

Importance of digital skills training for your organisation

 By [Senzo Dhlomo](#)

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Digital is fast-changing how consumers interact with brands. We, as consumers, are more empowered than ever before by search engines and social media.



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Research has consistently shown the change in consumer buying habits; there's a steady growth in online research before a consumer makes a decision to purchase, and the majority of the buyer's journey now begins and is almost completed, before we reach out to a sales rep. Thanks to digital, consumers are more in control – they are able to educate themselves and be savvier when it comes to making buying decisions.

Continual upskilling is essential

If digital has enabled the rise of the savvy consumer; what does this mean for organisations? According to the Marketing Institute, the savvy consumer has made organisations obligated “to acknowledge and adapt... if they want to achieve lasting customer success and be as profitable as possible.” Where does this leave marketers? 76% of those that spoke to the Marketing Institute think “marketing has changed more in the past two years than the past fifty, which means that continual upskilling is essential.”

A well-thought-out digital marketing strategy has enabled organisations and businesses to build brand awareness, generate cost savings, and ultimately, drive revenue far more easily than competitors with no digital presence whatsoever. This is why having skilled and dedicated digital professionals is such an essential resource.

Digital has indisputable benefits, but many organisations remain resistant to the use of these tools and technologies. Many citing a variety of reasons, including lack of available budget and resources, a fear of loss of control and a general scepticism that digital can provide a significant return on investment. These barriers to digital adoption must be overcome to guarantee ongoing organisational success.

Far simpler than many think; an investment in digital skills training will result in long-term reward – empowering, not only the organisation but also its employees. The organisation also maintains their competitive advantage and ensures they are not left behind.

Other key advantages to your organisation in having a dedicated and strategic digital education plan includes, but is not limited to:

Digitally skilled employees are motivated employees

The digital industry is currently suffering a global skills shortage. As a result, recruiting competent personnel currently proves problematic for organisations of all sizes. Larger salaries and lucrative benefits packages are usually to the detriment of the smaller-sized organisations because they fail to match up to their larger competitors. The *African Digitalisation Maturity Report 2017* concluded that, in the African context, South Africa had the highest digital literacy in Africa.

According to the study: “In the digital maturity assessment, SA scored higher than all other countries across all segments of the survey. South Africa scores above the four-country average in all areas except for digital training (internet access in schools).” While more and more organisations look for a solution to plug the digital skills shortage, it is clear “that the easier, and ultimately more cost-effective option is to cultivate an indigenous talent pool.” The skills and digital literacy segment of the study took into account the extent and quality of a country’s human resources and current use of digital technology and platforms.

“According to Adobe, organisations with a plan for their digital maturity aim to train and develop the skills of their existing workforce. They recognise that training, and the opportunity for professional and personal development is often the main priority for employees. Without it, they can feel unstimulated and disillusioned.” Digitally empowered employees are good for an organisation; not only because the employees have new digital capabilities; but, they also have incentivised attitudes, that can be leveraged as a powerful retention tool.

Digital skills can help drive, and ultimately increase revenue

Every year, digital proves to be a worthwhile investment for organisations. As technology advances, the tools to do business within an organisation also change. According to the Marketing Institute; “By 2020, customers will manage 85% of their interaction with the enterprise without interacting with a human. Only 28% of prospects that are cold called actually engage in conversations, and only 1% of those cold calls will ultimately convert into appointments. As consumers become more empowered by digital, they rely less on the expertise of sales reps and more on their own ability to research.”

Digital skills can be used as a cost saver

In the US, for example: “The American Society for Training and Development (ASTD) collected training information from over 2500 firms and found that organisations that offer comprehensive training have 218% higher income per employee than those with less comprehensive training. This means the simple act of motivating employees through skills training can save a substantial amount of money for an organisation.”

Similarly, the American Management Association said: “The cost of hiring and training a new employee is between 25 to 200% of annual compensation, so skills training can cut costs again by alleviating unnecessary employee turnover. In

addition to this, other financial benefits can include labour savings, reduction in lost workdays and productivity increases.” Digital marketing’s main principles are based on efficiency and cost-effectiveness:

- Precise ad targeting options can result in a lower cost-per-lead
- Easy and immediate online interactions with a segmented target audience can generate more conversions for less cost
- An abundance of data from analytics tools provides invaluable insight that can help to refine a digital strategy and avoid unnecessary spending.

Overall, the association concludes: “40% of organisations claimed they received considerable cost savings from using digital marketing methods to promote their products and services.”

Digital skills can help your organisation to develop a competitive edge

Time and time again, digital has proven itself to no longer be a luxury, but rather a necessity to an organisation’s survival. Yet still, “Only 31% of US organisations, 25% UK and 40% in Ireland are felt to be digitally engaged, and the general consensus among employees is that the pace of technological and digital change is too slow.”

According to the Marketing Institute: “Some of the main barriers to digital adoption is a lack of expertise in-house, as well as a lack of organisational commitment to the area. In order to realise the potential that digital holds for your organisation, it’s essential to have the requisite skills training to be able to understand its significant benefits and take action.”

ABOUT SENZO DHLOMO

As a Digital Marketing Maverick, I can integrate digital marketing with traditional print/broadcast methods, to support the research and analysis of potential or existing markets for products and services, both to provide a sound basis for business development and to generate a flow of sales enquiries. My knowledge and experience over the last seven years have been in the management and development of strategies, campaigns and day-to-day marketing activities delivered through the web and other digital channels.

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