

My Discussion Board post:

This is actually one of my major pet peeves. Companies, at least on a large scale, do not check for technology competencies before hiring someone. Just about any office job requires some kind of technology competency. But many people get hired without being tested or checked for their technology expertise. I don't mean that someone has to know how to write code, be a Microsoft Office Master, and be able to fix hardware in order to get a job in a company's finance department. However, they should know how to use Microsoft Office, be familiar with an Operating System (preferably the one they'll be using) and have basic internet skills. Too many people simply put their computer skills on a resume without really being able to create a PowerPoint, or properly format a Word document. Excel is a very difficult program to understand, but for some jobs it is a critical tool.

So, the question becomes how do we assess technology competency for new hires? Well, that's a very interesting question because I doubt that there are many jobs that have equal competencies required. But, there are the basics. As part of the onboarding process each employee should take a "placement" test of their technology competencies. And depending on how well they do on the placement test, they should be offered remedial help to bring them up to speed. Numerous companies exist to provide online tutorials on Microsoft Office products, the Internet, Windows, Mac, etc. It would be a significant cost to the employer to acquire these services, but I would argue that it would cost far less in the long run to have their employees properly trained and properly prepared for the work environment they are entering.

Also, unlike education, there really isn't a ruling standards organization that sets forth the competencies or standards for particular occupations. This makes it difficult for someone to know what to learn in order to get a certain job. This process of coming up with standards would take long time and require input from a number of different sectors. But I think it would be very valuable to a company as a part of knowing what they are getting when they hire someone. If a candidate was able to write that they have mastered standards 1-4 of the Workplace Technology Standards then a company would understand the investment involved in hiring the candidate if there was technology training needed.