



What Today's Employers Expect And Why You Can't Afford to Ignore It Anymore

Abstract

In today's digitally driven economy, computer skills are no longer exclusive to IT professionals. They're an essential part of doing business. From small operations to global enterprises, organisations rely on employees at every level to engage with technology effectively.

This examines how digital literacy influences productivity, communication, and adaptability across sectors. It highlights the shifting expectations of New Zealand employers, the growing demand for a digitally fluent workforce, and why digital upskilling is no longer optional. It's critical to remaining employable and competitive in the current labour market.

From Optional to Operational: The Shift in Skill Expectations

There was a time when using a computer was a specialist skill. That time is over. In the contemporary workplace, foundational digital skills are now expected across almost every role, regardless of sector or seniority. Whether working remotely or on-site, employees are expected to:

- Navigate communication tools like email, Microsoft Teams, or Zoom
- Use spreadsheets to manage budgets, data, or schedules
- Create and edit documents, reports, and presentations
- Share and organise files across cloud-based platforms
- Engage in real-time digital collaboration with clients or colleagues

This shift isn't limited to corporate environments. In New Zealand, staff in retail, hospitality, construction, health services, education, and logistics regularly use digital tools to complete everyday tasks. Basic to intermediate digital competence is now as essential as written communication or customer service skills.



Real-World Applications Across Roles

Digital skills are no longer confined to traditional IT jobs. They are part of how work gets done across all functions:

- **Warehouse staff** operate barcode scanners, update stock using inventory software, and check manifests on tablets.
- **Administrators** compile professional reports using Word, manage calendars using Outlook, and track expenses in Excel.
- **Café owners and baristas** use cloud-based rosters, POS systems, and digital loyalty apps.
- **Tradespeople** receive job requests, issue invoices, and communicate with clients via mobile apps.
- **Job seekers** create online CVs, complete digital forms, and attend virtual interviews via video platforms.

Even roles that seem manual or client-facing often rely on back-end digital infrastructure. Without sufficient digital skills, employees can struggle to meet performance expectations or miss advancement opportunities.

The Productivity Edge

Digital competence is directly linked to workplace productivity. When staff are comfortable with digital systems, organisations benefit through:

- Faster turnaround times through efficient workflows
- Fewer mistakes, reducing rework or manual errors
- Clearer communication, particularly in hybrid or remote settings
- Better data handling, including real-time access and analysis
- Automation of repetitive tasks, freeing up time for higher-value work

For employees, the benefits are equally tangible. Competence with digital tools often leads to improved confidence, smoother onboarding, faster upskilling, and access to a wider range of career pathways.

It's no longer enough to be "good with people" or "quick on your feet" without digital fluency, even strong performers risk being held back.



What New Zealand Employers Are Saying

According to the 2022 New Zealand Digital Skills Aotearoa Report, more than half of employers struggle to find staff with the right digital capabilities. Gaps exist not only in high-tech roles but in general workplace IT literacy.

Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), which make up over 97% of New Zealand businesses, report particular challenges in recruiting and retaining staff with basic digital skills. Many SMEs rely on manual processes or outdated systems simply because their teams lack the training to transition to more efficient digital workflows.

The implications are significant:

- Missed productivity gains from underutilised software
- Increased cyber risk due to poor digital hygiene
- Lost opportunities in customer service, data insights, and operational scalability

New Zealand's economy, especially in regional areas, needs a digitally capable workforce to keep pace with global changes and support sustainable growth.

The Cost of Falling Behind

Digital exclusion is not just a social issue. It's a business risk.

Workers without sufficient computer literacy often face:

- Fewer job options, particularly in sectors where online applications or remote interviews are standard
- Higher stress levels on the job due to reliance on others for basic tasks
- Reduced income growth and limited pathways for promotion
- Increased vulnerability to redundancy, especially as automation expands

For employers, onboarding staff who lack core IT competencies requires more time, more support, and more resources. This limits agility and can erode organisational performance over time. Addressing these gaps through structured training, inclusive education, and cross-sector collaboration is not only socially responsible it's economically urgent.



The Future of Work: Digital First

The next wave of technological change AI, automation, data analytics, and cloud computing is already influencing how New Zealanders work. These trends are not limited to the tech sector. They are reshaping expectations across customer service, finance, trades, logistics, government, and education.

To remain employable and resilient in this environment, workers will need more than basic familiarity with digital tools. They will need:

- The confidence to adapt to new platforms and systems
- A mindset of continuous learning and digital curiosity
- The ability to critically assess online information, ensuring safe and informed use of digital tools
- A working understanding of cybersecurity and data privacy responsibilities

Digital literacy is no longer just about knowing how to use a spreadsheet, it's about participating in a digital society with competence, confidence, and care.

Conclusion

Computer skills are no longer optional they are the infrastructure of modern working life. For individuals, digital fluency means access to employment, progression, and greater confidence in navigating the future. For employers, it means a more agile, productive, and competitive workforce. And for New Zealand as a whole, it underpins economic resilience and social inclusion.

No matter where you are in your career entering the workforce, returning after a break, or aiming to upskill—building your digital capability is one of the most valuable investments you can make.

Want to Build Your Digital Confidence?

At Aspire2 Education, we're committed to supporting learners from all backgrounds to gain the digital skills they need to thrive in New Zealand's modern workforce. Whether you're just starting out or looking to sharpen your intermediate IT skills, [take a look here](#) and explore how our programmes can help you build confidence, capability, and career momentum.