



WALKING A MILE IN YOUR SHOES

My Experience as a CIO

CIPS **SEPTEMBER** LUNCH MEETING

For our first discussion of the new season, Graham McFarlane will present his recent experiences as an interim CIO at a large Vancouver-based shipping company. Although his consulting practice had involved counseling CIOs for several years, Graham found that he still had many lessons to learn in effectively playing this role.

During the discussion Graham will examine the various "compass points" that a CIO needs to manage and what he learned along each dimension. He will explore:

- Managing North – establishing working relationships with the senior management of the business
- Managing South – running the "IS shop"
- Managing East – establishing relationships and providing services to the clients of the IS organization
- Managing West – managing external relationships including vendors, external customers, trade associations, and the public at large.

Using this model, Graham will explore what it takes for a CIO to be successful in a balanced performance encompassing 360°. CIOs, IS managers and IS professionals will all benefit from his insights in leading today's information technology environments.

Graham McFarlane is a Calgary-based Director with Western Management Consultants and has been a Certified Managements Consultant since 1978. Previously, Graham worked for IBM occupying technical, marketing, and managerial positions, including the management of the local IBM Computing Centre. He is a Charter Member of our I.S.P. professional designation program (1989) and is a long time active member of CIPS Calgary. He has observed both successful and unsuccessful CIOs over several years and now, with his practical experience on the job, would like to share his insights with fellow CIPS members and their guests.

Speaker

Graham McFarlane,
PEng., FCMC, I.S.P.,
Western Management
Consultants

Date

Wednesday,
September 5, 2001

Time

11:30 am
Registration

12:00 noon

Presentation

Place

Calgary Chamber of
Commerce
4 Floor, 517 Centre
Street S

Please register by noon on Monday, September 3, 2001, as seating is limited. Register online at <https://secure.nl2k.ab.ca/aplus/forms/cipluncheon.html> or phone CIPS at (403) 245-0633. Prepayment by Visa, MasterCard, or American Express will be accepted over the phone. No-shows will be billed if a reservation has not been cancelled two days in advance of the luncheon. Alternatively, you can send a replacement if you cannot attend. **Prepaid seats will be guaranteed until 12:00 noon, at which time they may be released for general admission.**

PRICES - Pre-registered
(Prices include GST)

Members - **\$30.50**
Non-members - **\$38.00**
Students - **\$21.50**

A two dollar surcharge
will apply for all walk-ins.

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Hi-Tech Start-ups
Information Systems as
a "Profession"
2001 - 2002 Seminar Series

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Key Success Factors in Hi-Tech Start-ups

A large part of our business involves laying foundations upon which a high technology start-up can build a successful venture. Commonly, the attributes that separate those that turn out healthy from those that struggle or fail may be termed Key Success Factors (KSFs).

The recognition and discovery of KSFs is vital to the long-term health of any start-up. KSFs form the columns atop which the survival of the business rests. Vencom Business Solutions has determined that small businesses that measure their ability to compete in this way are often much more successful than those that don't.

Unlike large companies, most start-ups are not well funded and thus have little room for error. By focusing on their KSFs, start-ups can ensure that their business is on the right track, or at least be aware if things start to go awry.

KSFs are very specific to each company, and the exercise of defining a company's KSFs is just as important as the resulting list. Everyone must brainstorm to identify qualities that will allow the start-up to succeed in the marketplace and to outperform its competitors. The three or four most important items in this list then become the Key Success Factors to watch and measure.

For example, Servidium, a developer of Java-based enterprise application development tools, cites the following as two of its Key Success Factors:

- **Reputation and brand awareness** – It tries to set a rock-solid reputation for quality in terms of client feedback, measured in the quantity and quality of their positive and negative feedback. Secondly, it participates in many atypical promotional initiatives, such as contributing to open-source projects, speaking at conferences and user-groups, and even publishing articles. A count is kept of such initiatives and an estimate of the response is generated from each event.
- **Employee focus** – Careful attention has been paid to motivate and satisfy its employees. It is recognized that good people really are an asset, and as a result of this focus, only one employee has left since the company was founded in 1999.

This is further reflected in its ability to attract and retain new talent.

For Kwiksites, an eCustomer relationship management company, its primary KSF is as follows:

- **Customer satisfaction and responsiveness** - It constantly stays in contact with customers and counts its successes. By doing this, Kwiksites is almost instantly aware if a certain feature or service isn't delivering the customer the desired value and can be quick to adjust its service. This constant feedback regarding the specific usefulness of services allows Kwiksites to stay ahead of the game and provide the customer with a high level of satisfaction, value, and responsiveness, increasing client retention.

Oftentimes, recognizing these Key Success Factors can make the difference between success and failure. Other than the standard published causes of failure (lack of management experience, lack of financing, poor market timing, etc.), attention to KSFs can combat some other barriers to success:

CONTINUED ON PAGE 5...

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Writing Editor's Notes is always an interesting exercise—it's tough to strike the right balance in them, but I'll give it a go.

As the new editor of CIPScene for the next two years (until June 2003), I have some very large shoes to fill, as George Urquhart has stepped down to give his life a

semblance of sanity. George, your work and contributions have been greatly appreciated, and I'm sure I'll be calling you for advice, thoughts, and contributions over the next two years.

I'm very excited about this opportunity and the challenges it presents, but I'm fortunate to have the support and assistance of two very capable people. Angela Pedrini, of CNC Global, is the assistant publications and web presence director. She'll be contributing articles and generally helping to keep CIPScene (more accurately, its editor) on an even keel. Peter Cromer has also graciously volunteered his time to be a grammar freak and second pair of eyes for submissions.

As for me, I'm presently a programmer/analyst with the Calgary Police Service, and have been in IT for nearly four years – all with the public sector. I began my career with the Department of National Defence, moving to the Calgary Fire Department. From there, I spent a brief stint with the City of Calgary, before moving to my present position.

My writing and editorial background spans my college and university days. I was an editor, assistant editor, advertising sales manager (mercifully not for too long), columnist, and contributor for my college newspaper, along with several other publications, both print and web-based.

This year will present some interesting challenges for CIPS. This year, for the first time, electronic newsletter delivery is being explored as a medium in its own right. Also, working with Centient Systems to deliver the full potential of the website is a major goal of mine.

Part of my vision for the newsletter is to make it a value-added resource for CIPS members. To this end, I will endeavour to focus on four major constituencies within CIPS in each edition—software development, network and database management, IS strategy and management, and ancillary functions such as HR and sales.

Angela and her colleague Matthew Williams will be providing an HR focus to every issue, and I'll cover off the software development base, but this still leaves our network colleagues and IS managers out in the cold.

This is an open call to those members of CIPS who are network and/or database administration professionals and IS managers to consider contributing an article (or two) on a topic of interest to you. I'm not asking for a ten-month commitment—just 500 to 900 words will do for one article.

Apart from articles, your thoughts and opinions are valued—if you have an idea or two that might make the newsletter or website better, please don't hesitate to call me at 206-5914. Or, you can email me at bkanewis@calgarypolice.ca or blakek@cips.ca.

See you next month! ☛

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2001 Training Schedule

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AMAZING THINGS COME IN SMALL PACKAGES...



...in this case, in the form of a cheque for **\$3818.00!** CIPS Calgary would like to thank the **Association for Systems Management, Calgary Chapter** for this generous contribution, presented by Loretta Fladhammer on behalf of the Association.

BUSINESS BOOSTERS CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3...

- **Lack of focus** – After a start-up gets off the ground, the most common barrier to success is a lack of focus. Hi-tech entrepreneurs often want to perfect their first product or try to be everything to everyone. This is a sure recipe for disaster. Recognizing KSFs helps to focus the company on the issues and features that are important – the ones that customers will pay for.
- **Failure to execute corporate priorities** – Whether the failure is in identification or execution, having the list of Key Success Factors contributes greatly to the chances that Corporate Priorities will be successfully executed.
- **Technology obsolescence** – KSFs can serve to highlight whether or not a technology is critical to the success of the company. If so, then measures should clearly be taken to protect this competitive advantage.
- **Establishing partnerships** – Some start-ups take a haphazard approach to establishing partnerships, not taking the necessary time to cement key relationships. KSFs can guide the company to focus on the partners that will provide the most benefit in establishing a sustainable competitive advantage.

In the case of companies large and small, KSFs will help to avoid many potential problems. Vencom has found that there is often a tendency to focus too much on the product and not the consumer's need. Inevitably, the customer pays for what is perceived to best fulfil his or her need and nothing else.

Finally, KSFs play an important role when a company seeks financing. Potential investors will often look at a company's Key Success Factors to

provide a measure of the state of the company. Properly identified KSFs will tell an investor that the company is properly managed, knows how to sustain its competitive advantage, and has plans to survive in the competitive market. Their measurement allows the investors to instantly know how the company is doing at protecting its competitive advantage, and reassures them that they are investing in a company that carefully measures and focuses on success.

Throughout the life cycle of a business, identification and recognition of a company's Key Success Factors is a very powerful tool. In an increasingly competitive market, a hi-tech start-up's success depends heavily on doing everything right. KSFs are a good way to make sure that the key points are getting the most attention. ●~

Alex and Calvin are management consultants focusing on information technology-based companies. They can be contacted at Vencom Business Solutions via email at agierus@vencom.ca or ccli@vencom.ca.

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Student Bits

I am new to the CIPS Board and would like to introduce myself to all CIPS members. My name is Shilo and I am the Student Section Chair for the coming year. I am 19 years old and plan on graduating from DeVry with a CIS degree in June. I have only been in this great city for two years. Since I originally come from a small town in Saskatchewan, I find the pace and atmosphere of Calgary to be quite refreshing. Another thing I love about Calgary is being close to the mountains, my older siblings, and Grandma.

I have many exciting plans for the Calgary Student Section. One of my goals is to initiate a mentoring program to help IT students easily adjust to becoming part of the industry following graduation. My current project is organizing an Employment Fair (Career Gateway) for February 2002. Right now we are at the stage of recruiting companies that would be interested in attending and trying to locate speakers interested in giving workshops. Students from all across Calgary will be attending Career Gateway and I'm confident that it will be a success. Feel free to contact me if you are interested in participating in Career Gateway – either with a company booth or as a speaker. I also welcome any other questions or comments. Do not hesitate to email me at shilo@cips.ca. ☛

Athabasca University Introduces Innovative MBA in Project Management

Blake Kanewischer

Athabasca University's (AU) Centre for Innovative Management (CIM), in conjunction with a number of sponsoring organizations, including the Project Management Institute (PMI), has just completed a major study called "Selling Project Management to Senior Executives."

Dr. Janice Thomas and Dr. Peter Carr of AU will be presenting a breakfast session to cover the study's highlights. They will be in Calgary at the Sheraton Eau Claire on September 19, 2001 from 7:30 am to 9:00 am. To register, email CIMOffice@athabascau.ca or call 1-800-561-4650.

The results of the study were notable in several areas. Most project personnel (75%) reported having a university-level education, but 58% of respondents to the survey felt that project management education was given short shrift. A significant number of respondents had formal project management education or professional designations as a project manager, but there was an overwhelming demand for further post-graduate training in project management.

A significant majority of survey respondents suggested they would be willing to invest three or more years in project management education on a part-time basis, reflecting the broad range of

competing demands on respondents' time. Online education, perhaps in conjunction with some classroom components, was cited as the preferred delivery mode by a majority of respondents.

To meet this need, AU has received approval from Alberta Learning to launch a new MBA in Project Management (MBA-PM). This will integrate project management theory and practice throughout the course of a project.

For further information, contact Dr. Thomas, the MBA-PM Program Coordinator, at JaniceT@athabascau.ca.

More information will appear in the October 2001 issue of CIPScene. ☛

U of C Student Receives CIPS Award

Congratulations to **Marcia Lee McKay**, recipient of the **Silver Medallion in Systems Management**. Ms. McKay was awarded her medal at the University of Calgary Convocation June 13, 2001. An outstanding student, Ms. McKay is to be commended for this achievement. ☛

Becoming Agile: Lightweight Methodologies for Analysis and Design

CIPS **SEPTEMBER** SEMINAR

The recent trend towards lightweight methodologies for application development such as eXtreme Programming (XP) is notable because it emphasizes the need for software projects to become more effective. Delivery times continue to decrease and the financial risks faced by organizations writing software are increasing.

This presentation introduces a project launch methodology based on principles from several published methodologies, including Rational Unified Process (RUP)(tm), eXtreme Programming (XP), and Agile Modeling (AM). The talk will focus on the first phase of a project and provide guidelines for selecting the appropriate methodology for your project and how both AM and XP might fit into that decision. As a necessary backdrop to the conversation, Adam Geras will introduce concepts of RUP(tm), AM, and XP as required. The general idea is that the launch phase, whether it's called "inception", "discovery", or "the launch", is critical to the overall success of the project. As Scott Ambler and Larry Constantine put it, even the best programmers in the world can't save a project that had a poor launch. Attendees will see a work breakdown structure for a typical RUP(tm)-style launch phase and also review the ways that both AM and XP might cause the planner to adjust it to better suit the needs of the

team and the customer.

Adam Geras is an object-oriented development consultant specializing in:

- The component and object-oriented software development process
- Coaching and mentoring project teams on object-oriented analysis, design and development

- Managing requirements in projects using object-oriented techniques
- Coaching and mentoring project teams on managing projects with an iterative software life cycle.

Mr. Geras brings over twelve years of successful software engineering experience in the software consulting and internet industries. He has been a technical lead on both Microsoft-oriented projects and on Java-oriented projects, giving him unique insight into component technologies and projects that use them.

Mr. Geras has designed the solution and application architecture for .com startups and click-and-mortar companies launching internet ventures. His focus remains on web application architecture, configuring the software process for specific customer engagements, and coaching/mentoring companies in the use of object-oriented techniques, including Rational Unified Process(tm) and lightweight methodologies such as eXtreme Programming. Adam likes to teach and is an instructor with the Object-Oriented Software Technologies programs at the University of Calgary and Saint Mary's University in Halifax.

Mr. Geras holds a Bachelor of Science, Computer Engineering degree from the University of Manitoba. He also holds a diploma in Nuclear Medicine Technology from the Red River Community College in Manitoba. Adam is a Sun Certified Java 2 Architect, a member of the Association for Computing Machinery, and IEEE. In September 2001, he will enter the Masters of Software Engineering Program at the University of Calgary. ☛~

CIPS breakfast seminars are catered by the  Second Cup, Fifth Avenue Place.

Date

Thursday, September 20, 2001

Time

7:30 am

Registration and continental breakfast

8:00 - 9:00 am

Presentation

Place

Fifth Avenue Place
1790, 425 - 1 Street SW

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CIPS Calgary Section

Future Meeting Dates – 11:30 am

Wednesday September 5, 2001	Tuesday February 5, 2002
Tuesday October 16, 2001	Wednesday March 6, 2002
Thursday November 8, 2001	Wednesday April 3, 2002
December 2001 (TBA)	Wednesday May 1, 2002
Thursday January 10, 2002	Wednesday June 5, 2002

All meetings are held at the Calgary Chamber of Commerce
4 Floor, 517 Centre Street S.

CIPS Events

- September 13, 2001 **PROPELLER HEAD PUB NIGHT**
4:00 pm – 6:00 pm
Brewsters Brewing Company
Eau Claire
101 Barclay Parade SW
- September 13, 2001 **E-BUSINESS SIG**
*e-Commerce: An Oilpatch
Suppliers' Perspective*
12:00 noon
Lunchbox Theatre
+15 Level, Bow Valley Square
- September 19, 2001 **NETWORK MANAGEMENT SIG**
*Linux in the Enterprise -
Prime Time Ready?*
11:45 am – 12:45 pm
HP Office
3600, 150 – 6 Avenue SW
- September 20, 2001 **2002 SEMINAR SERIES**
*Becoming Agile:
Lightweight Methodologies for
Analysis and Design*
7:30 am
Fifth Avenue Place
1790, 425 – 1 Street SW
- October 10, 2001 **PROJECT MANAGEMENT SIG**
*Oaks and Palms - Flexibility in
Project Management*
12:00 noon
Fifth Avenue Place
1790, 425 – 1 Street SW

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Wireless technology – it is becoming more and more common. I can remember it was not that long ago personal computers were just coming onto the market. Soon after, it was the client/server explosion and we are now in the midst of the Internet revolution.

How do we, as IT professionals, cope with this frantic rate of change? Not only are we expected to understand new technology developments, IT professionals are often expected to advise clients on how these technologies can be utilized to provide a competitive business edge. This brings to mind questions about how an association such as CIPS can help the IT community learn about new technologies in a time-effective manner. A more essential question, however, is not just what can CIPS Calgary offer its members but how can we build a sense of community with all IT professionals in Calgary?

Last year, as CIPS Calgary President, Derek Manns posed these fundamental questions to the members of the CIPS Calgary Board. As a result of this, we questioned how CIPS Calgary could bring value to its members, as well as to the greater IT community. A number of initiatives were planned that are now beginning to materialize. This is where I step in. My role as CIPS Calgary President this year is to continue the incredible work that Derek started. This is the year to “make the strategy come alive” – it is the year to put into action some of those great ideas.

So, how do we start building a sense of community within the IT profession? I believe one way is to focus some of our attention outward and do more with other IT and non-IT associations. In fact, the mandate of the External Liaison portfolio is to foster these alliances and partnerships. CIPS Calgary can help to build a sense of community by providing technology information and education to other

CONTINUED ON PAGE 10...



**CIPS CALGARY SECTION
BOARD OF DIRECTORS
2001 - 2002**

Back row, left to right: Stuart Quinn, Matthew Hillhouse, Mohamed Teja, Herb Malcomson, Shilo Beechinor, Marion Ng, and Blake Kanewischer.

Front row, left to right: Denise Richards, Derek Manns, Maria Anderson, and Matthew Williams.

Missing: Rob Carruthers, Barrie Cameron, Nguyen Tran, and Leon Cygman.

EXECUTIVE NOTEPAD CONTINUED FROM PAGE 9...

associations where the necessity to learn about IT is required but is not their core business. Another way to create a greater sense of community is to provide more relevant educational and networking opportunities to CIPS members and the greater IT community.

A fundamental building block under all of this is professionalism and the I.S.P. designation. We cannot build a sense of community without professionalism – a code that all IT professionals are proud to uphold and follow. The IT profession is still young in comparison to other professional groups such as engineers or accountants. As we evolve, we can learn from these established organizations what holds the profession together and how we can collectively act as one. Despite the diversity of the IT profession, I believe that the I.S.P. designation will be the common ground that binds the community and the profession together.

In closing, I would like to extend my sincere thanks on behalf of CIPS Calgary to Derek Manns for his vision and hard work as CIPS Calgary President last year. Derek now takes on the role of Past President on the Board so he's not getting off that easily! The incoming Vice President is Matthew Williams. Matthew previously held the Sponsorship portfolio and worked wonders with it. I look forward to working closely with Matthew this coming year.

There are a number of Board members returning this year:

- Barrie Cameron, Southern Alberta Regional Director
- Stuart Quinn, CIO Liaison
- Mohamed Teja, External Liaison
- Rob Carruthers, Secretary/Treasurer
- Leon Cygman, Academic Liaison
- Marion Ng, Membership Director.

The new Board members are:

- Matthew Hillhouse, Continuing Education and Programs
- Blake Kanewischer, Publications and Website
- Herb Malcomson, Marketing and Publicity
- Denise Richards, Sponsorship
- Nguyen Tran, Special Interest Groups
- Shilo Beechinor, CIPS Calgary Student Section.

In the CIPS office, Pamela Wilson and her staff continue to be a tremendous help to the Board members by keeping us organized and providing advice and expertise. I would like to take this opportunity to extend a warm welcome to all new and returning CIPS Calgary Board members, as well as the staff in the CIPS office. It's going to be a great year – let's accomplish some great things, be proud of what we do, and have some fun.

As always, I encourage and welcome your feedback on how we can make your CIPS membership a more rewarding experience. Feel free to contact me or any CIPS Calgary Board member with your ideas and suggestions. ☛~



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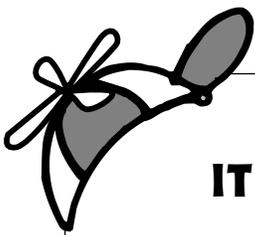
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more information.



CIPS MEMBER BENEFITS UPDATE

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SHAW CABLE

A new benefit was recently announced in News from National – a discount on Shaw Cable subscriptions – in which CIPS members actually receive **one more free month** of service than through a similar program offered to the general public.

Because Shaw is not available in all parts of the country, the benefit is only available to non-subscribers in areas covered by Shaw Cable. While it is unfortunate that not every benefit will always apply to every member, CIPS tries to offer a wide variety of benefits so all members can take advantage of as many as possible.

A complete list of our benefits is available in the 'Members Only' area of the website at <http://www.cips.ca/loginarea/members/benefits>.

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e-Business SIG

e-Commerce: *An Oilpatch Suppliers' Perspective*

CE Franklin Ltd., the largest oil field supply company in Calgary, has been working on the delivery of its e-Commerce solutions for two years and has been selling online for one year. During this presentation, Les Zaharichuk will give you a summary of its experience to date, where it is now and what it has learned. He will also discuss the technical aspects of e-Commerce, the keys to success in this ever-changing world, and what others are doing to make this come to life.

Les Zaharichuk, CMC, an independent management consultant, has been working with CE Franklin for a number of years in the planning and management of IT initiatives. Having led the implementation of the JD Edwards ERP system at CE Franklin, his interests turned to e-Commerce, where he is now leading the development and implementation of this initiative. Les has over 22 years management consulting experience, has worked on projects with CE Franklin, Talisman, Koch and TCPL over the past five years and numerous other companies during his tenure with IBM

and Price Waterhouse. Les will be joined by Neil MacLean, Director, e-Commerce at CE Franklin.

Note: Pre-registration is required for this event.

Title	<i>e-Commerce: An Oilpatch Suppliers' Perspective</i>
Speaker	Les Zaharichuk, CMC Neil MacLean
Date	Thursday, September 13, 2001
Time	Noon (Check-in starts at 11:45 am)
Location	Lunchbox Theatre, +15 Level Bow Valley Square, Calgary
Cost	Free

Register for the CIPS Calgary e-Business Special Interest Group by visiting: www.eBizCalgary.org

e-Business SIG Mission Statement:

Showcase leading edge e-Business initiatives for Calgary IT Community leaders.

e-Business SIG Audience:

IT Executives • Project Managers • Architects ●~

Network Management SIG

Welcome back everyone! Hope everybody was able to enjoy his/her summer with family and friends. For those of you who are not familiar with Network Management SIG, it is a forum for network professionals to address all aspects of network systems,

infrastructure, and management. For our September meeting, we are pleased to present Bruce Johnston from Ideaca.

Over the past year, Ideaca has been putting Linux and open source products to the test with production deployment – both in-house and for clients – in web, database, mail, firewall, VPN, desktop, and other roles.

A question which many people are currently asking is: "Is Linux – and open source software in general – suitable for use in building enterprise applications?" This presentation will summarize Ideaca's experiences - the good, the bad, and the ugly - and will explore the future impact which open source software may have on the IT scene.

Title	<i>Linux in the Enterprise - Prime Time Ready?</i>
Speaker	Bruce Johnston
Time	11:45 am – 12:45 pm
Date	Wednesday, September 19, 2001
Location	HP Office, 3600, 150 – 6 Avenue SW (Petro-Canada Building)
Cost	Free. Please note that this is a brown bag lunch meeting.

Space is limited. RSVP to nm_sig@cips.ca asap.

Bruce has 24 years experience in the computer and communications industry, including management, design, implementation, maintenance, and teaching. This includes over ten years experience in the management of Unix systems and TCP/IP network design. He is currently a managing consultant with Ideaca Limited, a management and technology consulting firm with offices in Calgary and Toronto. He has held past roles with Digital Equipment Corp. (now Compaq), the Alberta Research Council, Bell-Northern Research (Nortel Networks), and the Southern Alberta Institute of Technology. ●~

Project Management SIG

2001/2002 Season Opener

Welcome to the new 2001/2002 PMSIG season. Our fall session will feature Robin Hornby, a senior IT consultant with Tempest Management Inc., presenting *Oaks and Palms - Flexibility in Project Management*.

Project management is essentially a problem solving activity, yet too often the less experienced project manager is hindered rather than helped by the rules handed down. There are times when bending with the breeze is both expedient and wise. Similarly, there are times when a heart of oak is required. The presentation will explore the circumstances and criteria for applying either judgment to achieve project success. Aspects considered include style and politics, process, and technique. It will amplify these lessons with examples drawn from experience and will appeal particularly to those project managers who have faced the gathering storm and wondered whether to bend or stand firm.

Robin is a dynamic and experienced public speaker as well as a respected, practicing IT professional. His last presentation to the PMSIG two years ago was very well received.

Title	<i>Oaks and Palms - Flexibility in Project Management</i>
Speaker	Robin Hornby
Date	Wednesday, October 10, 2001
Time	12:00 noon (sharp) to 1:00 pm
Location	17th Floor Conference Room Fifth Avenue Place 1790, 425 - 1 Street SW
Cost	Free

This session will be sponsored by Intergraph Canada Ltd. which develops, markets, and supports complete solutions for industries around the globe, offering engineering, mapping/GIS, and IT professionals open, enterprise-wide, web-enabled, interactive graphics software and hardware.

Refreshments will be provided and you are welcome to bring a bag lunch. Anyone with an interest is welcome, so please forward this invitation to your associates.

You can register for the event at the PMSIG web site found at www.jobcafe.ca under the Special Interest Groups section. Should you wish further information please contact Bill Bentley or Karen Wright (see below). ☛

CIPS Special Interest Groups (SIGs)

Citrix

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Women in Technology

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Information Systems as a "Profession"

The related terms 'professional', 'profession', and 'professionalism' seem to be terms everybody "just knows," but nobody can quite define. However, given that professionalism is one of CIPS' values, and since the I.S.P. designation itself hinges upon the term "professional," there seems to be value

in exploring these ideas.

When I pull the dictionary off the shelf, it defines "professionalism" in terms of the practice of a profession, which is in its turn defined as a "body of knowledge that requires long and intensive study". This doesn't even come close to capturing the ideas inherent in the terms.

I would delve into a book of quotations for more in-depth inspiration on the subject matter, but it doesn't seem to exist. Perhaps the pithiest musings on the matter can be attributed to Alastair Cooke, who suggested that "a professional is a person who can do his best at a time when he doesn't particularly feel like it." This seems to be closer to the mark. But it still falls short, so I suppose I shall attempt to remedy these deficiencies.

When we explore professionalism, why not first explore the professions? The learned professions are traditionally held to be medicine, law, and theology. Engineering, in more recent times, has been considered a profession, as has accounting. There are undoubtedly other professions that could be deemed to exist – but these five will serve as a representative base.

What are the common threads among the professions mentioned earlier? One is that post-secondary education is a requirement to enter the profession, along with a licensure or certification process. Another is that there are generally materially adverse consequences for errors and omissions. Finally, there is a code of ethics and professional conduct (a circular reference if I ever saw one) for each of these professions.

Measuring information systems against these benchmarks, we can then arrive at an answer to the question of information systems as a profession. From there, we should be able to make the easy jump to qualifying IS practitioners as professionals.

IS is a young discipline, which hardly measures up against its contemporaries. Medicine dates to the days of Hippocrates, law to Seneca, and theology to the dawn of recorded time. Engineering and accounting are both hundreds of years old. Nonetheless, I shall attempt to fairly assess IS against these stalwarts.

Is post-secondary education a barrier to entry into the IS field? The answer to this is mixed. Many IS practitioners have college or university level training in computer science or information systems, but this is by no means universal. Numerous information systems personnel have high school diplomas or unrelated post-secondary education. By contrast, to enter the previously mentioned traditional professions, post-secondary education of a specific type and duration is required. IS isn't a profession when measured against this yardstick.

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Is a licensure or certification process required to practice in the field of IS? The answer to this is obviously, no. In every one of the aforementioned disciplines, the answer is yes. Certainly, the broad nature of the information systems field militates against one wide-ranging certification exam, but one can be similarly specialized in engineering and medicine—and there are, in fact, specialized examinations within those professions.

Are there materially adverse consequences for errors and omissions within IS? There is no question that this is so – indeed, some of these consequences may even be deemed life-threatening, as with nuclear control systems, or CAT control software. Stories abound in each of the previously mentioned professions of errors and omissions. Certainly, IS measures up in this case.

When you signed up for CIPS, you agreed to abide by the CIPS Code of Ethics and Standards of Professional Conduct – but is this code of conduct universal to IS practitioners? The answer here must also be no. The code of conduct tends to be linked in some way to individual licensure or certification.

When all this information is assessed, it is clear that IS, as a field in its current form, does not represent a profession. Thus, its practitioners cannot be fairly termed professionals.

Since “information systems professional” appears to be a contradiction in terms, can practitioners still act with professionalism? The answer to this is a definite yes. By drawing our examples of behaviour from the aforementioned fields, we can act in a professional manner. We can also work toward the recognition of information systems as a true profession, rather than a self-styled one. ☛

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