email. We also provided some tips

for dealing with info overload: Karl Albrecht told you to get out your "crap detector," and Jeanne Allert offered a 12-step program for information junkies.

The advice must've worked. According to a recent study conducted by online business journal *The Next Big Thing*,

www.tnbt.com info overload, or digital dysfunction as the journal calls it, is on the decline. Might we (humbly) take just a little credit?

TNBT, the media arm of digital-strategy consultancy Marketspace, surveyed about 2,300 people and found that they're coping with the glut

Illustration by Joel Holland

Info overload is on the decline.

Might we take just a little credit?

of information (including electronic devices) better now than five years ago. Fifty-nine percent of respondents described their coping ability of five years ago as “better than most” or “excellent.” Present coping ability, however, was ranked “better than most” or “excellent” by a whopping 80 percent of those polled.

Respondents were also optimistic about the future: When asked to predict their coping ability five years from now, 81 percent chose “better than most” or “excellent.”

Contrary to researchers’ expectations, people who reported feeling the most comfortable with electronic information were also the ones who handle more of it. Josh Clark, publisher of *The Next Big Thing*, says, “The implication is that the more information you consume, the better you learn to use the tools necessary to manage it.”

Email is the distribution method of choice; 58 percent of respondents receive more than 20 messages a day.

Thus, overload seems to depend not on the amount of information actually received, but on a person’s ability to handle it. The study suggests that people who feel “info-whelmed” (20 percent, a still-significant minority) may not have mastered the information-processing techniques that cut down on overload.

The survey was completed entirely online, so the respondents represent a group of early adopters of technology. That helps us envision the trend for the mainstream population, who, researchers predict, will follow a similar pattern of adapting to and thriving in the digital world.

Download the free study (registration required):

📄 www.tnbt.com/digitaldysfunction

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E-Learning Terms of the Month

FAQs (frequently asked questions). A file established for public discussion groups containing questions and answers new users often ask.

Lurking

Reading the postings in a discussion forum but not contributing to the discussion.



News Flash

Do you think your training schedule is full? Can you fit in 35,000 more people? That’s how many volunteers need to be trained over just a few months for the 2002 Olympic Winter Games in Salt Lake City, Utah. Not quite up to the task? Don’t worry; AchieveGlobal is. The performance skills training and consulting firm was chosen by the Salt Lake Organizing Committee as the official staff and volunteer training supplier of the 2002 Olympic and Paralympic games. That marks the first time a training company has had such an official association with the Olympic games.

AchieveGlobal, which is based in Tampa but has 1,400 employees in more than 70 countries worldwide, consulted with the Salt Lake Organizing Committee to help it determine the training objectives and to select and train 33 trainers. AchieveGlobal also prepared and produced the training materials and assisted with the development of a customized video.

Ed Eynon, SLOC’s senior vice president of human resources and international relations, explains that AchieveGlobal was selected because the company’s leadership understood the importance of the skills and attitudes that Olympic volunteers must project. Eynon says AchieveGlobal knew that “how a volunteer dealt with a frustrated visitor or helped a confused spectator would be a moment of truth that would color that person’s experience of the Winter

Games, of Salt Lake City, or of the United States.”

Volunteers of all ages and backgrounds will work as ushers and parking lot attendants, collect tickets, offer directions and transportation, officiate events, work with the press, and provide medical services. The volunteers will be trained in three waves of about 10,000 people each.

In addition to the required job training, all volunteers will receive customer service training to help them provide a warm welcome to the thousands of visitors from around the world.

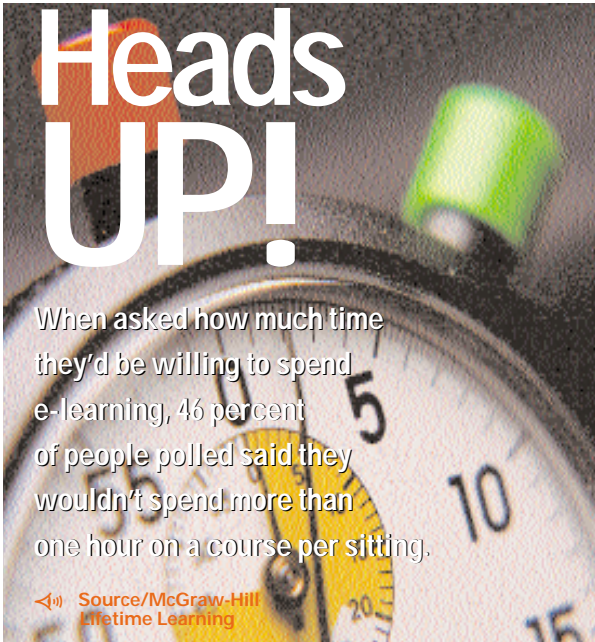
Eynon hopes that the impact of the volunteer workforce will

extend beyond the Olympic season. “We want to inspire and train our volunteers to do their best, and we hope that they take that inspiration and those new skills into their communities, to be better people for it,” he says.

The trainers have already been selected and, according to the Salt Lake Olympic Committee Website, www.slc2002.org there has been an overwhelming response to the request for volunteers. Paid temporary positions in a variety of areas are still available.

For more on training volunteers:

 The Junior League Wants You!
(T+D, June)



Heads UP!

When asked how much time they'd be willing to spend e-learning, 46 percent of people polled said they wouldn't spend more than one hour on a course per sitting.

Source/McGraw-Hill
Lifetime Learning