



**CONFERENCE REPORT ON INFORMATION  
TECHNOLOGY WORKFORCE 2002**

**Conference of New England Governors  
and Eastern Canadian Premiers**

*August 2002*

## Conference Report On Information Technology Workforce 2002

More than 150 participants from a broad spectrum of industry, education, government and non-profit agencies across New England and Eastern Canada came together at a regional conference on June 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> to take stock of the region's position in information technology and focus on actions to prepare the future IT workforce.

This conference builds on the work of an IT working committee formed by the New England Governors' Conference and Eastern Canadian Premiers formed one year ago.

### **Broadbased Conference Participation**

32% Industry  
19% Government  
25% Education  
24% Non-Profit

### **Highlights of Panel Discussions:**

Industry leaders provided both a promising and sobering view towards future IT developments. Despite a year of economic downturn and job layoffs, industry leaders warned that New England still faces a tough labor crunch. Jeff Taylor, founder and chairman of Monster.com, the on-line job placement service that has fundamentally changed the way people find jobs, reported that "while there are more applicants per job opening, there is still a labor shortage in finding qualified IT workers able to get the job done."

Michael Bell, Vice President at Gartner, echoed concerns about IT workforce availability pointing out that 40% of businesses will miss their recruitment goals in the year ahead. Moreover, Mr. Bell warned that companies will "follow the talent," and those communities able to develop, retain and attract IT workers will be the ones that gain jobs as the economy recovers.

Jerry Beausoleil, Director General of Strategic Policy for Industry Canada set out the major challenges facing Canada involving increasing research and innovation including the production of PhD's, as well as increasing the deployment of information technology across manufacturing base to improve its economic competitiveness. These concerns were amplified by Charles Bourgeois, Executive Vice-President of Montreal TechnoVision, Inc., who also suggested how regions can organize themselves to address skill needs.

Joseph Smialowski, Vice Chairman, Global Technology and Operations for FleetBoston, pointed out that aging IT workforce and declining numbers of women choosing IT careers could add up to one of the worst labor shortages in our history over the next three to seven years.

But do not expect "business as usual" as companies begin ramping up on IT workers. The industry leaders pointed out that many new types of skills are in demand. These include design skills, project management skills, and computer security.

One critical challenge shared by key New England industry leaders such as Chris Peretta, Senior Vice President and Chief Information Officer for GE Card Services and John Doucette, Vice President and Chief Information Officer for United Technologies Corporation, is that the standard IT curriculum taught across education fails to measure up to the new business requirements of industry.

## ***Workshop Discussions on Key Topics Relating to Workforce Development***

The insights from industry leaders framed the key discussions of the participants in identifying ways to address IT workforce issues. The participants spent a day involved in problem-solving workshop discussions focusing on:

- How to best measure and stay abreast of the fast pace of changes in IT supply and demand. One key solution identified was moving forward on a region wide quarterly job vacancy survey, including the New England states and Eastern Canada.
- How to ensure that curriculum meets the demands of industry needs. The participants learned about how to adopt and validate national industry skill standards for New England and Eastern Canada.
- How to generate stronger interest in IT careers and retain IT graduates in New England and Eastern Canada through the use of internships, career mentoring and other business-education connections that reach out to students.
- How to assess and ensure that communities have an IT-friendly infrastructure able to support advanced technology needs of education, industry and workers in New England and Eastern Canada. Increasingly ability to access broad-band reflects on a community's quality of life and its ability to support workers as they seek to connect to their businesses from home.

### **Key Recommendations for Suggested Regional Actions for New England and Eastern Canada.**

#### **IT Workforce Supply & Demand**

⇒ Participants recommended that the region work together to compile improved data on gross supply and demand involving region-wide vacancy survey, real-time analysis of job advertisements from newspapers and on-line services and up-to-date reporting on higher education offerings and student participation.

#### **IT Skill Standards**

⇒ Explore the development of a regional effort (New England States and Eastern Canadian Provinces) for a business-education-government IT skills standard which can increase impact of industry involvement, enable better sharing of curriculum and reduce cost of developing programs and improve industry and student access to training.

#### **IT Internships**

⇒ Importance of developing a business-education intermediary to assist schools and employers in working together including use of web-based matching systems, linking with variety of non-profits, providing training and offering services to simplify and ease business participation.

#### **Broadband & Education Technology Infrastructure**

⇒ Need to better inventory what exists to ensure all communities are being served and to identify ways to better leverage existing investments in fiber optic lines that may run through communities, but do not offer an "on-ramp" for community access.