










...survival tools

What to know and why ...

-  To understand the value of all ICT systems working efficiently in your company
-  To become aware of how an ICT “survival-knowledge” can be documented and utilised for optimal business productivity

Outline

-  A “normal” working day – an efficient operational flow
-  The value for company of ICT "survival" knowledge
-  ICT "survival" knowledge
-  The “super-user” and his/her role
-  Survival-knowledge management



A “normal” working day – an efficient operational flow

On a perfect working day everything works. The coffee machine gives the best coffee ever, the ventilation system gives a cool and comfortable working environment and all the ICT systems are functioning perfectly.

John, the employee turns on his computer, which starts up all its systems quickly, connects to the local area network, downloads the emails waiting and says: “**Good Morning John**”.

After reading and quickly replying to his email, John turns to his daily routine which is online sales to business customers. This morning there were 10 orders waiting for John who browsed through them one by one. He initiated order responses to the buyers and flagged the sale into the sales system. All the orders were forwarded to the warehouse where an order pick list was printed out and sent to the financial department for invoice creation.





A “normal” working day – an efficient operational flow...cont.

In the finance department, the order automatically created an entry into the “accounts receivables”, and then initiated a printout of a pro-forma invoice at the warehouse that became a part of the document package to be delivered to the customer.

As soon as the products had been picked from the racks and sorted with other orders to be sent to the customer, they were scanned and loaded into the delivery van together with the pro-forma invoice and pick list.

The van then left the premises and drove to the customer, constantly sending information about its location via GPRS telephone network to the service department.

When approaching the customer’s location, the service department automatically initiated a SMS message to the customer’s warehouse manager about the arriving delivery, who then was prepared for receiving the products when they arrived.



A “normal” working day – an efficient operational flow...cont.

When the products were scanned into the customer’s warehouse, the remote communication device in the van instantly communicated to the service department that the products had been delivered.



The service department flagged to the finance department the fulfilment of the order, who then initiated an electronic invoice delivery directly to the buyer’s financial system. There the invoice was automatically compared with the order and confirmation of order reception; the invoice amount was confirmed and became an entry into “account payables” ledger, finally leading to an automatic e-payment in the buyer’s bank after the agreed credit time.

A “normal” working day – an efficient operational flow...cont.

OR:

John arrives at work, gets the worst coffee ever...

... the office climate is hot and heavy...

... the computer refused to start correctly and when it did...

... there was no Internet connection which meant that there was no email arriving...

... the applications failed to start...

... and John’s day started overall disastrous; **bad coffee and no sales.**

TASK

1. List 5 ICT functionalities that you consider crucial for your work
2. Which of these are not always working and how does that affect you?

The value for company of ICT "survival" knowledge

It is clear from John's example, that a company with all systems functioning is a much more efficient and prosperous than the one where there are constant system break-downs.

The fact is that in the majority of instances the necessary response to a system failure is simple and easily learned.

The idea here is to deal with the situation in a more organised manner, introducing the ICT "survival" knowledge.

ICT "survival" knowledge

ICT survival knowledge is here defined as the general knowledge required to tackle all the daily operational difficulties when running ICT systems, such as errors that can be corrected and do not call for repair service.

In most companies there is a person, or two, who usually is called upon when things go wrong. This person often is someone that has interest in systems, knows very well how to use the systems and applications, is quick to learn and solution oriented. This is the “**super-user**”; co-workers tend to think of him or her as a smart and knowledgeable person that can and is willing to help with technical problems without being overtly technical and even intimidating to others by his knowledge.





ICT "survival" knowledge... cont.

For the co-workers it is a plus that the super-user is not really a technical person, rather “a user” just as any other, making it easier to relate to the problems that arise in daily work. The super-user, however, is rarely systematically trained to maintain the systems. He or she attends to the problem when it arises, often leading to temporary operational standstill, with respective loss of productivity, while the error is corrected.



The importance of documenting acquired knowledge can never be overemphasised, especially when it has to do with maintaining the company’s ICT infrastructure operational. When a company procures an ICT system, being hardware, software or network, it is a good practice to ask the installer to document the most likely faults that can occur and the appropriate actions to take, in a company **ICT SURVIVAL MANUAL** together with the relevant product instructions.



ICT "survival" knowledge... cont.

During time, errors will occur and if care is taken in documenting the error and the remedy the ICT SURVIVAL MANUAL will prove to be a valuable tool for companies ICT systems maintenance and operational assurance.

The right persons to keep and maintain such a manual is an in-house person: The ICT administrator, if such a position exists within the company, and/or the super-user.



ICT "survival" knowledge... cont.

By taking the operational and maintenance recommendations given by the service provider (installer), studying the manuals that are provided with the ICT products and systems and learning from experience, a good **checklist** can be prepared and maintained.



The checklist can also contain information such as telephone numbers of service companies, the names of persons that are familiar with the company ICT systems, references to websites where support can be sought and so on.

The objective of preparing and maintaining a check list is to gather in compact form all the necessary knowledge needed for expedient response to any error that may occur. The super-user is the right person to manage such a list, but he or she may be absent for any reason and therefore others must have access to the knowledge in order to step in.

The “super-user” and his/her role

The super-user is often a person that has worked for several years for the company, has learned to use the ICT systems, is keen on learning and has the willingness to assist others.

For the super-user to meet the responsibilities mentioned he needs to be recognized as such and given the necessary time and resources.

Most often the super-user is a self-made person, meaning that the interest in systems and willingness to assist others in their work either is in a person’s nature or not.

This naturally does not mean that a super-user cannot be trained; he just needs to be found within the company or recruited and then given the responsibility and resources to become the super-user.

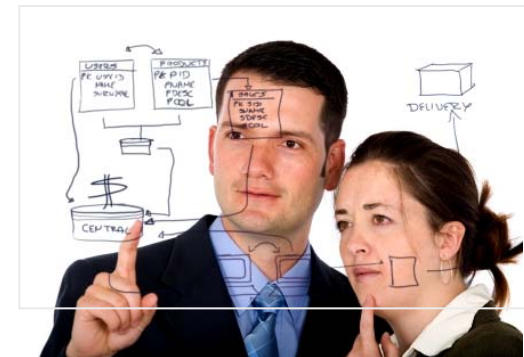


Survival-knowledge management

Effective business operations and up-to-date ICT survival knowledge requires the personnel of the company to be informed about the super-user's appointment, his role and the objective of having such a person in the company.

This way, people will more easily be able to seek assistance instead of inactively waiting for solution or trying to solve problems on their own, possibly creating more problems to themselves and others in the company.

People need to be trained in the general use of the ICT systems, company policy with regards to security, Internet browsing, email use and document backup routines.



TASK

1. The general manager comes to you and asks if you would like to become an ICT “super-user” in the company. You like the idea (presumably) and already start to think: “How should I do this?” List 5 things that you would do in the very beginning.