PRRODUCTIVITY TOOLS AND SKILLS

**Overview:** productivity tools represent the practical application of technology to enhance your efficiency and output. From project management platforms and collaborative software to automation tools and specialized applications, these digital solutions can transform how you work, learn, and organize your life. Knowing which tools to use and when can significantly impact your professional effectiveness.

**File Management:** File Management is essential for organizing and retrieving digital information on computers, aiming to make information universally accessible. It is a personal version of Google, involving managing substantial amounts of data using different methods. Effective computer use relies on learning file organization and developing good practices, with experienced users using Microsoft's File Explorer and Mac's default Finder. To keep balance and efficiency in your home, basic organization skills are essential. Organize your belongings by sorting them into categories like table lamps, desks, speakers, cameras, fans, and more. This helps you find what you need quickly. Include all information belonging to file management next: folders, settings, and more finding files, navigating, pathways, permissions, collaboration, copying, pasting, compressed folders, zip folders, managing cloud-base work.

**Personal Productivity Applications:** productivity applications on computers enable users to create, process, and distribute information globally. These applications enable groups of dispersed individuals to share information seamlessly, enabling teams to work on various parts of the same document simultaneously. Productivity applications have enabled the globally connected world, enabling various aspects of life, such as healthcare, banking, housing, food, and entertainment, to work together using various tools. To take part in this ecosystem, one must know which tools to use.

**Documents:** A digital document is a meaningful collection of text and images, used in various forms like college admission letters, report cards, and car sales deeds. These documents are generated and stored using productivity applications. A digital document is a meaningful collection of text and images, used in various forms like college admission letters, report cards, and car sales deeds. These documents are generated and stored using productivity applications.

Google Docs and MS Word are browser-based productivity applications with collaboration features, allowing multiple team members to work on different sections simultaneously. Word processors offer powerful capabilities like fonts, paragraphs, lists, numbering, styles, layouts, tables, pictures, colors, headers, footers, and templates, allowing users to create beautiful documents with a consistent look and feel, highlighting critical information.

**Portable Document Format (PDF):** digital documents are often used for ease of editing, but they can be changed by others without authorization. For example, shipping labels with a special barcode are read-only documents, so they should be saved in PDF format. PDF is used for various forms like college applications, loan forms, tax forms, and club membership forms. Word processors like Microsoft Word and Google Documents can save PDF documents, with Adobe's Acrobat Reader software being the most popular for viewing them.

**Spreadsheets:** a spreadsheet is a digital document that organizes data for business calculations, simplifying and automating tasks like entering incorrect numbers or converting expenses to different currencies. It provides predefined formulas and allows users to create their own formulas. For example, a home mortgage calculator can automatically calculate monthly payments based on input values, allowing users to focus on their business problems without worrying about calculations' accuracy. This allows them to focus on home purchase options based on their budget. Spreadsheets are simple word processors but can be advanced productivity applications with advanced features like Pivot Tables. They help aggregate data by parameters, find patterns, filter, sort, and visualize data. A common workflow for presenting business to stakeholders involves capturing data, creating graphs, and using these in documentation and presentations. Excel and Sheets are the top spreadsheet productivity applications, used by every business and school. With almost a billion people using them, it is essential to explore new capabilities and improve your skills in one of the most important productivity applications.

**Presentations:** presentations are digital documents that combine text, graphics, and media for display to an audience. They are designed to be viewed by a large audience at a pace set by the speaker, with visual appeal, consistency, visual contrast, and other story-telling elements. Microsoft PowerPoint and Google Slides are popular presentation software applications that can help create professional and effective slides. Prezi is another popular presentation application with unique formats. Slides are single pages of a presentation, and they can convey one point to the audience. PowerPoint can serve as an outline of ideas, allowing for smooth flow of ideas within each outlined section. However, when presenters do not try to deliver an engaging presentation, it can become monotonous and tedious for the audience. "Death by PowerPoint" is a colloquial term used to criticize poorly planned or executed presentations that do not effectively communicate their ideas to the audience.

**Email:** email, or electronic mail, is a communication method that allows users to send messages to recipients electronically, stored on a central server. It was introduced in the 1970s and became popular in universities and businesses. Before email, documents were saved in paper form and stored in locked cabinets. Email simplifies the process of finding and approving documents, allowing users to send messages to as many people as they like with the click of a button. It also allows for document changes and approvals even from thousands of miles away. Good email etiquette, such as being polite, using correct spelling and grammar, and staying brief, is essential for forming a good impression and ensuring a successful communication.

**Calendar:** calendars are time-organized charts that help manage and collaborate with people. Digital calendars use computers' capabilities to simplify time management and collaboration. Meeting friends for a movie is easy if there are few people involved. However, coordinating meetings with groups of coworkers’ multiple times a day and multiple days of the week can be time-consuming. Calendaring software can help streamline this process, saving time and effort. Email writing has become the No. 1 Killer App in the workplace. Calendaring software allows scheduling meetings, creating agendas, and booking resources. It helps check colleagues' availability and schedules, ensuring everyone is available. The software also sends reminders of upcoming meetings to prevent missed meetings. Popular calendars include Microsoft's Outlook and Google's Calendar, but smartphones also have built-in calendar applications for personal use.

**Web Conferencing:** Web conferencing, an online interaction similar to in-person meetings, gained popularity during the Covid pandemic. Major vendors like Zoom, Webex, Blue Jeans, Go to Meeting, Teams, and Google Hangouts offer features like scheduling meetings, inviting others, and allowing others to join via a URL. Participants can share screens and present information, and record meetings can be shared with participants and missed ones. Post-Covid, most calendaring software integrates with web conferencing software to schedule meetings, making it business as usual to "Schedule a Meeting" in calendaring software like Outlook.

**Chat:** chat refers to real-time online communication, popular among family, friends, and social circles. It has also gained popularity in business environments, with popular office chat apps like Slack and Microsoft Teams easing informal conversations. These apps build channels of communication with select teammates, sharing files, screenshots, and messages. Chat history is preserved, allowing for easy search and sharing of past discussions. Emojis and gifs make chatting a fun way to stay in touch with team members.

**Bundling:** bundling is the distribution of productivity applications as a set of integrated, similar applications, allowing users to transfer knowledge between them. Vendors offer discounts for bundle purchases, as it reduces competition and reduces the likelihood of users buying multiple bundles or individual applications.

Microsoft Officer 354 home page, https://www.office.com/ (accessed June 2023).

Google Workspace home page, https://workspace.google.com/ (accessed June 2023)

**Skills Needed to Succeed in IT**

**· Soft skills:** soft skills, such as communication, listening, time management, respect, and empathy, are crucial for effective work in modern workplaces. These skills are less important initially but become more important as you progress in your career. Being a successful team leader requires empathy, compassion, honesty, and celebrating coworkers' successes. Despite disagreements, it is important to express yourself and regulate emotions. Mastering soft skills creates a positive, productive environment, fostering a positive work environment. These skills are essential for personal and professional growth.

**· Organizational and project management skills:** modern jobs require managing complexity and shifting goals, requiring organizational and project management skills. Coordinating with teams, vendors, and customers is crucial for solving common problems. Gathering business and functional requirements and test cases is essential. For example, defining a gaming PC's capabilities, budget, and assembly time is a high-level requirement. Lower-level or functional requirements include CPU type, RAM, storage, disk drives, and box size. Test cases ensure the computer works as expected. Identifying tasks and their order is crucial for building the PC. Regular updates to team, management, and customers are essential for efficient results. Excel and other project management tools can help with this process.

**· Basic computer skills:** on your first day at work, you will be assigned a computer for office work. Familiarity with common peripherals, printer settings, and file management are essential. You must know how to turn it on, shut down, connect to the network, and upgrade software. Files are stored on computers, and you need to know how to create, save, and store them. Meetings are often online, so you need to know how to create and accept invitations. Most offices have IT support teams to help with initial setup and troubleshooting.

**· Familiarity with office tools:** Office computers typically come with common office software like Microsoft Office, G Suite, and Outlook, used for creating documents, spreadsheets, presentations, and email communication.

**· Web skills:** proficient web usage is essential for daily tasks in most jobs, including using Google Maps for directions and logging into client accounts tools for invoice submission. Key skills include launching browsers, bookmarking links, and following instructions.

**· Collaboration skills:** Office collaboration software like Microsoft Teams, Slack, Zoom, Webex, Google Hangouts, WhatsApp, Discord, and FaceTime are essential for employees to connect easily. Post-Covid, technology jobs have become more flexible, with onsite, remote, or hybrid options. The work-from-home trend has been observed, and it will be interesting to see how it affects employee productivity and whether employees work longer hours. Choosing a career is a crucial decision that affects compensation, work-life balance, and waking hours. Assessing skills, considering financial needs, and volunteering for non-profit groups can help determine the best career options. Medical schools expect students to have experience volunteering in medical establishments to understand the field better. For students interested in IT, careers in software or hardware development are recommended due to the good salaries, meaningful work environment, and the growing number of jobs in this field. The US is a dynamic economy, with new job types expected to emerge by the time you enter the workforce.