

One size doesn't fit all for learning technology skills

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(PhysOrg.com) -- Simply hitting the wrong computer key may be all it takes for some people to learn new technology skills, while others need intensive training.

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Recent research from Deborah Compeau, Professor of Management Information Systems at the Richard Ivey School of Business, focuses on how people in organizations embrace and use technology.

For instance, a study involving employees at a large petrochemical company revealed a mix of learning styles. These include formal or traditional styles involving classroom and e-learning programs; informal, or unstructured and self-motivated styles, which is typically prompted by the need to complete a task or discover something new; and incidental, which often occurs by chance, such as hitting a wrong key.

The study was co-authored by Barb Marcolin, an Ivey Ph.D graduate, and Alain Ross, Assistant Professor of E-Commerce at Athabasca University.

The researchers grouped the learners into six categories:

1. "Purposive planners" - People who plan in advance with careful

attention to detail;

2. “Explorers” - Those who learn on their own by delving into new areas;

3. “Visionaries” - People who think about what new technology could do for themselves and their organizations;

4. “Problem solvers” - Those with a task-oriented mindset who learn about technology merely to master workplace tasks;

5. “Reluctant learners” - [People](#) who don’t see the value of technology and learn only what they need to survive at work;

6. “Pinballs” - Those who pick up a variety of knowledge often through incidental learning.

“Informal and incidental learning actually dominated ... it goes against the traditional mindset that exists around IT,” says Compeau. “Managers need to better understand and foster the value of technology learning.”

Details of the research were released today in the January edition of *Impact*, an online monthly publication featuring new research from faculty at the Richard Ivey School of Business. To read the full article, [click here](#).

Provided by University of Western Ontario

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