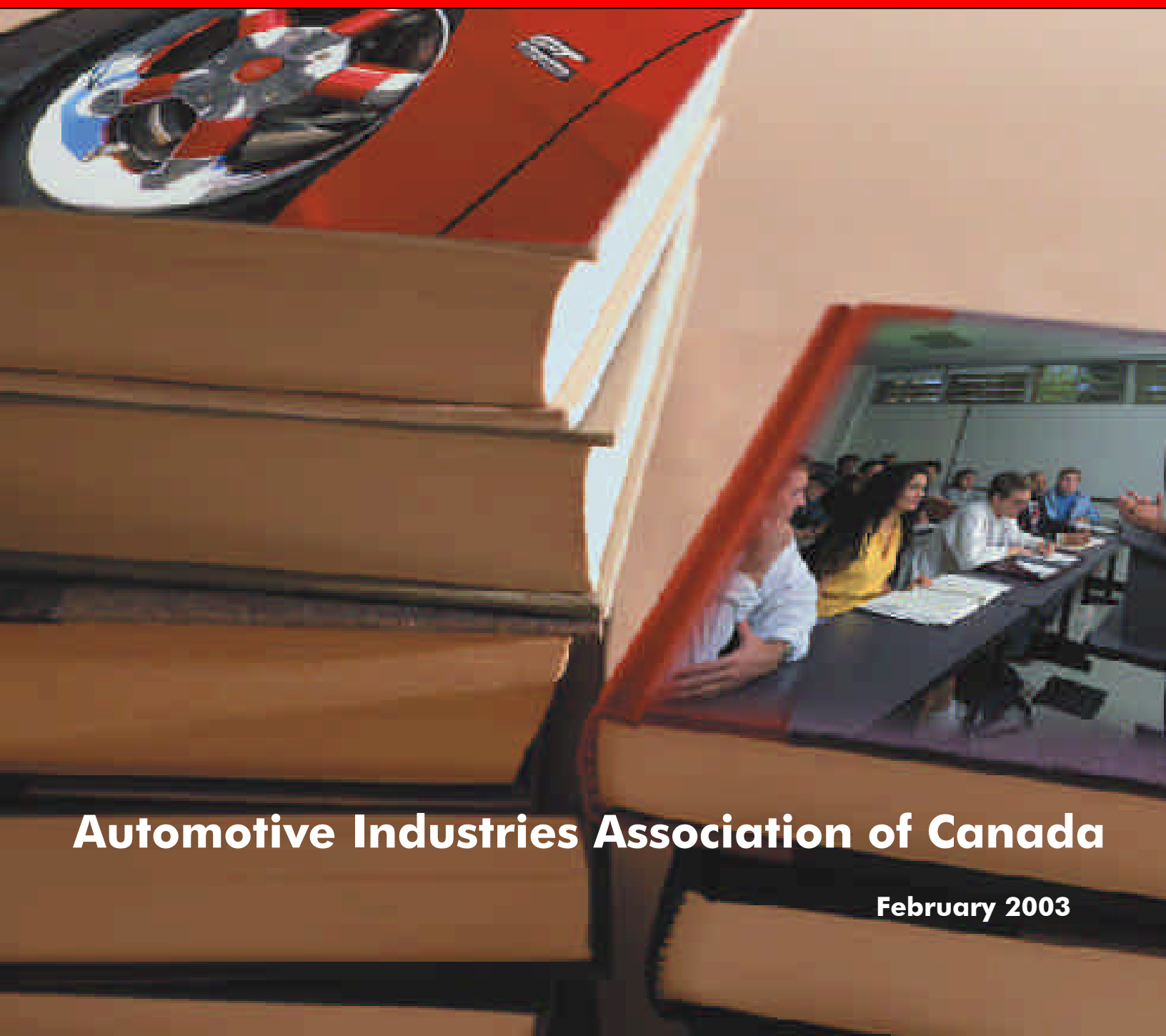




The Training Culture in the Automotive Aftermarket Industry in Canada



Automotive Industries Association of Canada

February 2003

The Training Culture in the Automotive Aftermarket Industry in Canada Report was prepared for the Automotive Industries Association of Canada by:

The Association Strategy Group
99 Fifth Avenue, Suite 10
Ottawa, ON K1P 5B4
www.associationstrategygroup.com

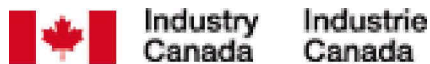


Disclaimer:

The views expressed in this report are those of the consultant, The Association Strategy Group, based on secondary research and consultations with industry representatives.

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Executive Summary

The Automotive Industries Association of Canada (AIA Canada) has an ongoing interest in the human resource needs of the automotive aftermarket and has participated in a number of studies aimed at assessing the human resource challenges facing this industry. These initiatives provide guidance to the association and other organizations interested in assisting automotive aftermarket companies with their ongoing human resources planning and development.

It has become apparent from research such as the 2001 Automotive Aftermarket Outlook Study, that while the industry has made several inroads in providing necessary technical training, the same is not true for non-technical training areas such as business skills and personal development. In order to gain further insight on training-related issues in the aftermarket, this study examines the

- type of business and personal development skills training needed;
- current sources of training;
- type of information required to assist in the planning and implementation of training and development programs;
- current or anticipated gaps in training, as well as existing or potential barriers to training;

With the support and partnership of Industry Canada, AIA Canada commissioned the Association Strategy Group to complete a series of industry consultations and a member survey. The overall goal of the project was to provide the information needed to develop tools to further engage automotive aftermarket businesses in continuous learning and training. A secondary purpose was to provide input into Industry Canada's Canadian Training Solutions, an on-line resource designed to assist businesses across Canada in addressing the skills development needs of their organizations.

The overall findings for this study support the AIA 2001 Outlook Study in its assertion that while the automotive aftermarket has significantly improved technical training, little advancement has been made in the area of business or personal skills development. In addition, the research results supported, in large part, other conclusions reached in previous studies conducted on this industry. Some of the business skills and personal development training needs identified remain the same, in particular:

- customer management (related is a new interest in customer relations management);
- marketing and sales; and,
- time management.

Challenges to accessing training are also consistent with those identified in earlier reports. Most notable are concerns related to:

- scheduling courses/programs;
- availability of courses;
- accessibility/ location;
- costs;
- lack of evaluations on courses/programs;
- inability to track completion rates;
- lack of currency of information; and,
- lack of qualified in-house trainers for certain topics.

Industry managers and employers were asked to identify the type of training related information they would find most useful for planning their businesses' human resource needs. The primary areas identified were:

- best industry practices in training;
- return on investment (ROI) on training calculators;
- inventory of business skill courses available and in particular, specific to the automotive aftermarket industry;
- cost and description of courses; and,
- evaluation of courses and track record of completion rates.

The following actions are proposed as a means of engaging all stakeholder groups:

1. Promote continuous learning and the need to train and educate;
2. Increase commitment to, and participation in, business skills and personal development training;
3. Establish partnerships to create and sustain an inventory / information system on training;
4. Facilitate cooperation amongst existing trainers to establish a broader base of offerings to the industry in multiple delivery formats;

5. Identify and communicate best industry training practices;
6. Monitor training needs over the next two to five years;
7. Examine current roles within the industry to determine the group or organization best suited to achieving each of the actions listed above.

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1.0 Introduction

“The Knowledge Era Economy relies on one primary resource: the knowledge creating abilities of its people.”¹

“Knowledge, more than money, is today widely recognised as the key resource for development.”²

The knowledge economy and the new knowledge worker are the reality of the contemporary global economy. This report looks at one specific area that greatly impacts the automotive aftermarket’s ability to respond to this new reality; that is, the degree to which a learning/training culture exists in Canada’s aftermarket industry.

The term ‘lifelong learning’ has been in use for some time to indicate that an individual is on a track of continuous learning. The 2001 Adult Education and Training in Canada survey (AETS) appropriately includes “learning a living” in its title and cites that “adult learning will play a crucial role in determining individual and collective economic and social success”.³ The most successful countries of the 21st century will be those that recognize the truth of the AETS statement and see it as a fundamental factor in the move to a knowledge-based economy. The basic premise is that “a well-trained labour force that consistently learns new skills is able to drive economic prosperity to new heights”.⁴ This means there is a need for continuous workforce training where an individual continually increases his/her skills.

A similar message can be found in the Government of Canada’s Innovation Strategy where one of the key imperatives is to respond to the demands of the knowledge-based economy for an increasingly well-educated and skilled workforce. “The so-called ‘new economy’ is demanding new things from us. The need for ingenuity, creativity and hard work has not changed. How we do our work has. Today’s workplace requires higher levels of education and skills.”⁵ This

¹ Dr. Karl-Erik Sveiby, Brisbane, Professor, Macquarie Graduate School of Management, Sydney

² <http://www.totalkm.com/home.html>

³ A Report on Adult Education and Training in Canada: Learning a Living. Statistics Canada and Human Resources Development Canada, 2001, p. 5.

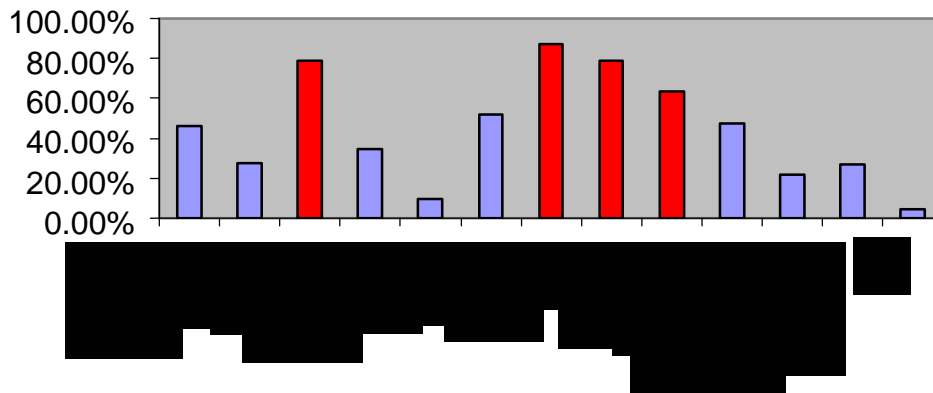
⁴ Murray, D. (2001). E-Learning for the Workplace: Creating Canada’s Lifelong Learners, p. 85.

⁵ Knowledge Matters: Skills and Learning for Canadians. Canada’s Innovation Strategy. Prepared by Human Resources Development Canada, 2002, p. 5.

requirement holds true across all sectors of the economy, including the automotive aftermarket where increasingly higher levels of education and skills are required in the workplace due to rapid changes in technology, equipment and business processes. For example, an automotive technician of ten years ago did not need the level of sophisticated training currently required in computer-based diagnostics to repair a vehicle.

“Countries that succeed in the 21st century will be those with citizens who are creative, adaptable and skilled.”⁶ In a survey conducted as part of this study by AIA Canada, automotive aftermarket employers clearly indicated they are seeking this new kind of worker who possesses all these attributes. When asked what skills they would look for when hiring a new employee in the next year, the most commonly selected traits were the ability to work as part of a team, think creatively, communicate well verbally and work towards goals (see figure 1). In the automotive sector success is no longer reliant on technical skills alone. Previous research studies and trainers in the industry that work directly with aftermarket companies all indicate that business acumen as well as interpersonal skills are increasingly becoming the factors that divide successful companies from their competitors.

Figure 1: Skill requirements for New Employees



*Comm:Oral = oral communications

Source: AIA Canada, Fall, 2002. Training Needs Survey of Members.

The need for ongoing technical and non-technical (business skills) training has been consistently raised in human resource sector studies as well as industry specific studies, such as AIA Canada’s Outlook Study. In consultations for this study, AIA members again identified human resources as a critical issue for the aftermarket industry and expressed the need for a

human resources strategy. Businesses recognize that equipping employees with the essential business skills is key to maintaining a competitive advantage. Managers and employers are clearly looking for the skills identified in figure 1, but these requirements are not reflected in the amount of business skills and personal development training offered or accessed in the automotive aftermarket industry.

Enhancing people's skill sets means that, "learning must be available to all Canadians throughout their lifetime"⁷. Unless the opportunity to learn is provided, individuals and companies cannot reach their full potential. Despite this recognition, the report prepared for the Canadian Innovation Strategy recognized that working adults do not have enough opportunities to learn while they earn. In addition, most often the adult learning system does not provide individuals with the information needed to make the right choices about their learning.⁸

An OECD study completed in 1999 concluded that Canadian workers' participation in formal learning is average compared with other industrialized countries.⁹ Formal learning was defined as educational activities that have a structured plan and clear objectives geared to the development of the learner's skill and competence (for example a part-time course in computer skills). Results from the AETS showed that the rates of participation in adult education and training did not grow throughout the 1990s. The same OECD study also reported that Canadian businesses in all sectors do not invest as much in training compared with firms in other countries.

A number of factors have been found to contribute to this lack of training investment including concern that newly trained workers may leave the firm. Small-sized employers cite the lack of resources and in-house expertise as reasons for low investment in skills development and human resources planning.¹⁰ These issues have also been identified in the automotive industry in general, and the aftermarket specifically.

⁶ Ibid, p. 5.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid, p. 9.

⁹ Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), Employment Outlook, 1999, quoted on p.39 of Knowledge Matters.

¹⁰ Knowledge Matters: Skills and learning for Canadians. Canada's Innovation Strategy. Prepared by Human Resources Development Canada, 2002.

Previous federal government/AIA Canada studies of the automotive aftermarket industry have indicated that strategies are required to:

- Promote skills development;
- Ensure continuous learning and training;
- Help with human resources planning and development; and,
- Facilitate workforce retention and recruitment.

The present study was undertaken to evaluate the current situation in the aftermarket vis-à-vis the existence of a training culture, the changes, if any, to barriers and the information requirements to help the industry move towards developing the necessary training strategies. While studies have established that a need for business skills training exists, and there is recognition of this fact amongst employers and business owners, the underlying question of whether or not this recognition has translated into action has yet to be answered. This study therefore attempts to identify the type of business skills and personal development training actually undertaken by automotive aftermarket businesses, and what other training they are interested in taking. Finally, the report identifies the type of training related information managers perceive as necessary for human resources planning.

The breakdown of this report is as follows: section 2 outlines the purpose and objectives of the study and also, the methodology employed; section 3 provides a brief overview of the automotive aftermarket industry in Canada, followed by an assessment of the industry's training commitment and needs in section 4; the challenges to training are discussed in section 5; and, section 6 focuses on employers' and managers' training information needs. The final section of the report highlights key conclusions and offers recommendations.

2.0 Purpose and Objectives

The overall goal of the study was to provide the information necessary to develop the tools to further engage automotive aftermarket businesses in continuous learning and training. The study first examined the broader training commitment of automotive aftermarket businesses and then focused on the type of business skills and personal development training needed along the automotive aftermarket supply chain. These needs were then assessed against the currently available, and most frequently used, training sources in the industry. The study looked at where training is accessed and the type of information employers and managers would find most useful to assist in the planning and implementation of training and development programs. The gaps and potential barriers to training were also highlighted to determine whether they have changed or remain the same as those identified in earlier studies.

To achieve this goal, the key objectives of the study were set out to identify and/or assess:

- ❑ the automotive aftermarket industry's current level of commitment to skills development and training;
- ❑ how training is sourced and delivered;
- ❑ successful training practices;
- ❑ the issues affecting employers' ability to supply training to workers;
- ❑ projected training needs over the next 2 – 3 years;
- ❑ training-related information necessary to increase companies' interest and involvement in skills development;
- ❑ the gaps existing between the training-related information required by companies and the information currently available; and,
- ❑ strategies to equip the automotive aftermarket industry with the training information and tools.

This project was also intended to provide input into Industry Canada's Canadian Training Solutions (CTS), an on-line resource designed to assist businesses across Canada in addressing the skills development needs of their organizations.¹¹ The web site provides one-stop access to a variety of essential training information, including a database that lists over 950

¹¹ Visit Canadian Training Solutions at <http://strategis.gc.ca/training>.

training providers from colleges, universities, private companies, and industry associations. CTS contains information for businesses on how to select training providers, how to measure return on investment (ROI) on training, information on e-learning and other new learning technologies, as well as case studies of best training practices. The web site also offers diagnostic tools to assist businesses in assessing their employee training needs.

2.1 Methodology

The secondary research comprised a detailed review of current literature and data from existing industry reports and government publications. Consultations with employers and managers were also carried out across the automotive aftermarket in Canada. This included a focus group with the Education and Training Committee of AIA Canada, interviews with aftermarket managers representative of the supply chain, and interface with AIA Canada's project team. Stakeholders were asked to identify some of the challenges to accessibility and the supply of training, the type of business and personal development training needed, and the type of training related information necessary to assist in training decisions.

Finally, as a contribution to this study, AIA Canada conducted an on-line survey of over 1,000 members that achieved a response rate of almost fifteen percent. The survey was sent to organizations representing manufacturers, warehouse distributors, wholesalers/jobbers, retailers, and paint, body and equipment suppliers. Questions focused on the type of business and personal development skills training required presently and over the next 2 – 3 years; training sources; challenges to accessing and receiving training; and the type of training related information needed.

3.0 The Automotive Aftermarket Industry in Canada

AIA Canada is a national not-for-profit trade association representing the automotive aftermarket industry in Canada. AIA Canada currently has close to 1,400 member companies representing suppliers, (manufacturers, rebuilders, manufacturers' agents, and national distributors), distributors (warehouse distributors and buying groups), wholesalers/jobbers (machine shops) and retailers.

The industry that AIA Canada represents is complex and diverse. The automotive aftermarket consists of manufacturing, re-manufacturing, distribution and retailing of all vehicle parts, tools, equipment, accessories, chemicals and services (except those products used as original equipment).¹² The industry employs about 225,000 people, of which 89% work in the "after sales" service and repair sub-sector.¹³

The 19,000 motor vehicle repair shops in this sector are responsible for the majority of aftermarket retail sales, totaling \$15 billion a year. About 4,000 parts and accessories wholesalers or jobbers supply the motor vehicle repair shops. Suppliers, who are either Canadian-owned manufacturers, subsidiaries of multinationals or importers of products manufactured elsewhere, bring products into the market through warehouse distributors (WDs) or directly into other levels of distribution.

A majority of aftermarket businesses are small to medium in size. About 60% of companies surveyed in the 1999 Outlook Study reported a work force of less than 50 employees, with 40% having less than 25 employees. Only 10% of businesses employ more than 250 employees with less than 6% employing over 500 employees.

The sophistication of vehicles today has given rise to new technologies and business processes in the aftermarket. For example, the equipment required to service vehicles has become much more complex and the pace of change in diagnostic technology has created financial pressures on aftermarket outlets, particularly the small independent installers. Advances in technology have also found their way into the distribution of parts and accessories, in areas such as

¹² The Automotive Aftermarket Industry in Canada: Outlook Study 2001.

logistics and communications. Manufacturers and wholesale distributors continue to move forward with technological changes in both business-to-business and business-to-consumer activities. Electronic commerce in the form of online information, electronic data interchange, electronic communication and electronic cataloguing have become standard aspects of automotive aftermarket business operations.

¹³ Automotive Industries Association of Canada (2000), Benchmarks for Success and Annual Watch.

4.0 Training in the Automotive Aftermarket Industry

This section of the report reviews the training commitment and culture in the automotive aftermarket industry. It examines the type of training sources accessed by aftermarket companies and identifies the type of business skills as well as personal development training they require. Most of the information provided in this section was obtained from previous studies and from the primary research completed for this project.

Over the last few years, a number of human resource studies have been completed assessing the training commitment and requirements of various sub-sectors of the automotive aftermarket industry. Two of these were national studies carried out in 2000 - one examining the human resource challenges in automotive retailing and the other, challenges facing the collision repair sub-sector. A third study on human resource issues in the automotive repair and service sector was commissioned by the Canadian Automotive Repair and Service (CARS) Council to provide direction in its strategic planning to address the sector's human resource needs.

One of the key challenges identified in all three studies was the need for ongoing training and upgrading of skills. Obstacles to meeting this challenge were also consistent. In many cases, the need to continually update skills often conflicted with the need to keep businesses running, given the large proportion of small to medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the industry. In addition, companies feared that sending employees outside the workplace to train would result in too much lost work time. There was also a concern from employers or owners that they would absorb the cost and inconvenience of training an employee only to have him or her leave to work for a competitor.

In 1997 and 1999 editions of the AIA Outlook Study, "training and human resources concerns were clearly identified as the single dominant issue facing the aftermarket".¹⁴ A majority of industry respondents indicated that the importance of this issue was still not sufficiently emphasized within the sector. This was attributed to the lack of resources and/or insufficient focus given by the industry. Respondents recognized the importance of training to productivity

¹⁴ AIA Canada, 1999. The Automotive Aftermarket Industry in Canada: Outlook Study 1999, p. 54.

improvement, employee retention, customer satisfaction and promoting a positive industry image. The need for re-training and re-certification was also highlighted as equally important.

Aftermarket companies voiced the same conclusions two years later in the 2001 Outlook study.¹⁵ However, respondents acknowledged that progress had been made by the industry in the area of technical training. The Canadian Automotive Repair and Service (CARS) Council has certainly contributed to this progress by offering technical training to the repair and service sub-sector of the industry. The CARS Council, founded in 1988, is a federation of seven national associations, of which AIA Canada is a member. CARS and its industry partners have been active sponsors of training seminars and conferences for the industry's workers and trainers. One example is an annual Provincial College Motive Power Conference, which features technical seminars and labs, equipment and training aid demonstrations, and displays of training manuals and educational materials. CARS has also been recognized for its Interactive Distance Learning (IDL) program, a satellite-based training capability that broadcasts high-quality training and education programs to the automotive repair and service industry across Canada, allowing employees to upgrade their technical skills within their own work location.

Although inroads have been made in committing to, and providing more, technical training in the aftermarket sector, this has not been the case for business skills training. The 2001 Outlook Study echoed the 1999 statement that business skills' training is an important success factor for a number of aftermarket companies, particularly SMEs. The essential value of business skills training has been validated in all three of the previously mentioned industry studies. The 2001 Outlook study indicated that customer management and efficiency had become critical competitive variables. For the automotive retailing industry, management training, communications, customer handling, time management, product knowledge and computer skills were identified as key areas requiring more training.¹⁶ Similarly, basic business management skills training was cited as the foundation for successful and profitable shop management in the automotive collision repair industry study.¹⁷

¹⁵ AIA Canada, 2001. *Prospecting for Success: Outlook Study 2001*.

¹⁶ *Time for a Tune-Up: Human Resource Issues and Challenges Facing the Canadian Automotive Retailing Sector* (Spring, 2000).

¹⁷ *Prep for the Future: Issues and Challenges Facing the Canadian Collision Repair Industry* (Fall, 2000).

That is not to suggest that the industry does not have access to any business skills training. The human resource study done by the CARS Council emphasized the need for ongoing training and professional development, particularly for non-technical skills such as business management and customer service.¹⁸ . In response to the “Bridging the Gaps” study, and after consultations with key industry representatives, CARS expanded their IDL programming to include several business skills courses¹⁹. In addition, some aftermarket companies, particularly the larger ones, do offer business skills training to employees in supervisory or managerial positions or to employees demonstrating potential to move into such positions. However, a number of these companies turn to the United States or use U.S. based organizations such as Northwood and the University of the Aftermarket to access the necessary training. This was the case for some of the organizations consulted in this study. In one case, the company typically sent 2 – 3 employees who showed potential for managerial careers to the U.S. for business skills training every year. Another company accessed some of the courses offered by Northwood to deliver business training to its employees in Canada. In addition, there are a number of leading trainers including colleges and associations offering business skills training to the industry. What remains to be addressed are two related issues, the lack of adoption for the training and the need for a wider selection of industry specific training to be made available for automotive repair and service employees.²⁰

While some business skills training resources are available, what appears to be lacking are partnerships or linkages among the various providers, as well as an industry champion to coordinate these efforts. As a result, the industry is left with training offerings that are not necessarily tailored to the Canadian aftermarket business environment, delivery formats which do not always respond to varying company needs, and course content which is not standardized. However, for some companies the barriers to providing this type of training to their employees remain more operational, i.e., too costly; inconvenient times; geographically too far to access or the desired topics are not available in their area. Thus, the need for a more coordinated approach to business skills and personal development training presents several challenges for the automotive aftermarket that will require further investigation.

¹⁸ Canadian Automotive Repair and Service Council (2000), Bridging the Gaps.

¹⁹ For more information visit: <http://www.carscouncil.ca/idl.asp>.

²⁰ Canadian Automotive Repair and Service Council (2000), Bridging the Gaps.

4.1 Training Commitment in the Automotive Aftermarket Industry

In the last two years, AIA Canada has completed two member surveys, consulting businesses throughout the aftermarket on a number of training related topics. A survey of about 700 members across Canada was conducted in September 2001, to better understand managers' and employees' technological capabilities, type of courses and programs required, willingness to use new learning technologies, and the challenges to using such learning technologies.²¹ The sample included employees and employers of manufacturing, warehouse distribution, wholesale/jobber, retail and paint, body and equipment suppliers.

Survey results showed that over 80% of managers who responded delivered professional development and/or training in the last year.²² About 50% of these managers indicated that their company had a yearly budget for professional development and/or training. However, a majority of managers and employees surveyed had spent an average of less than 10 hours on training in the previous year.

The survey conducted by AIA Canada for the present study showed a slight decrease in this number with just over 75% of managers indicating their company provided training to its employees.²³ Eleven hundred businesses were surveyed across Canada and close to a 15% response rate was achieved, with a majority of respondents being owners or company presidents, while managers represented 20% of the sample. The majority of businesses responding to the survey were wholesalers/jobbers who employed less than 50 employees. The split between the percentage of respondents who participated in business skills / non-technical training in the last year versus those who did not however was even. This result was consistent across the different sub-sectors of the industry.

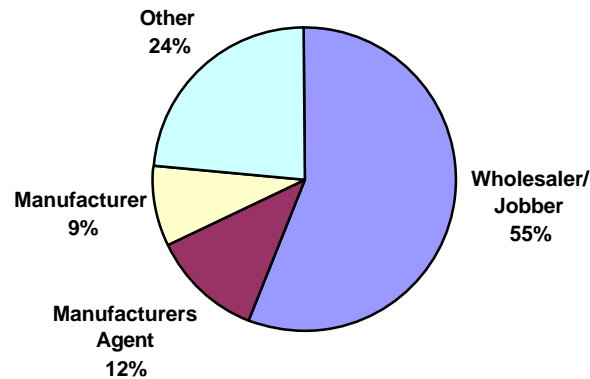
Figure 2 illustrates that a greater percentage of wholesalers/jobbers provided training to employees compared to other sub-sectors of the automotive aftermarket industry. About 11.6% of manufacturers' agents and 8.3% of manufacturers provided training in their businesses. Responses from other sub-sectors were not of a sufficient size to provide further data in this area.

²¹ Learning Technologies in the Automotive Aftermarket Workplace: A Feasibility Assessment. Prepared by the Association Strategy Group for the Automotive Industries Association of Canada, November, 2002.

²² Ibid. General trends were reported for the feasibility assessment given that only 7.7% of employers surveyed responded.

²³ AIA Canada, Fall 2002. Training Needs Survey of Members: Preliminary Results.

Figure 2: Percent of Automotive Aftermarket Employers Providing Training by Sub-sector, 2002



Source: AIA Canada, Fall 2002. Training Needs Survey of Members.

The three national human resource studies completed in 2000 pointed to the low level of training by businesses, particularly small businesses, as being a key issue. The 2001 Outlook Study also concluded that encouraging small businesses to invest in training remains a challenge. However, the two more recent surveys conducted by AIA showed some progress in that a majority of businesses surveyed provided training to employees, with larger companies generally providing more training, as was the case in the AETS.²⁴

While there has been some movement in engaging businesses to train, the need to change attitudes and commitment to training remains a key challenge throughout the automotive aftermarket industry. Most businesses do recognize the benefits of training but either these gains are not seen as significant enough to motivate the automotive aftermarket to actively work to overcome identified challenges or the solutions to these barriers have not yet presented themselves. This situation is not unique to the aftermarket as evidenced by the 2001 report on adult education and training in Canada that concluded there is still considerable room for improvement before Canada becomes a more inclusive learning society. About 28% of

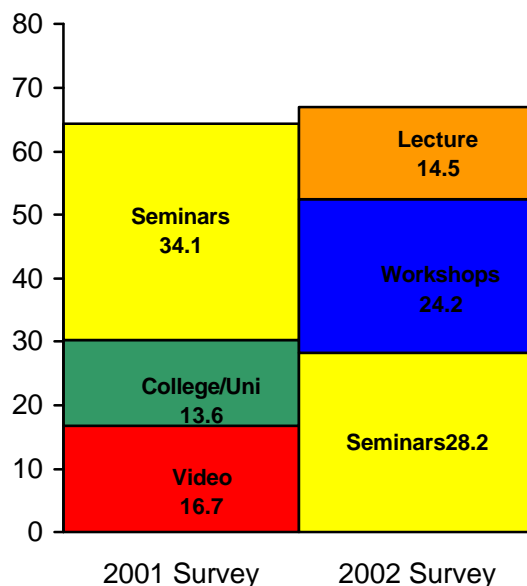
²⁴ Ekos Research Associates Inc. and Lyndsay Green & Associates (1999), *The Impact of Technologies on Learning in the Workplace*, prepared for: the Office of Learning Technologies, HRDC.

Canadians participated in adult education and training activities (formal training).²⁵ A majority of these participants took a course or program for job-related purposes.

4.2 Sources of Training Accessed by Automotive Aftermarket Businesses

The principal source of training accessed by automotive aftermarket businesses was seminars. Figure 3 compares the training sources used to deliver training in the automotive aftermarket industry between respondents of the 2001 and 2002 AIA Canada surveys. In the most recent survey, respondents indicated that the second most frequently accessed source of training was workshops, followed by lectures. All of these are more short-term individual courses rather than ongoing professional development or certificate programs.

Figure 3: Comparison of Sources Used to Deliver Training 2001 and 2002 Surveys (% responses)



Sources: Learning Technologies in the Automotive Aftermarket Workplace: A Feasibility Assessment. Prepared by the Association Strategy Group for the Automotive Industries Association of Canada, November 2002. AIA Canada, Fall 2002. Training Needs Survey of Members.

These results differ from the survey conducted in 2001 where respondents indicated videos and colleges/universities were the second most accessed sources of training. Community colleges /

²⁵ A Report on Adult Education and Training in Canada: Learning a Living. Statistics Canada and HRDC, 2001.

CEGEPs and suppliers were also identified as the main providers of training in the automotive retailing, collision repair, and repair and service sub-sectors of the industry. Employers and employees in the same three sub-sectors of the automotive industry did not use distance-learning programs frequently and did not indicate use of the Internet for training purposes. Consultations with members of AIA Canada revealed that more companies, particularly the larger ones who have the resources, are concentrating on providing in-house training.

Accessing training via the Internet was identified by less than 10% of respondents in both the 2001 and 2002 surveys. This was consistent with results from the AETS, which showed that adults rarely used the Internet as a training tool. This situation could change in the future. The feasibility assessment completed in 2001 by AIA Canada concluded that there is interest in using the Internet for the delivery of training in the aftermarket industry. The human resource studies of the automotive repair and service, retailing and collision repair sectors also recommended alternative training delivery methods such as the Internet, as a way to address some of the obstacles to training faced by employers and employees.

The cost for content development and training infrastructure seem to be contributing factors in the current lack of availability and low usage of non-traditional delivery methods, not to mention the limited scope of subjects being offered. The lack of automotive specific course content and the costs of the infrastructure required to access distance education were reasons most often given by employees and employers for not accessing training via the Internet. More courses in an affordable delivery format that is easily accessed are issues that will have to be addressed if the full potential for distance learning is to be realized in the automotive aftermarket.

4.3 Current and Future Business Skills and Personal Development Training Needs

As mentioned earlier in this report, the need for training in business skills emerged as a challenge in a number of studies completed over the last three years. Among the identified business skills training needs were:

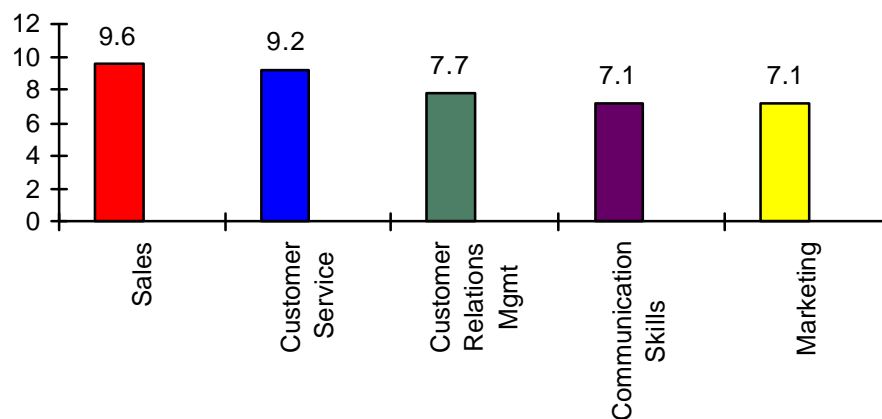
- basic management
- interpersonal
- selling techniques
- communication

- time management
- computer
- marketing
- customer management

With respect to customer management, the 1999 Outlook Study specified training requirements in customer handling, database management, marketing and sales.

Results of the 2001 and 2002 AIA Canada surveys are in line with previous studies. In the 2001 survey, profitability, marketing, and sales were cited by a majority of employers and employees as the type of training wanted in the future. Figure 4 shows the top five business skills training requested over the next two years in the 2002 survey. Sales and customer service training were tagged as the most wanted by 9.6% and 9.2% of employer respondents respectively. Customer relation's management (CRM), communication, and marketing skills were other areas of interest for further training. The 2002 AIA report, "Beyond A Handshake" provides background for the growing interest in CRM and indicates how crucial training in this area is becoming to the continued prosperity of the aftermarket, especially in the retail sub-sector. The least requested business skills training included writing skills programs, basic accounting, and network or other technology courses.

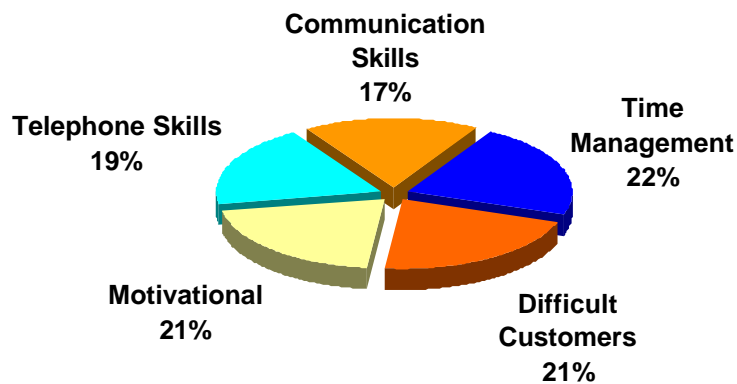
Figure 4: Top Five Business Skills Training Requested Over the Next Two Years (% responses)



Source: AIA Canada, Fall 2002. Training Needs Survey of Members.

The same survey revealed increasing interest in personal development type courses for both employers and employees. Figure 5 shows the top five personal development courses most requested by respondents as training they would like to take over the next two years. Time management was the most frequently requested training course, followed by courses teaching techniques for handling difficult customers, which were selected by 21% of respondents. Approximately 17-21% of respondents also wanted to take motivational courses, improve their telephone techniques, and expand their communication skills. Many of these courses are consistent with the topics identified as important in the business skills area. As the interest in sales, marketing and CRM increases, the value of related skills such as phone techniques becomes more apparent.

Figure 5: Top Five Personal Development Courses Requested Over the Next Two Years (% responses)



Source: AIA Canada, Fall 2002. Training Needs Survey of Members.

When respondents in the 2002 survey were asked to list the business skills courses they had taken in the last year, finance was the most frequently cited course (10.1% of respondents) followed by marketing, sales and profitability. The number of respondents who had actually taken, rather than just expressed an interest in, personal courses was relatively low. Of those who had taken this type of course, the most frequently cited were time management, communication and motivational courses.

Members of AIA Canada consulted as part of this research were asked to identify the top six business skills required for employees and employers. For employees, the following skills were listed:

- Basic financial skills
- Customer management, including interpersonal skills, customer satisfaction, telephone skills
- Time management
- Personal development
- Career planning and development
- English as a second language

For employers, customer management, time management, and personal development training topped the list, along with:

- advanced financial skills
- customer base management
- leadership skills, including communication, team building, and motivation
- marketing, research and analysis
- human resource management, including succession planning, assessing human resource needs, recruitment and development of human resources

There were similarities between the business skills and personal development training most frequently identified through the consultations conducted for this study and those identified in the 2002 AIA member survey. The most consistently identified courses were: customer management, marketing, sales, and time management. The degree of consistency and common understanding amongst respondents has provided a blueprint for the courses needed by the industry over the next two to three years.

5.0 Training Challenges

The rapid pace of technological change in the Canadian business environment has, in general, resulted in a transformation of jobs, changes in the organization of work, and an increased need for skills acquisition. The ongoing evolution in how Canadians do business has created a climate that requires flexible work practices. The net result is a need for workers who can continuously learn new skills.²⁶

This section of the report deals with the key challenges facing employers and employees in the automotive aftermarket industry that may prevent them from accessing and participating in training. Most of these challenges were raised in previous studies and have since been confirmed in the research work completed for this study. The most frequently cited barriers to training include:

- scheduling of courses/programs;
- availability and accessibility;
- location;
- costs;
- lack of evaluations on courses/programs;
- tracking of completion rates, lack of currency of information; and,
- lack of qualified trainers for certain topics.

The ongoing nature of many of these barriers indicates a real need for the industry to look closely at ways of obtaining and delivering training in short modules that allow for flexibility in time and location.

Scheduling of courses/programs

The automotive aftermarket has many small to medium businesses. Employers cannot afford to have their employees spend long periods of time in training in or out of the work place. The 1999 Outlook Study reported that aftermarket companies “with only a handful of employees face

²⁶ Learning Technologies in the Automotive Aftermarket Workplace: A Feasibility Assessment. Prepared by the Association Strategy Group for the Automotive Industries Association of Canada, November, 2002.

disruption of their operations... when an employee is sent to off-site training sessions".²⁷ If you have a small wholesale operation with a manager and two employees – one of whom makes deliveries - it is unlikely that anyone can leave the operation for several days to train. As a way of addressing this situation, AIA Canada has operated correspondence courses for a number of years. The ongoing demand for the courses is rooted in the need for flexible delivery. The main benefit is that the employee can control the training rather than the other way around.

Balancing the need to continually update skills with the need to keep shops operating was cited as a key challenge for many businesses in the human resource study of the collision repair sub-sector. Similar conclusions were reached in the human resource study of the automotive repair and service sector. Scheduling courses to accommodate employees' timelines was seen as a challenge to providing training.

Availability, Accessibility and Location of Training

Availability and accessibility of training was cited by 46% of aftermarket employers as a challenge to providing training. A majority of respondents in the surveys conducted by AIA Canada in the last two years also listed inconvenient times and location of training as reasons why employees and employers did not take training. This issue was re-confirmed by members of AIA Canada consulted for this study.

The three human resource studies completed in 2000 proposed bringing the needed training to the work place in a just-in-time manner as a solution to overcoming these challenges. One of the twelve recommendations proposed in the automotive retail study was to provide alternatives to on-site training delivery such as videos, web-based training or other distance delivery methods. This same conclusion was reached in the automotive collision repair study, which called for distance learning options or other innovative delivery methods to improve access to ongoing training programs.

Current non-technical skills training is offered through well-respected organizations and trainers. For example, CARS offers some business skills programs via IDL. In addition, a limited number of colleges and independent trainers offer courses related to automotive aftermarket business, and major WDs offer programs for companies within their banner program. AIA Canada itself offers some correspondence courses in business skills such as inside/outside sales and jobber

²⁷ AIA Canada, 1999. The Automotive Aftermarket Industry in Canada: Outlook Study 1999, p. 54.

management. However, there is no coordination between the various training organizations, resulting in each individual body having to absorb all the costs involved in the development and delivery of training. Geographically Canada is a large country with a small population. Not only are current training bodies absorbing development and delivery costs, they also have a smaller client base than their counterparts in the United States, which makes recovery of costs an ongoing concern in Canada.

Cost of Training

The cost of training is another key challenge, particularly for small businesses. About 12% of respondents in the AIA Canada training needs survey felt that training costs were too high.²⁸ AIA Canada's Education and Training Committee also raised a concern about the difficulties of filling training seats when training is offered. Smaller participation numbers in a course result in a higher per student cost. This problem is linked to the lack of time available to employees to train, inconvenient schedules, costs and the location of training. Results from the three human resource studies support the concern that the affordability of relevant courses is a barrier to an employer's ability to invest in training.

Distance Delivery

In 2001, AIA Canada completed a study assessing the feasibility of employing alternative training methods, such as new learning technologies, to deliver training in the automotive aftermarket workplace. The use of the Internet to deliver training was one of the least used methods cited by employees and managers.²⁹ This was again confirmed in the results of the survey conducted for this project. Less than 1% indicated using the Internet to deliver and access training. However, the majority of survey respondents in the same study indicated a willingness to try an Internet course. Those respondents who were not willing to try an Internet course gave the following reasons:

- preference for the classroom environment;
- need for interaction with other students and/or instructor;
- time constraints;
- no computer/Internet access;
- the slowness of the Internet.

²⁸ AIA Canada, Fall 2002. Training Needs Survey of Members.

²⁹ Learning Technologies in the Automotive Aftermarket Workplace: A Feasibility Assessment. Prepared by the Association Strategy Group for the Automotive Industries Association of Canada, November, 2002.

The feasibility assessment also examined the automotive aftermarket sector’s capability to use and deliver Internet based training. The use of automation and computer technology has been widespread in the operation of many organizations, primarily in the distribution networks and in dealings with suppliers of the automotive aftermarket industry.³⁰ Specific uses for a computer in the workplace vary from business to business. Inventory management, ordering and purchasing, and product research are some of the more commonly identified activities. Results from the roundtable discussions completed for the feasibility assessment identified variances in Internet accessibility among the sub-sectors of the automotive aftermarket industry.

Over 75% of managers and employees surveyed in the feasibility assessment indicated they had a computer at home and of this total, over 69% acknowledged having Internet accessibility.³¹ These results were consistent with those produced in the AIA Canada survey of members of the wholesale sub-sector. The majority of respondents indicated they have access to the Internet both at home and on-the-job.³²

However, as table 1 illustrates, a low percentage of managers and employees use the home computer for training. The greatest use is for leisure activities followed by research.

Table 1 Use of Home Computers by Managers and Employees

Activities	Managers	Employees
Leisure	27.9%	30.0%
Research	23.6	21.0
Work-Related	22.1	19.9
Family Use	17.9	15.0
Taking Courses	2.1	3.7
Communication	0	2.2
Home Business	0	0.75
No Response	6.4	7.5

N Manager responses = 140 N Employee responses = 267

Source: Survey of Managers and Employees, 2001.

³⁰ Time for a Tune-Up: Human Resource Issues and Challenges Facing the Canadian Automotive Retailing Sector (2002).

³¹ Learning Technologies in the Automotive Aftermarket Workplace: A Feasibility Assessment. Prepared by the Association Strategy Group for the Automotive Industries Association of Canada, November, 2002.

³² AIA Canada, AIA Wholesaler Internet Survey, 2000.

A lack of training material and courses suitable for the Internet or other learning technologies were identified as key barriers. Quite simply, the industry cannot access training if it is not available in the first place. However, just building on-line courses is not enough to address this particular issue. Lack of information, awareness and understanding of learning technologies and innovative training delivery methods were also cited as reasons accounting for not accessing training via the Internet. Although the feasibility assessment on the use of learning technologies in the automotive aftermarket industry concluded that the industry has the technological capability to use and deliver Internet based training, the report recognizes the diversity in terms of computer availability and use between the sub-sectors and also, size of business. These factors limit the opportunities to deliver training in alternate methods and present challenges for businesses to consider in their training decisions.

Despite the obstacles, some Internet training is being delivered for the industry. A few aftermarket companies and independent trainers who have both the technical delivery capabilities and content that relates to the automotive industry have begun to deliver via the Internet. Others however, have either the curriculum or the technology but not both in any great quantities. This limits the choices available to aftermarket companies and restricts the variety of courses that can be offered. Of the companies that have both the technology and curriculum, there are several where the programming is considered a competitive advantage and is therefore proprietary and not available for use by the industry in general.

Other Training Barriers

Employers in the automotive aftermarket want to be able to evaluate a course before they send their employees, and to track the employee's success once they attend. Currency of information, lack of qualified in-house trainers in certain areas, and more specific information pertaining to the aftermarket industry were other identified barriers to training. Several automotive organizations indicated that they either travel to the United States to access training or collect automotive specific training material from there and customize it for use within the Canadian industry.

6.0 Information Needs for Human Resources Development

One of the key questions that was asked in the AIA Canada survey for this study and also, throughout the consultations with the association's members, was what type of training related information managers would find most useful in planning their organization's human resource needs. This section reports on what the industry identified as being of most use to their business.

Canada's learning infrastructure does not always adequately serve the needs of all adults particularly, those in the workforce.³³ There is either a lack of or incomplete labour market and learning information for adults and by extension, for businesses to assist in making decisions about their learning needs. Best practices information on adult learning is not readily available for employees and employers to refer to and use in making informed training decisions. Providing businesses with information for human resources development was recommended in all three human resource studies conducted in the automotive aftermarket sector over the last two years. This information ranged from developing training assessment tools to providing an inventory of training providers. Industry Canada's Canadian Training Solutions web site is an example of one such resource developed in response to this demand.

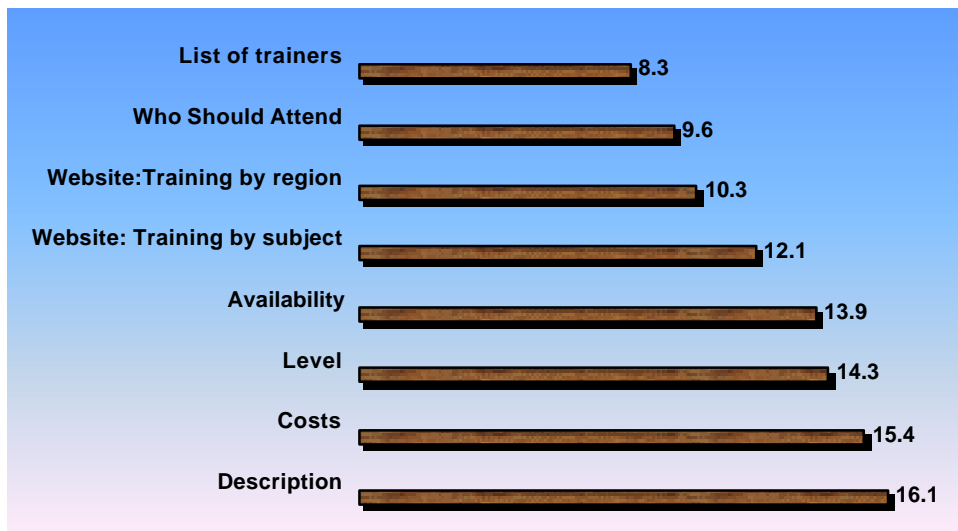
Consultations and survey work completed for this study identified several major sources of training related information managers and employers would find most useful when developing training and development plans. These included:

- Skills assessment
- Training information
- Best industry practices in training
- Information about the courses (such as cost and descriptions)
- Inventory of the training available by subject/topic
- ROI on training calculators
- Course availability
- Inventory of business skills courses available

³³ Ibid, p. 41.

Members also indicated that they would prefer the information to be made available electronically. This preference is supported by the results of the training survey completed by AIA Canada for this study. About 12% of respondents listed accessing a searchable web site of training courses by subject/topic as useful information to enable them to plan training programs (see figure 6). A description of available courses was cited as an information need by 16% of respondents in the same survey and was also identified in the human resource studies of the automotive retailing and repair and service sectors.

Figure 6: Type of Training Information Managers Would Find Useful (% responses)



Source: AIA Canada, Fall, 2002. Training Needs Survey of Members.

Skills Assessment

One of the recommendations in the 2000 Bridging the Gaps study was the development of an internet-based Human Resource Information (HRI) Suite. The automotive retail industry study recommended the development of a “clearinghouse” of automotive training available across Canada that would include information on the delivery options.³⁴ In response, the CARS Council has successfully secured support from Human Resources Development Canada and other partners to implement the HRI Suite initiative. This suite of information will provide the motive power industry readily accessible tools to analyze the skills required for a particular position, the level of an individual’s skills, and potential training resources to address any

identified skill gaps. A user’s guide for the tools being offered, a resource kit of human resource “best support practices”, and a directory of available learning resources are some of the products that the suite of information will offer the industry.

There are other professional groups such as the Canadian Professional Sales Association (CPSA) that have already successfully employed similar tools for specific sales and customer service occupations. CPSA members have found access to tools that allow employers to both assess the suitability of a new employee and plan the development of existing workers extremely useful. In implementing this new project the CARS Council will certainly be making a valuable contribution to furthering the business training culture in the automotive aftermarket industry.

Training Information

Table 2 summarizes the type of training related information managers in these three sub-sectors identified as most useful for their training decisions. Results did not vary much across the manufacturer, manufacturer’s agent, and wholesaler (jobber) sub-sectors.³⁵ A description of available courses and the cost of courses were consistently cited as useful training information across all three sub-sectors.

Table 2: Type of Training Related Information Most Useful For Managers in the Manufacturer, Manufacturer’s Agent, and Wholesaler / Jobber Sub-Sectors

Type of Training Information	Manufacturer	Manufacturer’s Agent	Wholesaler / Jobber
List of available trainers	9.1%	12.9%	8.9%
Description of available courses	16.2	16.1	15.2
Searchable web site with courses by subject	14.1	14.5	11.6
Searchable web site with courses by region	10.1	9.7	10.4
Description of who should attend a course	9.1	9.7	10.1
Indication of level of course	16.2	9.7	14.0
Cost of course	16.2	14.5	14.3
Available locations of the course or how far trainer is willing to travel	9.1	12.9	15.5

³⁴ Prep for the Future: Issues and Challenges Facing the Canadian Collision Repair Industry (Fall, 2000).

³⁵ Note: results reported only for these three sub-sectors and not the other sub-sectors of the automotive aftermarket industry due to insufficient sample size.

Manufacturer (N = 99)
Manufacturer Agent (N = 62)
Wholesaler / Jobber (N = 414)

Source: AIA Canada, Fall, 2002. Training Needs Survey of Members.

Best Training Practices

Currently, there is a lack of information with respect to best training practices in the automotive sector. However, respondents in the survey conducted for this study, rated this kind of information as very useful to have and refer to when making training decisions.

Documenting best training practices not only provides useful information for businesses to consider in their training development programs, but also offers data and information for benchmarking. Gathering the relevant data will require more cooperation amongst companies within the automotive aftermarket. About 91% of respondents in AIA Canada's 2002 training needs survey indicated that their organization either did not have or were not willing to share best practices in the area of training. Further work to identify and document best practices is therefore required in the automotive sector in general and for the aftermarket sector specifically.

Information About Courses

The cost of courses and an indication of the level of a course (such as beginners, intermediate and advanced), were also considered as useful information to have, when planning training in the work place, by respondents to the 2002 training needs survey and in consultations with AIA Canada's members.³⁶ Indirectly related to providing information on costs, is identifying links to potential funding sources for training. This information need was rated as a useful tool by 9.3% of respondents in the 2002 training needs survey conducted by AIA Canada.

Training Database

Private training is provided by automobile manufacturers, assemblers and importers, automotive retailers, specialized training organizations, and industry associations.³⁷ Some of the questions in the study conducted by AIA for this project were aimed at eliciting information regarding the trainers used by the industry. The number of trainers, private or public, with non-proprietary, industry specific programs was relatively low. The same names appeared on many responses.

³⁶ AIA Canada, Fall 2002. Training Needs Survey of Members: Preliminary Results.

³⁷ Ibid.

Further work to provide information on automotive specific trainers and training courses is an area that hopefully will be addressed through the new CARS HRI suite initiative. Industry Canada through their database project hopes to provide a central, web-based inventory of trainers. If the appropriate data can be obtained, this database will be an invaluable tool for aftermarket companies.

ROI Measurements

Measuring the return on training investment (ROI for training) is often mentioned as information needed to encourage businesses to invest in training. Showing what training can mean to a business' bottom line was discussed in the focus group conducted for this project. Survey respondents also rated return on investment calculators as somewhat useful.

ROI measurements for training have been a topic of research for a number of years. One of the problems with measuring ROI for training is identifying the appropriate metrics for the measurement.³⁸ The Conner report (2002) outlines a number of measurements businesses can use to calculate ROI for training. A brief search on the Internet also produces a number of studies measuring ROI in training and providing packages to assist businesses in creating, designing and implementing employee training programs that maximize ROI.³⁹ Access to some of these tools will be provided to the industry through Industry Canada's new Canadian Training Solutions website.

Course Availability

There are a number of web sites outlining the types of business courses available in Canada. Many Canadian colleges, universities and private trainers list their business course offerings. However, an inventory of automotive specific training courses does not exist. Unpublished results of the human resource study of the Canadian automotive retailing industry indicated that there are relatively few training programs in post-secondary institutions, focused on automotive retailing across Canada.⁴⁰ The study identified four post-secondary institutions that offer programs applicable to automotive retailing. However, the same report concluded that generic business, commerce and marketing programs can be found at almost every post-secondary

³⁸ Conner, Marcia L, (April 5, 2002), How do I measure return on investment for my learning program, Training & Learning FAQs, Learnativity.com.

³⁹ For more information visit: www.knowledgetech.cc/information/TopLinks/FAQ.html-lbk.

⁴⁰ Time for a Tune-Up: Human Resource Issues and Challenges Facing the Canadian Automotive Retailing Sector, Unpublished results (Spring, 2000).

institution across the country. Often the issue is providing data and/or links to the information in one place so it is quick and easy for the user to find. Instead of spending considerable time searching several websites or calling various institutions there needs to be a one-stop option for information. One access point is needed whether it is through a searchable website or industry portal.

7.0 Conclusions and Recommendations

Over the last few years, businesses in the automotive aftermarket industry have increasingly invested in providing technical training to employees. Technological change and sophistication of motor vehicles have been the key factors driving this need for training. However, the industry lags behind in implementing business skills and personal development training or, as it is sometimes referred to, 'soft skills training'. "The quality of employees and their development through training and education are major factors in determining long-term profitability of a business".⁴¹ Continuous learning embraces both the need to upgrade the skills required to perform in a job and also, to provide continuous personal development of one's capabilities. A number of businesses recognize the need to embrace and support continuous learning, but also acknowledge that a gap exists in providing business skills and personal development training to employees.

7.1 Challenges

Need to Engage in Business Skills and Personal Development Training

Over the last few years, inroads have been made in engaging the industry in technical training. A number of organizations such as the CARS Council have successfully contributed to this progress, which was acknowledged by members of AIA Canada in the last Outlook Study. The same is not true however, for non-technical training in areas such as business skills and personal development. Employers and managers consulted in this study indicated that few of them participated in personal development courses in the last year. However, a number pointed out that in the next one to two years, they would like to take courses in time management, motivating employees and oneself, developing techniques to deal with difficult customers as well as general telephone skills training. Much of the non-technical training provided in the aftermarket industry over the last year focused on business skills such as sales, customer service, customer relation's management, communication, and marketing. This study has identified the type of non-technical training that is needed/wanted by the sector. The availability of a clear list of courses may provide an incentive for aftermarket companies to increase their training and for training providers to expand their course offerings in the identified topics.

⁴¹ Managing a Small Business. Retrieved from Employee Training and Development, 2002.

Barriers to Training Continue to Exist

Several studies completed within the last three years have all highlighted the need for more business skills and personal development training in the aftermarket. The need for and value of this training is well recognized throughout the supply chain, however barriers to providing training persist and as a result, there has been no significant move forward in this area. The obstacles to training identified in this study are consistent with previous reports:

- Scheduling/timing of courses
- Availability
- Accessibility
- Cost
- A lack of evaluation and tracking tools

The scheduling and timing of courses / programs continues to limit access to training, particularly for SMEs when time off from work to attend a course can be costly to the operation. In addition, the recent AIA survey indicated that evening courses, as an alternative, do present family challenges for employees.

Availability and accessibility, location and costs of training are, in many respects, inter-linked as the availability of a training program is often determined by the location and costs. Other factors that might limit participation in training include the lack of evaluation tools, the inability to track completion rates, currency of information and availability of qualified in-house trainers. Although there are a number of business skills and personal development courses and programs available across Canada, very few are customized for the automotive aftermarket industry, a complaint often voiced by employees and managers in the industry.

Need for Champions to Coordinate and Promote Business Skills Training

The current training capabilities in this field are fragmented across North America. Lack of coordination amongst existing training providers has resulted in a smaller range of specific industry courses being available. Even when courses are available, trainers do not always have the ability to offer national coverage but rather serve a specific geographic region.

Technology exists that may help alleviate some of these training barriers, however, very little industry specific non-proprietary course content has been developed and provided in alternate

training delivery formats. Individual training providers are absorbing all the costs of development and deployment of training. An opportunity exists for partnerships to be developed that will serve the industry's needs, address some of the current barriers and minimize costs for the training providers. Industry itself must also step forward to create "champions" who are willing to set an example for the rest of the industry by actively engaging their employees and customers in business skills training.

Need for Training Related Information

One of the key outcomes of this project is the identification of the type of training related information or tools employers and managers require to assist them in developing training plans for employees and making informed decisions. Employers and managers pointed out that there is a need to evaluate training courses/programs and record the completion rates of such programs, particularly since a number of business skills and personal development courses already exist.

Other useful tools for managers include information on best practices and assistance in assessing the type of training required within an organization, including the individual learning styles of employees and source of training preferred. An inventory of training courses/programs available by subject type, preferably searchable on the web site, was also seen as a valuable tool. Ideally, this inventory would provide course descriptions, costs involved, and an indication of the course/program level.

The study highlights a number of key challenges that in some cases, have been identified in other industry related reports. A coordinated effort by all stakeholder groups in the automotive aftermarket is necessary to address the lack of engagement by industry in business skills and personal development training, the continued existence of training barriers, the lack of coordination and promotion of business skills training, and the need for training related information to assist businesses in developing human resource plans.

7.2 Recommendations

The following recommendations are proposed to address the challenges identified in the previous section. Individual businesses, provincial, territorial and national organizations, and trainers all have a role in addressing these challenges.

Recommendation 1: Promote continuous learning and the need to train and educate.

As a national association, AIA Canada should continue to promote the benefits of continuous training and education of employees to their membership. Information about the benefits of continuous learning and its applicability in the work place should be shared among employers and employees. Inroads have been made in the provision of technical type training due to the increased use, and sophistication of the technology in the industry. However, there is a need to improve the non-technical “soft skills” training in the automotive aftermarket. AIA Canada should support members in this long-term goal by providing the necessary information and guidance required for businesses to plan for their training needs. Reports and best practices outlining the benefits of non-technical training should be communicated to the industry stakeholder groups.

The Government of Canada recently announced the creation of the Canadian Learning Institute at the November 2002 Innovation Summit.⁴² The Institute will help ensure that Canadians have access to information about the effectiveness of skills and learning investments, and the results being achieved. Working with business, labour, educational institutes and the provinces and territories, the new Institute will address a wide range of issues, research and best practices associated with life-long learning. AIA Canada and other organizations within the aftermarket sector should work with the Institute where there is complementarity with respect to information resources on life-long learning and skills development.

Recommendation 2: Increase commitment and participation in business skills and personal development training over the next five years.

Employees and employers should also embrace continuous learning and accept their individual responsibility in the learning process. Stakeholder groups in the industry should address the challenges to providing and accepting training. Just as a growing number of businesses have embraced providing more technical training to employees, so should they commit to equipping employees with business skills and personal development training and education. Employers should recognize the importance of continuous learning to productivity improvement and also, to the retention and recruitment of exemplary employees.

⁴² Minister of Human Resources Development Canada appoints two advisors to lead Learning Institute consultations, January 9, 2003, press release.

Recommendation 3: Establish partnerships to create and sustain an inventory / information system on training.

Providing training information in an electronic format has been identified as a need in a number of studies completed on the automotive industry. Managers and employers consulted in this study reaffirmed the need to make training and human resource planning tools available electronically wherever possible. The type of training related information that needs to be provided electronically has been clearly identified in this study and should provide useful data for current and future inventory projects.

AIA Canada should continue to work in partnership with Industry Canada in developing the Canadian Training Solutions (CTS) web site of training information. Links between CTS and the association's web site should be established to provide AIA Canada's members a point of access to training related information. Links to sources of training that are central and easy to access should also be considered as part of the inventory. Also, the training inventory should include a search capability by subject/topic allowing businesses to find the courses most suited to their needs. The goal for AIA Canada is to ensure that a single window approach to training related information is provided to its members. Consultations with CARS regarding their new HRI project will be required to avoid duplication of efforts in building a training inventory.

AIA Canada has already forged a number of links with independent trainers, the CARS Council, various colleges and U.S. based organizations such as the University of the Aftermarket. Further cooperation to provide ongoing input into an inventory of training related information for the aftermarket would be of benefit to the whole industry. In addition, AIA can also provide a link to industry expertise to guide the development of industry specific content.

AIA Canada should also consider working with educational institutions and other training providers such as the CARS Council to investigate a mechanism that will allow assessment of existing programs currently offered in business skills and personal development. For instance, the inventory of training database could host a section that allows course attendees to post reviews of the program once they have completed. This would work much the same way as several web based travel sites that post hotel reviews from travelers. Training organizations might consider posting attendee assessments on their sites or on the inventory database.

Recommendation 4: Facilitate cooperation amongst existing trainers to establish a broader base of offerings to the industry in multiple delivery formats

There is a need for better cooperation amongst existing trainers and organizations offering training in the industry in order to capitalize on cost savings. Training costs have been cited as a key barrier to offering training by businesses, particularly small and medium sized companies. Location and accessibility are some of the other training barriers identified in previous studies and confirmed by this study. Coordination of generic and industry specific business skills and personal development programs and courses is the first step towards breaking down some of these barriers. However, this action by itself will not be enough to meet the needs of the industry. Further cooperation amongst trainers and the industry will be required to support the development and use of multiple delivery formats for training at a reasonable cost. Current expertise exists and needs to be utilized to avoid duplication of efforts amongst training providers. AIA Canada should consider assuming the role of facilitator and work with the various training organizations towards establishing more cooperative partnership opportunities.

Recommendation 5: Identify and communicate best training practices in the automotive aftermarket industry.

Implementing this recommendation should be the responsibility of both AIA Canada and member organizations. AIA Canada should take the lead in identifying best training practices in the industry. The information should then be communicated either through AIA Canada's newsletters, web sites, new CARS HRI inventory and/or the Industry Canada CTS website. Member organizations should share best practices with AIA Canada and other businesses to help encourage and promote training in the aftermarket industry. The information obtained from best training practices could then be used to benchmark various aspects of training across the aftermarket industry.

Recommendation 6: Monitor training needs over the next two and five years.

Training is a continuous activity that requires an ongoing assessment of skills and training needs. AIA Canada should continue to partner with other industry organizations and provincial, territorial and federal governments to study and assess the changing technical and non-technical skill training needs of the automotive aftermarket industry. Studies similar to the three national human resource initiatives completed in the last three years should be repeated for the industry over the next 3 – 5 years to identify the new skills and training needs of the industry. Market and sector wide research should also be considered to keep abreast of industry needs,

developments in the training community, and new tools that can assist businesses in human resources planning.

It is essential that all aftermarket stakeholders support such studies and assist in the collection and communication of information. The information obtained from these studies should be communicated to the industry so that individual businesses are equipped with the information necessary to assist in their human resource planning and training decisions.

Recommendation 7: Examine current roles within the industry to determine the group or organization best suited to achieving each of the identified goals listed above.

A number of provincial, territorial and national organizations exist in the industry offering a multitude of services to individual businesses. One of the conclusions reached in this report is the lack of cooperation and coordination among these organizations in promoting and providing training solutions to the industry. The role these organizations may have in implementing the recommendations proposed in this study should be assessed to see if complementary goals exist that could act as a platform for further cooperation. In some cases, one organization may be the lead while in other cases; a partnership of a number of organizations may be the solution.

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AIA Training Resources Survey

Name (optional): _____

Company (optional): _____

Section A: General Information

Q.A1). Which of the following best describes your company's primary business?
(*check only one*)

- Manufacturer
- Manufacturer's Agent
- Wholesaler/Jobber
- National Distributor
- Wholesaler Distributor
- Retailer
- Paint, body and equipment supplier
- Rebuilder
- Technology company
- Service Company
- Government
- Other, please specify _____

Q.A2). What is the size of your organization? (*check only one*)

- 0-25 employees
- 26-50 employees
- 51-100 employees
- 100+ employees

Q.A3). What is your current job title?

Q.A4). What is your present age? (*Select the appropriate age range*)

- Less than 25 years of age
- 26-35
- 36-45
- 46-55
- 56-65
- 65+

Q.A5). Please indicate your gender

- Male
- Female

Section B: Training Sources

Q.B1). Do you currently provide training for your employees?

- Yes [Go to question B2]
- No [Go to question C1]

Q.B2). What kind of training does your organization use? (*chosed all that apply*)

- In-house trainers
- Contract trainers at your location
- Contract trainers at an outside location
- Open courses (e.g. local school or training company that you register for)
- College
- Training offered by a manufacturer
- Training offered by a WD
- Other (please specify)_____

Q.B3). Please name any trainer or training organization that you use and would recommend. If you have a phone number or location for the trainer/organization that you can provide it would be appreciated.

(Please note that this trainers/organizations will be contacted regarding inclusion in a central database of available training that will be accessible to all AIA members.)

Section C: Training taken in the last 12 months

Q.C1). Did you take any business related or non-technical training in the last 12 months? e.g. time management, computer skills, management training

- Yes [Go to question C2]
- No [Go to question C5]

Q.C2). Which of the following business related courses did you take in the last 12 months? (*check all*

that apply)

- Finance
- Marketing
- Sales (inside or outside)
- Profitability
- Customer relations/management
- Human Resources
- Business writing
- Accounting (any level)
- Research skills
- Project management
- Information analysis
- Operations Management
- Inventory Management
- E-Commerce
- Recruitment/retention
- Retirement planning
- Health & Safety
- Transportation of dangerous goods
- Team building
- Other (please specify)_____

Q.C3). Please indicate if you have taken any of the following personal development courses in the last 12 months. (*Chose all that apply*).

- Time Management
- Communications
- Interview skills
- Negotiation skills
- Stress management
- Ergonomics
- Motivational Courses
- English or French as a second language
- Other (please specify)_____

Q.C4). How was the training you have taken delivered? (*Chose all that apply*)

- Seminars
- In-house trainers
- Video
- CDROM
- Internet
- College
- University
- Private trainer or training organization
- Public training (where you sign-up for a course open to anyone)
- AIA Correspondence courses
- On-the-job
- Other (please specify)_____

Q.C5). What factors have prevented or hindered you from taking training in the last 12 months?

- No problems getting or taking training

- Courses not available
- Level of courses either too sophisticated or too simple
- Cost too high
- Employer unable/unwilling to pay for training
- Location is not convenient
- Time of training is not convenient
- Delivery methods not what you like
- No one to replace you if you leave your job for training
- Family obligations/commitments
- Not able to attend an evening class
- Not interested in taking training
- Other (please specify)

Section D: Information Requirements

Q.D1)

What type of information on training would you find useful (*chose all that apply*)

- A list of available trainers
- A description of available courses
- Searchable website with courses by subject
- Searchable website with courses by region
- A description of who should attend a course
- Indication of the level of the course (e.g. beginners, ~~intermediate, advanced~~ intermediate, advanced)
- Cost of course
- Available locations of the course or how far a trainer is willing to travel

Q. D2) Please indicate how useful you would find the following tools:

	◆ Very Useful	◆ Somewhat Useful	◆ not Useful
Return on investment calculators	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Industry Best Practices	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Industry Case Studies	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Evaluation of various types of training delivery	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Internet bases training information	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Lists of College programs - technical	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Lists of College programs - non-technical	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Links to trainers websites	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Links to College websites	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Links to industry websites	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
List of skill sets for various industry jobs	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Links to potential funding for training	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other (please specify) _____			

Section E: Future Training Needs

Q. E1)

Which of the following non-technical topics would you like to take or have your employees train in, over the next 12-24 months? (*chose all that apply*)

- Finance
- Marketing
- Sales
- Software (e.g. excel, word, pacemaker)
- Network or other technology
- Human Resources
- Accounting
- Writing skills (business, resume, correspondence)
- Team building
- Communications skills
- Customer relations management
- Customer service
- Inventory management
- Operations management
- Profitability
- Administration
- E-Commerce/Websites Business aspects
- E-Commerce/Websites technical training
- Workplace health and safety
- Transportation of dangerous goods
- None
- Other (please specify) _____

Q. E2)

What personal development courses will be important for you and your employees in the next 12-24 months? (*chose all that apply*)

- Time management
- Handling difficult customers
- Phone techniques
- Motivational
- English or french as a second language
- Communication skills
- Cultural Diversity ([e.g. howe.g. how](#) to manage a culturally diverse workplace)
- None
- Other (please specify) _____

Q. E3)

When you hire a new employee what skills or abilities are you looking for over and above job specific or technical knowledge? (*chose all that apply*)

- Analytical skills
- Math skills
- Strong oral communication
- Strong written communication in English
- Strong written and oral communication in another language
- Innovative
- Team player
- Flexible
- Goal oriented
- Detail oriented
- Entrepreneurial skills
- Business acumen
- Other (please specify) _____

Q. E4)

Does your organization have a best practice in the area of training that you would be willing to share with other members of our industry? e.g. how you have made a course successful, how you instilled a training culture in your organization, how you were able to save costs in training

- Yes
- No