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Canada's Association of Information Technology (IT) Professionals

Resident Bloggers

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**Global IT Skills shortage fact, or fiction? -- Part 3 of the series**

[Margaret's](#) March 20th and [March 28th](#) blogs, "Global IT Skills shortage fact, or fiction?" triggered discussions both inside and outside the CIM forum:

- [Most Wanted: a Multi-Specialist with Business Acumen or I.S.P.](#)
- [What's a Versatilist](#)
- [Multi-IT Specialist with Business Acumen=A Versatilist.](#)

In part 3, Margaret discusses several practical solutions.

I encourage CIM readers to make comments here too. Let your views and voice be heard.

Part 3 of the series from Margaret Evered:

Playing in a global economy junior positions can be offshored, resulting in new graduates and co-ops/interns challenged to locate opportunities to gain suitable experience ultimately affecting their long-term desirability to employers. If there is a shortage of skilled IT workers, in part because CIOs will not give youth the chance to gain experience, CIOs can contribute to solutions. To be instrumental in attracting people to the profession they must show there is career stability and longevity (versus the current roller-coaster of work availability). School guidance counselors and parents will not advocate students embarking on dead-end careers, which the dot-com farce and offshoring/outsourcing have exacerbated. Business has to take substantial responsibility for cultivating what it wants - a guaranteed future supply of skilled resources. Forget reliance on just-in-time contract hires; instead develop in-house talent pools. Undertake skills inventories, gap analyses, and project trends for labour needs. This reduces alternating firing/hiring cycles, avoids frustrating hunts for the right skill sets in tight job markets, and shows employees respect by creating career and training paths.

Coherent partnering strategies between colleges, industry, government, and business will guarantee that potential IT workers get pertinent training and on-the-job experience. Partnerships, like that between Sheridan Institute of Technology and Advanced Learning in Oakville, Ontario and a program advisory board of industry reps (IBM, Cisco, RSA and others), assures students they are receiving up-to-date skills and appropriate hands-on practice, so on graduating with a Bachelor of Applied Information Science in Information Systems Security employers will hire them. We require such flexible technology programs in educational institutions so their content can be rapidly responsive to, and aligned with, business demands. However, educational programs must meet standards. India's economy, and ability to support the offshoring strategies of overseas businesses, may be impacted by the calibre of its 400,000 engineering and IT graduates (annually). According to Kiran Karnik, president of IT industry association Nasscom, it is not a question of availability of new graduates, but the adequacy of their skills - about 25% are ready to hire, as-is.

Long-term governments, high schools, colleges/universities, the IT industry, and business must do more to stimulate potential future crops of IT professionals. One of our profession's goals should be improving the attractiveness of hi-tech careers among high school students, before they drop key courses required to enter technology programs. Students surveyed, of both genders (though more females than males), have generally negative perceptions and misconceptions (not just in N. America, but also in the U.K. and Australia). IT careers have a "branding problem" - more geek than chic! Teenagers like using technology, but disinterested in building and maintaining it. Studies show they prefer "playing" on the computer to learning tedious tasks like programming. Students also need technology role models they can relate to, to show the field can be challenging and diverse - where/who are they? Our addressing student attitudes is vital to improving degree and diploma enrollment. Those having early (middle school grades) technology experience, working on projects with practical application, are more inclined towards IT careers. Numerous institutions run successful after school and summer programmes. Enlightened high schools and businesses can further encourage students by allowing high school credits and placements to "test drive" future careers - a potential enrollee in Waterloo's computer science program was placed by me on Helpdesk support for weeks; ultimately, he still wanted to go to Waterloo! However, unless people like him see predictable employment prospects post-graduation, they will consider other occupations.

Thank you Margaret for providing a perspective not often voiced.

Stephen Ibaraki, I.S.P.

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