

Benefits of educating employees

[Business](#), [Employee](#)



Is it possible for a business to increase productivity by offering workplace computer literacy training to their employees? This paper asked the question: Are there benefits to employers that provide workplace education and training, above and beyond increased competency? The answer, as reported by research, is a resounding yes. Benefits such as increased self-confidence, increased adaptability, flexibility, the willingness to accept change and increased success in job-related training plus increased skills were reportedly derived from the workplace competency training offered.

Moreover these benefits translated into more productivity for the organization. **Benefits of Educating Employees Introduction** With the rapid changes taking place in our world economy, researching the question of workplace education benefits is significant. The question arose whether the workforce is sufficiently educated to compete in a global economy. The research pointed to competency as being imperative in today's global economy, which implies an acceptance of computer competency. Education and competency training is defined as more than being able to work, but to make decisions.

It is defined as being an important adjunct of technology. Education of skills, particularly computer competency and how they function gave the employees an overview of the system as a whole. It helped them understand how their machine worked and gave them an impetus to look for solutions themselves. This transcended into time saved and increased efficiency. The paper also indicated that companies which supported education in the

workforce benefited because their employees exhibited improved self-confidence which translated into increased productivity and performance.

More flexibility and a willingness to accept change were also deemed to be benefits received from competency and skills training. Next point showed how computer literacy training benefited companies by helping their employees understand the computerized equipment they were working on. This understanding translated into: increased self-confidence, increased adaptability and flexibility, increased production as well as the willingness to take other training and succeed at same. Education and training today does include competency and skills not only in offices but also on shop floors.

The benefits to providing workplace competency and skills training to employees are multifaceted. It may lessen the time it takes for people to learn. Return on investment is always of interest to businesses and organizations. The paper illustrated how employees, managers, supervisors as well as trainers observed behaviors from participants in the training, which reflected savings and profit for the organization. Some of the benefits are: saving time, increased production, increased flexibility, willingness to ask questions and changed attitudes.

The paper points out how important it is to prepare to evaluate the training at the beginning of a project in order to determine what the organization is really trying to achieve with this specific training. The research concludes by looking at the organizational implications of offering workplace competency and skills training. Education and Competency Training Benefits There has been a great deal of information published on competency training done in the workplace.

For example, in the 1997 report, *The Impact of Basic Skills Programs on Canadian Workplaces: Results of a National Study* for ABC CANADA Competency Foundation, the following information was reported. " The study consisted of in-depth phone interviews with 86 individuals from 53 workplaces that have had basic skills programs for at least one year. Sixty percent of the individuals interviewed were employer representatives and 40% were employee representatives. " (n. d. , *The Benefits of Improving Competency Skills in the Workplace*) The following are impacts to the workplace identified by the study:

- increases in the quality of work - 84%

- increased work effort - 73%
- more competent use of technology - 87%.

(ABC CANADA Competency Foundation, *The Benefits of Improving Competency Skills in the Workplace*, n. d.) Bloom and LaFleur's (1999) report on improving competency skills through workplace education programs, indicates that " Although the impact of basic skills training on profits varies according to the value and shortage of a given skill or group of skills within a particular business sector, employers overwhelmingly report increased profits and other bottom-line benefits when their employees gain basic skills that enable them to work more effectively.

" (p. 4) On page six of this report there is a list of eleven skills gained by employees who participated in workplace education programs as well as a list of twenty three organizational benefits gained by the employers. Willis (1994) reports that working with employees to expand workplace competency at the Peavey Electronics Corporation the following results were noted: " all employees had statistically significant increases in job

performance with the areas of attitude, getting the job done, volunteering, doing extra, and dependability showing the most improvement.

" (p. 25) U. S. Department of Labor (1992) states that: " A high-performance workplace requires workers who have a solid foundation in the basic competency and computational skills, the thinking skills, and in the personal qualities that make workers dedicated and trustworthy... (p. 5). High-performance workplaces also require competencies: the ability to manage resources, to work amicably and productively with others, to acquire and use information, to master complex systems, and to work with a variety of technologies. " (p. 6)

According to Dr. Harvey Krahn (1998) workplace competency programs target people with very low competency skills; however, if we look at competency as a continuum, businesses will recognize that it will benefit them to develop competency in people at all levels in the workplace. Bloom and LaFleur research (1999) has shown that " improving employee's skills creates employees who work smarter and better and who cope well with change in the workplace, improves union/management relations and increases output and profitability. " (p.

3) The above speak of all competencies being important in the workplace. What challenges arise for businesses if employees are not literate? Bloom, Campbell and Gagnon (2001) speak of competency as being a crucial role in corporate competitiveness and productivity. They talk of globalization threatening U. S. 's economy and of people being a prime competitive advantage in the new economy. They maintain that U. S. 's traditional advantage of having a skilled workforce is being threatened by

other countries gaining knowledge and improving the competency skills of their workers.

They list the benefits to employers who work to increase the competency skills of their employees as: improved production and income, cost savings, better communication and employee retention as well as improved health and safety. For employees some of the benefits listed are higher income, more job security, less unemployment, improved self-confidence, more opportunities for job training, better attitude. (GAM, 2005) Benefits Specific to Computer Based Training The importance of computer training in today's workplace is shown by the following statistics. More than one-half of all workers in U. S. now use a computer on the job.

Data from the General Social Survey, on which the article is based, show that an estimated 8.3 million workers, or 57% of the total employed, used a computer at their main job in 2000, compared with 33% in 1989 (Marshall, 2001, pp. 1-2). Ginsbury and Elmore (1998, p. 2) point out that computer training can save employees time to "compile and manage large data"; therefore, there is more time to spend on "creative, higher level work that depends on the quick availability and quick manipulation of information". They go on to say that much learning has been removed from the "objects of work whether a machine part, raw data or communication.

"They speak of workers who fear technology or have difficulty learning new or upgraded technology as being liable to end up at the "lower end of a professional hierarchy." Leckie, Leonard, Turcotte and Wallace (2001, p. 1) talk of work "evolving as the result of globalization, increased competition, the development of new technologies and other changes in the

businessenvironment. In the face of these trends, businesses are adopting new technologies and ways of organizing work to attain efficiency and productivity gains" (p. 9).

They speak of businesses being wiser to retain their skilled employees rather than hire new, technically trained employees. They suggest that computer training can promote employee movement within a firm. Then firms have the best of both worlds, an employee who is experienced with the organization and has upgraded skills. They talk of new technology requiring new skills to be able to adapt to changing markets. They point to " job rotation, flexible job design and work teams" (p. 11) as giving employers the flexibility to have employees that will be able to adapt to change.

They point to the effect of technological training for employees - if they become unemployed they have an easier time finding a job. They speak of computer training as being able to help employees deal with change as well as help them improve their performance and add to job satisfaction. McNeill (2000, p. 3) talks of computer competency at the executive level, as being more than " just using email and pulling files off the Web and so forth. We live in an increasingly high-tech world and overnight redundancies have become the norm. Companies that can't assess these changes can easily get left behind.

" He goes on to speak of downsizing and how computer competency is not listed as a reason to downsize; however, firms who have a choice of someone who is computer literate and someone of comparable skills that is not, will most likely choose to keep the person with computer skills. Computer based training attracts many and varied employees in the

workplace. Most studies and papers state that computer training is beneficial to employees because it allows them the confidentiality to study what they need without others knowing. For instance there are many computer programs written which teach different skills.

Also the training can be self-paced so there is no pressure to keep up. A bonus is if there are computer labs at work, employees can study when there is a suitable time in their schedule, such as lunch breaks, coffee breaks and before or after work. (Rae, O'Driscoll, 2004)I believethat training and education, especially computer is and will continue to be, very important to both employers and employees. As the information society develops, information and the know-how based on it will become more and more decisive as factors of production.

Networking based on the application of information and communications technology, especially telecommunications, is a major trend. As well as creating new ways of communicating and working, information technology has made possible new methods of producing and distributing products and services (UNESCO, 2002, section 2. 1). Technological competency—meaning computer skills and the ability to use computers and other technology to improve learning, productivity and performance—has become as fundamental to a person's ability to navigate through society as traditional skills like reading, writing and arithmetic ... (Selfe, 1998, p. 1).