

DeGeeking: Infusing Business Professionalism into Information Systems Degree Programs

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Many business schools offer degrees in or related to information systems. Students seeking these technology-based degrees are often viewed as “different” in that they focus more on technology, for the sake of technology, as opposed to the pursuit of investigating and solving business problems. These students are recognized for their technological savvy, yet many are characterized as being socially awkward and often introverted, not dressing properly in business situations, not focused on business techniques in problem resolution, and lacking in communication skills. In other words, they are referred to as “techies” or “geeks” and are discounted as business professionals.

This paper investigates the need, as driven by the marketplace, for infusing business professionalism into information systems degree programs. This process is referred to as “DeGeeking”. The goal is to offer degree programs in which there is a balance between technical abilities and business applicability and professionalism. Through interviews with hiring managers and mid- to high-level business professionals, four common themes are apparent that need to be addressed in the DeGeeking process: (1) encourage all professors in the information systems program to incorporate projects and activities that stress the solving of business issues and problems, (2) require students to create Web-based portfolios of accomplishments (internships, study abroad, community service, entrepreneurial activity, teamwork, etc.) to impress potential employers, (3) prepare students to present a clean and professional image in person and on social media, and (4) include a mix of relevant business courses such as accounting, management, marketing, and business writing. Students that are DeGeeked will be more valuable business professionals when they graduate and seek employment.