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# FOCUS ON PER

## PO 6: USE INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY

**Technology plays a central role in virtually every finance team. Today's professional accountants must be web-savvy, spreadsheet-literate and comfortable adapting to new or bespoke software – especially those who aspire to wider business management and leadership roles. And mastering technology won't just make you super-efficient in the workplace; you'll be streets ahead of technophobic colleagues who shun any chance to turn computers to their advantage.**

Whether you're gathering or analysing data, preparing presentations or reports, building financial models, stress-testing budgets or implementing new systems, there's no escaping technology for handling information and communicating your messages. But that means there are plenty of ways in which you can build and demonstrate your competency:

- Take advantage of relevant free downloads to expand your software knowledge – you'll develop a mindset that's totally adaptable to technology, making it easier for you to pick up any new software.
- Make the most of any tutorials that accompany your company software – or find them online.
- Join website forums where you can swap ideas and ask questions on various applications – often, the best hints and tips come from experienced users, not the manufacturers or vendors.

OUR THIRD ARTICLE ON ACHIEVING THE THREE PERSONAL EFFECTIVENESS PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVES LOOKS AT HOW YOU CAN DEMONSTRATE YOUR COMPETENCE FOR PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVE 6 – USE INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY.

- Get into the habit of using the help facility on your PC to resolve any problems or find out how to do something – instead of always being first on the phone to your employer's IT support helpdesk.
  - If you use spreadsheets, try to master at least one useful new piece of functionality each week; find the fastest shortcuts and demonstrate your prowess in the files that you use in the office.
  - Learn to conduct advanced internet searches – watch your search times decrease and your results become more highly targeted.
  - Teach yourself how to build and manage a database – from creating a basic structure through entering data to writing sophisticated reports and queries.
  - Improve your organisational capability (and impress your boss) by tracking any projects with spreadsheet-based Gantt charts or by using specific project management software.
  - Boost your presentation skills by getting to grips with PowerPoint or other slideshow applications – making you less reliant on colleagues in marketing or design.
  - Make the most of your phone – learn how to use mobile technology to keep up-to-date with business and financial news; or sign up with a recruitment agency for SMS job alerts.
  - If your tuition provider offers online facilities, such as podcasts, video lectures or chatrooms, take full advantage.
  - Manage your schedule more effectively by integrating all your e-mails, diary appointments and to-do lists.
- You can find out more about the ACCA's Practical Experience Requirement for membership at [www.accaglobal.com/per](http://www.accaglobal.com/per) – but don't let technophobia get in your way. The next step is to answer the three unique challenge questions for this objective in the trainee development matrix (TDM), accessed via *myACCA*:
- Describe your experience of using information technology (think about reasons you've used IT and what challenges you may have to overcome).
  - How have you applied your IT skills to improve your personal performance? (List the ways in which you do certain parts of your job better, faster, or more accurately).
  - How have your IT skills and associated improved performance benefited the wider organisation? (Consider how you might have contributed to streamlining procedures, helping the team, saving money or time, impressing customers or suppliers, or coaching others to use IT more effectively.)
- Finally, remember that all ACCA Qualification exam syllabuses cover and test a range of personal effectiveness skills.