Common Sense Ideas
TO BOOST YOUR EMPLOYEE'S TECHNOLOGY COMPETENCY

by Rob Drover

Self-Driving Cars and Artificial Intelligence are around the corner, but do your employees even know how to write an Excel macro?

Every day we hear more and more stories focused on the development of artificial intelligence, augmented reality, autonomous vehicles, drones and advanced robotics. I, for one, am simply fascinated with this quantum leap in technology that faces us today. The current advances that we are witnessing make the creation and evolution of the internet look like child's play. We now have a technology company making cars, launching rockets and installing solar panels on your roof. That company has a larger market capitalization than General Motors, yet its revenue is 5% of GM. The reason for the huge market cap? The future of course. When we buy a share of Tesla, we are buying the future earnings potential.

Now that I have started this conversation high up in space, let us come back down to earth for a few minutes and discuss the reality.

FIVE ACTIONABLE STEPS TO IMPLEMENT TODAY TO IMPROVE YOUR EMPLOYEE'S TECHNICAL APTITUDE:

ENHANCE your professional development curriculum to include courses on the building blocks of today's technology.

ADD process improvement goals (using existing or available technology) to every employee's scorecard.

SEED change champions throughout the organization — Every team needs an agent of change. These employees will challenge the status quo and provide an example for everyone else. Provide them with the motivation and the approval to try new things.

FOCUS on data quality in all aspects of your business. Challenge your staff to reject and fix bad data wherever and whenever it occurs.

PLANT the technology seeds for the future. Expose your staff to the best of breed organizations and technologies. Show them what is possible, even if it is five years away for your organization.

Make it an imperative that your employees immediately raise their technology game. The ability for your staff to grasp even a fraction of the new technology requires a higher level understanding of the existing technology

While the most advanced organizations are designing drone systems to deliver packages, many organizations are still running their businesses using paper, spreadsheets, disconnected Information Technology systems and archaic budgeting processes that stifle innovation.
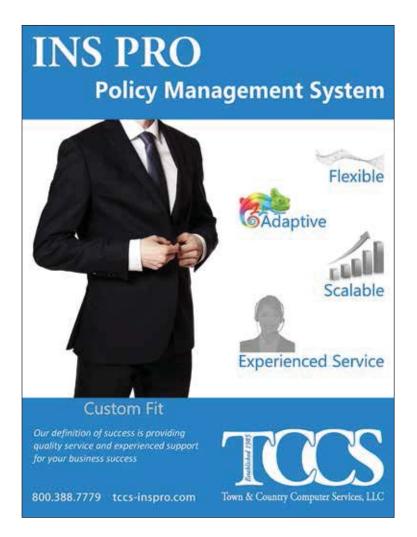
As a business owner or corporate executive, ask yourself how many of your employees understand what a database is? Maybe they can use a spreadsheet, but can they program a macro? How many use online reports every day but struggle with missing or inaccurate data? As a Business Process Improvement consultant, I see the dichotomy between the technical capabilities available to organizations and how they are implemented and used in the trenches where the work is performed. The gap is wide and it is growing!

It is time that Corporate America, and businesses of all types wake up to the reality that jobs as we know them are changing forever. The traditional training process for current employees often consists of a mandated number of training hours from a company supplied catalog. The available courses are often focused on incremental changes in government regulations and trends in "today's" marketplace. For many employees, the creation and attention to training goals are linked to the annual review process which is about 365 days too late to be effective.

So before we go out and sign-up our staff for a drone pilot license, let us focus on the fundamentals of the computer technology that we use every day. Make it an imperative that your employees immediately raise their technology game. The ability for your staff to grasp even a fraction of the new technology requires a higher level understanding of the existing technology.

It is difficult to understand where technology is headed if we are struggling to scratch the surface of what we are working with today.

Weaving these principles into your corporate culture will bring many benefits. Your employees will deliver an increase in productivity and develop a newfound technical competence that will pay HUGE dividends as we all strap on for the technology ride of our lives.

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