Mastering the Basics for Productivity

By Annick M. Brennen, MA, October 6, 2006

Many persons desire to be productive users of applications such as Excel, Word, Access, etc., but few have mastered the basics. A great number of clerical staff who are required to produce documents are unskilled, very slow, and not even aware of the basic functions of the computer or the software application they are using. They waste their time and the time of their supervisors, and cannot produce error-free documents. Out of sheer frustration, some employers assume the responsibility of producing their own documents.

THE BASICS

So what are some of the basics one should have mastered prior to learning and using these applications? Without these basic skills, production is hampered; quality of service is compromised, thus affecting negatively the function and image of your institution.

To become an adept user of applications, one should have mastered mouse operations such as pointing, clicking, double-clicking, right-clicking, and dragging, and one should know when to use these operations. Having keyboarding skill is also important. Word processing is about using software features to produce professional-looking, error-free documents. Therefore, one should have a minimum keyboarding speed of 25 gross words a minute (gwam) to undertake a basic Microsoft Word course, and a minimum keyboarding speed of 20 gwam for a basic Microsoft Excel or Access course.

Having basic file management skills is crucial. These skills include switching to different drives; opening, saving, naming, renaming, copying, deleting, and moving files; creating, naming, renaming, deleting, copying, and moving among folders at any level of the disk hierarchy. In the Windows environment, one should know how to use Windows Explorer, My Computer, and the Open and Save As dialog boxes of applications to accomplish some of these basic tasks. One should be able to interpret a file path such as "C:\My Documents\Advantage\EX0230.xls" and be able to execute any task that includes it. One should know the various parts of a window and use that knowledge to operate efficiently in any application.

Manipulating and sizing windows; using the scroll bars, mouse, and keyboard to navigate documents; selecting text; working with menus and dialog boxes; using the taskbar or keyboard combinations to switch from one application to the next are skills that save time when using applications.

OPPORTUNITY

Employers themselves should be knowledgeable of what is required from their staff for high performance and output. They should have methods of testing and screening potential employees before interviewing**.**

Sometimes persons register for the proverbial Introduction to Computers course thinking they will acquire the basic skills, but often this course does not meet their expectation. Most of the times, it provides lots of "information" related to hardware, operating systems, software, etc., but fails to help people master the basic skills through hands-on practice of essential window skills.

If you want to learn these skills, Office Skills Certification Service (OSC) is offering three scholarships to persons over 18 years of age for its winter session. Call and secure your scholarship today. OSC also provides employee testing service to assist employers make hiring decisions. Annick M. Brennen is the director and trainer of Office Skills Certification Service, 29 Madeira Street. She can be reached at 242-326-5004 or at osc@coralwave.com or the website www.oscbahamas.com .