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Will IT Skills make People Skills Extinct?

By Adam Ripley

The last two decades have seen IT become an integral part of the workplace. The internet explosion has given us access to more information than previous generations had access to in entire lifetimes. The internet also gave birth to what is now the most used means of communication in the modern workplace – email. In a mere twenty or so years, email has gone from being a computer company exclusive to communication tool no modern corporation would be without. As a result, the way we communicate with co-workers, our boss and employees has changed dramatically.

Email traffic has taken over from the traditional phone conversation and instant messaging has also grown significantly. As a result face-to-face interaction has decreased significantly. But this is by no means the death of people skills in the workplace.

IT simply provides a medium for people to communicate; so the increase in IT in the workplace has not killed people skills—it has simply changed the way people interact.

People have had to become a lot more computer savvy to survive in the workplace. Traditional forms of business communication such as letter writing and phone conversations have been replaced with more net centric communication such as email and instant messaging. However the history and common understandings regarding how letters and phone conversations should be used do not exist for new communication styles, so business blunders, misunderstandings and misinterpretations are frequent.

These changes have introduced a new set of interpersonal skills and etiquette that needs to be enforced in the workplace. Deeming what is appropriate and inappropriate for email and instant messaging is a struggle for organisations.

An example of this is the number of workplaces that have used instant messaging inappropriately to announce redundancies. GMB members employed by the AA reported back to the union that selected patrol staff received two text messages on their mobile phones inviting them to accept £12,000 to leave the employment of the AA. This was followed up by a second message inviting those targeted with the first message to give the manager a ring. This is reminiscent of the 2,500 workers at personal injury

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claims firm The Accident Group who were made redundant via text message, in 2003.

We are only just now beginning to see the effects these technologies are having on our workplace and the roles we play within them. Take email as an example.

Email is probably the most convenient form of written communication. However, overuse and spam has skewed the effectiveness of email. Hampered by overflowing inboxes, employees often spend too long trying to manage email overload and often miss important messages. This can in turn affect productivity. However this situation highlights the fact that verbal communication of email policies and good management procedures is the best way of controlling email overload– an example of where technology needs people skills.

What is clear from these examples of instant messaging and email communication is that we are still learning how we should make the best of what technology has to offer.

The truth is that technology will never replace face-to-face interaction. People respond to human communication and important issues can't be dealt with via email, they must be done face-to-face. With between 55–70 percent of communication being non-verbal (ie through tone of voice and body language) communicating difficult messages through email or instant messaging is almost impossible.

However the main reason why people skills will never be replaced with IT is that engaging people is the most fundamental part of business, and this needs to be done on an emotional, enthusiastic and passionate level which can only be conveyed via face-to-face interaction.

IT is a perfect example of this. For years techies were considered nerdy with their traditional stereotype of thick black-rimmed glasses, high waisted pants and `Rain man' type conversational skills. However, as technology has become more pervasive and more user friendly the need for technicians who understand the detail has reduced whilst the need for business focused people with a broad understanding of how to exploit technology has increased. Because of this IT professionals are moving away from the geek image and using their interpersonal skills to connect with others in the workplace.

If IT professionals are embracing people skills, it is a sign that IT is not likely to make people skills extinct, if anything it has raised people's awareness of just how important communication and human interaction in the workplace really is.

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3 Fundamental Skills Essential To Master Your Business

By Eric Fields

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When you begin to start building your business there are certain things that you must master. Those 3 things are 1. Internal Communication– how you respond to yourself 2. People skills– how you respond to other people 3. Mastering technical skills

1. Internal Communication– How do you respond to yourself? Do you always put yourself down? How do you handle problems? Running a successful business all starts within you. You are what matters not anyone else. If you quit when it gets tough it is your choice. If you choose to keep on going till you succeed it is also your choice. The one thing you control is yourself. You control what choices you make. You control how you respond to given situations. The first skill to master is yourself.

2. People Skills– You must learn how to relay your message to your customers. People with poor communication skills are normally broke. Look around the richest people are the best communicators. Your income will be directly related to how well you are able to communicate your message. Order courses, go to seminars and read books on how to communicate more effectively. Communication is key.

3. Mastering Your Technical Skills– This is the easiest of the three. Whatever technical skills you need to use, you can learn in a how to book or from an advisor.

Once you have these 3 skills mastered there is no reason why you should not be successful. Many common mistakes can be avoided by mastering these 3 skills. Remember first work on yourself, you are in control. You control your life. Next work on how you relate to people. Getting your message out effectively is vital. And then learn the technical skills you need to run your business. After you have mastered all 3 you will be in a much better position to achieve your goals.

Eric Fields has been involved in business for over 20 years. He has currently been consulting online companies on ways to drive more quality traffic to their websites. To sign up for a free newsletter on how to create your own quality leads. Go to

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