

Are you being passed over for possible jobs or promotions because you lack certain skills or knowledge? When was the last time that you took a course in a new skill, technique or discipline?

The job market can be very competitive. Maybe it's time to assess your situation. By upgrading your skills, you can increase your chances for landing the job that you desire.

Functioning in this 21st century

Technological advancements create rapid change in the workplace. Most people claim that they are "willing to learn new skills," but many have not pursued significant, advanced job-related training within the last five years.

Today, many employers expect job-seekers to be proficient in at least two or more software applications.

Five years ago, you may have been able to get by without using email or surfing the Internet. Now, you may be expected to use email about 40 percent or more of your workday.

Computer technicians often refer to old computers (that are only two or three years old) as "dinosaurs." Do you keep up with some of the latest advancements in computer technology or are you a dinosaur, too?

It's not too late to learn new skills. Persistence, patience, tolerance, determination—and perhaps fewer visits to the neighborhood movie theatre—will help you achieve your computer training goals.

Training Options

There are several options available to boost your skills and qualifications:

Evening (or daytime) instructor-led adult education classes. These courses are often available at high schools and community colleges. The training usually runs once a week for four to six weeks and are affordably-priced. You can earn continuing education units (CEU) and the pace is

often relaxed and may not include formal quizzes or tests. If you cannot afford to go back to school for your degree, or you already have a college degree—this training option might be the right one for you.

Online courses. Many colleges and universities offer online courses (accredited and non-accredited). Usually, online course information can be accessed from the school's home page on the Internet. You can take online courses from the comfort of your own home, day or night.

Degree programs. This is the most expensive and toughest option for many job-seekers. Acquiring hands-on computer skills is often helpful in one's career; however, some jobs or internal promotions may require advanced degrees. Will getting a bachelor's or master's degree put you in line with (or give you the edge over) your competition? If so, perhaps you should take this important step in your career.

On-the-Job Training (OJT). If your company offers in-house training, consult with your supervisor, training department, or human resources department to direct you to instructor-led/classroom courses or web-based/online courses that may be available. OJTs are usually free of charge and held during work hours. For this reason, OJTs are good options for people with busy lifestyles after hours or those with limited financial resources.

Tuition Reimbursement

Some companies offer tuition or educational reimbursement. Check with your human resources representative to learn which training options are available to you, including eligibility requirements and reimbursement limits.