ICDL GCC Foundation raises public awareness on viable choices of operating systems and common productivity software

"Inexpensive and free software contribute significantly to the spread of computers among the Public" says Ezzo

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ICDL GCC Foundation, the governing body and certification authority of the International Computer Driving License (ICDL) program in the Gulf States, has recently called on the general public to be aware of the choices available for operating systems and common productivity software as part of its digital literacy program. The Foundation is making an effort to raise public awareness about the availability of choices of operating systems and office suites to help optimize digital skills independent of any vendor specifics.

"Innovative software such as operating systems, Internet browsers, social-networking software and office suites have become essential in our daily lives and revolutionized our use of computers. Nonetheless, ICDL believes that computers and software must become less expensive to get more people started and people must be offered with options. Indeed, the ICDL program is based on vendor neutrality and the public with the right set of knowledge and skills to be able to use the commonly used software despite of who makes them. The success of our digital literacy program in becoming the de facto standard is based on its non-commercial vendor neutrality approach thereby making candidates skilled, digitally cultured and aware of their choices," said Jamil Ezzo, Director General, ICDL GCC Foundation.

The International Computer Driving Licence concept is a globally endorsed digital literacy standard funded by the European Commission with the initiative to raise the level of knowledge about Information

Technology (IT) and increase the level of competence in using personal computers for all citizens of the world. The ICDL GCC Foundation was established to enforce and promote the concept of digital literacy in the GCC region.

"When we talk about digital literacy, we have to refer to digital competencies which enable an individual to be functional and confident in operating various applications of the information age. The world of technology is rapidly expanding and our mandate is not only to empower our candidates with the skills and the competency to use computers, but also to be aware of the ethical use of technology that cover subject like recycling, virus protection, use of social network software, digital devices, etc. Candidates are also exposed to the choices they have available on the market, and be able to use any commonly used software regardless of the environment or the vendor.

The Foundation continuously supports affordable and easy access to information technology which has proved to be a very efficient method to spread the use of computers and further involve people in the digital society. And in line with this objective, the Foundation also encourages its candidates to be aware of the choice they have for operating systems such as Apple OS, Linux, Solaris and Windows; and choices for common productivity software such as Microsoft Office, Google's online Docs and Spreadsheet, Lotus SmartSuite, Apple iWork, Sun Microsystems StarOffice and its relevant Open Source Office which can be download for free from www.openoffice.org..
To promote the different alternatives available, ICDL has partnered with Zayed University and other technology and academic leaders to establish the Open Source Lab. Open ICDL is a perfect IT literacy program which has been embraced by Zayed University Open Source initiative.

"The ICDL syllabus always reflects the latest in the fast-paced changes taking place in the technology industry with vendor neutrality. The ICDL program has over 20 content providers that develop learning and testing material based on the ICDL syllabus. Several vendors opt to develop content specifically addressing the education market while others may choose to develop their content tailoring to the professional market or other markets. The ICDL learning material can be self-taught or used in a class environment and it is available in various formats including CBT, online and printed books." Ezzo concluded.
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About ICDL
International Computer Driving License (ICDL), is an internationally recognized computer proficiency standard that is owned by the The European Computer Driving License Foundation (ECDL) and introduced by the UNESCO's Cairo Office (UCO) for Arab states in 2001, is gaining increasing acceptance in the Middle East, with several governments adopting and prescribing it to their employees. The ICDL program exists in over 143 countries, and is offered in 42 languages, including Arabic. The programs offered are all based on one standard syllabus and question set. There are more than 27,000 centers worldwide, above 7 million candidates (500 thousands candidates in the GCC region alone), more than 2 million issued certificates and over 25 million exams have been taken globally since the launch of the program year 1997.

About ICDL GCC Foundation
ICDL GCC Foundation was created by the ECDL Foundation, the not-for-profit global governing body of the ECDL and ICDL member countries dedicated to helping raise the general level of computer skills in societies and providing access for all to the information society, to serve the to the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) States with their implementation of ICDL and for providing them with localized support to ensure quality of ICDL programs. The ICDL GCC Foundation is the sole accreditation body that is responsible to support ICDL accredited training and testing centers in the GCC. It also acts as the reviewing and approving body for the local adaptation of ICDL programs.

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