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Canada's Association of Information Technology (IT) Professionals

**Resident Bloggers**

Stephen Ibaraki

Technology Journalist I.S.P.,  
DF/NPA, CNPBarnaby Jeans  
IT Pro Advisor  
Microsoft Canada**Most Wanted: a Multi-Specialist with Business Acumen or I.S.P. !**

I have been following [Margaret's](#) March 20<sup>th</sup> blog, "Global IT Skills shortage fact, or fiction?" with interest and reading the comments.

CIM co-host John and I had a recent discussion on it today, and I just finished an hour with a researcher for the US department of labour O\*NET program where they called for input and we discussed these issues and the profile of IT workers in the future. I find Margaret's arguments compelling and wanted to add another dimension to this perspective based upon my conversations today.

I see this around me and in my discussions with others worldwide--tech-oriented IT specialist positions will be outsourced. Moreover these positions are on a natural decline due to the evolution of the industry. IT specialists: these are IT pros with narrow deep skills in one area who are known by their immediate peers of their expertise. The impact will be such that 40% of these kinds of jobs will disappear in five years.

Jobs with several deep skills sets including leadership, business process, core company process, relationships-orientation, and industry knowledge - these will be on the rise. In looking at IT trends, there are/will be more automation of previous areas requiring specialist skills. Again this will drive business-facing and business-focus careers for IT pros. Overall, there will be a skill shortage for the latter [Garner calls them versatilists] - not the IT specialist. This is where the mature IT pro should be acknowledged since their broad experience, variety of roles, multiple deep skill sets, and business knowledge can be of great value. A key component here is education of the industry and IT pros to meet these new trends.

Interestingly, ways to gain these kinds of "multi-specialist skills combined with business acumen" is to work for startups, government agencies, and non-profits. Have you considered volunteering for a non-profit IT group?

I also feel that the industry is positioned "now" for a legislated professional designation and a knowledge/skills base that is broader. I talked about this with the O\*Net researcher today and that industry, government, educational groups, and societies must drive in this direction. I'm having the same kinds of discussions with vendor groups and other international professional societies. What may be surprising to some but not to me is that there is synergy along these lines and overall general agreement. Moreover, Canada is leading the way. How so, you are asking?

The Canadian IT Body of Knowledge or CITBOK sponsored by CIPS provides this knowledge base with mastery resulting in an Information Systems Professional (I.S.P.) credential. The I.S.P. is a legislated professional designation for IT professionals. It's an area of increasing focus and worthy of further study.

Thank you,  
Stephen Ibaraki

Published Monday, March 27, 2006 8:47 AM by [cdnitmgr](#)Filed Under: [Stephen Ibaraki](#), [Guest Bloggers](#)**Comment Notification**

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**Comments****# re: Most Wanted: a Multi-Specialist with Business Acumen or I.S.P. !**Monday, March 27, 2006 11:55 AM by [Gerry Lamast](#)

IT workers are an independent group and this has held them back. They don't voice their opinions enough. They need to work together! A real prof. cert. is a step in the right direction. It's good to see work in this area. Keep us informed please.

**# re: Most Wanted: a Multi-Specialist with Business Acumen or I.S.P. !**Tuesday, March 28, 2006 9:49 AM by [Thomas Walker](#)

Your post hits it on the head. I see this in my owrk where we spend more than 60% of our time on the business side. For that reason, I am going for my executive MBA and will be finished this year. I used to be a technie with a matching education, and now I spend my time talking about business intelligence, business process, business strategy, business alignment of our goals. I also see the need for an IT certification that encompasses a number of core technical areas, but also doesn't ignore the business side. The ISP you mention is something I can see of high value, and I will now gear for it. A bit of a silly question, but "why the periods in isp?"

**# re: Most Wanted: a Multi-Specialist with Business Acumen or I.S.P. !**Tuesday, March 28, 2006 10:48 AM by [Stephen Ibaraki](#)

Gerry, you make some interesting points. Independence does go contrary to full collaboration. And now



John Oxley  
Director IT Pro Evangelism  
Microsoft Canada



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and in the future, the IT field is about community and working together. I am in contact with many noted IT authorities and I'm getting this same message again and again. This forum, initiated by John Oxley, and supported by Barnaby Jeans and all the new guest bloggers provides a means to share. I strongly feel that this is the right step, at the right time—it's for this reason I am giving this message and that I'm here blogging every day. Express your point of view whether in three words, three sentences, or three paragraphs. The key is engage, comment, talk, share! These collaboration themes speak to a maturing profession and a maturing profession requires a body of knowledge, code of ethics, standards of practice capped by a professional designation. These are in place for 2006. I got my professional designation, the I.S.P., for this reason. Still we are a maturing but young profession so the build out of professionalism will grow as will the Information Systems Professional (I.S.P.) practitioners. Patience is required but it is happening. I am seeing this worldwide! You will notice I have been encouraging people to attend INFORMATICS held in Victoria BC May 28th to 30th. [Click on my name above and you will link to the conference site.] The reason, you will get top notch educational sessions on hot issues AND professionalism and the I.S.P. Plus, Microsoft is doing several sessions on key issues for IT managers and IT Pros: The Top Ten Security Threats and How to Avoid Them; Self-Managing Dynamic Systems; Writing Secure Code. {click on the name link above for more or go to: <http://www.cipsinformatics.ca/>

Remember, I said the time is now, so get engaged.  
Cheers,  
Stephen Ibaraki, I.S.P.

#### # re: Most Wanted: a Multi-Specialist with Business Acumen or I.S.P. !

Tuesday, March 28, 2006 11:22 AM by [Stephen Ibaraki](#)

Thomas, I just finished my comment back to Gerry and after posting I noticed your posting. Both of you make great points.

It's interesting what you say about business. I myself come from a really technical background where I worked on hardware, designed/implemented systems and wrote technical papers [built my first analog system in the 60s' and my first digital systems in the 70s'—the first national award I received in 1980 was based upon this work]; followed by systems and software development where I did much the same thing [one example: I designed and implemented a mission critical system for Atomic Energy of Canada in the 80s' and wrote some of the first design guides/templates on enterprise network design which Novell picked up on their web site back in the early 90s'—it's cool when thousands of companies download your material].

However, I found out early on that you need a business background and must be able to talk business so I have studied accounting in my undergraduate days and taken graduate studies in business here in Canada and from the UK. I have taught computing technologies since 1980 and retired in 2004 [Jan 2005 was my official last teaching month.] So I get a lot of ex-students in computing, asking me, "I have worked for 5 years now (or 10...). Should I get my Masters in Comp. Sci." I tell them, get your MBA if you plan to continue in business. If you are in heavy technical development or want to get into more research than there can be value in a MSc.—but in general an MBA would be of more value. In fact, I just finished counseling three prior students in this area and received notice from another that he just got his acceptance letter into an MBA program. How about those IT pros who don't have an undergrad degree? You can still get into many MBA programs or executive MBA programs based upon your prior work experience and particularly if you have a management background. In addition, the largest MBA program in Canada, from Athabasca University, accepts the CIPS I.S.P. for entry into their MBA and Masters program in information technology.

In answer to your question about the periods in the I.S.P. I used to write ISP after my name until Mylene Sayo, our PR wizard at CIPS indicated, "Stephen, you need to put in the periods." This is to differentiate it from Internet Service Provider (ISP). So, I carry my I.S.P. proudly and in my work internationally, there is wide spread recognition of Canada's leadership in sponsoring and creating a premier IT professional designation.

Cheers,  
Stephen Ibaraki, I.S.P.

#### # re: Most Wanted: a Multi-Specialist with Business Acumen or I.S.P. !

Tuesday, March 28, 2006 6:11 PM by [joiner](#)

As someone with a long association with the engineering sector, I am very familiar with professional accreditation issues. I have long believed in the importance and value of formal professional recognition. Before I came to Canada in 1981 I was a Chartered Engineer in the UK for 5 yrs. After 3 years in Canada I obtained my P.Eng in BC and have maintained it ever since - 25 yrs (non-practicing status now). It was not just a matter of career progression for me but an element of pride in a demonstrated and recognized standard in the industry.

However, currently there is one important difference between the engineering and IT worlds. In engineering you will not be permitted to carry out certain tasks without the P.Eng. designation, signing off on drawings for example. So there is a "built in" incentive to pursue the P.Eng. designation if you wish to progress in your career. As far as I know no such requirements exist regarding the I.S.P. (note the dots Stephen) designation for example. In other words there is still a disconnect between the I.S.P. and what goes on "on the shop floor" on a daily basis.

Until such time as employers start to demand such requirements, like with the PMP for example, or it becomes a legal requirement for certain levels of responsibility the I.S.P. is likely to remain a matter of personal choice and pride in the profession.

Very few members of VANTUG are also members of CIPS. Rightly or wrongly they don't picture themselves as "belonging" to that world. Often they see the "entry fee" as being too high, that itself giving the impression of a group apart from themselves. If we are to "grow" the "versatilists" that the industry feels is the way of the future then we need to find a way to bridge the apparent gap because many of those people will start out in the purely technical side of the business.

It would seem that things are beginning to change and I hope that it continues. With people like Stephen

and his CIPS colleagues pushing I feel quite sure that they will not rest until they have made a breakthrough. I vow to support them in whatever way that I can.

Cheers  
Graham Jones, P.Eng.,PMP,MCSD,MOS  
President, VANTUG

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**# re: Most Wanted: a Multi-Specialist with Business Acumen or I.S.P. !**

Wednesday, March 29, 2006 8:02 PM by [Stephen Ibaraki](#)

Graham,

You provide thoughtful comments.

The computing profession is hitting a tipping point in 2006 where you will see many references that it is maturing. Like any profession, it takes time to mature. This maturity is reflected in discussions about IT governance and integration of IT with business strategy. This is also reflected in larger numbers of companies incorporating some form of governance whether homegrown or external (examples: COBIT, ITIL), into their operations. The more recent indicators of this growing maturity are the forecasts about IT workers requiring multiple skill sets combined with business acumen. The majority of CEOs now see the importance of IT for business strategy. The need for regulatory compliance (financial, security, privacy) and mandated industry sector IT guidelines creates a more urgent need for IT governance and associated IT Pro professionalism.

Unfortunately, the Dot Com recession created fragmentation, confusion, and a suspension of activity but we are now emerging out of the fog. We are again on track for a build-out of the profession. It will take time but it is happening. We just need patience. In my discussion with Dr. Maria Klawe that appeared here, she talks about perceptions from the past influencing the present and even current enrollments in computing programs. However, the trend is upward such as in available employment and she commented on this.

So we are at a good point to start messaging about professionalism, working on accreditation and certification programs. And to call for IT professionals to reflect and realize the profession is at a tipping point and a legislated professional designation is in their future. From an international perspective, CIPS, our academic accreditation, and professional credentialing programs are well respected and looked upon as a model. This viewpoint has been consistent across-the-board in all my discussions with many groups. I believe this means something and we can build on it. We have a good brand and it provides a good base.

I work with and talk to professionals worldwide and from this perspective I have some opinions on certification. Specifically vendor certifications have taken a hit after the dot com bust and it is one of the comments I have received behind the scenes. There is a trend towards professionalism and a broader based credentialing system. Vendors are moving in this direction now. However, this is what CIPS has and is expanding upon. For example, their work on an IT Body of Knowledge is one example. So CIPS is a model others are looking at due to its leadership. However the IT field is still relatively a young one compared to other professions so you can look at a longer process for broader build-out. The recognition of the CIPS I.S.P. by the Ontario School Board system is an example of this build-out or the recognition. This is going to take time and more hard work but it will happen. This link describes the leadership position taken by the Ontario School Board:  
<http://www.cips.ca/news/media/news.asp?aID=2148>

This link provides an overview of the I.S.P.:  
<http://www.cips.ca/standards/ispcert/>

If members of this forum have any more questions, I would be pleased to answer them.

Thank you,  
Stephen Ibaraki, I.S.P.

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**# Multi-IT Specialist with Business Acumen= A Versatelist**

Friday, March 31, 2006 12:19 PM by [Canadian IT Manager](#)

I read Graham's blog "What's a Versatelist" where he rather eloquently expresses his thoughts about the...

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**# re: Most Wanted: a Multi-Specialist with Business Acumen or I.S.P. !**

Monday, April 10, 2006 4:30 PM by Adam Cole

I am heartened to see the interest this conversation has generated. There is merit in every comment made in this blog, and absolutely no question in the merit of a professional IT designation, namely the I.S.P.

As workers in the IT profession we are under pressure to mature from every conceivable angle:

- Outsourcing/offshoring has eroded the entry level position and threatens to climb the qualifications ladder. (At times it feels like a continuous struggle to keep my relevance in front of this tidal wave.)
- The Canadian Council of Professional Engineers (CCPE) argues that only a licensed engineer should be entitled to practice software development (<http://www.peo.on.ca/enforcement/June112002newsrelease.html>). [Superficially I see merit in their argument. HOWEVER, a professional IT worker could bring many of the rigors argued by the CCPE while also contributing the "craftsmanship" which is unique to IT projects [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Software\\_engineering#Debate\\_over\\_who\\_is\\_a\\_software\\_engineer.](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Software_engineering#Debate_over_who_is_a_software_engineer.)]
- Various compliance and governance models demand stronger processes, greater predictability, ...Professionalism.
- I have heard IT described as the central nervous system of a company. There is certainly an expectation of IT to be thoroughly versed in business.
- I am sure it would be easy to add to this list...

Stephen, Gerry, Thomas, Graham, I fully support you when you say now is the right time for IT

professionalism.

Although the I.S.P. is not nearly as recognized as the PMP designation, I take more pride in the former. You are all a bright bunch of people and I enjoy reading your comments. I look forward to seeing the I.S.P. following your names. :-)

Together we can all make a difference in influencing respectability and maturity within our chosen profession.

Cheers,  
Adam

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