

UMUC Business and Executive Programs Podcasts  
**Essential Competencies for the 21st Century Manager**

**Commentator:** Dr. James J. Stewart

**Podcast Title:** Technology Fluency: An Overview for Business Students

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**Stewart:** Hello I'm James J. Stewart, a collegiate professor in the Graduate School of Management and Technology at University of Maryland University College, where I teach in the MBA program. I'm going to be talking to you now about technology fluency, which is one of the competencies that the MBA programs at UMUC seek to give you. I'll tell you just a little bit more about myself, then I'll cover what technology fluency is--and why you need it--and then how the UMUC MBA programs help you to get it. I'll summarize on technology fluency and then tell you by whom I'll be followed in the next Podcast.

As I said, I'm a collegiate professor at UMUC. I'm also a career technologist with considerable time in both public service and private enterprise, doing such things as managing computer centers, doing computer programming, and performing system analysis. I think I'll add one more thing about myself because it's relevant to you who are in or are considering a part-time, after-hours graduate program such as ours at UMUC. I happen to have earned three degrees in part-time programs, just like you are or could be, and I understand the demands on your time and perhaps in the background I'll be thinking of them as I get now into what technology fluency is.

Basically, it's the competency in use of computers, hardware, and software. It's also the competency in the use of the associated telecommunications that, these days, more than ever, connects computers into networks around the world. Finally, technology fluency is for many of us additionally competency in use of one or more other technologies such as perhaps aviation technology, biotechnology, or some other form of medical technology. Now why do you need technology fluency? These days, you need it to keep your job. I think I can say without much hesitation at all that you must be able to use a computer to get your job done today, starting with being able to process documents--Word documents in particular--and going on to dealing with spreadsheets and PowerPoint presentations and many other more specialized forms of software. You have to do that to keep your job. But, there's really more to why you need technology fluency. You need it to get a better job, because technology fluency implies that you will understand the business uses of technology beyond what you need for your current work. In particular, you'll understand where technology can be used to give your firm or public agency a strategic competitive advantage. There are many examples of that in real life now. One of them is perhaps well known to you, Amazon.com, where technology makes the business run. Of course, another example you may be thinking of would be eBay, the online auction house. So, you need technology fluency to keep your job, and, also, to get a better job. I think to close on this topic I should add that you need technology fluency to keep your company making money or to help it make more money, or if you are in the public sector, to aid your public agency or your nonprofit organization to serve its public better.

Now how does the UMUC MBA program help you get technology fluency? First of all, our program is basically delivered online. Even the courses that meet for some sessions face-to-face have an online component. In other words, you will be interacting online in every course. And this can only help your technology fluency, because you will be using UMUC's proprietary course delivery system, WebTycho, which is at the state of the art. And I think I should add, though it's probably pretty obvious, you will be using telecommunications to make your

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connections to your professor and your fellow classmates. Indeed, this online delivery in every course allows you to study where you want and when you want and also to gain technology fluency. When you get to the particular MBA course that I happen to manage, which is numbered AMBA 604, you will be in the MBA program's Technology and Operations Management seminar; and there you will learn additional aspects of technology fluency, such as, you will acquire managerial familiarity with Microsoft Project, Microsoft Excel data analysis and solver, and/or Lindo linear programming software. You'll also very likely interact with your professor and your classmates in real-time software sessions, or I should say, real-time classroom sessions supported by software. Right now we're using the Connect program. We could use another by the time you reach AMBA 604. The point is, in this particular seminar you will acquire additional technology fluency, because that is the focus of the seminar. In that seminar, AMBA 604, finally, in the final week you will predict technology advances, not just in computers and telecommunications, but in one or more other areas of technological advance such as, once again, aviation technology or transportation technology in general, biotechnology, medical technology, or even perhaps human performance technology--all of which will help you gain technology fluency.

Finally, on how the UMUC MBA program helps you to get technology fluency, I want to add that through earning an MBA at UMUC, you will also have earned the right to advanced entry into a technology-based second UMUC Master's degree program, such as one in management information systems or telecommunications, for examples, and there you will continue to gain technology fluency.

Now let me summarize and tell you by whom I'll be followed in the next Podcast. I'm James J. Stewart, a collegiate professor at UMUC's Graduate School of Management and Technology. I am a career technologist and I've talked to you about what technology fluency is. It begins with competency and use of computers and telecommunications and goes on to competency in one or more other technologies. I've covered why you need it, which is to keep your present job, but also to get a better job and to help your company make money or your public-sector enterprise serve its public better. And finally, I've covered how the UMUC MBA program helps you to get technology fluency through such means as our online delivery of every course and the content in AMBA 604 followed finally by the possibility of your advanced entry into a second UMUC technology-oriented Master's degree program. I'll be followed in the next Podcast by Professor Conrad Boyle. He'll be talking to you on the very important subject where we also help you gain skills. That subject is innovation. Thank you for your attention.

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