

DIGITAL SKILLS AND RESEARCH METHODS

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Executive Summary

The following report focuses on the use of contemporary technological tools in improving workplace employability. It also identifies relevant theories and explains how they can be incorporated in an organisational context of resource management. Furthermore, it looks at the critical role that social media plays in modern day marketing campaigns and how it enables organisations to reach out to a wide range of potential customers. Finally, it evaluates the various advantages and disadvantages of such platforms and assesses how they impact personal and professional security in the 21st century context.

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Introduction

Digital skills in an organisational context are absolutely critical in the modern day business scenario that is driven by technology to a large extent. It increases business productivity through integrated training modules for employees, can help companies develop a competitive edge in the market and can also provide new ways of recruitment and working. It also provides organisations with certain tools to analyse employee performance and bring about changes in operational processes. The following report focuses on the role of digital skills in the promotion of business ventures and analyses how social media platforms can be effectively used to improve customer relationships as well as develop new methods of recruitment, marketing and promotion.

Use of technology to improve workplace efficiency

Different modes of technology are used in different capacities at workplaces. Right from the use of internet to simple email and chat services to cloud storage of data, all operational processes involve the use of technology in some way, shape or form. This part of the report takes a look at the importance of tablets and smart phones as well as web conferencing tools in conducting everyday business activities.

Tablets and Smart phones

Specific use in the workplace

Smart phones and tablets are changing the way business is done in almost every industry. Its everyday applications are summarised as follows:

- **Better communication amongst various stakeholders**

The use of smart phones and tablets has facilitated remote access to work for all levels of employees. They can work from home or from any location that they might be in. Additionally, it has increased the level of communication between the employees, senior management, supply side as well as the end consumer (Cabello-Hutt *et al.* 2017). If a specific change has to be implemented in any daily task, information regarding the same can be passed on to everyone with just the click of a button. Furthermore, many work related software integrate easily with such devices making the entire work experience more seamless and convenient.

- **Better efficiency in essential processes**

Important details like payment information, employee data and other such important data that is confidential and requires proper storage can be easily stored on such devices. This not only makes the entire process of data documentation more seamless, but also relieves hours of manual data input (Sekaran and Bougie, 2016). Therefore, when it comes to data storage and protection, smart phones and tablets save organisations a lot of time and money. Furthermore, the use of internet is also very convenient through phones and tablets and enables employees to quickly procure information regarding any office matter. For instance, employees on vacation can still contribute to operational processes in case some critical work comes up through remote access passwords which help significantly in meeting deadlines.

- **Reduced overhead and administrative costs**

Portable devices like mobiles and tablets also ensure that a lot of miscellaneous expenses can be avoided. They eliminate the need for lots of paperwork and consequently save businesses money on paper and toner. Similarly, such devices also eliminate lots of administrative costs that enable office employees to focus on more important work.

- **Greater customer satisfaction**

As observed by van Laar *et al.* (2017), customer satisfaction is the primary target for any business. Such devices facilitate quick redressal of grievances, intimation for various tasks and better customer service through improved communication between the two parties. Services like instant invoicing and digital signature of customers also leave a lasting impression on customers.

Providers or devices

The two biggest players in the smart phone and tablet market are Apple and Samsung. Each of these companies provides customised services through their diverse range of products. Apple focuses on providing customers with a closed ecosystem experience that is very secure and helps users in toggling between different devices (Siadaty *et al.* 2016). These features make its products the industry leaders in their category and as such are perfect for office work. Samsung on the other hand focuses more on a eye catching design and access to different kinds of apps and features that provide comprehensive assistance in office as well as leisure work.

Web-based email

Specific use in the workplace

Web based email services have had a major impact on office work since the late 90s. Their main benefits have are as follows:

- **Timelines**

Email services provide a convenient method of engaging in two-way interactions that is time independent. Emails get delivered in seconds and employees can access them at a later time of their convenience which makes it the most used messaging platform in workplaces.

- **Broad work teams**

According to Charlier et al. (2016), emails enable companies to have a diverse workforce that is spread out over large territorial areas as all the information is congregated in a central database through cloud storage. This makes it easier for employees in various time zones and different levels of accessibility to the internet to access files and data whenever they need to.

- **Ease of use and cheap**

Emails are the cheapest methods for message transference and can be used by people of all ages due to their simple interface (Akhtar and Moore, 2016). Furthermore, it automatically creates entries in the address book and responds to incoming mails automatically through predefined responses if needed.

- **Data storage**

Cloud storage is the usual mode of data storage that most email interfaces use. It is effortless, saves time and facilitates quick and easy access to files and ensures employees can store enormous amounts of data securely.

Providers or devices

The two major providers of emailing services are Google and Microsoft. The Google platform is known as Gmail and enables cloud storage of up to 15 GB of data. It has quick access features and timely login alerts making it the safest web mailing platform in the world (Rana *et al.* 2016). The corresponding service provided by Microsoft is known as Outlook, which has a 5 GB limit and has advanced capabilities like OneNote Publisher, SharePoint, OneDrive and so on which assist organisations' documentation, presentation and data storage needs respectively.

Effect of each on employability

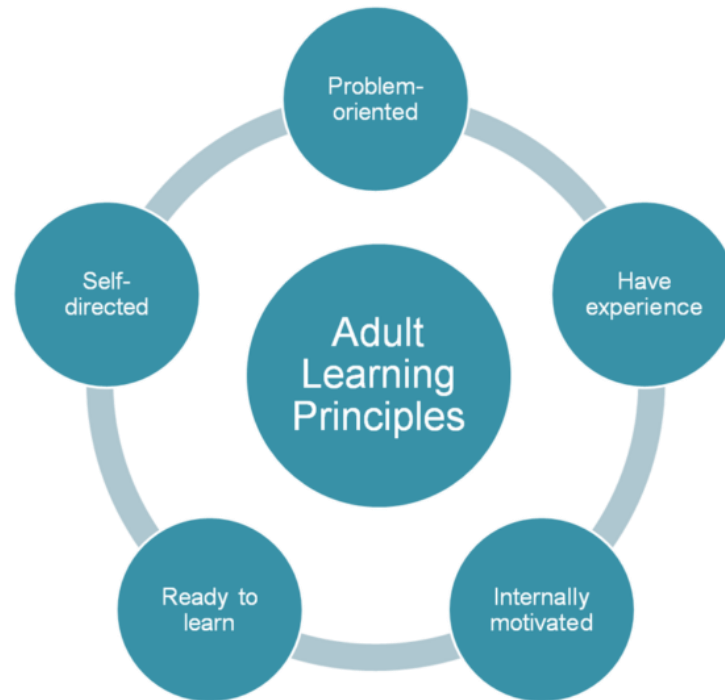


Figure 1: Adult Learning Theory

(Source: Influenced from Reiser, 2017)

The impact of smart phones, tablets and web based email services on employability can be analysed using the adult learning theory. Firstly, such technological tools help in better recruitment through more comprehensive screening processes. They also play a key part in improving existing employees' level of motivation to learn new techniques and modern methodologies that can help them to increase their productivity. Analysing key problems at work therefore becomes easier and continuous engagement with the same makes them more attuned to the specific demands of certain tasks (Reiser, 2017). Lastly, easy transmission of data and pertinent information regarding office work makes it easy for employees to analyse a large stream of data and approach work sequentially so that no critical tasks are missed.

Application of technology in the workplace

Appropriate platform for job search

LinkedIn can be considered as the most appropriate platform for job search, which successfully connects employers to suitable, potential and skilled candidates. LinkedIn has a basic free

version, which allows the users to create their professional profiles highlighting their skills and attributes. As commented by Nikolaou (2014), the users of LinkedIn can ask for recommendations from their peers and seniors in order to increase their chances of getting hired. The paid services of LinkedIn include features such as LinkedIn Talent Advantage, which is effective in building network with co-workers, entrepreneurs and employers.

Applications of each in the workplace

Facebook

For a working professional, Facebook is effective in creating a positive image for the organisation one is working for. As suggested by Ali-Hassan *et al.* (2015), Facebook is also beneficial for developing affiliated groups of professionals, which will impact in continuous personal development of the employees. In addition, Facebook is also efficient in the process of recruitment for the workplace one is employed under. Facebook and LinkedIn have similar features for creating professional groups.

Please see the appendix-1 for Facebook Link

LinkedIn

LinkedIn is the most important social media platform to be used in a workplace for conducting recruitment and developing the self. As suggested by Nikolaou (2014), LinkedIn Premium allows a user to get notified when a specific employer or client has viewed their profiles. Thus, LinkedIn is influential to establish successful business relationship and garner potential clients. The professional blogs, shared in the portal will also be useful in learning new skills and gathering knowledge of the current market trends.

Please see the appendix-2 for LinkedIn Link

Twitter

Twitter helps in notifying employees of the recent developments in the sector by using specific hash tags. Moreover, it will also be beneficial for following successful entrepreneurs to learn from their opinions on business trends. Twitter and LinkedIn both are similar in their features regarding following professionals.

Please see the appendix-3 for Twitter Link

Advantages and disadvantages of each

Advantages

Social media platforms such as LinkedIn, Twitter and Facebook have specific advantages regarding ensuring employability and successful execution of workplace responsibilities. As commented by Ali-Hassan *et al.* (2015), these platforms are instrumental in creating collaborative, multi-disciplinary teams. By using these platforms, the employees can develop specific groups for establishing coordination among the team members. Valuable information can be shared in these groups along with educative blogs. Moreover, the platforms can be used for connecting with like-minded individuals for ensuring self-development. In addition, these platforms also contribute to enhance brand recognition of the employers. The most important benefit of these platforms is that these are cost effective and less time consuming.

Disadvantages

Even if the social media platforms are beneficial for working professionals, there are specific disadvantages of these platforms as well. As suggested by Fuchs (2017), these platforms store personal data of the users and often use that data for personal commercial gains. This phenomenon poses a threat of major data breach for an individual as well as an organisation. Moreover, the social media profiles create an illusion of public appearance and acceptability through their excessive emphasis on likes shares and retweets. Thus, individuals have often been witnessed to obsess over their public persona, which results in alienation from the real world and subsequent depression.

Implications on personal and professional security

The increasing use of technology in the form of social media inside workplaces has both a positive and negative implication on personal and professional security. The positive impact is mainly in the coherent storage of data and easy access to it from any place in the world. These platforms also facilitate easy transference of information and also allow people from geographically distant places to connect over common themes of discussion. However, there exists the constant threat of hacking and data theft which may leak private and confidential data in the public domain (Silva, 2015). Additionally, revealing personal information or work related information on such platforms may result in fraudulent activities and disciplinary actions from employers respectively.

Networks of preference

The social media networks of my personal preference in terms of professional activities are LinkedIn and Facebook. LinkedIn provides a comprehensive database of potential candidates as well as informative blogs and articles regarding what existing organisations are looking for in candidates as well as how they can better their operational activities using their human capital (Avci and O'Dwyer, 2016). Facebook is also similarly useful as it gives a more personal look at organisations' internal activities and also provides a platform where employees and aspirants can speak about what keeps them motivated at their workplace and what their long term aspirations are respectively.

Conclusion

The role of digital skills at the workplace cannot be understated in the 21st century business climate. Technology makes everything more seamless and smooth and also enables employees learn new skills in a substantially less time. Use of gadgets and internet services has similarly made the business community a smaller place with more interaction between organisations and the end consumer through consistent dialogue in the form of feedback and consequent application of prescribed changes. Social media platforms have also made it easier for businesses to engage its customers as well as recruit potential talents. All in all, the increased use of technology has ensured that organisations can scale their businesses more easily while it has also empowered customers to make their voices heard in a way that impacts the profitability of businesses and hence makes them take notice of what the customer demands are.

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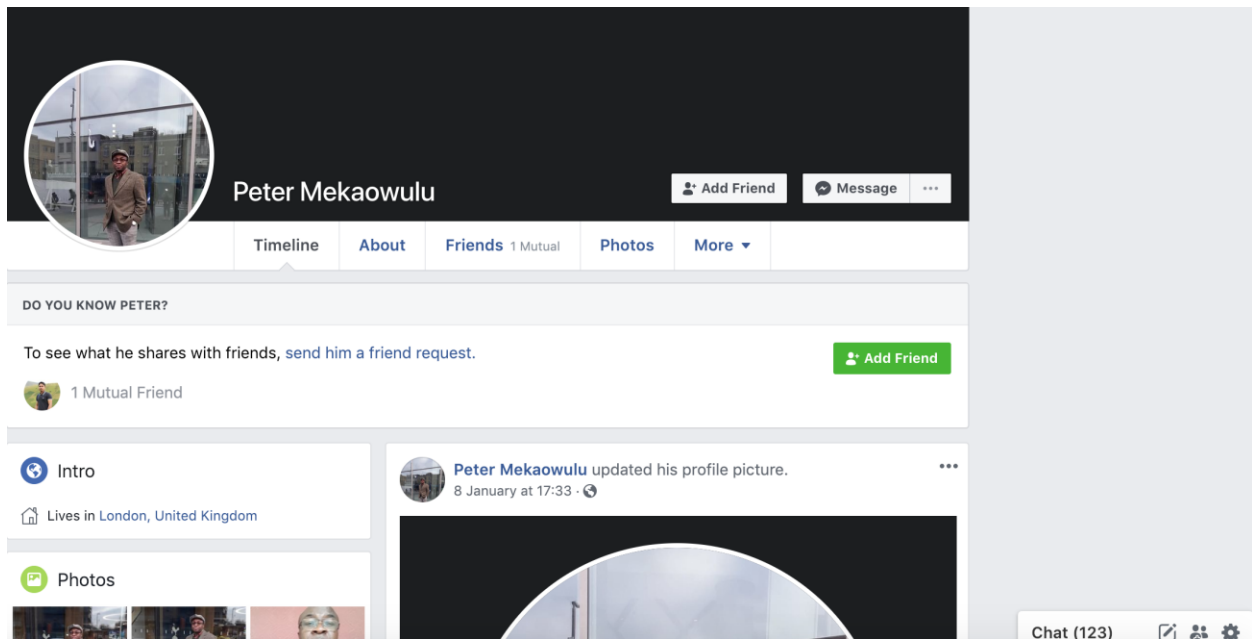
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Appendix 1

<https://www.facebook.com/peter.mekaowulu>



Appendix: 2

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/peter-mekaowulu-75b141123/>

LinkedIn profile page for Peter Mekaowulu. The header shows the LinkedIn logo, a search bar, and navigation links: Home, My Network (11), Jobs, Messaging, Notifications (6), Me, and Work. A banner ad for "Safeguard Pest Control" is displayed. The profile section shows a placeholder for a profile picture, the name "Peter Mekaowulu", location "United Kingdom", and a "Connect" button. A "See contact info" link is also visible. The right sidebar features promoted content: "Effective SEO from £129", "Safeguard Pest Control", "A World Of 1,000 CEO Jobs", "eCornell Attn: Digital Marketers", and "A World Of 1,000 CEO Jobs".

Appendix 3:

<https://twitter.com/PMekaowulu>

Twitter profile page for Peter Mekaowulu (@PMekaowulu). The header shows a blue background with a placeholder for a profile picture. The profile section shows the name "Peter Mekaowulu", handle "@PMekaowulu", and bio "@PMekaowulu hasn't Tweeted". A "Follow" button is visible. The right sidebar shows "Who to follow" recommendations: Sahid Hannan (@sahid_ha...), A.I.Khan (@tasariffit), and juan (@juan78338597).