

Other work can be defined to the point that virtually anyone with a modicum of training can fill a vacancy anywhere in the company. For example, since McDonald's hires workers with a wide range of abilities and experiences, its training program leaves virtually no room for variation in process. Even seemingly insignificant tasks, such as the method in which fries are salted (from the back to the front of the deep fryer rack), are fully defined, leaving little room for misinterpretation of the intended process.

Some work, such as high-end special sound or graphics effects for a movie, is unique to the point that it can be considered magic—it's a special, mysterious, or inexplicable quality, talent, or skill. Tasks involving tacit and, to a lesser degree, implicit knowledge are often considered magic. Salting french fries, in contrast, is a technology based on manufacturing techniques, process optimization, and use of explicit knowledge.

Most tasks fit somewhere in the continuum between magic and technology and within the boundaries set by the characteristics of pure technology and pure magic, as shown in Exhibit 1.6. For example, the tasks associated with salting french fries at McDonald's (represented by the containers of french fries) can all be considered at the extreme technology end of the spectrum. There is a specific process defined for the tasks, and anyone following the process will turn out an acceptable product. At McDonald's, training typically includes having employees watch short training videos—a form of explicit knowledge—distributed by the corporate offices.

In contrast, the ability of a musician to create a one-of-a-kind multimedia experience is considered more toward the magic end of the spectrum, represented in Exhibit 1.6 by the musical notes. The art of making music typically is associated with years of training, and the results may not be replicable by other artists or even by the same artist at a later time.