

Can You Survive In An Online World?

Do you have the skills to make it in a computer driven, increasingly online world?

Your immediate, knee-jerk reaction may be "Yes! Of course I have the skills.

I know how to send and receive email and surf the web.

I can even download and install files."

Well, three or four years ago, email, Web surfing and downloading files qualified you as "electronically literate," but not anymore! Computer and online survival skills now encompass much more than that.

Surviving in an online world involves maintaining a high degree of "electronic literacy," which means focusing on and developing skills in the following areas:

** Personal Computer skills **

In the old days of 1998, the ability to use a computer, keyboard and mouse rated anyone as computer-literate.

In fact, you were a real pro if you could burn a CD, scan documents and manipulate digital pictures.

Fast forward to today and "personal computer skills" carries a whole new meaning. You must know how to maintain and update not only anti-virus, but "anti-spyware," and firewall software too.

You also need to understand how operating with Windows ME, or 2000, or XP will affect your ability to use certain software along with specific security precautions to avoid trouble from hackers.

** Internet Skills **

In the bygone era of 1998, friends considered you an online genius if you possessed basic surfing and navigation skills.

They watched in awe as you used search engines like InfoSeek.com (a long-defunct search engine) to find and download programs, pictures, and information on specific topics.

Now electronic literacy means the ability to set up, upload, and maintain basic web pages and blogs.

It also means understanding terms such as "RSS" and "news aggregator" because that's the next generation of how information will get disseminated online (and it arrives for the masses this year).

** Email Skills **

Perhaps the most deceptively simple of all the areas of electronic literacy, email actually presents the most challenges for keeping up with the times.

Previously, clicking the "send and receive" button meant you were proficient at using email.

Now, because of spam, viruses and "phishing scams" (identity theft schemes delivered through email), email requires a whole new set of skills, "street smarts" and software just to survive.

You must understand how to use an email "preview" program such as MailWasher.net to eliminate spam and virus email messages before they ever reach your computer.

You also must learn to protect your identity and avoid "phishing scams" by learning to recognize and defend against online con-artist tactics.

**** Buy or Borrow Expertise ****

Though you should constantly upgrade your skills through personal education, nobody can do or know it all (except maybe your know-it-all bother in law).

The good news is that you can always buy or borrow someone else's expertise to solve any online challenge.

A prime example of outsourcing in the consumer market is all the little stores popping up in strip malls to help you sell your stuff on eBay.

Through outsourcing, online survival skills can also mean taking what was previously the exclusive realm of computer geeks and making it as easy as dropping off the dry cleaning.

About the Author

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