

# Why Should *Employees* Care About Workplace Literacy?

“Literacy is *not* just about being able to read at some one, universally basic level. Rather, it is the ability to read, write, work with numbers, problem-solve, communicate, and/or think critically at whatever level is needed to complete the task at hand. In an everchanging workplace, ‘basic’ has become a bit of a moving target. If they are to keep pace with change, *all* employees need to continually upgrade their skills and embrace the notion of lifelong learning.”

-- *The L Campaign Information Kit*, BC Federation of Labour, 1999

Employees and job seekers gain a variety of benefits from upgrading their skills. Skills improvements for employees often change their ability to perform their jobs well. With enhanced skills comes a greater capacity to adapt to change, to learn at work and to respond to competitive challenges. As a result, employees gain rewards and recognition from their employers in the form of better pay, promotion, job security and career opportunities ... Benefits to employees of improving their workplace basic skills include:

- Ability to complete the same tasks faster and more accurately
- Improved morale and self-esteem
- Ability to work better with coworkers or in teams
- Improved reading, writing, numeric, communication, and problem-solving skills
- Greater chance of being promoted or transferred into new positions
- Increased pay or responsibility

-- *Conference Board of Canada*,

[www.workplacebasicskills.com/non\\_frame/wep/employee\\_benefits.htm](http://www.workplacebasicskills.com/non_frame/wep/employee_benefits.htm)

“Employers and employee representatives who initiate workplace literacy initiatives must also be recognized for their contribution to improving literacy skills in the workplace. These initiatives ... can have a positive impact in areas such as production, wages, workplace health and safety, and union participation. Furthermore, workplace literacy can have positive intergenerational literacy effects; as workers become more literate, they can become bigger contributors to literacy within their families.”

-- *Raising Adult Literacy Skills: The Need for a Pan-Canadian Response*, Human Resources Development Canada, June 2003

“Strong basic skills provide members with the foundation for ongoing training and retraining. They are better prepared to move into jobs with new technologies and to enjoy greater job security and advancement.”

“Upgrading basic skills can boost workers’ self-esteem, develop their confidence, and increase their desire to learn for personal fulfillment. Feeling better about oneself and one’s abilities is often the greatest benefit of learning.”

-- *The L Campaign Information Kit*, BC Federation of Labour, 1999

“While BC does have groups with special needs such as older workers and immigrants, literacy is not directly restricted to marginalized members of society. Significantly low literacy levels can be found in most communities throughout the province. It has been said that many workers need to continuously acquire new skills and qualifications in order to succeed in the new economy.”

-- *Closing the Skills Gap: A Report of the British Columbia Chamber of Commerce Skill Shortages Initiative*, April 2002

“It is estimated that over an employee’s lifetime, a male worker with a high document literacy level can expect to earn \$1,743,000 in pre-tax earnings, or \$585,000 more than a male worker with a low document literacy level. A female worker with high document literacy can expect to earn \$1,242,000 in her lifetime, or \$559,000 above that estimated for women with a low document literacy level.”

-- *Raising Adult Literacy Skills: The Need for a Pan-Canadian Response*, Human Resources Development Canada, June 2003

“In addition to higher profits for firms, learners also realize higher earnings as a consequence of investments in literacy skills training; it is estimated that each additional year of education raises an individual’s annual earnings by some 8.3%, of which approximately one-third is attributed to improved literacy skills.”

-- *Raising Adult Literacy Skills: The Need for a Pan-Canadian Response*, Human Resources Development Canada, June 2003

“The census showed clearly that the chances of making it to the top earnings levels are most directly associated with educational attainment, and particularly with a university degree. In 2000, more than 60% of earners in the lowest earnings category (less than \$20,000) had no more than a high school education and 37.4% had less than a high school education.) However, more than 60% of earners in the top category (\$100,000 or more) had a university degree.”

-- *Earnings of Canadians: making a Living in the new economy* - 2001 Census: analysis series, Ministry of Industry, March 2003