

Digital Literacy@ WORK

GET THE FACTS:

Did you know that almost 10 percent of Canadians do not have internet at home? And that almost half of Canadians with the lowest income do not have access to broadband? Or that in Indigenous communities only 3 out of 10 households have internet fast enough to participate in online life?

Digital literacy, and access, is increasingly becoming a social determinant of health as our world, education, and jobs, go digital—with a major impact on the workforce.

Right now 84% of jobs in Canada require some level of digital skill and even jobs that were traditionally hands on are moving towards increasing automation. And workers are being left behind.

A lack of digital skills and access to the required technology can cause barriers to employment such as difficulties with:

- Online applications
- Virtual interviews
- Completing hiring packages
- Online training
- Operating basic business equipment such as cash registers, food ordering systems, or inventory management programs
- Using scheduling apps or software
- Accessing health & safety information

Having basic digital skills is not the same as being digitally literate however, and lack of digital literacy is an even more invasive problem in the workforce.

Even those with tech skills can be illiterate because digital literacy goes beyond being able to use a smartphone. It means having the knowledge, skills and confidence to keep up with changes in technology as well as to find, use, create and evaluate information online.

Although older adults are the ones most likely to have low digital skills, lack of *digital literacy* can affect every demographic. It may surprise you to hear that 16-24 year olds are among the groups most likely to struggle with problem solving in technology rich environments, or that an international study found that only 1 in 5 students can use computers as tools for “information gathering and management.”



So, what does this mean for your business? Well, digitally literate employees can adapt to new technologies, navigate and trouble-shoot, understand internet safety and “netiquette”, and evaluate online information for validity.

And a lack of digital literacy can leave employees at risk of being left behind by new technologies, programs and processes as well as vulnerable to scams and fake news.

HOW DO YOU KNOW?

Watch for signs that applicants or employees:

- Do not follow through with applying online to the position, or with completing a digital hiring package
- Refuse to be cross-trained or accept additional responsibility if the new duties require use of tech
- Unable to use email, complete online forms, internet search
- Avoid using scheduling programs or apps or some features of those programs beyond basic viewing
- Avoid or refuse to look up inventory for customers
- Make repeated mistakes operating the cash or ordering system
- Tend to miss whole sections of information on a webpage, app or online training
- Do not have a cell phone, or uses ones for calls in/out only
- Has no understanding of cyber bullying, internet scams, social media do's/dont's, internet safety etc.
- Is unable to use ATM, online banking, book online appointments, complete EI reports
- Seems to struggle to use critical thinking skills to solve problems

MAKING IT WORK @ WORK

Consider starting by doing a digital survey of your operations. By walking through your hiring, onboarding and training processes, as well as day to day operations, can you determine where there may be unintentional barriers due to digitization? Are there aspects of your operations that assume applicants or employees have access to tech, can perform basic digital skills and/or are fully digitally literate?

How about your employees? Have you noticed any of the indicators listed above? Or would an anonymous survey of your staff help identify their digital skill levels without singling anyone out?

Once you have identified some of the barriers or lack of skill sets, would any of these strategies work for your business:

- Provide digital learner sessions for all employees regardless of how comfortable they may express they are
- Team up employees who lack digital skills with a more experienced employees for peer to peer instruction
- While training any digital skills allow for lots of questions and practice time – do not set short timeframe for learning that new skill
- If possible, allow for alternate training options that do not require computer use, or provide person support to work through an online learning system
- Create tip sheets or checklists for how to operate specific programs or digital functions that are necessary to the job
- If you use app-based scheduling software, consider providing a hard copy
- Reach out to the Y for support for you and your employees for site specific strategies

WE CAN HELP

The YMCA of Simcoe Muskoka is here to support both employers and employees. We can offer one on one customized support for:

- Basic Computers classes
- One on one support for specific programs or tasks that require computers
- And can facilitate access to technology



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