

# *Information Technology*

## **The Axe Man**

There's an old story about a young fellow hired to be a lumberjack. He sets off into the forest with his fine new axe and fells 12 trees his first day of work. The foreman is delighted. The next day he fells 6 trees. By noon of the third day, he's cut down no trees, and the foreman goes to see what's wrong. The foreman sees him whacking away at a tree, but no chips are flying, so he asks, "have you sharpened your axe?" The young fellow replies, "I don't have time to sharpen the axe – I'm too busy cutting trees!"

I've lost track of the number of times I've been in a client's office doing something simple, like moving a folder, or selecting multiple files, when someone says, "how did you do that?" People aren't dumb or incapable of learning – they just never learned how to use the system. Their axes aren't sharp.

An old rule of thumb in the IT industry says that the costs of a large project will be divided about equally among hardware, software and services, including training. Inadequate training leaves users afraid of a new system. Costs and frustration go up as users attempt to apply what they know (the old system) to a different environment. When in doubt, over-train. It'll be cheaper than days or weeks of frustration and lost productivity.

Given that training is good for your business, where should you go to get it? For a niche or industry specific product, the vendor or local dealer will usually supply training. For widely used products like Windows, Word, etc., training is available from a variety of sources: books, videos, CDs, online classes and classroom instruction. Each type of training has advantages, so you should select training based on your staff's current level of knowledge and preferred way of learning. While classroom training may appear to be the most expensive alternative, it may actually be the most efficient, because of the hands-on experience, opportunity to ask questions and ability to be tailored to your specific needs. If you opt for classroom instruction, RCC, the Rockland Teachers' Center, and numerous commercial centers offer classes in Windows, Word, Excel, etc.

So, sharpen the axe and watch the chips fly!

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