

Skills for the Workplace

Module Assignment Submission

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What has been the impact of 21st Century Technologies on the modern workplace?

The internet is the most important technological feature in the workplace (Heng, 2004), this allows the use of computers and software in place of more draconian measures such as typewriters and paper. As the internet has evolved to include a wireless connection this has increased the ability to work in a variety of settings, employees are no longer tied to the office, having to plug an internet cable into their computer. The option to work from home has provided much-needed flexibility for many workers.

Cloud storage is another important and necessary feature, without it you would need to log into a specific network to access shared files. Detailed online instructions on how to do this were provided, but even then, according to PC World (2011), this could often be challenging for those without good IT knowledge.

The introduction of cloud storage such as OneDrive (Microsoft, 2007) or Dropbox (2008) has overcome these restrictions and made files easily accessible and shareable. This type of file management has adapted to suit the ever-changing needs for a range of company sizes from start-ups to large corporations, regardless of the size security is a top priority (Brame D, 2019) There are many options available to ensure data is kept safe, Options include anti-virus software and password managers. Many companies now use a cloud storage system as a backup location for files.

As we become more fluid in our workplace many companies may even supply employees with a company mobile phone, allowing them to be contactable regardless of where they are working. Many software companies have adapted their software to not only be accessible via the internet on a PC but have created mobile applications that connect seamlessly to the online version creating very little downtime.

Now that many people can work remotely you may not need to live in the same locality as the office. This provides opportunities to a larger workforce who may face restrictions such as not being able to drive, or perhaps living some distance from the office. In a blog by Airtasker (2019a) their research suggests “long commutes caused 1 in 4 respondents to quit a job at some point” it also suggests:

“Compared to office employees, remote workers saved an annual average of \$4,523 on fuel alone. This also equated to an extra 408 hours, or 17 days, of free time each year for not having to take the time to get from their home to an office”



(Airtasker Blog, 2019b)

According to a survey from the office of national statistics (ONS, 2020) in April 2020, a study showed that 46.6% of employed people did some work from home. When this was further analysed it was found that of this 46.6% that 86% worked from home as a direct impact of the current pandemic caused by Coronavirus (Data.gov.uk, 2021)

The office environment has changed greatly in the 21st Century, the above findings along with the ability to work remotely and to collaborate as a team without being physically present could pose the question, “do we need the traditional office anymore?” (Grant, 2011)

In an article by Czycholl-Hoch (2020) it is suggested that certain companies will still need office space, such as estate agents, the office itself is likely to adapt allowing staff to split their working week between the main office and home.

Evaluate the appropriate use of modern technologies and social media in the workplace generally

The most basic use of modern technology enables a business to be more productive, efficient and competitive (Emma, 2019). By using simple, widely available software, one business could quickly complete all accounting tasks. Another could automate tedious lengthy tasks that would otherwise take an employee a considerable amount of time.

Since technology was first introduced into the workplace it has been met with mixed emotions. From a business perspective, the progression of technology has allowed companies to micromanage without the appearance of doing so. For example, where an

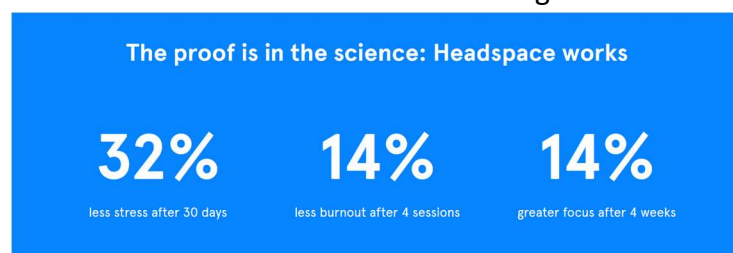
employee would have manually 'punched in' on their timecard, this may have evolved to facial recognition or fingerprint scanning (Quick Clocks, 2020) to prevent "buddy punching" (Efron, 2017) this is where an employee 'clocks in' on behalf of their co-worker, perhaps they are running late. By doing this management are not aware of the lateness and the absent employee will not lose any wages.

As a company implements more technology, the productivity of the workforce rises. However, this productivity, coupled with flexible or remote working, enables individuals to 'always be available'. Rather than this being viewed as a negative, this is more commonly viewed as a 'cultural norm' and associated with high social status. Many technological designs are either directly or indirectly created to be compulsive and habit forming and can lead to addiction. (Joyce *et al.* 2018)

One such way is suggested in an article by Arden-Close *et al.* (2018) social media platforms such as Instagram (2010) and Twitter (2006) encourage active participation. This is achieved by enabling the platform to function in real-time, by adding friends and other contacts, you are compelled to check if your message has been received and responded to. This is known as a 'compulsive checker'. Most platforms are designed to constantly refresh and provide the most up to date information/news by including the 'pull to refresh' mechanism. This feature mimics the action of pulling a lever on a slot machine and the anticipation and excitement felt whilst waiting.

As technology advances and more employees are required to work from home, some companies encourage the use of apps and social media platforms to communicate with other remote workers. However, they need to be aware of the potential burnout associated with the overuse of technology and social media. By working from home, employees can feel that they should work more hours, overtime and weekends. "1 in 3 workers believe their employer values productivity more than safety" (Stewart, 2018)

There are many actions that a company can take to look after an employee's digital wellbeing. One example is Headspace. (2010). "Headspace has one mission: to improve the health and happiness of the world." (Headspace, 2021a). The company have made meditation available to everyone online via a web browser or a mobile phone app. They provide guided meditations and promote mindfulness which can lead to lower stress levels. Their website provides statistics indicating that a science-backed approach to mindfulness and meditation will "lead to healthier organizations from the inside out".



(Headspace, 2021b)

Explore the use of modern technologies and social media in own workplace

The company I recently worked for is small and still in its infancy, as such they utilise as much free or low-cost software as possible.

Microsoft Office 365 (2011) is used for emailing and letters, Microsoft Teams (2017) for collaborative projects. One key feature of Teams, providing the document has been saved into a folder on Teams, is the ability to work on the same document at the same time. Especially helpful when we were compiling information to tender for work.

Another important software used is Priceajob (2016), the software is accessed via an internet browser and enables the creation and management of projects, its key features are estimating, creating a bill of materials and converting these documents into a spreadsheet or PDF (Adobe, 2020) to enable it to be shared with a client.

Glennigans (2021) is a subscription-based product accessed via an internet browser, it provides access to all current and upcoming construction projects, it has parameters to search by allowing a customised search criterion. Once a potential project has been identified and with an active subscription, it provides essential contact information of the project team, such as the principal designer. Glennigans enables quick and efficient use of time by providing this information which is normally difficult to obtain. The alternative would be to spend several hours calling local companies, such as housing associations or house builders to see if they have any current projects requiring our services, the success rate would be extremely low even if you managed to get through to the right person to start with.

Most of the team are tradesmen and as such are based on-site, the easiest way to communicate was found to be WhatsApp (2009). Phone calls were limited due to the amount of noise within a construction site. We also found that a WhatsApp message was quicker, they didn't need to find somewhere quiet and general conversation is limited as a message can be very specific needing a short and specific answer.

Trello (2011) was used to capture and store clients and subcontractors personal and contact information, to communicate the project stages, requirements and updates with all the team, on and off-site, one place to store all expense receipts, delivery notes project photographs.

To generate more customers the company launched a social media campaign, adding videos about the company to Facebook (2004) and Instagram (2010). The videos were created by a professional media company and were created to promote the company giving information about the staff to make us more personable.

We found after a few months that although a lot of people had seen our videos, they still did not engage with us directly. Based on the leads that we did have it was decided that social media appeared to a better platform for either well-known companies or for sole traders where people recommend a local person. We decided after three months to cancel the campaign and focus our efforts on a government tendering process sell2wales (Gov.wales, 2021) this is specifically aimed at small to medium businesses.

How can Personal branding help YOU?

Personal branding provides an insight into who you are, tells your story and promotes your beliefs and ethics. It can benefit you personally, academically, or professionally.

The purpose of self-promotion will dictate the approach. For instance, should you be creating a personal brand for Facebook (2021a) which you intend to share with your close friends and family, the style of branding may be more relaxed and casual. However, this platform allows you to create multiple accounts, enabling you to create a separate more professional page, should you want to use if for the promotion of your business.

Alternatively, if the intention is to showcase your academic skills and industry experience, you may want to use a different platform such as LinkedIn (2002). LinkedIn is well known for creating professional connections. In this instance, it would be prudent to include your academic achievements and professional accomplishments. The tone of your brand should be considered and tailored to appeal to your target audience, such as corporate professionals. It may be that a potential employer will use LinkedIn to research you before an interview or by a recruitment agency tasked with finding a suitable employee with your specific skills.

In either case, your personal brand will remain the same as it portrays you, your aspirations, and passions. The only difference is the target audience.

Regardless of the purpose, careful consideration should be given to the content that you are sharing, and you should utilise the privacy settings provided on each platform to ensure that you are keeping yourself and your contacts safe online.

Your LinkedIn Profile to promote your Personal Brand

www.linkedin.com/in/jemma-rees

Appendix 1

I have updated my profile recently to reflect a recent change in employment. The cover picture I chose is from LinkedIn Backgrounds, Images and Photos, (2016) I wanted a background that stood out, bright but not overwhelming, simple but engaging. I chose to use an image with the colour green, firstly because this is my favourite colour and secondly,

in an article by Empowered By Color, (2018) it is suggested that green reflects nature and indicates a person is practical and down to earth. An important characteristic that I wanted to portray.

Evaluate the value of other social media platforms to enhance networking and career prospects

I have not had much experience with Twitter (2021); however, I have recently signed up and created a profile. I found the platform difficult to navigate and felt that there was too much information presented. I prefer a more visually streamlined page. In my experience, so far, it appears that Twitter is a place to voice an opinion, due to this I don't feel that it is the best way to promote myself professionally as it lacks credibility.

In my personal and professional use of Facebook (2021b) I find it easy to navigate and I like that you can post pictures alongside text. However, I would not choose this platform to promote myself professionally. But it could be beneficial to reach out to my local community should I be in search of employment as there are a lot of established networks. I have found that posting on Facebook can attract a lot of negative comments. It appears that the demographic of its users can be very critical, for this reason, I would not feel comfortable presenting myself for this kind of critique.

I have used Instagram (2018) for many years, the main reason is that the information is presented mainly in the form of a picture, similar to a poster. Much of the information is provided in one image, I can then decide if I want to read the accompanying text or to access the website that is being promoted. I would be comfortable using this platform to promote a business or my personal brand.

Examine the impact of Personal Branding on your own employability

Until recently I did not understand the potential of LinkedIn (2002a) have been using it regularly now for approximately five months. Prior to this, I had wrongly assumed that LinkedIn was for large corporate professionals to communicate with their companies. However, since I have spent time creating a professional profile and engaging with the content, I now see that it is used for all sizes of companies, from Sole traders and Start-ups to established corporate businesses. Also, it is a great platform for self-promotion and work opportunities.

In July 2020 I found myself in search of a new career, I spent several months sending my curriculum vitae to companies where I felt I would be a good fit, I sent over 100 applications. Out of these applications I received a total of six interviews and joined a company at the beginning of September 2020. Since creating and updating my profile on LinkedIn (2020b) I have attracted more attention from potential employers. Unfortunately, I found myself in a similar position again in January 2021.

However, this time I had a strong personal brand and several connections on LinkedIn (2020c) I started searching at the beginning of January and started in my position on the 18th of January. I had only sent my curriculum vitae to a handful of companies but the responses were more positive, I received several interview requests within a week of actively searching. I believe that this process was aided by my LinkedIn profile, my views had risen by 130% from the previous week. I also believe that completing the first assignment module, as part of my degree, gave me more confidence in my abilities and the time spent creating a professional curriculum vitae benefitted me no end.

Without spending this time creating my personal brand online and, in my curriculum vitae, it would have undoubtedly taken a lot longer to secure these interviews if at all.

LinkedIn (2020d) provides a credible base, it includes sections where you can not only add your professional qualifications, but you can add a link to the associated accreditation providing a quick way to verify the information.

[Discuss personal and professional security and safety online.](#)

Security and safety online are extremely important, regardless of how you access the internet, cybercriminals can access your personal information such as passwords and bank details. During my research, I found extensive information on how to protect yourself, your family and friends and your workplace. This information is available to everyone for free via Digital Wings (2020).

Whether you are on a personal, public or work computer careful consideration should be given to choosing a password. It may be tempting to create a password with a memorable date or a pet's name. However, these passwords are not secure, you should create a password that is at least eight characters long and contain uppercase and lowercase letters and a combination of symbols (£,\$,%,&,!) you should also create a unique password for every login. Cybercriminals have various ways of hacking your passwords and are familiar with password combinations such as changing the letter E to the number 3. (Getsafeonline.org, 2021).

By creating a complex password, you may be tempted to write it down, this is not recommended as it is no longer secure. There are several ways to store and save passwords securely, one of them is to install an application to manage all your passwords for you, there are many suitable applications for this that you can download from the internet or an app store on your mobile phone for this. A good example is MYKI (2017) this allows you to store passwords and other information securely, it also features 2-factor authentication (Authy, 2016) which means you must verify who you are in two different ways, making the information harder to hack. Their website also provides regular updates and blogs with information detailing cybersecurity (OA, 2020)

You should also be sure to check the credibility of a website to ensure that it is safe first. You can do this in several ways, one method is the 'CRAAP test', this was created by Sarah Blakeslee, (Duq.edu, 2020). CRAAP is an acronym for Currency, Relevance, Authority, Accuracy, and Purpose (Daytonastate 2020) **(Appendix 2)**.

General Data Protection Regulation abbreviated to GDPR (Gov.uk, 2018) is a regulation in law to protect individuals not only online but any situation whereby another captures any personal information of yours. It is the responsibility of any individual or company to ensure that they follow the guidance provided by the government to comply with this regulation.

Under GDPR, organisations who fail to comply and/or suffer a data breach could face a fine. In the most serious cases, this fine could be up to 17 million euros, or 4% of a company's annual turnover. This upper limit far exceeds the current maximum fine of £500,000 allowed under the Data Protection Act.

(Wright, 2018)

If a data breach were to happen, it means that a 3rd party could have access to sensitive or personal data about you, for instance, your name, address, date of birth or bank details. This is information that you would not want everyone to have access to. You can protect yourself by checking that the person or company that you are providing this type of information to has a GDPR policy in place and by confirming they are reputable.

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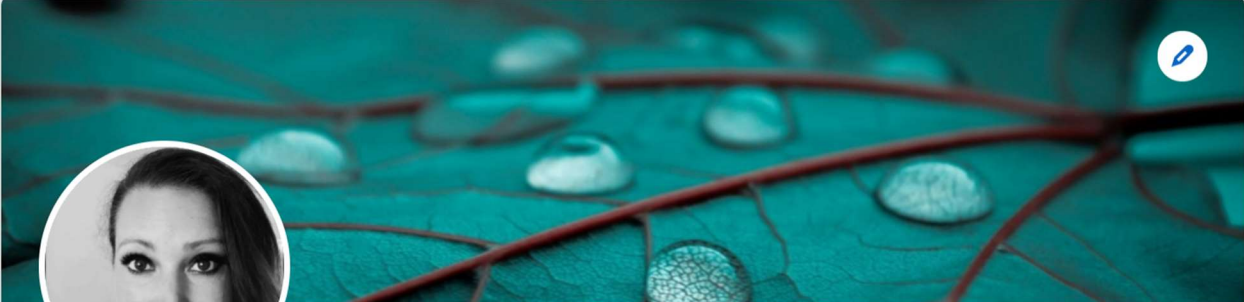
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Appendix 1



Jemma Rees 

Committed to enabling the contribution of social, economic and environmental benefits within the community

Rhymney, Wales, United Kingdom · [247 connections](#) · [Contact info](#)

[Open to](#) [Add profile section](#) [More...](#)



Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council



University of Wales Trinity Saint David

About

Ambitious, methodical and organised professional with extensive experience in residential and commercial property, procurement, compliance, logistical planning and safety regulations.

I'm always looking for ways to do better and perform better. This is demonstrated in my recent achievement in passing both the Prince2 foundation and practitioner exams. I am continuing my education with The University of Wales, Trinity St David, currently studying for a BA (Hons) in leadership and management.

I thrive in any situation with the ability to remain calm and positive. I enjoy helping colleagues to be proactive and efficient in everything they do. It is in my nature to be caring and this passion shines through in my work.

Appendix 2



Currency

The timeliness of the information

When was the information published or posted?
Has the information been revised or updated?
Does your topic require current information, or will older sources work as well?
Are the links functional?



Relevance

The importance of the information for your needs

Does the information relate to your topic or answer your question?
Who is the intended audience?
Is the information at an appropriate level (i.e. not too elementary or advanced for your needs)?
Have you looked at a variety of sources before determining this is one you will use?
Would you be comfortable citing this source in your research paper?



Authority

The source of the information

Who is the author/publisher/source/sponsor?
What are the author's credentials or organizational affiliations?
Is the author qualified to write on the topic?
Is there contact information, such as a publisher or email address?
Does the URL reveal anything about the author or source?
examples: .com .edu .gov .org .net



Accuracy

The reliability, truthfulness and correctness of the content

Where does the information come from?
Is the information supported by evidence?
Has the information been reviewed or refereed?
Can you verify any of the information in another source or from personal knowledge?
Does the language or tone seem unbiased and free of emotion?
Are there spelling, grammar or typographical errors?



Purpose

The reason the information exists

What is the purpose of the information? Is it to inform, teach, sell, entertain or persuade?
Do the authors/sponsors make their intentions or purpose clear?
Is the information fact, opinion or propaganda?
Does the point of view appear objective and impartial?
Are there political, ideological, cultural, religious, institutional or personal biases?

Adapted from the CSU Chico CRAAP Test for the UC San Diego Library

(Daytonastate.edu, 2020)