

The Journey InsideSM: Technology and Society Student Handout: Beyond School

Beyond School

One of the reasons that you are in school is to become prepared for future jobs. The job market has changed since your parents finished school. Some jobs have disappeared, and other jobs have been created. This will be true for you as well. Consider that on December 31, 1995, there were only 24 businesses providing Internet services. By December 31, 1996, there were 2,298 such businesses. What kind of skills would a person need to succeed in this kind of business?

On May 22, 1997, *The Oregonian*, a newspaper published in Portland, Oregon, included an article looking at companies in Washington and Oregon that make computer chips. In 1995, a large group of companies were surveyed to determine their future needs for new workers. In 1996, when the same companies were again consulted, it was very clear they had badly underestimated their needs. In almost every instance, their estimations were much too low. In 1995, they hired almost 50 percent more operators, almost 20 percent more technicians, and 25 percent more engineers. Their estimates for 1996 were off even more. In each of the three categories, they hired more than double their estimated number of workers.



Other studies focus on similar situations. The May 20, 1997, issue of *Inc.* looks at companies supporting the auto industry. These companies have traditionally hired many workers directly from high school or college. In the last 20 years, suppliers to the auto industry dwindled from 10,000 to only 2,800. The number of people earning a living from a home-based business continues to grow. In 1991, there were only 12 million home-based workers. In 1996 there were 16 million home-based workers. In this same time period, computer service and repair businesses grew by almost 8,000 new businesses (Source: County Data Corp.)

Today's jobs, as well as future jobs, require knowledge and skills that go beyond what your parents needed to enter the job market. The list includes:

- The ability to work with groups of people. Increasingly, the workplace includes working with others both locally and at a distance.
- The ability to communicate well. Communication now goes beyond talking and writing. You must be able to use the telephone and electronic mail to communicate with others.
- The ability to learn to use a wide variety of technology, including computers and a variety of devices that use embedded processors.
- The ability to learn—to be a lifelong learner. The changing nature of the job market means that you will change jobs frequently during your adult life and will need to learn new skills with each job.

Activities

1. Think about the places you have been during the last week—stores, the mall, the theater, home, school, etc. Create a list of where you saw people making use of technology as part of their job and identify what it was each person was doing.

From this list, select one item. Think about how much training it takes to learn to use the technology you saw being used on this job. How often do you think the person needs to learn something new because of changing technology?

2. Think about how the things you are learning in school are helping to prepare you for jobs of the future. Discuss the knowledge you are gaining in school that is definitely going to make a difference when you begin to look for a job. What kinds of things can you identify that school is not providing for you at this time? What could you be doing in school to better prepare yourself for the jobs of the future?
3. Many of the jobs that are the most interesting or challenging require you to attend a college or university before you can actually start working in your chosen field. Being accepted into a program of higher education is not automatic. You must meet specific requirements. This means you must be careful to make the correct choices during your high school years.

Identify a college or university that is located near where you live. What is necessary for you to qualify for admission to this school? If you wanted to study computer science so you could become a computer programmer, what kinds of courses do you think you should take in high school?

Identify a career choice that interests you. Create a list of courses you think might qualify you for admission for a program preparing you for this career. What qualities do you identify in yourself that might suggest you could succeed in this field?