

SkillPort Gives DCMA Employees an Edge in Learning

By Dianne Ryder, Editor in Chief

SkillPort, a Web-based resource sharing system, is an innovative method for Defense Contract Management Agency employees to increase their learning capabilities. However, some potential students may be unaware of how SkillPort can help them advance their educational goals.

Inez Paul, management program analyst, elaborated on some of SkillPort's unique features. "SkillPort offers over 3,200 courses and more than 10,000 books through Books 24/7, and those numbers are growing monthly," Paul said. "We offer several curricula to our workforce, such as Business Skills, [Information Technology] End User, IT Professional Certification, Workplace Compliance, Financial Service Industry [and] Environmental/Safety/Health/Transportation, to name a few. The list just goes on and on."

Paul explained that these curricula entail a wide range of subjects, such as leadership, strategic skills, professional and personal development, logistics, human resources, ISO 900 overview, safety and a variety

of information technology courses (e.g., Microsoft® Office applications).

Paul said the SkillPort program is relatively user-friendly, but training is also available for those who need additional assistance.

"For those who prefer tutorials prior to use, SkillPort offers an [Adobe®] Flash® demo available to all users through the login screen. In addition, a help link is available for any function a user or administrator may be interested in performing." If further aid is required, SkillPort also offers live technical assistance that can be accessed online at <http://support.skillssoft.com/livehelp/>, via e-mail at support@skillssoft.com or by phone at (866) 754-5435.

"While I feel confident that SkillSoft's helpdesk will resolve any issue promptly," Paul said, "users are welcome to contact me directly for assistance as well." As far as formal training, Paul said, "In the near future, we do plan to offer brown bag lunch training and host virtual training sessions for end users since some have expressed interest."

Regarding the rules for enrolling and completing courses through SkillPort, the Workforce Development Center does not require notification or coordination of any kind.

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(Background and Opposite Photo) Computer keyboard.

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In the past, DCMA organizations, particularly contract management offices, have required an SF182 or DD1556 form for transcript purposes. Continuing this practice is at the discretion of each CMO. Courses taken during duty hours, however, must be approved first by a supervisor and should be listed on an employee’s individual development plan. Workforce Development is currently updating old business processes and standard operating procedures to reflect this information in detail.

Employees may be able to read books online during duty hours, but, again, this is

discretionary. If the material is approved first by an employee’s supervisor because it’s work-related or developmental training, a reasonable amount of duty time may be allotted for training. As with courses, employees may also use Books 24/7 after duty hours to take advantage of resources on non-work-related subjects they may have an interest in and access the application from home. They can also sign up for e-mail notifications when books are added by accessing the “Settings” tab within Books 24/7 and selecting the “New Book Alert” option.

The primary benefits of using SkillPort are clear — it offers a wide range of course material and targets DCMA’s entire workforce. As technology progresses and financial resources are more limited, blended learning programs that combine computer-based training and instructor-led training are expanding.

“SkillPort is advantageous because it offers something for everyone, and the training is instantly, conveniently available,” Paul said. “I can’t encourage employees enough to speak with their supervisors about computer-based training opportunities that are of no extra cost to DCMA,” she added. 



(Above) Workstations. (Photo courtesy of ©iStockphoto.com)