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The Minimum You Need to Know about Logic to Work in IT

Roland Hughes
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Reviewed by Regan Windsor for Reader Views (8/07)

Roland Hughes' passion for the IT Industry is obvious. If you have read the first two books in "The Minimum You Need to Know" series, "The Minimum You Need to Know to Be an OpenVMS Developer" and "The Minimum You Need to Know about Java on OpenVMS," you will figure that out very quickly. So imagine his horror when he found out that Logic, the very foundation of application and system design, had been tossed out of college curriculum. To remedy this he has provided the market and, with high hopes, the classroom a short, concise guide to "The Minimum You Need to Know about Logic to Work in IT."

Hughes begins with what he loves best – an analysis of the IT industry and what perils have resulted from abandoning the teaching of logic. I found this chapter extremely interesting as it outlines a trend that is impacting a wide span of industries. While explaining that the basic tools of logic, such as flowcharts and pseudocode, may not be seen in the workplace as something that is done by seasoned IT professionals, nor is it a deliverable of a project, Hughes highlights that it is the ability to use this logic when developing applications and systems that makes an IT professional successful. Therefore, it is key that students, and those starting out in the industry, be trained in the ability to think through projects in this way -- and for more complex problems realize the advantages of mapping it out using logical tools. This training should be the foundation of college educations, however since these classes do not produce marketable skills (in the way that training in languages does) the pressure to replace them with classes that do has broken down the holistic approach to education.

Along with the basics of flowcharting and pseudocode, "The Minimum You Need to Know about Logic to Work in IT" provides a basic understanding of fundamental data types, common sorts and searches, the importance of decision order, linked lists, using a hash, and the basics of relational databases. It's chapter on 'Knowing What Questions to Ask' provides a glimpse into the situations IT professionals may encounter and the importance of asking questions, understanding what the user requires, and most importantly ensuring that what they are asking for is legal!

While Hughes has moved more toward a textbook format in regards to the delivery of questions and case studies, his writing style and advice still mimic that of a mentor who has much knowledge to offer those just entering the field of IT. As with his other books in this series, "The Minimum You Need to Know about Logic to Work in IT" provides the reader with essential information, knowledge transfer in the form of tips and tricks, and much to ponder about the IT industry and its many challenges!