

GET SMART!

Most of us know what we should do to stay physically fit, even if we don't always do it. But did you know that you can keep your brain fit with exercise too? According to "Cognitive Fitness," an article in the November 2007 *Harvard Business Review*, you can actually physically change your brain by learning new skills! The article discusses research from the 1990s "decade of the brain" that proves that our cognitive abilities and neural networks can be strengthened and improved by our life experiences and interactions with our environment. The old belief that the brain loses function and cells as we age may just not be the case.

Cognitive fitness can be defined as "a state of optimized ability to reason, remember, learn, play and adapt that is enhanced by certain attitudes, lifestyle choices, and exercises." Workers who are cognitively fit are better at making decisions, problem solving, reasoning and handling stress—all desirable qualities for the workplace.

Included in the article are the four steps to cognitive fitness along with a personal program for exercising your brain. The following are a few things you can do right now to start your cognitive fitness program:

Manage by walking about: walking and moving around invigorates your brain; leaving your office space for unfamiliar territory broadens your perspective.

Read funny books: never underestimate the power of humor! A good joke can strengthen your brain and benefit your immune system at the same time.

Try new technologies: experimenting with as many different technologies as possible sets off all kinds of auditory, visual and tactile networks in your brain.

Get the most out of business trips by soaking up the local culture. Visit a museum, read a book about the area, talk to the locals.

Take notes—and then go back and read them: keep a small notebook handy to jot down anything that comes to mind—those random thoughts might be the inspiration for the next great business venture

Learn a new language or instrument: learning a new language is the marathon of brain exercise.

For more information about cognitive fitness, including the four steps and the **complete** personal exercise plan, call 703-792-4880 or email MAGIC at magic2@pwcgov.org. The article is "Cognitive Fitness," by Roderick Gilkey and Clint Kilts and appears in the November 2007 issue of the *Harvard Business Review*.

WHICH FONT SHALL I WEAR TODAY??

All of us spend time carefully choosing the correct wardrobe in order to make a good impression. When sending email messages or composing reports, we probably spend time carefully choosing our words to convey the correct ideas. But did you know that the font you choose in those messages can also impart certain images about you?

In the March 2008 issue of *Government Technology*, there is an article titled "Finding the Right Clothes for Your Words". The article cites a study by the Software Usability Research Lab at Wichita State University. Researchers analyzed 20 commonly used fonts by asking more than 500 people what images those fonts projected. Below is a list of some of those fonts and the results of that study.

The two most popular fonts:

Times New Roman: a serif font which incorporates small designs at the ends of letter strokes. Serif fonts aid legibility and are often used for the body of works.

Arial: a san-serif font which is starker and bolder. This type font is often used for titles and headlines.

Other fonts included in the study:

Kristen: the study found this font projects flexibility, can also suggest instability and rebelliousness.

Impact: impact projects assertiveness but can also connote rudeness and unattractiveness.

Georgia: this is the font for those who want to connote practicality.

Gigi: Gigi suggests creativity, as well as impracticality and passivity.

Courier New: chosen for its uniformity due to its monospaced font; each letter takes up the same amount of horizontal space. Can suggest conformity, unimaginativeness and dullness.

General rules of thumb for using fonts:

- Use a maximum of three different fonts per page.
- Avoid long stretches of text in italic, bold and uppercase which can be more difficult to read.
- Make sure there's enough contrast between the letters and the background. The most legible combination? Black on cream.

Want to browse a variety of fonts and download your favorites for free? Visit **101 Free Fonts**: www.101freefonts.com/

To view the Wichita State Study in its entirety, visit: <http://psychology.wichita.edu/surl/usabilitynews/81/PersonalityofFonts.asp>

If you would like to read the full article in **Government Technology**, call 703-792-4880 or email MAGIC at magic2@pwcgov.org.

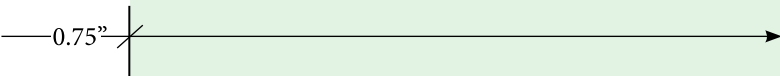
From the
Trenches...

Wide Margins Save Paper

Want an easy economy that may save lots of paper? According to the February 17, 2008 issue of *The Washington Post*, a study by the Penn State Green Destiny Council estimates that reducing margins widths on Word documents from 1.25 inches to 0.75 inch would result in an average paper savings of 4.75 per cent. At Penn State, this could total an estimated savings for paper of \$123,011 per year.

To change your document margins in Microsoft Word

1. From the File menu, select Page Setup
2. On the Margins tab change the left, right, top and bottom margins to 0.75"
3. Click the Default box in the bottom left hand corner—when prompted reply Yes to the changes.



Empowering Goals

Goals motivate and communicate, according to Shelley Metzenbaum of Harvard's Kennedy School of Government. Goals that are "specific and clearly defined serve as a sort of shorthand language" and let employees know where to concentrate their time and attention.

Performance management systems are tools to translate goals into measurable objectives. The Kennedy School of Government's document *Get Results Through Performance Management* lists 10 traits that characterize effective performance measures:

1. Outcome-focused
2. Few, simple, and resonant at the top
3. Challenging, but realistic
4. Cascading down and rolling back up
5. Broadly used
6. Visible
7. Interactive and informational
8. Frequent and fresh
9. Segmentable
10. Fact-based

The full report includes discussion on implementing each individual trait. See the full report at www.hks.harvard.edu/visions/performance_management/local_memo.pdf

Chesterfield ranked in the Training Top 125

Chesterfield County, Virginia is listed as one of the Top 125 training organizations in the country according to the February 2008 issue of *Training Magazine*. Ranked as number 45, Chesterfield has a training budget that is 3.3% of their payroll. According to *Training Magazine* these training dollars are spent on succession and human resources planning which offers strategic development opportunities for employees, initiatives to help county managers become better "talent" and "human capital" managers and strengthen the county's talent pool.

Doing Business Internationally?

To avoid misunderstandings, frustration and possibly embarrassment when doing business internationally, use Canada's Agri-Food Trade Service's *International Business Etiquette Internet Sourcebook* at www.atn-riae.agr.ca/export/4027_e.htm#4. Here you find links to a collection of web sites that discuss cultural and regional customs for negotiating, etiquette for meetings and gift-giving in various regions and countries of the world. Whether you are planning a trip overseas or entertaining foreigners here in the United States, this information will help you make a great impression.

