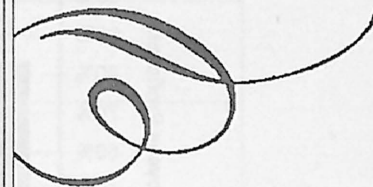


## IMPROVING THE EMPLOYEE SOFTWARE TRAINING PROCESS

by Billie Clements



The goal of the Employee Software Training Process Team at the Mishawaka-Penn-Harris Public Library was initially to improve the process of training staff on new software. Team members were chosen from each of our three locations: Jennifer Ludwig from our downtown (Main) location, Babett McBain from our Bittersweet Branch Library, and me, from the Harris Branch Library. The purpose of our charter was to create a standardized process for training staff to use software and complete at least one rapid cycle improvement of the process. We had no knowledge of the software skill levels of the staff as our process began.

As we began to flow chart the process, it became apparent to the team that there was no distinct process for training staff on new software. A number of sessions with many "parking lot" ideas resulted in our team forming the question: what is the knowledge level of our staff of various software programs? We decided to collect data with a simple survey labeled as the Employee Software Questionnaire. The staff had to rate their comfort level of a particular software on a scale of 1-5. The team members reviewed and compiled the findings from our three buildings and transferred the data to an Excel spreadsheet. From the spreadsheet we created an Average Proficiency Rating Sheet that has categories at the top and then employee responses listed below. From these results, we determined how proficient our facility was as a single entity per software. That average was used to generate the percentage of proficiency chart (Figure 1).

The free form answers the staff gave in response to what software they thought would be helpful or they wanted to learn were also calculated into a Demand Spreadsheet. We produced two charts with the demand information. One was a bar chart in the form of a Pareto Chart (see Figure 2). From the consultants, we learned that when we add percentages from most to least, the results by the time we reach 80 percent is what the staff actually wants and needs to learn. These are the items we should tackle first and foremost.

After reviewing the information, we realized this survey did not completely tell us what we needed to

know. For example, many staff members wanted to learn how to use Publisher, but it was not actually needed for their particular job. There was a high staff interest in learning new software. The team needed to know what software knowledge was most needed to provide better customer service. The awareness of this need resulted in the process team reframing our initial question. Our reframed question was: how can our library improve the process of training employees in computer software skills to give better customer service?

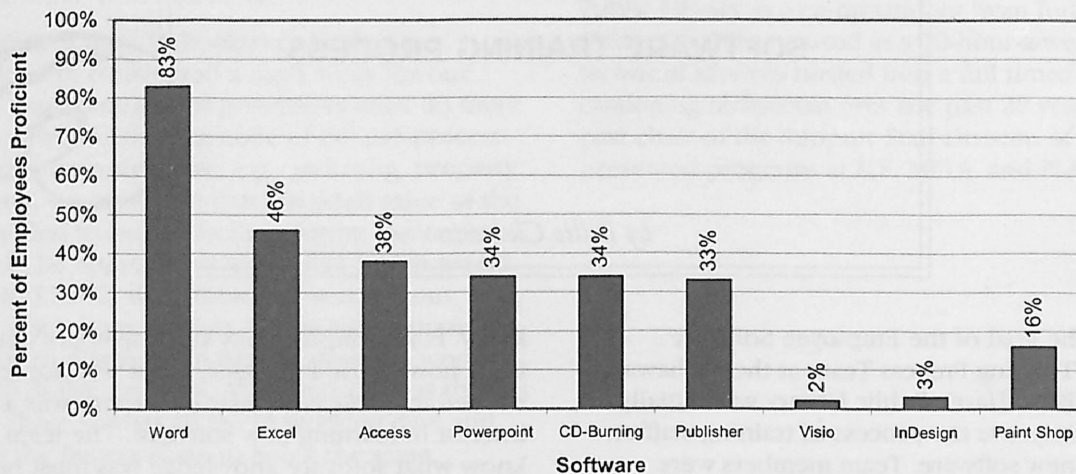
The team now had a need for another but different set of data. A Reference Desk Check Sheet was created with various categories of possible patron needed assistance (Figure 3). The team requested that the staff assisting patrons with computers tally the types of assistance provided. We gathered data at all public computer service desks for a week. This became a cooperative effort of all staff dealing with patrons and computer customer service. Our staff was most supportive and helpful as data was recorded from the various service desks.

When this compiled data was displayed on a chart, we could immediately see what questions were being asked frequently. We could also see with which software the patrons most needed assistance. The Check Sheet let the process team recognize the areas of frequent need for assistance by the patrons. Most of the questions were for help with Microsoft Word, general internet assistance, or computer troubleshooting (Figure 4).

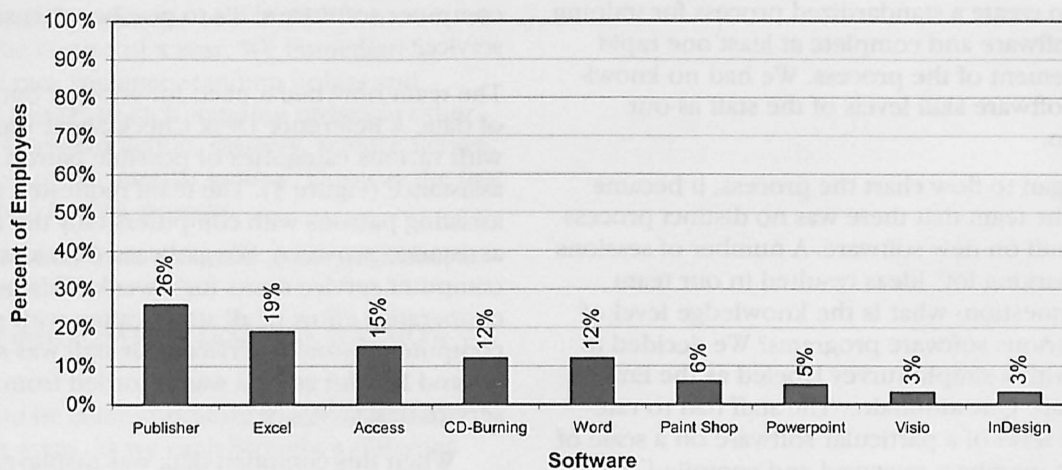
We realized our collected data could be information that another team could use to develop a process for orienting new staff. The Employee Software Questionnaire was referred to that team for possible incorporation and amending to use as part of the orientation process.

Our team made recommendations that each building would have at least two trainers. Each person would have expert level knowledge of at least one software program. Cross training would be necessary between buildings at this point depending on the software and availability. Eventually we envision a stationary training

**Figure 1: Current Employee Proficiency**



**Figure 2: Employee Training Demand**



team in each building so a trainer would not need to travel to train staff. Our other vision is to have an expert team, not trainers, who are able to assist staff with minor problems and questions. The team recognizes these are long range goals with a number of processes that may need to be addressed as our library continues improvement.

#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Billie Clements is a reference/young adult librarian. She also maintains the local history section for the Harris Branch of the Mishawaka-Penn-Harris Public Library in Indiana. She coordinates YA and some adult programs. Away from the library, she enjoys gardening, reading mysteries, travel, nature, and researching history and genealogy.

Figure 3: Reference Desk Check Sheet

<i>Task</i>	<i>Number of Times Requested</i>
Print in Color	
Enlarge Pictures for Printing	
Inspire Referred Shown how to Use	
Other Database Assistance	
Help with the Unemployment Website	
Internet Assistance in General	
Setting up an Email account	
Scanning Assistance	
Questions Pertaining to Microsoft Word (make note of those items most commonly asked for)	
Questions Pertaining to Microsoft Excel (make note of those items most commonly asked for)	
Questions Pertaining to PowerPoint (make note of those items most commonly asked for)	
Questions Pertaining to Microsoft Access (make note of those items most commonly asked for)	
Questions Pertaining to Microsoft Publisher (make note of those items most commonly asked for)	
CD-Burning Assistance	
Computer Troubleshooting (computer freezing, canceling print job, etc.)	
Miscellaneous (make note of those items most commonly asked for)	

Figure 4: Customer Technology Assistance Requests

