

Digital Fluency in Credit Management: Essential Skills for Today's Credit Professionals

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Credit management plays a critical role in maintaining the financial health of organizations, relying on professionals with sharp analytical skills, strategic thinking, and the ability to build strong client relationships. These human strengths—insight, judgment, and problem-solving—are irreplaceable, even as technology transforms business. However, to thrive in today's fast-paced, tech-driven world, credit professionals must combine their expertise with digital fluency.

This article examines the essential skills credit professionals need to succeed, the challenges they face in adapting to digital tools, and actionable strategies for developing digital fluency. By mastering these competencies, credit teams can enhance efficiency, make smarter decisions, and strengthen client relationships.

Why Digital Fluency Matters

The financial world is rapidly digitizing, and credit management is no exception. From ERP systems to data analytics platforms, the tools available today have the power to simplify workflows and provide unprecedented insights. Yet, the effectiveness of these tools depends on the people using them. Digital comfort isn't just about knowing where to click—it's about understanding how to use technology to improve your processes, centralize your data, and drive better results.

Digital fluency bridges the gap between traditional strengths and modern demands. Embracing technology helps teams move past outdated methods, streamline operations, and focus on high-value tasks like risk assessment and strategic planning.

Core Skills for Digital Fluency

Adaptability to Change

Finance is constantly being driven by new technology, regulatory updates, and shifting market conditions. Credit professionals who remain curious about new tools, experiment with updated workflows, and stay open to feedback are better equipped to thrive in dynamic environments. Adaptability allows teams to navigate learning curves effectively, uncover opportunities for automation, and respond quickly to challenges.

Technical Aptitude

Mastering digital tools is a cornerstone of modern credit management. ERP systems, automation platforms, and analytics tools streamline complex tasks, such as tracking payments and generating reports. Platforms like Tableau or Power BI elevate data analysis, enabling professionals to visualize trends and act on insights with greater accuracy. Building technical proficiency enhances both efficiency and confidence, ensuring workflows run smoothly and decisions are data-driven.

Analytical Skills

While technology improves the speed and efficiency of processing data, human judgment remains critical for interpreting it. Credit professionals must evaluate information, identify trends, and align decisions with organizational goals. By connecting the dots, teams can proactively mitigate risks and address challenges like cash flow issues or potential defaults, maintaining strong relationships with clients and stakeholders.

Comfort in Using Customer-Centric Digital Tools

Digital communication tools have transformed how credit teams interact with clients. Payment portals, automated reminders, and self-service platforms create seamless, efficient interactions that build trust. Professional and timely communication tailored to individual client needs strengthens relationships while minimizing delays and improving overall satisfaction.

Building Digital Comfort

Digital fluency begins with mastering the tools and systems used daily. Credit professionals who optimize their digital workspace reduce friction and unlock greater efficiency.

Master the Interface

A solid understanding of daily tools like ERP systems, email platforms, or automation software minimizes frustration and increases productivity. Adjusting dashboards and settings to fit workflows provides quick access to critical information, reducing time spent navigating clunky interfaces. Tools that feel intuitive and responsive allow professionals to focus on strategic tasks than struggling with technology.

Centralize and Organize Data

Disorganized systems slow down even the most skilled professionals. Centralizing data ensures accessibility and improves collaboration, with cloud platforms like Google Drive or SharePoint keeping teams aligned with the latest information. Consistent naming conventions, logical folder structures, and regular archiving create a streamlined, secure workspace. Well-organized data reduces errors, saves time, and enables faster decision-making.

Practice Good Computer Hygiene

Your computer is your workspace, and just like a desk, it requires regular maintenance to function optimally. Neglecting basic digital hygiene can lead to inefficiencies, lost files, or even security risks.

- **Update Regularly:** Keep your software and operating systems up to date to benefit from the latest security patches and performance enhancements.
- **Automate Backups:** Use automated tools to back up critical files to secure locations, minimizing the risk of data loss.
- **Declutter Periodically:** Clean out unused files, applications, and emails on a monthly basis to keep your system running smoothly.
- **Secure Your Access:** Use strong, unique passwords and enable multi-factor authentication to protect sensitive financial data.

Prompt Creation: Unlocking AI's Potential for Everyday Tasks

Artificial intelligence (AI) is reshaping credit management, and for credit professionals, its integration presents both opportunities and uncertainties. Many apprehensions about AI stem from concerns over losing the "human touch" or the fear that automation might replace jobs. However, AI tools are designed to enhance—not replace—the role of skilled credit professionals by complementing their expertise and expanding their capacity to handle complex challenges.

A key step in overcoming apprehension is understanding that AI thrives on collaboration. These tools are only as effective as the professionals guiding their use. AI can process data at unparalleled speed, but it lacks the judgment, intuition, and relationship-building skills that define credit professionals. By viewing AI as a collaborative partner, teams can use its strengths—such as predictive analytics or automated workflows—to refine decision-making and address issues proactively.

One of the most practical ways to build comfort with AI tools is by mastering the art of prompt creation. Tools like ChatGPT can serve as an invaluable resource for streamlining tasks, generating ideas, or solving problems—provided they are guided with clear and specific instructions. The effectiveness of AI hinges on how well professionals articulate their needs, making prompt creation a skill that amplifies the tool’s value.

For credit professionals, crafting thoughtful prompts can turn AI into a collaborative assistant. For instance, prompts can be used to draft customer communications, summarize complex financial reports, or even suggest strategies for resolving payment disputes. The key lies in being detailed and directive: instead of asking for “help with customer emails,” a better prompt might be, “Draft a professional email reminding a client about an overdue payment while maintaining a polite tone.”

As familiarity grows, credit teams can use AI to brainstorm ideas for process improvements or uncover inefficiencies in workflows. This dynamic, back-and-forth interaction reinforces AI’s role as a support system, helping professionals save time and focus on high-value activities. Learning to craft effective prompts transforms AI from a generic tool into a tailored partner, amplifying its usefulness and deepening professionals’ confidence in its capabilities.

Ensuring Cybersecurity and Data Privacy

Handling sensitive financial data requires diligence and secure practices to avoid breaches, fines, and reputational damage. Credit professionals play an essential role in maintaining cybersecurity and ensuring operations remain safe and compliant.

Prioritizing practices like encryption, access controls, regular updates, and phishing awareness safeguards financial data and protects organizational integrity. Collaborating with cybersecurity teams strengthens defenses, aligns workflows with security protocols, and ensures quick action in case of potential threats. This proactive approach supports both efficiency and trust, safeguarding valuable information while reducing vulnerabilities.

Practical Strategies for Developing Digital Fluency

Building digital fluency requires a deliberate, consistent approach. Credit professionals who invest in skill-building, collaboration, and continuous learning create more efficient workflows and strengthen their overall impact.

Leverage Vendor Training and Support

Training resources from software vendors provide in-depth knowledge of the tools professionals use daily. Webinars, tutorials, and certifications offer actionable insights and build confidence. Working closely with account managers or customer success teams simplifies implementation, ensures tools align with specific workflows, and uncovers advanced features to improve performance. Vendor guidance can significantly shorten the learning curve and increase the value extracted from software investments.

Collaborate with Colleagues

Mentorship and collaboration encourages knowledge-sharing and accelerates skill development. Teams that encourage tech-savvy colleagues to share best practices build a culture of continuous improvement. Practical demonstrations, such as creating dashboards or automating tasks, help less-experienced professionals apply new tools effectively. Collaboration creates stronger, more efficient teams and ensures everyone stays up-to-date on evolving tools and strategies.

Apply Hands-On Learning

Learning through action solidifies understanding and builds confidence. Starting small—such as automating reminders or creating basic reports—allows professionals to explore tools without feeling overwhelmed. As comfort grows, applying these skills to more complex workflows enhances productivity and uncovers new efficiencies. Hands-on practice turns theoretical knowledge into tangible results.

Focus on Continuous Learning

Keeping pace with tech is essential for credit professionals looking to remain competitive. Work for credit professionals demands a commitment to learning, whether it's through industry webinars, software certifications, or credit management publications. These resources offer actionable insights into emerging tools, best practices, and strategies for optimizing workflows. Conferences and workshops provide opportunities for in-depth exploration of topics, often with hands-on sessions that build confidence in using new technologies.

Networking with peers is another invaluable avenue for growth. Engaging with professional communities allows credit professionals to exchange, share, and learn from others' experiences and successes. This collaborative learning fosters innovation and adaptability, ensuring professionals are equipped to handle evolving challenges. By dedicating time to continuous education, credit teams not only stay ahead of trends but also bring fresh perspectives and improved efficiency to their organizations.

Adapting to a Digitized Credit Landscape

Digital fluency is no longer optional for credit professionals—it's essential. Mastering digital tools, maintaining organized systems, and prioritizing secure practices enable credit teams to work more efficiently, make informed decisions, and build stronger relationships. These skills bridge the gap between traditional expertise and modern demands, ensuring professionals remain indispensable and competent.

The journey to digital fluency starts with intentional steps. Training, collaboration, and consistent practice build the foundation for long-term success. Credit professionals who embrace these opportunities will not only adapt to change but lead their organizations toward greater efficiency, stability, and growth. In a world driven by technology, thriving means combining the best of human expertise with the power of digital tools.

About the Author



Chris Woodard is the CMO and Co-Founder of Handle.com. Handle's software powers the largest credit and finance teams in construction. Fortune 500 material suppliers and contractors trust Handle on a daily basis to provide their credit and collections departments with an end-to-end solution that saves their staff 10-12 hours per week.