

**NO LIMIT
OVER
50**

WHAT TO DO WHEN YOU'VE BEEN LET GO,
REPLACED, DISPLACED, OR JUST WANT
SOMETHING DIFFERENT FROM LIFE

BOB POOLE & STEVE DOTTO

CHAPTER TWO

Become Digitally Literate

A friend of ours told an amusing story about his mother, whom he described as highly set in her ways. She was married to an engineer who ran his own business, and as engineers often do, he was constantly installing “new” technology in the house. Whether it was an intercom system that connected every room of the house to particular other gadgets (including timers for the lights and sprinkler system for their lawn), our friend’s mother complained bitterly that her husband was always trying to make things “too complicated” when in fact his goal was the exact opposite. Every gadget or system was installed in the service of efficiency.

Have you felt that way when it comes to modern technology? The first time you read or heard a news story about some new app or social media site you’d never heard of before, you probably felt a pang of regret and even fear. When you don’t understand what people are

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talking about, there's an authentic feeling of being left behind or becoming obsolete. But the good news is that it doesn't have to be that way.

Our friend who told the story about his mother also told me about his *grandmother*. She was a retired teacher who was a fiend for technology. When she retired, she started buying computers (this was when they had first come out). I'm talking about the old Commodore 64 and Vic 20 computers—machines that had tape-recorder inputs and later 5¼-inch floppy disk drives. Our friend spoke fondly of how all his earliest computer (and computer game) experiences came thanks to his grandmother, who bucked the stereotype that older people don't like new technology.

Bob's mother is 93-years old as we write this book. She's been using her desktop, laptop, and iPad to send and receive email, surf the web, play games, and more for almost 20 years. She's nearly deaf, and the computer allows her to stay connected, which is increasingly important for everyone in our online world.

Are You Reluctant to Change?

It's not unusual for people in their 50s and older to resist change and innovation. There are ways to learn just about anything (we'll discuss some of those later in this chapter and in the **Resource Guide** at the back of this book), but you have to be willing to change. You must embrace and

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train to develop new skills because otherwise, you'll be stuck where you are. The good news is you wouldn't be reading this if you weren't ready to try something new.

You can do it, too. What you'll find, once you start exploring new technology, is that a lot of it is enjoyable. Sure, some of it won't be to your liking. We're not saying that you need to sign up for the latest social media app to make short videos lip-syncing along to pop music or citing the latest memes. You don't need to go back to school to learn hypertext markup language (HTML) or other technical disciplines. We're talking about having basic digital "literacy"—what Wikipedia defines as the "ability to find, evaluate, and compose clear information through writing and other media on various digital platforms"—not learning how to program computers.

Hiller Spires, a professor of Literacy and Technology at North Carolina State University, views digital literacy as having three buckets:

1. Finding and consuming digital content
2. Creating digital content
3. Communicating or sharing it

Modern technology is nothing to fear. More importantly, though, it's essential.

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The “Ways” You Communicate: A Note about Generational Prejudice

We use the word “ways” because there are many ways to communicate. As Boomers and Gen Xers, we’ve experienced many of them over our lifetimes. Consider this: We’re born communicating! As soon as we’re born, we cry. We learn how to let others know what we want and what we don’t want. We learn many “types” of languages. And to our last breath, we’re communicating. That’s kind of what we’re put on Earth to do. It’s the one thing that we do universally. We communicate, and we’re so good at it!

What happens is that different generations get caught up thinking that *their* form of communication is the *only* way to communicate. Do you remember being on the phone talking to a girlfriend or buddy? Our folks would say, “You know, they’re just across the street.” Our parents thought face-to-face was more relevant.

What about the first time you saw family members sitting in the same room texting each other and having a conversation? Bob remembers a millennial married couple sitting in his living room with other people who were having face-to-face conversations. When he asked them why they were texting when they could just talk to each other, they looked at him like he had two heads and gave an embarrassed laugh. The fact is they felt more comfortable texting. They don’t particularly like talking on the

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phone. They get just as much or more satisfaction from having a conversation via text than from “talking.” Bob says he felt the same as he might feel if he were having a conversation with a group of people, and suddenly two of them switched to a different language, knowing that he couldn’t speak that language.

Whereas in person, we can laugh heartily at a joke or scowl upon hearing unpleasant information, we now convey complex emotional states through punctuation. The written language is evolving. Emoticons (the combination of “emotion” + “icon”) and emojis (images, often representing facial expressions but also objects) are now part of our discourse. Videos with no spoken audio track are used to communicate our message across continents and cultures without saying a word. Videos shared on social platforms are quite often played with the audio muted, as they are viewed on mobile devices where the viewer does not want the audio turned on.

We savvy communicators overcome this limitation by adding closed captioning tracks or telling the story graphically. This way, the same video can be delivered into different languages and cultures and still be effective.

If you’re reading this book, you’re likely over 50 or 60, and you may have your own generational prejudice about how the younger generations communicate. We prefer picking up the phone and talking rather than texting.

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You may think of talking to someone on the phone or face to face as the “real way” of communicating. Using instant messaging—a reflection of our speeded-up way of life—to communicate may even be offensive to you. But to a millennial who is the manager of the unit you’d like to work for, it’s the only way they’re comfortable communicating. And when we bring our generational arrogance to the table, saying, “You know, I prefer a phone call or email or a meeting,” then you’re going to be looked at as someone difficult to work with.

And speaking of phones, if you’re not using a smartphone, don’t whip out your flip phone or Blackberry device in a meeting or interview. There might be a bias, and you might be seen as someone resistant to technology. You could also be doing yourself a disservice by not having a smartphone, as it is seen as a necessary tool in today’s business world. It doesn’t have to be the latest smartphone on the market, but sending and receiving email and text messages on a mobile platform is expected by the younger generations.

So, yes, Boomers and Gen Xers need to adapt and change to communicate with and succeed in finding that new job or that side hustle. If you won’t use text or Messenger or Slack or even email and if you don’t express capability and understanding in those formats, then it’s going to cost you. You need to speak the language of the people you want to convince to hire you.

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Steve likes to share the story of his uncle, who fought in World War II. During the war, he became pen pals with the woman he would one day marry.



Jim and Ruby Maxwell

“My uncle dropped out of high school to sign up for the first group of Canadian paratroopers. He wasn’t a man of many words. He was a fisherman, he was a hunter, and as you would expect from someone who volunteered to be a paratrooper, he was a man of action. And yet, he wrote letters back and forth with my Aunt Ruby. And they fell in love by mail. They never knew each other before that. And during the war, every letter was censored in Canada. The Bureau of Censorship would take a razor blade to letters. And if he mentioned a pub near where they were bivouacked in the U.K., that whole paragraph would be removed by a razor blade. They knew that every communication they had was being read by somebody else.” There were often gaps in delivery, and the letters would sometimes arrive out of order to top it off.

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Not exactly the kind of courtship that most of us have gone through. Yet through these letters, this unlikely couple fell in love and developed a bond that lasted for over 60 years.

As human beings, we have this incredible capacity to communicate using the tools we have at our fingertips. And for any generation to think that their communication form is more effective or more relevant than others is the height of generational arrogance.

We have always communicated through gesture, touch, smell, body language, expression, music, and other ways. For us to think that somebody can't be as effective communicating through text is ridiculous. We must adapt. We must recognize that text doesn't have to be our first language. But if we want to be fully participating members of society, we must speak the language.

You'll also need to learn at least the basics of a few programs and apps. Simply put, an "app" (short for application) is a type of software that allows you to perform specific tasks. Applications for desktop or laptop computers are sometimes called desktop applications, while those for mobile devices are called mobile apps. When you open an application, it runs inside the operating system until you close it.

People our age are usually familiar with Microsoft Word as it has been ubiquitous for the past 35 years. Microsoft brought out the Office Suite of Word, Excel, and

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PowerPoint. (Most millennials won't know this, but the first release of Office was in 1989 for the Mac.)

You should still have a basic understanding of the apps you will need to transition to a new job and position yourself as technically competent with potential new employers. Think of how this will impress your grandchildren!

Suppose you've decided you'd like to find employment with an existing company. In that case, you need to understand that modern employers want to know that a prospective employee can handle the demands of the contemporary workplace. The odds are remarkably high that the person who'll interview you will be younger than you—often *much* younger—and will have immersed themselves in the latest technology since childhood. In 2018 Bob met a young woman who ran the marketing department of a publicly held company who told him she had just gotten a master's degree in Social Media Marketing—a field that didn't even exist as an educational discipline when we were in college!

We're more connected today than ever before, and modern technology has made remote work and remote learning an integral part of society (especially since the COVID-19 pandemic). Part of dealing with the demands of contemporary work is not looking lost when someone asks you to perform a primary task requiring a computer.

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A good friend told us a story about a coworker who was so computer illiterate he didn't even know *how to turn on the computer*. If that describes you, we understand, although it is exceedingly rare these days. The fact is, though, you must have a certain baseline familiarity with computers, using the Internet, and other modern communications tools if you want to be hired. That is because an employer simply does not have time to teach you how to use a mouse, navigate the Internet, or call up and use basic word-processing programs that are necessary to perform almost any office job these days. And while there are plenty of jobs that aren't in offices, in many cases, employees must use a computer to fill out timesheets, check bulletins from HR, put in for vacation and sick time, etc.

Even many blue-collar and trade jobs require some computer familiarity. For example, numerous positions in the construction industry, such as plumber, carpenter, or electrician, require computers to create estimates, drawings, invoices, etc.

COVID-19 Changed Everything

During the COVID-19 pandemic, most employees found themselves working from their homes. This meant they had to use online meeting software like Zoom, Google Teams, and Skype. Meetings and conferences are now virtual. If you can't navigate and be effective in the virtual business world, you'll be frustrated and likely to find yourself unable to contribute the way you'd like. Many

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online meetings now begin with appeals to “Unmute yourself,” “Tilt the screen so we can see more than the top of your head,” and “Get rid of that cat filter!” We had a guy from Australia on one of our podcasts who said he’d seen enough cat butts on Zoom calls to last a lifetime. You may even remember seeing the BBC interview a professor whose conversation was interrupted by his daughter and infant son toddling into view.

This may not be what you want to hear, but do you want to hear the good news about these teleconferencing apps?

They are all basically the same.

All these apps, and countless others, work with your phone’s camera and microphone, or a camera and microphone connected or built into your computer or tablet. That’s literally all they do. You click on a link (that’s sent to you) to take you to a group meeting, or you place a call to a contact from a list of contacts and turn on your camera and microphone. That’s literally all there is to it. The locations of the buttons may be different, but all these programs are basically the same, and they’re super easy to use once you’ve tried them. Getting familiar with them is as easy as downloading the app on your phone or computer and then making some test calls to friends or family members. That way, when it comes up at work, you’ll know what to do and how to do it.

How to Learn When You're Behind

Getting up to speed on technology is very easy these days. You can learn how to do anything, including how to use the essential tools you'll need to use, by spending some time on YouTube or in a bookstore. There are also online learning portals like Coursera and Udemy. Many of the apps include their own lessons, or you can usually find several more on YouTube. And the good news is that these learning tools are free or affordable.

There are also classes you can take and various online resources. Classes for seniors and other older people who want to learn modern technology from the ground up are available through local technical schools, colleges, universities, ongoing education programs, and various other sources. You just have to look around to see what's available, starting with a simple Google search.

Other online resources include YouTube, which is full of video tutorials on just about every subject, and websites devoted to specific topics. Social media includes groups dedicated to topics for learning technology, too.

We would also be remiss if we didn't blow our own horn and suggest that you go to Steve Dotto's site ("DottoTech") as another way of learning quickly how to use the types of apps you will need at work. Go to <https://dottotech.com/>.



Now, you may be worried about asking for help because you're worried about looking stupid. Don't be. News flash: Technology is changing so rapidly that everyone is behind, and we do mean everyone. The only question is, are you willing to be left behind, or are you willing to learn?

Steve Dotto has spent three decades teaching people how to use technology, but not a day goes by that he doesn't see something new and has to learn something he didn't know. If you tend to get embarrassed by your lack of technical knowledge, apologizing for it, or even being ashamed about it, remember that it's easier to ask for help the first time you see something new than the fourth time it appears.

We're all in the same boat when presented with a new technology, application, or process we don't know. If you take the attitude of "That's cool. I would love to learn that!" instead of "I'm sorry. I don't know that," you'll encourage both your potential employer and yourself.

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Sure, you'll have to put up with a certain amount of grief from people who have that "Look at that old person who doesn't know anything" attitude, but you're used to dealing with that already. Remember the first time someone called you "Boomer" as an insult? We do.

The funny thing about using "You're old" or "Boomer" as an insult is that getting old is the goal we're all striving for. (After all, as Maurice Chevalier once quipped, "Old age isn't so bad when you consider the alternative.") Don't let it bother you. When asking for help, simply be direct and honest. Say something like, "I'm relatively new to this because when I entered the workforce, this wasn't available. Can you explain it to me?" Not everyone will be patient, but many more people will be willing to help than you think. Here's the secret: people love feeling smart. If you politely ask them for help and then listen attentively, most of the time, they'll be delighted to help.

Now, will you feel foolish? Will you be frustrated at times? Will it seem difficult? It certainly will. But you're a Boomer. You've faced countless challenges in your life, and you've dealt with them all. You have life experiences that younger people haven't had, and you know how complex the world can be. This is just another challenge and, compared with what you've dealt with, it isn't even a very difficult one. It doesn't have to feel scary. It's just new and unfamiliar.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Bob Poole

With over 45 years of business experience as an entrepreneur helping other companies grow through creative consulting solutions, Bob has solved problems and created opportunities for as many types of businesses as you can imagine.



During the Vietnam War, Bob served in the US Navy. During part of his naval service, he was stationed on-board the USS Recovery (ARS 43), a rescue and salvage ship. Bob became one of a few enlisted personnel in the US Navy to earn and be assigned as Underway Officer of The Deck.

As a photojournalist and professional photographer during the late '60s and early '70s, his peers and clients recognized Bob as an outstanding talent, leading to a national photography achievement award from Eastman Kodak. In addition, his fellows in Professional Photogra-

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phers of America consistently acknowledged him for his outstanding work.

A talent for creating marketing campaigns led to him becoming more involved in sales and marketing. His first position with a company other than his own was in sales for 3M Company. In 1980, he was recognized by 3M and awarded their highest sales honor and was their guest at the 1980 Winter Olympics in Lake Placid.

With a desire to share his passion for business with others, he has conducted over 150 sales, marketing, and technology seminars and workshops for a wide variety of companies, associations, and individuals in the United States, Europe, Canada, Australia, and Asia. In addition, as a member of the National Speakers Association, he was one of the International Center for Professional Speaking founders in Tempe, AZ. He has enjoyed traveling for business and pleasure to over 35 countries and six continents.

Companies and individuals use his sales consulting program, “Listen First – Sell Later”[®], to implement a highly successful approach to selling both products and services. He is the author of three previous books, and his work has also appeared in many newspapers, magazines, and trade journals. In addition, his website <https://bob-poole.com/> has a combination of almost 1,000 free blog posts and podcast episodes. At 72 years old, he is creating follow-up products and services to enhance the Listen First – Sell Later sales program. He firmly believes that “age is a state of mind.”

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Steve Dotto

Steve Dotto is Canada's favorite geek. For over 20 years, as host and executive producer of Dotto Tech, a nationally syndicated TV show, Steve entertained and educated millions of Canadians on all aspects of technology.



After spending 20 years in traditional broadcast, Steve re-invented himself, learning the world of social media, online community building, and Internet Marketing as he built his YouTube channel into his new career.

His passion is teaching Baby Boomers and Gen Xers how to remain relevant in the digital age, how we can re-invent ourselves and grow side hustles into successful online businesses.

He has a gift for making complex concepts easy to understand. Steve takes the world of technology and makes it relevant in your life.

A background in theatre and comedy, including a short stint with the famed comedy troupe, Second City, provides for a unique and often humorous perspective on the works of technology.

YouTube is Steve's new network of choice. He serves two communities, a traditional "How To and Productivity" stream, which follows his TV tradition, and a new focus on learning the keys to growing and ultimately monetizing a Social Network, specifically, a YouTube channel.