

ICDL urges the Public and Private sectors to prevent misuse of technology in the workplace

Ethical use of IT resources results in organisational productivity and safe digital society, says Jamil Ezzo

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ICDL GCC Foundation, the regional arm of the ECDL Foundation and the governing body of the International Computer Driving License IT literacy programme in the Gulf region has urged organisations in the public and private sectors to monitor and control the use of technology in the workplace to prevent the misuse of Internet and improve employee productivity and create a safe digital society.

While the Internet is considered an essential productivity tool that allows employees to communicate rapidly, perform research, and engage in e-commerce activities, it could fundamentally be detrimental to an organization if it becomes a major distraction to employees allowing them to engage in inappropriate online activities such as chatting, visiting pornography sites, gambling, shopping, or illegal downloading of software, music and movies. Employees that download inappropriate material from the Internet tend to share it with colleagues and friends by email, potentially causing severe damage to an organization's reputation or increase the risk of software virus infections.

Jamil Ezzo, Director General, ICDL GCC Foundation says, "the Internet has become an integral part of our modern life and it would be difficult to envisage doing business without email or the web. The abuse of technology in the workplace points to weaknesses in an organization's employee training, corporate policies, and technical defences. Unless employers take serious precautionary measures to remedy these issues in the workplace, they will remain defenceless against viruses, security violations and financial hemorrhage. Organizations can resort to many IT solutions that will help monitor the use of Internet by employees and prevent them from accessing non-work related websites".

A recent study conducted in the United Kingdom found that 64 per cent of the large companies surveyed by the study had reported incidents of employee abuse of IT resources and one in five companies suffered from some form of abuse directly related to the use of the internet. The study concluded that employee abuse of IT resources lead to significant disruptions in business continuity and manpower wastage.

"ICDL is an inclusive IT literacy International certification that empowers individuals with the essential concepts of IT and understanding of the common computer applications. Educating users on the netiquette (network etiquette) of web surfing and online communication as well as the optimal use of computing is the central-pillar of the ICDL IT literacy program," says Ezzo. "For example, in a broader perspective, netiquette also covers issues of intellectual property rights, protection against computer viruses, and recycling to protect the environment. Other key concepts include the use of lifestyle technology such as digital cameras, Personal Digital Assistant (PDA) and third generation mobile devices.

"The burden of creating a respectable digital behaviour lies within the users themselves. Observance of netiquette will result in increased productivity and significant cost savings in IT deployment in the workplace. ICDL places high importance on promoting netiquette and has the express intent to provide guidance in the right direction to scores of IT neo-literates who are discovering the benefits that IT skills accord them," concludes Ezzo.