

Keeping up with technology – what managers and executives need to know

1 Warmer

Think about the questions and make notes. Then share your answers with each other.

- What digital knowledge and skills do you need for your work?
e.g. operating computer-controlled machinery or using specific computer software or programs
- How did you gain this knowledge or learn to work with this technology?
- *e.g. attending a course, getting hands-on training, following online instructions.*

2 Key words

Find the words in the article that match the definitions below. Use the paragraph numbers to help you.

1. make an organized and determined attempt to deal with a problem (2) _____
2. as much as is needed (5) _____
3. involving several different subjects of study or areas of professional activity
(8) _____
4. a particular use that something has (10) _____
5. likely to be or become a particular thing (14) _____
6. keeping someone at a job (14) _____
7. reduced in amount, size, or importance (16) _____
8. a method of learning which uses a combination of classroom sessions and online learning
(17) _____
9. problems that you must solve before you can do something successfully
(17) _____
10. give a formal talk or lecture to a group of people (17) _____

Coronavirus sharpens executive education focus on digital skills

The pandemic is accelerating growth of programmes and online teaching

BY JONATHAN MOULES

- 1 The creators of executive education courses always try to make their offerings relevant to current business needs. The coronavirus crisis has sparked a wave of new programmes focusing on leadership in a crisis, for example.
- 2 But even before the pandemic, there was another strong trend: the teaching of digital knowledge and skills around subjects such as artificial intelligence and cyber security. Now, as the world has gone into lockdown to tackle Covid-19 and working online from home is commonplace, an understanding of the digital world has become still more important. Meanwhile, schools are also rethinking how to develop and expand remote tuition.
- 3 Imperial College Business School is prominent among those embracing the trend. One example is a Cybersecurity for Executives programme that teaches participants how they can implement better safeguards for IT networks, ways to protect against and handle cyber attacks, and the threats to businesses if they do suffer such an event.
- 4 Teaching takes place over two days, with lectures about basic technical aspects before participants are able to ask questions. For those who want to go into greater depth, course tutors provide supplementary materials online and use Imperial's name to attract guest speakers. These recently included Robert Hannigan, the former director of the Government Communications Headquarters (GCHQ), the UK's signals intelligence and cryptography agency.
- 5 "People have an awareness of technology, but the depth of their knowledge is often not sufficient to make decisions as senior executives," says Deeph Chana, co-director of Imperial's Institute for Security Science & Technology.
- 6 "The idea of this course is to give people a few more layers of depth about decisions, and what concerns they should have about cyber security in their organisation."
- 7 Imperial also runs courses in artificial intelligence and the evolution of financial technology start-ups, or fintechs, both of which have proved popular, according to Prof Chana. He says Imperial's brand — as a school built on engineering and the sciences — helps in a competitive market. "Our unique selling point at Imperial is to be able to offer that technical insight," he adds.
- 8 In Barcelona, Iese Business School this year launched a three-day course combining teaching on artificial Intelligence with its Future of Management Initiative, a multidisciplinary project that will look at how AI affects leadership. The focus is on ethics, with tutors designing their teaching to prepare executives to put AI to use in their companies in a socially responsible way.
- 9 The school draws on its teaching of AI across a range of business degree programmes, says course tutor Sampsa Samila, assistant professor of strategic management.
- 10 "We start with the basics of AI, explaining neural networks and basic teaching about computers, before moving on to simplified structures for application of the technology and how you can consider algorithms as a tool for business," Samila says. "We might talk about what you need to create a voice-activated assistant like the Amazon Echo's Alexa or some of the technology in self-driving cars."
- 11 The market for the course is broad, says Samila, but is mainly executives in middle or senior management roles.
- 12 "What we are trying to do is to get them to think about the business models created by this new technology," he says. "These managers will have to learn new skills, which is not just about knowing what AI is but what are the competitive impacts on their business."
- 13 Tutors everywhere are now having to think about how they teach online, at least in the short term.

Continued on next page

For courses already focused on tech, the hope is that such distance learning will be a good fit with target audiences.

14 A 2018 study of managers by the Trium Executive MBA found that two-thirds of prospective learners on executive education courses wanted some online learning in the teaching offered, double the number five years earlier. The Trium survey revealed that the most common challenge for executives is dealing with change, particularly in technology. Attracting and retaining the right talent and skills for organisations was a concern, as was the way technology, especially AI, may replace human workers.

15 Schools are starting to rethink their digital courses to adjust for this new world. "It's not easy for anyone,

but necessity is the mother of invention. And we are inventing very quickly," says Ron Duerksen, executive director of executive education at HEC Paris.

16 "Even after the global coronavirus crisis is hopefully diminished and classes can resume in person, we will have transformed our way of thinking about teaching online.

17 "Staff, professors and students will most likely be much more willing and open to blended and online formats as a result of this. Once you get over the fear and hurdles of delivering online, you also see the many benefits."

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3 Understanding the article

Answer the questions using details from the article.

1. What new skills and knowledge do senior management and executives need these days in order to lead a company effectively?
2. What is driving the need for them to gain these new skills and this new knowledge?
3. What teaching format does Imperial College Business School's Cyber Security for Executives programme follow?
4. What are two new ways that the Iese Business School teaches managers to use artificial intelligence?
5. What trends can be seen in the way business courses are being taught? How has the acceptance and uptake of these new formats been?

4 Business language – collocations

a. Match the words to make collocations from the article.

- | | |
|------------------|--------------------|
| 1. artificial | insight _____ |
| 2. cyber | responsible _____ |
| 3. remote | intelligence _____ |
| 4. supplementary | audiences _____ |
| 5. technical | management _____ |
| 6. socially | tuition _____ |
| 7. strategic | materials _____ |
| 8. target | security _____ |

b. Find the words in the article to check your answers.

c. In your own words, explain what each expression means.

5 Business language – Multi-word phrases

Find multi-word phrases in the article that you can use to complete these sentences.

1. The decision to close the staff canteen _____ protest right across the company. (4 words, paragraph 1)
2. The company showed that they were actively _____ by ordering electric cars for their salespeople. (3 words, paragraph 3)
3. Our promise to deliver any time of the day or night within 20 minutes of ordering is our _____ (3 words, paragraph 7)
4. You often don't realize what you are able to achieve until the time comes when you really have to do it. As the old proverb goes _____ (6 words, paragraph 15)

6 Discussion

- What might happen, and what consequences might be seen, if your company suffered a cyber attack or even just a 24-hour system crash?
- What do you know about the cyber security and IT network safeguards that your company uses?
- Have you been able to work from home recently? What IT safeguards and security measures needed to be implemented or installed for you to safely do your job from your home?

7 Wider business theme – A mandatory in-work training course

Your company demands that everyone take a training course to ensure their knowledge of basic online security at work. The course is being offered in different versions. Regardless of which version you choose, there will be a written test at the end.

- Firstly, hold an informal department meeting in which you discuss the pros and cons of each version of the training course.**
- As everybody in your department has to take the same version, come to a unanimous decision which version of the course you will take.**
- Write an email to the head of your department, copying in the next further level of management, explaining which version your department will take. Explain why you came to this decision.**

Online security at work

This course will be available in three versions.

1. A classroom-based intensive two-day course.
2. A 16-hour online course which must be completed within 2 weeks at times of your choosing.
3. A one-day classroom-based intensive course followed by a further 8 hours of online learning.