



macromedia® white paper

Digital Communication Research: Summary of Results

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From May to June 2005, Macromedia and Certiport conducted a research study in North America, Britain, and Australia to learn about views on digital communication at work and in education institutions. The survey results from over 3000 employers, educators, and students indicate that communication with technology improves success in school and work.

Digital Communication

Today's communication with technology takes place through an array of media, from interactive websites to virtual meeting environments. Digital communication has become a foundation skill for most careers, but it involves more than simply attaining computer literacy. Success in school and in the workplace depends on knowing how to select the right medium for the message and then design and create different forms of communication.

Last year's report by NCREL and The Metiri Group ranked the value of both technological literacy and effective communication alongside that of rigorous academic standards. Research from MIT also indicates that adapting to changes in technology requires not only knowing how to use technological tools, but the ability to use those tools to express oneself creatively (Resnick, Rusk, and Cooke, 2003).

Research Study

Macromedia and Certiport collaborated on a 2005 research study to learn more about people's views on requirements, goals, and trends in digital communication, the effective communication using digital formats such as video, audio, animation, and images. The research team surveyed more than 3,000 people working in business, government, and education. Initial findings indicate three noteworthy results:

- **Trends:** People use new forms of digital communication to become more productive, make their communications more persuasive, and teach more effectively
- **Job success:** Individuals, organizations, and industries all find value in digital communication technologies
- **Certification:** Strong interest exists in certification for digital communication skills

Trends in Digital Communication

The data from the study indicate that the biggest trends in digital communication center around the use of video on the web, the use of "rich" media presentations (multimedia delivered over the web), and mobile communication. Over 70 percent of the respondents currently use or plan to use video on their websites. Nearly two-thirds said they use or plan to use rich media presentations on the web as a form of communication. These responses were consistent across respondents in business, education, and government.

Respondents in both education and business felt that they could create more persuasive content using video, podcasting, and other rich media on the web, indicating a feeling that media have a stronger impact than just text and images. Respondents in business were strongly in favor of using video content and other rich media on their websites. When asked what made mobile communication valuable, nearly half the respondents cited increased productivity.

Respondents working in business also cited virtual collaboration environments as key productivity tools. Comparatively less than one third of the K-12 educator respondents felt productivity was the key value; their concern was improving learning. People viewed the use of video on the web as a way to teach more effectively and communicate more persuasively. All respondents appeared to embrace both the power and the potential of video, audio, and synchronous online connection to teachers and peers as ways to enhance learning.

Mobile e-learning was more popular in the education sector. Over 40 percent of educators currently use or plan to use mobile e-learning technology, with the strongest interest among respondents at vocational colleges. Blogging was most popular in higher education, with the strongest support among students.

Job Success: The Communication Connection

Given the extent to which both educational institutions and businesses have embraced digital communication technologies, it is not surprising that the survey indicates that people across a broad range of skill levels are using technology to communicate in a broad variety of ways and are seeking even more ways to communicate. The vast majority of respondents indicated that they need to be able to use digital communication in multiple ways to be successful in their jobs. The study validates that digital communication has become a foundation skill for today's workplace.

More than 80 percent of respondents said they create presentations, and more than 70 percent either create web pages or provide content for a website. More than half said they create web presentations that include multiple types of media content—audio, video, or interactivity.

Certification of Digital Communication Skills

The survey indicates that digital communication is critical for career success. As more and more organizations use more forms of digital communication, employees and students need new skills. In response to this need, public education entities have begun to require that career and technology education programs focus more closely on connecting course content to industry-validated certification. States such as New York and Virginia now require that all technology courses prepare students for industry exams. In the United Kingdom in 2004, former Minister of Education and Skills Charles Clarke called for vocational qualifications to be linked directly to relevant industry certifications so that students leaving school and entering the workforce would be properly qualified.

Interest in Certification

The survey data indicated a strong interest in certification of skills related to digital communication, specifically in web media and multimedia. Survey respondents felt widely that certification would be valuable or very valuable to them as individuals and to their organizations. More than 80 percent of K-12 educators among the respondents felt that certification would help them both to meet requirements for professional development and to integrate technology across the curriculum effectively. University faculty and students were the least likely to support certification.

Regarding the value of certification, the strongest response was that it would enable respondents to keep up with the latest technology. Employers and employees alike felt that certification would allow validation of a minimum skill level and differentiation of skills. Slightly more than half believed that certification would create new career opportunities.

The survey explored ways in which educational institutions might support new certifications for web media and multimedia. The survey data indicated that certification would have the greatest impact on courses at secondary schools and community, vocational, and career colleges, the institutions most likely to implement certification classes as part of degree and certificate programs. There was very strong support in higher education for digital communication certification to be integrated into continuing education programs. Even university educators, who were the least inclined to support certification, were interested in digital communication as part of a continuing education program.

Today's communication with technology takes place through a vast array of media, from interactive websites to virtual meeting environments. Digital communication has become a foundation skill for most careers, but it involves more than simply attaining computer literacy. Success in school and in the workplace depends on knowing how to select the right medium for the message and then design and create different forms of communication.

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