

Digital Age Literacy

The current and future health of America's 21st Century Economy depends directly on how broadly and deeply Americans reach a new level of literacy—'21st Century Literacy'—that includes strong academic skills, thinking, reasoning, teamwork skills, and proficiency in using technology.

21st Century Workforce Commission National Alliance of Business

For educators at all levels - this seems like a call to arms! Fodder for those involved in curriculum design; a portent of the need for professional development.

But before we get carried away - I would like to suggest that colleges and universities have been providing strong academic skills, thinking, and reasoning all along. That proficiency in using technology comes about as a result of the growth and dependence on technology. And that teamwork develops as familiarity with others and the required tasks increase.

But maybe this means something more in the 21st century? At the curricular level, we should be thinking about the knowledge and skills hospitality students will need – not just now, but 3-5 years out. To do this, let us consider the current Knowledge, Skills and Abilities as identified by the Department of Labor/Employment and Training Administration (USDOL/ETA) through the Occupational Information Network (O*Net). This is a primary source of occupational information in the U.S. The following Table lists the Knowledge, Skills and Abilities of Lodging Managers.

Knowledge, Skills and Abilities for <u>Lodging Managers</u> (O*Net, 11-9081.00)		
Knowledge	Skills	Abilities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customer and Personal Service • Administration and Management • English Language • Sales and Marketing • Personnel and Human Resources • Clerical Procedures • Economics and Accounting • Psychology • Mathematics • Education and Training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Active Listening • Speaking • Social Perceptiveness • Critical Thinking • Reading Comprehension • Monitoring • Active Listening • Instructing • Service Orientation • Time Management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oral Expression • Oral Comprehension • Speech Clarity • Problem Sensitivity • Speech Recognition • Deductive Reasoning • Inductive Reasoning • Information Ordering • Written Comprehension • Written Expression

The “Knowledge” list looks similar to current hospitality curricula. That’s a relief. The other two lists are akin to the outcomes that help define the goals and objectives within the coursework. Again we can take some comfort in that we – educators – seem to be on the right track. But the 21st century will be more “digital” – and success may depend upon having Digital Age literacy. Defining what that means exactly is challenging; maybe the U.S. Department of Labor had Digital Age Literacy in mind when it wrote back in 1999 that

We are living in a new economy-powered by technology, fueled by information, and driven by knowledge. The influence of technology will go beyond new equipment and faster communications, as work and skills will be redefined and reorganized."

Further, when discussing the impact that technology will have in the “world of work” the Department of Labor wrote that

The rapid computerization and networking of American businesses, industries, and homes has been called a "microprocessor revolution." That revolution is fundamentally transforming the way—and the speed with which—people think, connect, collaborate, design and build, locate resources, manipulate tools, conduct research, analyze and forecast, reach markets, present themselves and their wares, move and track products, make transactions—in short, do business.

We can get some sense of this by looking at the Tools and Technology that are required of Lodging Managers. According to USDOL/ETA Lodging Managers use the following technology:

- Customer relationship management CRM software
 - ▶ Enablez ResortSuite; GuestClick software
- Facilities management software
 - ▶ Anand Systems ASI FrontDesk; Execu/Tech Systems HOTEL Premium; TCS Hotel Software Guest Tracker; UniResMan software
- Point of sale POS software
 - ▶ ePOS Business Solutions System 3 POS
- Spreadsheet software (Microsoft Excel)
- Word processing software (Microsoft Word)

As for professional development, can we stay relevant technologically? And, to what extent does technology impact the skills and abilities as we may have learned/taught them BT (Before Technology)?