As you learned in Chapter 1, office competencies are a requirement for many workers in performing their jobs. Whether or not you know what you want to do as a worker, you will find the content of this textbook valuable. You will develop skills and understandings that have application to all types of careers and will be useful preparation for work of any kind.

In the first topic of this chapter, you will find a brief overview of overall occupational projections to the year 2008. Next, you will be introduced to basic office competencies. These competencies are discussed in relation to basic skills and job opportunities. The second topic of the chapter focuses on overall goals of organizations and the contribution expected of employees. A discussion of how you can plan your strategy for developing office competencies follows.
The business office has changed a great deal. Before the personal computer became common in business offices, companies often employed two office workers to support each executive or manager. Today, executives and managers are not likely to have the services of office support staff as full-time assistants. **Projections** to 2008 show a strong demand for executives, managers, professionals, and technicians. Yet, administrative support services jobs are not expected to increase at as high a rate as total jobs.

Many persons entering the workforce are expected to have basic office skills or competencies. These skills can be acquired through your studies while you are still a student gaining your basic education.

Much information is available about types of jobs in the United States. The federal government, through the Department of Labor, monitors the total workforce and provides information about the current employment situation. Also, the Department of Labor undertakes research to predict the need for workers in the future. Such information is valuable to individuals as they plan for their future careers. Schools and universities, too, use such predictions to plan courses that prepare students for jobs.

**National Overview of Employment**

The U.S. Department of Labor publishes and provides **online** *The Occupational Outlook Handbook*, which discusses the major occupations in the country. From this book, you can learn about job prospects in a wide range of fields. The 2000–01 issue has projections to 2008. The monthly magazine *Monthly Labor Review* updates projections and provides additional information about job opportunities.
In projecting employment to 2008, the government’s economists judged rate of increase. The overall projected rate of increase in jobs was 14 percent. Professional specialty occupations are expected to increase by 27 percent from 1998 to 2008. Administrative support occupations, which are also referred to as office support services, are expected to increase by 9 percent during the same period. Note the percentage of change (growth rate) projected for other occupational groups in Figure 2-1.2.

Figure 2-1.3 shows the ten occupations that are projected to grow the most in number of jobs from 1998 to 2008. Note that office competencies are needed in most of these occupations.

**Outlook for Employment of Office Workers**

Automation will continue to have an effect on many administrative and clerical support occupations. This effect is shown in the low rate of growth projected to 2008. However, many jobs will be available in this area because many persons in this group will need to be replaced. Some workers will leave the field to enter new jobs or to retire. For example, approximately 3.2 million persons work as secretaries and nearly 2 million work as information clerks. These are among the largest of all the job groups in the United States workforce.
### 10 Occupations with the Largest Job Growth (1998 and Projected 2008)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Employment (Thousands of Jobs)</th>
<th>% Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Systems analysts</td>
<td>617 to 1,194</td>
<td>94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retail salespersons</td>
<td>4,056 to 4,620</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cashiers</td>
<td>3,198 to 3,754</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General managers and top executives</td>
<td>3,362 to 3,913</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Truck drivers, light and heavy</td>
<td>2,970 to 3,463</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office clerks, general</td>
<td>3,021 to 3,484</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Registered nurses</td>
<td>2,079 to 2,530</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computer support specialists</td>
<td>429 to 869</td>
<td>102%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal care and home health aides</td>
<td>746 to 1,179</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher assistants</td>
<td>1,192 to 1,567</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


### Workers Face Expanded Job Responsibilities

Office activity is increasing because of the growth of business throughout the **global marketplace**. A change has taken place, however, in who handles office tasks. Far more workers are performing office tasks than in the past. Modern technology is responsible for the shift. All types of workers can handle office tasks because of the technology available. If no **innovations** in technology had occurred during the last 20 years, about six times as many office support employees as are now employed would be needed to handle the volume of activity. Remember, though, many office support workers will continue to be employed in businesses.

**global marketplace**: buying and selling of goods or services throughout the world

**innovation**: new method or idea

**Figure 2-1.3**

Toula Ahara was hired nine months ago as a receptionist in a travel agency. She acquired office skills in high school. She completed a liberal arts program at a community college before she accepted the job. Toula loves to travel. She had taken many trips while a student. Soon after her job began, the manager asked her to assist clients. Toula enjoyed this part of her job. Just a short while ago, Toula was promoted to travel agent. She said this about her new job: “My love of travel is one key to my promotion. The other key is my skill with the personal computer—from word processing to database management.”

**WORKPLACE CONNECTIONS**
An Overview of Office Competencies

A wide range of activities make up office competencies. However, four major groups based on primary skills reflect the overall nature of office work. These are:

- Word processing
- Data processing
- Information management and transmission
- General managing and communicating

You will now become acquainted with each of these categories. Pay attention to the basic skills needed for doing tasks effectively and efficiently.

Word Processing

Communicating information effectively is important in all types of organizations. Much information is communicated using written documents. **Word processing** is the producing of written documents such as letters or reports by using software programs and computers. Usually these documents are shared in printed form. Increasingly, however, written documents are shared and read online. Electronic mail messages, for example, are often used to...
HTML: hypertext markup language, authoring language used for World Wide Web and intranet documents

desktop publishing: producing documents that include both text and graphics

proficiency: ability to perform at a satisfactory level

speech recognition software: computer programs that allow the user to input text and commands by speaking into a microphone

communicate within a company. Some word processing programs allow the user to save documents in HTML format. These documents can be posted on the company intranet, for example, and viewed in browser software.

Desktop publishing is closely related to word processing and requires many of the same skills. Desktop publishing is the producing of documents that include both text and graphics. Examples of these documents include newsletters, brochures, and forms. Basic desktop publishing can be done using word processing software such as Microsoft Word. Desktop publishing software programs, such as Adobe PageMaker, are used for advanced desktop publishing.

Basic Competencies

The proper and efficient use of a personal computer in composing, revising, and preparing many types of documents is the goal of skill development in this category. The essential skills include:

- Keyboarding with speed and accuracy
- Knowledge and skill in use of software programs
- Skill in formatting and proofreading documents
- A large vocabulary
- Proficiency with grammar, punctuation, and spelling
- Ability to learn special vocabularies
- Ability to follow instructions
- Skill in preparing copy from audio recordings, if employed as a transcriptionist
- Skill in dictating text and commands if using speech recognition software

Workers Who Need These Competencies

Word processing skills are needed by many workers. Executives and managers, both general and technical, spend much time composing written communications. Technical personnel, such as engineers, advertising designers,
architects, and public relations specialists, are employees likely to use word processing and basic desktop publishing skills in their work.

**Opportunities in Office Support Services**

Some office support staff provide full-time assistance handling word processing and basic desktop publishing activities. Among the positions observed in organizations in this category are typist, word processor, and transcriptionist. Such workers prepare drafts as well as final copies of letters, memorandums, and reports. They may assist one other worker or several. Some word processing workers assist an entire department.

Such office support workers are considered for promotions to jobs in the same category that require more advanced skills. For example, workers who quickly learn new software programs and can explain the details to other employees may be promoted to a supervisory or training job. Workers with good writing skills may become administrative assistants.

**WORKPLACE CONNECTIONS**

Bob Wells is a transcriptionist in a large financial services company. At the moment, Bob is transcribing from a tape of a speech given to a group of employees. After Bob keys the speech, the draft will be sent to the speaker for review. When the document is considered complete, Bob will prepare multiple copies. He will also save the file in HTML format. The file will be posted on the company’s intranet so employees who missed the speech can access it easily.

**Data Processing**

Data processing is the collecting, organizing, analyzing, and summarizing of data, generally in numeric form. Many positions require competency in such skills. This type of activity is usually done at a computer, using spreadsheet and statistical software programs. Though we think of data processing as primarily dealing with numerical data and word processing as dealing with text, the two processes often blend with one another. This blending process is made easier by the integration capabilities of software programs. Data processing and word processing are often collectively referred to as information processing. Many workers do this type of office activity.

**Basic Competencies**

Among the skills important for workers who handle data processing activities are the following:

- Proficiency with spreadsheet, database, and related software programs
- Knowledge of arithmetic processes and statistical methods
- Ability to be consistently accurate
- Knowledge of methods of organizing and analyzing data
- Ability to interpret data
- Ability to prepare reports that communicate information in a meaningful way
- Ability to maintain an organized workstation
CHAPTER 2: OFFICE COMPETENCIES

Workers Who Need These Competencies
Accountants, budget analysts, brokers, insurance salespersons, and many other types of personnel found in all kinds of organizations deal with data and prepare reports. As new software programs make processing data faster and easier, these workers must continually learn to use new programs and methods in their work.

Opportunities in Office Support Services
Many workers continue to be employed in the data processing category. They include specialized clerks, such as accounts payable clerk, billing clerk, order clerk, payroll clerk, and shipping clerk. Such clerks prepare and process sales, purchases, invoices, payrolls, and other types of transactions. Their work is vital to the whole organization.
Office support employees in this category have offers for promotion. Companies need workers who can oversee increasingly more automated systems for processing data. Consequently, beginners who have an aptitude for understanding the total operation and have learned their jobs thoroughly are good candidates for promotions.

The experience of one entry-level data processing worker reflects the opportunity for advancement. Gail began working as an order clerk in a manufacturing company when she graduated from high school. After six months, she was transferred to the controller’s office where she did tasks such as enter data from invoices and create reports. The controller noted that she learned quickly and talked with Gail about her future plans. He suggested that Gail consider enrolling in a college program to study accounting. Gail liked the idea. She began night studies at a local college. She realizes that she will not complete her college studies in four years. She likes working full-time and studying part-time. Gail’s long-term goal is to complete a college program and become an accountant.

Information Management and Transmission

Information management refers to the organizing, maintaining, and accessing of data. Transmission refers to the communicating of information both within and outside the organization.

Basic Competencies

The skills considered basic in this category include considerable variety:

- Identification of information needed in the situation
- Ability to maintain or develop an information system
- Ability to give attention to details
- Ability to use established procedures
- Knowledge of records management principles and basic filing rules
- Good keyboarding skills
- Proficiency in working with databases
- Ability to meet deadlines and solve problems
- Ability to work with others

Workers Who Need These Skills

A wide range of workers is likely to need the skills for information management and transmission. Personnel such as buyers, real estate brokers, and property managers must have well-organized information systems. The details they need to make decisions often require them to design their own systems. Often their information must be available to others, too. Following a well-designed system is the key to easy use of information.

Opportunities in Office Support Services

People who find gathering and organizing data interesting will enjoy work in this category. This category consists of updating information on a timely basis and transmitting information promptly. Among common jobs in this category are hotel and motel desk clerk, mailroom clerk, records clerk,
priorities: a listing of items in order of importance

**General Managing and Communicating**

*General managing* and communicating are broad areas that involve handling work time and tasks efficiently and interacting with other employees and customers. Setting up schedules, meeting deadlines, and tracking the progress of tasks are aspects of general managing. Communicating with customers and coworkers is a common activity for many types of workers in a company. Reporting on the progress of tasks, projects, or budgets are also aspects of general managing. Often, these reports are given orally and delivered with the use of a multimedia presentation.

**Basic Competencies**

The skills and knowledge needed to handle the activities in this category are varied. In general, they include the ability to:

- Establish priorities
- Establish schedules and meet deadlines
- Work in teams
- Motivate others to complete work
- Use a personal computer and manage files
- Handle telephone calls effectively
- Give attention to several tasks at the same time
- Determine the time required for completion of tasks
- Communicate effectively both orally and in writing
- Interact with many types of people at all levels of an organization or outside the organization
Workers Who Need These Competencies

General management and communication skills are critical for a wide range of employees, from executives to salespeople to office support staff. Office employees must be good managers of their own time. In addition, they must be skillful in guiding the work of any employees who report to them. They must be able to establish priorities and follow schedules for the completion of tasks. They must communicate clearly and effectively to coworkers and customers.

Opportunities in Office Support Services

Many office support staff provide the services of this category. The most common jobs include administrative assistant, secretary, customer service clerk, receptionist, and general office assistant.

Some positions in this category require specialized skills. The position of secretary, for example, may require high-level information processing skills. Receptionists must be at ease in meeting and talking with all types of people, both inside and outside the company. General assistants learn the special responsibilities of the offices in which they work. Then they take the initiative in completing tasks in the proper manner. For example, office assistants in travel agencies answer questions about advance payments required for tours, penalties for canceling tours, and documents required for travel to other countries. Office assistants in a governmental office, such as immigration services, understand the rules and procedures for processing an application for admission to the country.

Higher-level jobs are available to those who perform their initial tasks with success. There are many jobs in companies for those who have the ability to:

- Complete tasks with little or no supervision
- Use oral and written communication skills effectively
- Meet deadlines
- Organize tasks and work independently
- Evaluate their own performance objectively
Your Future Prospects

Your education, including your study of business subjects, provides you with a background of value in many occupations. You can enter some jobs after your high school graduation. Others require further education.

Some openings for high school graduates will continue to be available. Increasingly, however, jobs require skills and knowledge beyond those acquired through high school studies. Many organizations have on-the-job training and formal courses to prepare employees for new tasks or new ways of performing their jobs. Additionally, postsecondary schools that provide specialized training, such as business schools, community colleges, four-year colleges, and universities, have degree programs and continuing education programs. Continuing your education will add to your competencies for jobs that interest you.
Craig is soon to be a high school senior. He needs very few courses in order to graduate at the end of the school year. He has asked you and a couple of other friends to give him your opinions about what he should do about his school program. He has listed on a sheet of paper what he believes are his options. His list has these options, which are not in order of preference:

1. Take only the courses required in the mornings. Relax in the afternoon until my friends are free.
2. Take some extra courses, such as accounting, business law, or office procedures. Because I think I want to work in the business world or become a lawyer after college, these courses might be helpful.
3. Get a part-time job at one of the local fast-food places.
4. Really learn all about the new computer at home.

With a group of three or four other students, discuss the alternatives Craig has outlined. Select the alternative your group believes is best for Craig.

As a group, write a paragraph or two that identifies the alternative you think Craig should choose. Support your choice with reasons, and be prepared to share your ideas with the class.

1. In what way has the computer changed the nature of employment in companies?
2. What kind of information is provided in The Occupational Outlook Handbook?
3. By what percentage is the entire workforce expected to increase by 2008?
4. Explain why job responsibilities are expanding because of technological innovations.
5. Identify skills needed to handle word processing tasks.
6. What kind of workers need data processing competencies?
7. What are the critical skills and understandings needed to effectively perform information management and transmission tasks?
8. What are examples of good managing skills?
9. What qualifications do office support workers in entry-level positions need to be promoted?
10. What types of educational opportunities are available after graduation from secondary school?
Reinforcing English Skills

The following description of the job outlook for general office clerks is taken from *The Occupational Outlook Handbook* online. No spelling errors were in the original copy. However, misspelled words have been introduced.

1. Key the paragraph, correcting the spelling errors.
2. Use the spell check feature of your word processor to check for additional errors. If you are not sure about a word, check a dictionary. Remember to check for forms of words that are not used correctly such as “to” for “too.”

**Job Outlook**

Employment of general office clerks is expected to grow about as fast as the average for all occupations through 2008. The employment outlook for office clerks will be affected by the increasing use of computers, expanding office automation, and the consolidation of clerical tasks. Automation has led to productivity gains, allowing a wide variety of duties to be performed by few office workers. However, automation also has led to a consolidation of clerical staffs and a diversification of job responsibilities. This consolidation increases the demand for general office clerks, because they perform a variety of clerical tasks. It will become increasingly common within small businesses to find a single general office clerk in charge of all clerical work.


**Jobs in Your Community**

In this activity, you will become acquainted with jobs in the ten occupations that are projected to grow the most in number of jobs from 1998 to 2008 as shown in Figure 2-1.3. Work in a group with two or three classmates to complete this activity.

1. Choose occupations from the list in Figure 2-1.3 that you would like to investigate in your own community. Choose twice as many occupations as there are members of the group.
2. Decide who will investigate each of the occupations listed. You may choose to work in groups of two investigating the same four occupations, or each member of the group may select two occupations to investigate.
3. Through group discussion, determine the places in the community where you are most likely to get information about the occupation.
There may be a local association of persons in an occupational field, for example. Find answers to these questions:

- In what local organizations do you find workers in this occupation?
- What are the basic educational qualifications for these workers?
- What are the key duties of persons in this occupation?
- To what extent are workers responsible for office tasks?
- What promotional opportunities exist for persons in this occupation?

4. Review the information gathered by all group members and prepare a table that presents the information. (Hint: Column headings can be the occupations. Each row can deal with the response to a question.)

5. Participate in a class discussion of job opportunities in the community for these occupations.

**Study an Occupational Field**

For this activity, choose an occupational field that interests you. You may choose an occupation that you explored in Activity 1 or any other occupation. Do some research to become acquainted with this field.

1. Use the Internet or the resources of your school or local community library to get information about your occupation. A reference that is likely to be helpful is *The Occupational Outlook Handbook*, which was described briefly in this chapter. Find the following information for the occupation:
   - Educational requirements
   - General responsibilities
   - Employment opportunities
   - Promotional opportunities

2. Interview a person working in this occupational field. In your interview, seek answers to these questions:
   - What are the primary duties of a beginner in this occupation?
   - What do you consider your primary duties?
   - For each primary duty, would you consider education, on-the-job experience, or training the best source of preparation?
   - To what extent do you use a personal computer in completing your job tasks?
   - What office skills do you find most valuable in your work?
   - What advice would you give a student who is thinking of preparing for your field?

3. Create a report that summarizes the information you gathered. The final paragraph of your report should be your current opinion about the appeal of the occupational field as a career for you.
Organizations seek to hire the qualified workers who will be highly productive. In this topic, issues that affect achieving company goals will be introduced. All personnel are expected to help achieve company goals. Then the general expectations for employees will be described. Finally, a strategy for you to consider as you develop office competencies commonly needed at work will be presented.

Goals Influence Expectations for All Employees

If you were to read a dozen annual reports of Fortune 500 companies, you would find information about company achievements during the past year. You would also read about goals for the future. In some instances, goals are simply expressed as a long-term vision statement. For example, the head of one computer company declared that the company’s vision was to have a computer on every workplace desk and in every home. Others make predictions about level of earnings, new markets, new products, or improved customer service. The goals set by the company affect the work of all employees.

Issues such as quality management, customer satisfaction, and teamwork affect how successful the organization is in achieving its goals. These issues must be the concerns of all employees. The company expects all employees to be reliable and cooperative in efforts to increase productivity and meet company goals.

Total Quality Management

The primary goal of all businesses is to make profits. In an effort to increase profits, many companies have adopted total quality management (TQM) plans. TQM means establishing and maintaining high standards in how work is done and in the creation and delivery of goods and services. All
personnel, from the president to staff in the mailroom, are asked to view their work with an awareness of TQM.

The thrust of TQM is that managing quality is everyone’s business. Quality standards apply throughout the organization. For example, in one company, all office support workers were asked to keep track of the errors in their work. Two common errors were omitting an attachment with a letter and failing to answer questions of callers. After recording such errors, the next step was to establish a new way of working so the errors would not recur.

In some companies, an executive is assigned to lead the company’s efforts to improve quality. This executive works with groups of employees to find out what will improve performance or products. Many companies have developed slogans such as “Quality is everybody’s business” or “We want to be the best in all we do” to highlight their quality goals.

**Continuous Improvement**

Over time, the policies and procedures used by a company may become outdated or inefficient. Companies seek to avoid this problem by applying the concept of continuous improvement.

*Continuous improvement* means being alert at all times to ways of working more productively. Continuous improvement is a concept that overlaps the principles of TQM. All employees are encouraged to participate in continuous improvement efforts.

Because of new technology, companies are finding that many aspects of their work require changes. Continuous improvement begins with looking at the work that is done and how it is being done. Improvements are often possible. The attitude reflected in the question “Could this be done in a better way?” helps workers think creatively about improvements.

**WORKPLACE CONNECTIONS**

One office employee commented on how TQM changed his job:

It is amazing how you can maintain quality standards without feeling unreasonable pressure. Keeping track of questions I can’t answer has been an eye-opener. Some questions were about issues that are not handled by my department. Many, though, were about issues someone in my department should know about. I began to learn as I worked so I understood the entire department better. Now I can answer almost any question related to the work of my department. I am so much happier than I was earlier. I confess that TQM has made my job more interesting and me far more competent.
Companies often conduct surveys to see if they are consistently delivering the value demanded by customers. They study the results of such surveys and then make changes to improve customer satisfaction.

**Ethical Standards**

Ethical standards require honesty, fairness, and justice in all business dealings. These qualities provide the foundation of trust. Leaders of organizations are responsible for making clear their attitude toward standards of ethical behavior. Companies want to be considered trustworthy by their employees, their customers, companies with which they deal, and the public.

Companies have developed standards of conduct for their employees, called **codes of ethics** or codes of conduct. Such codes are communicated to all workers. Employees are generally informed about the code of conduct when they first join the organization.

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**code of ethics:** moral standards or values and related behavior; also called code of conduct

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**WORKPLACE CONNECTIONS**

One office assistant found that continuous improvement helps her be more productive:

I must telephone many people to get specific information. Frequently the person I need is out, and I leave a message, which states: “Please call Sally at...” Often when the person calls back I am out, so I find a message on my voice mail. When I considered how I handled such calls, I thought: Why not leave a message asking for the information I need? Then the caller could leave an answer at my voice mail if I am away from my desk. This is a timesaving way of handling my calls. When I get to my office after lunch or after a meeting, I now find answers to my questions. I do not need to make a follow-up call.

**Customer Satisfaction**

“We are here to serve customers” is a message that all kinds of organizations send to employees. Thinking through what you do in relation to what it will mean to customers is a key focus in many organizations. Many people believe that attention to customers is very important for long-term success.

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**WORKPLACE CONNECTIONS**

The staff of an organization is involved in a variety of ways in meeting the goal of customer satisfaction. One beginning worker, for example, described his experiences in these words:

I serve as an assistant in our Customer Hotline office, which is open seven days a week, 24 hours a day. Among the team are members who speak English, Spanish, French, Chinese, and Japanese. Together, we are able to provide customers around the world with information about our products. We can quickly put a customer in touch with a technical person, if additional assistance is needed.
From time to time, employees are called together to discuss what the code means in relation to specific behavior and actions. For example, all staff involved with purchasing—from directors to office staff—may attend a meeting dealing with a new conflict of interest statement. This staff interacts with many vendors who are eager to sell their products. The new statement makes clear that no employee is to accept gifts of any value, including trips to attractive vacation spots, from any vendor.

Companies also have procedures for handling violations of ethical standards. Employees found guilty of violating the code of ethics may be subject to disciplinary action. Continued or very serious violations may lead to immediate dismissal of an employee.
CHAPTER 2: OFFICE COMPETENCIES

Responsible Teamwork

Some people work alone at the company offices or at home. Frequently, however, employees must work in teams to complete tasks. Teamwork involves combining the efforts of two or more people to accomplish a task or achieve a goal. For a team to function effectively, each team member must understand the purpose or goals of the team. Each member of the team must accept responsibility for completing his or her duties and communicate clearly with other team members. For remote teams, in which team members may be located around the world rather than down the hall, communication is especially important.

FOCUS ON . . .

One common question asked of prospective employees is: “How willing are you to participate in teamwork?” Interviewers are asking this question because today’s business world is complex. Many of the tasks performed in any department require the skills and knowledge of several staff members who can cooperatively assess what is to be done, how it is to be done, and who will accept responsibility for parts of the task.

Working as a team, employees bring varying experiences, observations, insights, and knowledge to determining what action should be taken and following through with those actions. A team, thinking critically, is often far more successful than an individual working alone. This belief is commonly held in successful organizations and by many successful employees.

You have probably had experience as a team member—possibly as a member of a sports team, in a science laboratory, or in an after-school club. You may enjoy teamwork, or you may feel that you would rather work alone. If you have a positive view of teamwork, you will be a valuable employee. If you have a negative view of teamwork, reconsider your attitude. As an office worker, you will be expected to work in teams, and you will want to be successful in this aspect of your job. Consider these guidelines for working effectively in teams:

- Set clear goals for the team and create an action plan for achieving the goals.
- Define the responsibilities of each team member in achieving team goals.
- Identify how success will be measured. How will the team know when its goals have been accomplished?
- Identify obstacles to achieving the team’s goals and discuss ways to overcome the obstacles.
- Communicate clearly and often with all team members, and be open to all feedback and ideas. Schedule regular meetings or reports to track the progress toward achieving team goals.
- Discuss how differences will be resolved. Understand that all members of a team may not have the same level of authority.
- Build on the strengths of individual members. Encourage all members of the team to participate in making decisions and contributing ideas. Each team member has different skills and ideas that can be valuable to the team.
- Recognize accomplishments of team members and the team as a whole.
- As an individual team member, develop your colleagues’ trust by fulfilling your responsibilities, acting in a professional manner, and maintaining a positive attitude when discussing team activities.
Team members often are not from a single department. For example, customer collections were a problem in a relatively small shoe manufacturing company. The controller realized that those involved worked in the order entry, shipping, and billing departments. A team composed of several members of these departments was assigned the task of reviewing the policies and procedures involved. Through teamwork, the group recommended a new policy and related procedures. Soon thereafter, the problem was resolved to everyone’s satisfaction.

Global Marketplace

The area in which a company does business is called its marketplace. In the past, many U.S. companies sold their goods or services only in the domestic marketplace, meaning within the United States. Many of these companies now produce and/or sell their products in countries around the world. Some companies have moved into the global marketplace using only traditional sales channels, such as retail stores. Other companies have expanded using ecommerce to enter the global marketplace. These companies, sometimes called e-companies or dotcoms, sell goods and services online using a company site on the World Wide Web.

Whatever their sales strategy, moving to the global marketplace has affected activities in these companies. Employees must travel beyond the United States to other countries. Company personnel who live in other countries visit headquarters in the United States. Communications, too, must be international. Information for Web sites, advertising materials, and product instructions must be available in many languages. All personnel must be sensitive to variations in culture as they communicate with people of other nations. Employees must be acquainted with varying time zones, sources for information about travel, and places for travelers to stay and work in other countries.

ecommerce: business conducted electronically, as in making purchases or selling products via the World Wide Web

World Wide Web: computers on the Internet that use and transmit HTML documents


**Diversity**

*Diversity*, as it relates to organizations, means having a workforce with people from a wide range of ethnic and cultural backgrounds. Many companies seek to have diversity at all levels of the organization. In some companies, a diversity coordinator collects data about the company's hiring and promotion policies. This person also tracks the progress of the company in achieving its diversity goals. Employees are expected to respect coworkers and customers from all backgrounds. Diversity training programs are conducted to help employees become aware of issues related to diversity.

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**WORKPLACE CONNECTIONS**

Meg works in the human resources department where diversity is getting attention. She is one of the staff members planning diversity seminars. She was especially interested in comments from the managers who participated in the seminars. They described how their evaluations of employees are now influenced by what was learned in the seminar. Her company has an awards program honoring individuals who demonstrate a respect for diversity in their work.

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**General Expectations for Employees**

A company expects the same basic work qualities in all employees. The way these qualities are shown, however, will vary depending on the nature of the employee's work. Reliability, productivity, cooperativeness, and independence in learning are important qualities for all employees.
Reliability

Companies expect employees to be reliable. Reliable means dependable and trustworthy. Employers rely on employees to report to work on time and to devote their time on the job to completing their work. They expect to be able to trust employees to keep company business confidential and to protect the assets of the company.

WORKPLACE CONNECTIONS

A director of administrative services in a large bank commented on employee reliability:

Employees who have to be watched every minute in order to keep them doing what they should do are worthless in our bank. We must have reliable employees. One of the most common reasons for dismissal in our bank is unreliability. For example, one new employee failed to be at the office at eight o’clock on the mornings she was scheduled to open the office. The office was unattended. She didn’t call to explain her lateness; she just arrived two hours later. This pattern continued for a month. At that point, we had to dismiss her. We cannot function with such indifference to schedules.

Productivity

Productivity is demonstrated by completing an appropriate amount of work on time and according to instructions. Organizations are cost conscious, meaning that they are aware of how they spend their money. Employee wages is one of the major expenses in many organizations. Employers expect employees to produce a reasonable amount of work and contribute toward achieving company goals. Often specific, measurable standards for a day’s work are not practical. Supervisors and managers, however, have some level of output that they believe is reasonable for an employee. Following a schedule that ensures you will complete the amount of work expected of you is important.

Valuable workers are aware of what they are accomplishing each day. They are able to evaluate their own work and make changes as needed. Some managers discuss productivity with their workers in informal ways from time to time. Other managers expect workers to decide on their own what changes are needed to improve productivity.

Managers and executives identify the following barriers to high productivity among employees:
- Talking with friends by telephone
- Chatting with coworkers for long periods of time
CHAPTER 2: OFFICE COMPETENCIES

- Failing to maintain an organized workstation
- Failing to set priorities
- Moving from task to task before any one is completed

Cooperativeness

Most office employees work with others daily. Information must be shared, and tasks often require more than a single worker. Being cooperative is an important quality for all employees. Employees must be prepared to learn new skills and handle new tasks as circumstances change. Most office workers have job descriptions, but seldom do such descriptions fully describe everything the employee will do on the job. Employees who believe they need to do only what is outlined in their job descriptions are not effective workers.

One manager described an employee who was not cooperative in these words:

As long as Betty was not interrupted, she was a good worker. When I asked her to spend the next day at a conference center at midtown, however, she said she didn’t understand that she would have to work in another location. She said she was hired to work in the office. Even though nothing was stated about where she would work, she was right in assuming that she would be located at headquarters. From her own observations, however, she should have realized that employees travel out of town and many employees work at conference sites. After this encounter, I became more aware of Betty’s attitude, which was reflected in small ways as she worked with others. At the end of the year, Betty’s performance was assessed. Her level of cooperativeness was listed as an area for improvement. She was not added to the list of persons to be considered for promotion.

WORKPLACE CONNECTIONS

Figure 2-2.6
A disorganized workstation limits productivity.

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Independence in Learning

As you undoubtedly realize, all you need to know to be an employee—in any field—will not be learned while you are a student. One of the characteristics of modern life is that learning must be a lifelong activity. Professional workers, such as lawyers, doctors, and accountants, for example, must have continuing education experiences each year in order to maintain their professional credentials. Although some continuing education can be in formal programs, much of it is self-directed. Workers are in an environment where they can learn much from what they do and what they observe. Furthermore, organizations have resources such as databases and libraries that are available to employees. Companies expect their employees to learn how to use new equipment, software, and methods for completing tasks on an ongoing basis.

Maintaining a professional reading file is one example of how an employee can continue to learn. Magazines, newspapers, journals, and ezines contain many articles and reports related to office work. Many professions and industries have associations that seek to provide current information to members. For example, the International Association of Administrative Professionals is an organization for the office administration profession. Many of these associations have magazines or journals and Web sites devoted to topics related to the profession. Many also have yearly conferences or more frequent seminars that members can attend to learn about current developments, new equipment or methods, and issues of concern.

The Professional Development Resources feature boxes in this textbook provide the names of some associations that may be of interest to office workers. Articles from a wide variety of magazines and Web sites are also listed. Access and read these articles to learn more about topics related to the chapter content. If the articles listed are not available, or to find more current articles, search the Internet or library databases using the search terms provided.

Strategy for Developing Office Competencies

You are a student. What you have experienced as a student is of great value to whatever you choose as your career. You are evaluated when you submit assignments, complete quizzes, and take examinations. You have some idea of what you are able to do, what you would like to learn, and, possibly, how you can learn. You will develop many competencies as you study and participate in the activities provided in this textbook. You can develop general and specific competencies for becoming an effective worker. These competencies will be valuable in a wide variety of jobs and careers.

Consider the competencies you have now. What skills and understandings do you have today that would be of value to an employer? You may have work experience, either paid or volunteer. This gives you an introduction to what work is like. Think about what those experiences required and the extent to which you were comfortable in doing the work.
Your education has been focused on developing basic competencies that are critical for gaining the most value from your life. Those basics included reading, writing, arithmetic, speaking, and listening. You have also studied math, literature, history, social studies, physical sciences, languages, and other subjects. Think of your educational experience. Identify your key competencies that you believe will have value at work. Competencies commonly developed in elementary and secondary school are valuable competencies for the office. Note those listed in Figure 2-2.7.

Set goals for improving or developing new competencies. What do you want to accomplish this year? What skills do you want to improve? What new skills do you want to learn? Only you can make such plans. Only you can make a commitment to developing your office competencies.

**Competencies for the Office**

- Composing letters and reports
- Creating spreadsheets and charts
- Formatting memos, letters, and reports
- Keeping workstation organized
- Keyboarding accurately
- Learning software programs
- Listening and following instructions
- Maintaining records and files
- Managing time wisely
- Meeting deadlines
- Prioritizing tasks
- Proofreading
- Speaking appropriately by telephone
- Using references such as the Internet, databases, and reference books
- Working in teams effectively

Which of these competencies can you improve during this course?
Reviewing the Topic

1. What information are you likely to find in a company’s annual report?
2. What does a company hope to achieve with a total quality management program?
3. Who is expected to participate in a program for continuous improvement?
4. Why do companies value customer satisfaction?
5. To what do ethical standards relate?
6. Why is teamwork considered important in today’s world of work?
7. What changes are likely to be made in a company that shifts from being a domestic company to being a global one?
8. Why is a company interested in diversity?
9. Describe what you might observe to conclude that a worker is reliable.
10. “If it isn’t in my job description, I will not do it.” What does this comment imply about cooperativeness?

Interacting with Others

Tanya, a manager in an advertising agency, called a meeting for three members of the staff, Jill, Dave, and Donna. Tanya explained that she had just received a telephone call about an exciting offer to submit a proposal for a new account. Tanya told them the project will require an intensive period of work because a proposal must be submitted within two weeks.

The project is complex. Tanya believes, though, that the three of them can do the job. They will be given some help from the departmental secretary. They must research the types of advertising campaigns used in the industry. They must also gain information about what the client’s goals are and what its present image is in the marketplace. After they have gathered the information, they must develop what they believe are promising campaigns. Tanya told them that they can decide among themselves how to divide the work to be done.

Jill, Dave, and Donna met immediately after leaving the supervisor’s desk. Jill said: “Look, I feel rather tired and I just don’t want to start work on this right away. Could I just beg off the research? Then I’ll be happy to help you develop some plans for a campaign. I think I’m better in the creative part of such a project. I know that there will have to be many overtime hours during this first week of work. I just do not want to change my plans.”

1. In a group with two or three other students, discuss what you would say to Jill if you were Dave or Donna.
2. Prepare notes on your response for use for a class discussion.
In planning for next year’s budget for the accounts payable department, a study was done of how the work could be improved and costs reduced. The conclusion was that the office should operate with a supervisor and only two clerks, rather than the four clerks employed in the department last year. State-of-the-art equipment was purchased to help two clerks do the work formerly done by four clerks. This new equipment will increase the depreciation charge, however.

### Reinforcing Math Skills

In planning for next year’s budget for the accounts payable department, a study was done of how the work could be improved and costs reduced. The conclusion was that the office should operate with a supervisor and only two clerks, rather than the four clerks employed in the department last year. State-of-the-art equipment was purchased to help two clerks do the work formerly done by four clerks. This new equipment will increase the depreciation charge, however.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Last Year’s Expenses</th>
<th>Proposed Budget</th>
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<tr>
<td>Salaries</td>
<td>$133,000</td>
<td>$96,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Supplies</td>
<td>4,000</td>
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<td>Repairs and Maintenance</td>
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<td>Depreciation</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telephone</td>
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<td>3,900</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Calculate the total expenses for the department using last year’s figures.
2. Using last year’s figures, calculate the percentage of total expenses each of the expenses items represents. Round percentages to one decimal place.
3. Using last year’s figures, calculate the cost per invoice processed if 144,500 invoices were handled during the year.
4. Determine the difference in total expenses between last year’s figures and the proposed budget.
5. Calculate the percentage decrease in total expenses if the proposed budget is used.
Checklist for Evaluating Team Projects

For this activity, work in a group of three or four students to develop a checklist for evaluating team project participation.

1. Search the Internet or other reference sources to find at least two articles about effective teamwork. Make a list of the main points of each article and share this list with the group.

2. As a group, prepare a list of factors to be included on an evaluation checklist. For example, one factor might be: Completed work on time. Decide on a system to use in rating how well a student does on each factor on your list. (Hint: Should there be A, B, C grading? or 1, 2, 3, 4, 5? or Excellent, Good, Poor?)

3. Prepare a final copy of the checklist with the factors and rating scale. Use an appropriate title and format the document so that it will be easy to read and use.

4. Participate in a class discussion and share the factors your team used on the checklist.

Professional Reading File

Develop a database to record the source of newspaper, magazine, or online articles that will help you increase your knowledge of office work and related issues. Many articles that are published in hard copy newspapers and magazines can also be found online. Use your favorite search engine or sites such as Find Articles.com (www.findarticles.com) to look for articles online. Many major newspapers also have online sites (www.ChicagoTribune.com, for example) where you can find some of their articles.

1. Create a new database file to store information about articles for professional development.

2. Include the following fields in the database:
3. Format the data table or design a form to make entering the data convenient.

4. Begin your reading file using the articles in the Professional Development Resources feature boxes from Chapters 1 and 2 on pages 8 and 57. Enter the data for these four articles in your database.

5. Search the Internet or use hard copy publications to find two additional articles related to topics studied in Chapters 1 and 2. Read these articles and enter them in your database.

6. As you study each remaining chapter in this textbook, find at least one article related to topics studied in the chapter. Read the article and update your database.

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**Field Name** | **Description**
--- | ---
Title | Title of the article
Subject | Subject of the article (Sometimes the title may not clearly suggest the subject of the article.)
Author | Author name
Publication | Name of magazine, newspaper, or Web site
Date | Date of the publication or the date you accessed the article online
Web Address | For articles accessed online
Notes | A place to record your brief notes about the article
Summary

Chapter 2 gave you an overview of the workforce as provided by the U.S. Department of Labor in *The Occupational Outlook Handbook*. You also learned about key categories of office competencies needed by many workers in today's workforce, employer expectations, and a strategy for developing office competencies. Consider the points listed below as you reinforce your understanding of the topics in this chapter.

- The information provided by the U.S. Department of Labor is useful in learning about occupations. Projections for workers are given through the year 2008.

- Although there will continue to be job opportunities in office occupations, the rate of increase is lower than that for some other occupational groups.

- In many occupations, workers are expected to have office competencies. Therefore, your study of this subject is valuable for your future, regardless of your career interests.

- Office competencies are considered in four categories: word processing, data processing, information management and transmission, and general managing and communicating.

- Goals of companies influence their expectations for all employees.

- Organizations focus attention on concerns including total quality management, continuous improvement, customer satisfaction, ethical standards, responsible teamwork, global outreach, and diversity.

- Qualities considered important for employees are reliability, productivity, cooperativeness, and independence in learning.

- Planning a strategy for developing office competencies will be valuable to you no matter what you choose for your life's work.

Key Terms

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<tr>
<th>aptitude</th>
<th>general managing</th>
<th>projection</th>
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<tr>
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Chapter 2: Expectations of Employers

Expectations of Employers

Become acquainted with workers’ opinions regarding basic expectations employers have for employees.

1. Working with one other student, interview someone about his or her work. The purpose of the interview is to learn opinions about the importance of basic expectations in specific situations. Collect the following information:
   - Name and current position of the employee
   - The employee’s opinion of how important each of the following qualities is to his or her employer: reliability, productivity, cooperativeness, independence in learning
   - A specific example that shows the importance of each of the qualities listed above

Ask the employee to respond using these evaluation ratings:
   - Very Important
   - Somewhat Important
   - Of Limited Importance
   - Of Little or No Importance

2. Key a report of your findings.

3. Discuss the findings in class, noting similarities and differences in responses.

Chapter 2: Employment Projections

Employment Projections

Research current employment projections. Then key a report highlighting the information.

1. Open and print the data file Project.pdf, which contains the report. Follow the formatting instructions written on the document. Correct any spelling or word usage errors you find in the document.

2. Use the current edition of The Occupational Outlook Handbook to find current employment projections. You can access the Handbook online at the Bureau of Labor Statistics Web site (http://stats.bls.gov). If you do not have access to the current edition of the Handbook, use the information provided in the Chapter 2 text and figures.

3. Create a column chart using your spreadsheet software to show the three occupational groups with the largest percentage increase. Then copy the chart into the report.

4. Proofread carefully and correct all errors before printing the report.