

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

1 Warmer

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

- 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

Match the words to the definitions. Then find them in the article to read them in context. Use the paragraph numbers to help you.

application	commonplace	diminished	hurdles	multidisciplinary
prospective	resume	retaining	sufficient	talent

1. not unusual (2) _____
2. as much as is needed (5) _____
3. a project or course that involves different subjects or topics (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. a person with a natural ability for being good at a particular thing (14) _____
8. when something's importance is not as great as before (16) _____
9. start something again after stopping temporarily (16) _____
10. problems that you must solve before you can do something successfully
(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

Read the article and decide if the statements are true or false according to the information given. Correct the false statements.

1. Before the Covid-19 crisis there was very little interest in learning about artificial intelligence and cyber security.
2. Imperial College Business School's Cybersecurity for Executives programme is held completely online.
3. The course for senior executives is popular because while they may have some digital knowledge, they often don't have enough to be able to make informed decisions.
4. Iese Business School's course on artificial intelligence and leadership helps prepare executives to make good ethical decisions concerning the use of AI in their company.
5. The course helps executives develop new business models using the digital skills they already have.
6. Now, more than half of managers who plan to take a course want to do some of it online.
7. One of the most common issues managers and executives have to deal with is technological changes.
8. After the crisis, all business courses are likely to be delivered 100% online.

4 Business language – collocations

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

- | | |
|------------------|--------------------|
| 1. digital | networks _____ |
| 2. artificial | tuition _____ |
| 3. cyber | materials _____ |
| 4. remote | insight _____ |
| 5. IT | security _____ |
| 6. supplementary | learners _____ |
| 7. technical | knowledge _____ |
| 8. prospective | intelligence _____ |

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

c. Write T or L next to each pair to show whether each of the word pairs is more connected with technology (T) or with learning (L).

d. With a partner, take turns explaining what each word pair means.

5 Business language – Multi-word phrases

a. Find 3-word phrases in the article matching these definitions.

1. A 3-word phrase in paragraph 3 that means to accept a change or development which produces a particular result. _____
2. A 3-word phrase in paragraph 7 that means the thing which makes a product or service special or different from others. _____

b. Use the 3-word phrases to complete these sentences.

1. The company showed that they were _____ by ordering electric cars for their salespeople.
2. Our _____ is that every time you buy a pair of our shoes, we give a pair to a child in need.
3. We promise to deliver any time of the day or night within 20 minutes – that's our _____.
4. We are _____ by putting more vegan dishes on our menu.

6 Discussion

- What might happen if there was a cyber attack on your company or if your IT network crashed for 24 hours?
- How does your company protect itself from a cyber attack or a IT network crash?
- Which IT safeguards and security measures would you need to do your job if you're working from home?

7 Wider business theme – An in-work training course

Your boss has said that everyone in the company must do a training course to learn about online security at work. The course is offered in three different versions, each with a written test at the end.

Your tasks are to decide which version you will take and to write an email informing your boss of your decision.

- a. **Read the descriptions of the three versions of the course. Decide which one you prefer and explain why.**

e.g. I prefer version because

- b. **Hold an informal department meeting. Everyone should say which version of the training course they like best and why. Everybody in the department has to take the same version of the test. Come to a decision which you all can agree on.**
- c. **Write an email to your boss. Say which version your department will take. Explain the reasons for your decision.**

Online security at work

This course will be available in three versions.

1. An intensive two-day course (2 x 7 hours) in a training room with a trainer.
2. A 16-hour online course. You must complete this within 2 weeks.
3. A one day (7 hours) intensive course in a training room with a trainer followed by 8 hours of online learning.