

Technology

■ Better IT, Better Business

The more technology has advanced, the more money companies have spent on IT to improve everything from productivity to communication. But even as they spend more in their IT budgets, many managers are wondering whether the investment is really worth it. Some business schools are now stepping in to offer programs that link IT savvy with management know-how, so that management and IT professionals can make better decisions when it comes to their IT expenditures.

For example, since the 2000 launch of its Master of Science in Management of Information Technology, the McIntire School of Commerce at the University of Virginia in Charlottesville has seen a steady rise in the program's enrollment. Aimed at working professionals from one side or the other of the IT/management divide, the program is designed to teach both groups how the other side works.

"In the late 1990s and early 2000s, people were throwing huge amounts of money at IT because they knew its potential. But they were realizing increasingly low returns on their investment," says Cyndy Huddleston, assistant dean of graduate marketing and admissions. "We've spent the last five years trying to understand how managers can learn to use technology to save costs, create value, and drive business."

Students can opt for McIntire's 12-month program, in which they meet every other Friday and Saturday in Charlottesville; or its 16-month program, in which they meet every other Saturday in Reston. During the program, students continue to work and use the IT man-



Students in McIntire's MS MIT program link technological savvy and management skills.

agement challenges they face at their jobs as the basis for much of their discussion and assignments. Both tracks follow a four-module progression that includes IT architecture; IT project management; enterprise IT management; and the capstone module, IT strategy and management. The capstone module also includes a feature called "Executive on Ground," in which CIOs from companies such as Sprint and the Peace Corps mentor students and help them with their final projects.

It took a year—and interviews with 40 managing partners and CIOs—to create the MS MIT degree, says Barbara Wixom, associate professor of commerce and program director. Since then, 445 students have completed the program, and 72 are currently enrolled. In the future, the school plans to add tracks

that target the government and finance sectors.

Both Wixom and Huddleston say they've been most surprised by the patterns of enrollment in the program. Early cohorts were filled mostly with lower-level managers who had been sent by their supervisors. But when those managers returned to their jobs with improved skills, their supervisors decided to enroll as well. Today, Wixom says that senior-level managers make up nearly half of enrollment.

"Our MS MIT program is attracting IT professionals who want to think like businesspeople and managers who want to know more about IT," says Wixom. "All managers want to know whether they're making the most logical IT decisions and getting the most return on their IT investment."

Rising Interest in Online Ed

A recent survey indicates that adults may be turning to online education in greater numbers. High Voltage Interactive, a California-based marketing firm, surveyed 1,000 adults, most ranging in age from 24 to 65, regarding their attitudes about online education. Of those surveyed, 74 percent indicated they would consider taking classes online. Moreover, when respondents were asked to choose among 27 online degrees, business was the most popular option, with nearly 50 percent expressing interest. Forty-two percent were interested in education or human resources, and 36

percent were interested in accounting.

According to the survey, 42 percent of respondents expected online education to be supplemented with face-to-face meetings. In addition, when it comes to taking a course that combines online and face-to-face interactions, respondents preferred to meet in person once a week (43 percent). Fewer were interested in courses that met in person only once a month (31 percent) or once a semester or quarter (17 percent). Only 9 percent preferred courses that included a one-week intensive

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The number of public wireless "hotspots" recently surpassed 100,000, up from 57,000 just a year ago, according to JiWire, a California-based company that helps mobile users find access and connect to wireless Internet service. Which country has the most hotspots? The U.S., with 37,073. Which city? Seoul, Korea, with 2,056.

classroom session with the rest of the course given online.

Respondents also were asked whether they preferred to learn online or in the classroom, and why. When presented with seven possible reasons, those

who preferred to work online ranked the ability to "work at my own pace" and "work on my own time" as their top two reasons for preferring online courses. Reasons such as "cost tends to be less" and "usually takes less time" ranked last.

Those who preferred to work in a physical classroom presented

TOOLS OF THE TRADE

Hyperion Offers Software Grants to B-Schools

Hyperion, a software company in Santa Clara, California, recently announced that its Academic Alliance Program will offer software grants to business schools worldwide. The grants will provide Hyperion's Business Performance Management software and enable its integration into business and business technology curricula.

The grant program will make available case-based Business Performance Management instructional materials; demos and tutorials; computer-based training courses; and white papers on the use of business performance management and business intelligence tools. In the future,

the program also will provide hosted online access to more tools, applications, and resources. To that end, Hyperion will begin testing remote, hosted access to materials, in which faculty and students can use its query, analysis, and reporting tools. With these tools, users can develop custom, personalized "dashboards" over the Internet and use them to control and monitor their individual projects.

A growing number of companies are using business intelligence and performance management tools to manage their businesses, says Valter Cantino, a professor at the Scuola di Amministrazione at the Università di Torino in Italy. Hands-on experience with these tools helps students learn "to draw information from various managerial systems and processes, including financial consolidation, enterprise resource planning, and auditing and compliance," he adds.

Current recipients of the Hyperion Academic Alliance Program grants include the Università di Torino, Chulalongkorn and Rangsit Universities in Thailand, and the University of Baltimore's Merrick School of Business in Maryland in the U.S.

To learn more about the Academic Alliance Program, visit www.hyperion.com/services/education_services/academic_alliance.cfm.



a more mixed response. Younger respondents were more likely to question the credibility of an online degree, while older respondents were more likely to want regular face-to-face interaction in their educational experience. When respondents in both groups were asked what would most convince them to take an online course, they ranked “knowing the value of the online degree” as the most important factor.

To read more of the survey, visit www.searchforclasses.com/temp/surveyresultsshortversion.pdf.

Technology's 'Top Ten'

The March/April issue of *Technology Review*, published by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in Cambridge, included its 2006 list of “10 Emerging Technologies” that hold the most promise for computing, medicine, telecommunications, and business.

In addition to a number of new medical technologies, this year's top ten included advances such as pervasive wireless technology that can seamlessly link wireless devices to data networks; cognitive radio,

which allows wireless devices to share airwaves more efficiently; stretchable silicone that will allow for the manufacture of devices flexible enough to be rolled up like a newspaper; and universal authentication, which will assign Web users a code that allows them to move from site to site while keeping their personal information secure.

To read a list and descriptions of all ten technologies, visit www.technologyreview.com/special/emerging.

DATABIT

According to a survey from CyberSource Corp., a supplier of e-payment and risk management products, companies with online operations lost **\$2.8 billion** to online fraud in 2005.

NEWSBYTES

GOOGLE TAKES ON FINANCE

In March, search engine giant Google announced the launch of the beta version of Google Finance, which will compete with established financial sites such as Yahoo Finance, Marketwatch.com, and TheStreet.com. The new wing of its popular search engine site will include stock market information, financial news, links to companies, blogs, and an interactive chart that connects world news and events to changes in stock prices. The site also allows users to create personalized lists of stock quotes for selected companies and funds. Danny Sullivan, editor of the SearchEngineWatch.com, told CNet.com that he wondered what took the company so long to enter this area of the online market, adding that this was a “good move” for Google.

ONLINE LIBRARY BY 2010

The European Union's Information Society and Media Commission plans to make available an online digital library comprising at least 6 million texts by the end of this

decade. The creation of the European Digital Library was sparked by Google's 2004 announcement that the popular search engine planned to begin digitizing texts from major libraries. The European Union hopes that 2 million texts will be available online by 2008.

FRANCE TAKES ON APPLE

France's lower house of parliament recently passed a law that may put a halt to Apple's dominance in that country's digital music market. The new law requires online music retailers, including Apple's iTunes, to provide users with conversion codes that will allow them to transfer one format of digital music to another. The codes, in place to protect copyrighted digital material, currently do not allow such conversions to take place. The lasting effects of the law are uncertain, but digital music providers have protested the law as a measure that may weaken their defenses against music



piracy. Some industry watchers fear it may result in Apple pulling iTunes out of France altogether. The law still must be reviewed by France's upper house.

PROTECTING COPYRIGHTS

Ever since the first songs, movies, and images were posted online, thieves have tried to infringe on their copyrights and steal them. To help combat this problem, researchers at the Clark School of Engineering at the University of Maryland in College Park have created a new form of digital rights management technology. The technology specifically blocks “collusion attacks,” in which thieves avoid detection by working together to steal “pieces” of a movie or image and then reconstituting the material for distribution. Old theft-prevention technologies would not be able to track individual thieves in a collusion attack. The new technology, however, embeds a unique ID code on each piece of multimedia content, which can be traced back to the thieves, no matter how many.



■ Biz History Comes Alive on the Web

Knowing the history of business is crucial to understanding today's business trends. With this in mind, librarians at the Harvard Business School's Baker Library in Cambridge, Massachusetts, want to ensure that the lessons of business history are widely available via its new series of Web-delivered media, "Historical Returns."

The series combine a selection of original short films, Web links, books, articles, digital content, and digitized historical documents from Baker Library. The first installment of the series, "Financial Bubbles," depicts the similarities between the 1990s dot-com boom and a similar financial crisis in 18th-century England known as the South Sea Bubble. Like the Internet craze, the years leading up to the South Sea Bubble were marked by financial promises, "irrational exuberance," and the ultimate collapse of the South Sea Company in 1720.

These series are created for a general business audience, and all of their information will be available to the general

public. They are designed give visitors a chance to compare historical events and ideas with their modern counterparts, explains Mary Lee Kennedy, Baker Library's executive director. "Each Historical Returns capsule provides relevant material from our historical collections,



These two 18th-century images depicting the South Sea Bubble are part of the Baker Library's online business exhibit, "Financial Bubbles."

research tools, and a Flash movie to frame and contextualize a specific business climate," she says.

The series highlight the role history plays in business, both in informing its present and shaping its future, says Karen Bailey, curator of rare books for the library. The Web is one of a library's most effective tools for making that historical information available, she adds. "The Web is a hub of discussion and an environment where ideas can travel, connect, and spread," says Bailey. "There was never any question that this type of dynamic setting was perfect for a series like Historical Returns."

The capsule "Financial Bubbles" is now available at www.library.hbs.edu/hc/historicalreturns. The release of the next installment is planned for later this year.

■ iPod Nation Comes to UMich

The University of Michigan's Ross School of Business in Ann Arbor announced a partnership with Apple, in which it will convert recordings of its events and seminars to podcasts. The free podcasts will be offered to the business school community via Apple's iTunes Music Store.

Such information already was available on its Web site; but school administrators felt that providing it in podcast format would make the audio versions more accessible, since users can download them to any MP3 player, as well as to their desktops. The podcasts will include channels for school news, events, and seminars; centers and institutes; and publications. UM's schools of music and dentistry started offering podcasts last year. ■