Computer literacy in the world of business

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South Africa’s President Thabo Mbeki identified Information and Communication Technology (ICT) as a strategic focus area for the country. And rightly so!

The sad reality is, however, that even highly qualified professors and industry professionals often just manage to use the basics of PC office-type software and email. The inherent power and efficiencies of these technologies are thus not utilized effectively – a tremendous waste!

This paper would deal with issues of the information technology explosion and how staff at companies are barely able to master the very basics of one technology – to ‘help themselves’ – before the next wave, a newer and more advanced version, is upon them.

Training is a key issue here – but one that is usually sadly neglected.

The point is that if even highly qualified, educated people battle to use information technology effectively without some training or hand-holding, how much more difficult is it then not for those that do not read and write with confidence. Surely they, too, should be ‘brought on board’, to ride the technology wave. This is not only important for their self-esteem, but also to the benefit of the company and the economy.

Companies clearly have a responsibility towards their employees – both the literate and less literate ones. ICT is becoming pervasive in the global society and computer literacy is fast becoming a life skill. Training costs money, especially science and technology-type training. But, training equates to skills upliftment – and this can (in SA) be funded by reclaiming the Skills Development Levy from the relevant Sector Education and Training Authority (SETA).

ICT and people training - the key to bridging the knowledge gap.