



Canada's Career Imperative How do we fix the "Talent Disconnect" Dilemma?

Summary Report – 2013

**Vancouver ♦ Calgary ♦ Regina
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Across Canada, from April through November 2013, CERIC conducted seven roundtable discussions in the cities named above. We invited regional decision makers in business, education and governmental agencies, in addition to professionals in the career services field to find some common ground for answering the overall question "How do we fix the "Talent Disconnect" Dilemma?"

Our goal at CERIC was to be a catalyst for conversation on this topic between all collaborators; to promote networks across the country, share innovative ideas & success stories, while fostering a better understanding of how career services can better intersect as part of the solution.

Preface

Who will win in the talent match - connecting the best of Canada's talent with the immediate and future needs of employers? We've been crying about the dilemma of our "talent disconnects" for years. Goalposts keep moving.

Business, education and government all have a stake in the **economic imperative** of crafting a clearer strategy to **develop, connect and retain the best of our talent** to meet the ever changing needs of disruptive regional and global markets.

Recognizing the constant swings in and out of recession, and major global forces that rapidly impact the changing world of work (technology, aging demographics and social behaviour to name a few); we in Canada have a real need for genuine, innovative and collaborative action to, if not fix – improve our "talent disconnect."

Consider how:

- regional markets across Canada differ in the skills shortage & talent match
- our educational process could better prepare and connect young people with realistic choices offered by employers
- patterns of recruitment and selection are amplified by social networks
- society's cycle of work, continuous learning and personal life aspirations are upside down from 20th century norms

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Roundtable discussions were centered on three questions. Some thought-provoking conversation points for the two core questions are highlighted in this summary. A complete view of the contributions from each of the seven locations; (including an extensive list for the third question about examples of regional collaborative innovations), can be found **at** www.ceric.ca/talentedisconnect

Changing the Talent Match Process

If there was **one thing you would change** to make the work search & talent match system work better, what would it be?

As if in a unified voice; here are samples of messages cited more than once in several variations, by participants from all across the country and directed to two primary audiences; business **employers** and the **education** system, focusing on the integration and collaboration between the two.

- Develop a collaborative national workforce strategy that involves employers, educators & governments. A national strategy would include immediate, short, medium & long-term strategies by promoting/engaging regional discussions to understand local supply/demand and help make a work search process easier.
- Educators and employers need to come together to connect what students are learning to what is required for the roles of the future. Industry needs to be more forward-looking. Industry is often focused on now, not 5-10 years out and the potential talent they will need then.
- Improve the disconnect between employers & educators around the requirements of hard and soft skills. The employment market says what is important are soft skills (such as conflict management, problem solving, critical thinking) – are we teaching this in our education programs? And more effective work search skills should be taught more at high school/university.
- Demystify entrepreneurship as part of the career education process. It doesn't have to be about "starting a business." Instil an entrepreneurial spirit, thinking of it as creating something or growing your current role.
- Employers/recruiters can be too myopic, narrow/specific in their search criteria, looking for the "ideal" candidate, checking off boxes for a perfect match. Employers need to see beyond surface information ... seeing talent as an investment. Focus on a person's capacity to relate to others and learn.

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- Employers put up digital walls, screening out applicants through key words & online resumes or assessment tools, which doesn't serve anyone's best interest (employer/jobseeker) and can be particularly difficult for new immigrants.
- New graduates need more understanding and help on how to access networks. That's how you get referrals to 80% of jobs. Learn more "real-time" face-to-face networking, going beyond social networking tools.
- Some employers continue to rely on a credential for screening instead of competencies, but few employers are involved in what a credential means in terms of curriculum development for a certificate or diploma. Need to encourage employers to better define competencies within their business context.
- If Canada is looking to attract international talent we also need to examine the barriers we put up, such as inter-provincial mobility within trades/professions.
- Let's not ignore the influence of professional associations and alumni associations that provide assistance where organizations don't.

There were also messages for professionals in the career services field:

- Perhaps the culture of career counselling should change? Instead of starting with the individual and their choices, turn it on its head; start with what the employment market needs, encourage people to look at a wider range of options.
- Career counselling has to change, it needs to be reality-based. When counsellors focus on "where would you get the most pleasure in your career/life," it could steer people in the wrong direction. Need to talk of skills in demand and market opportunities. There's a three-way disconnect between career counselling, workplace needs and the education system.
- For people in work search mode, it's information overload. They need proper processes/techniques to help sort through options, including entrepreneurship. Career counsellors/coaches need better tools and insights to do this.

There was also one persistent concern – to improve the flow of relevant, current information and awareness about the rapidly changing employment market. This is a concern for parents, educators, career services professionals, industry leaders, professional associations and workers of all ages. The very nature of global markets being in a perpetual fast rate of change makes this an ongoing challenge.

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Value Proposition for Career Services

Variant language describes the "talent disconnect" dilemma. **What strong value proposition statement would you make for career development services so that business and government would see it as our nation's investment?** (50 words)

One key learning we can take away from all the roundtable discussions is that service providers in the field of career development need to work at developing a crisper value proposition statement that answers the how and the so what?

That is the core of the problem when you are asked to articulate value within a business context, for a field of work that is largely unknown and diverse in its application.

Three comments from these roundtable discussions perhaps best sum up this concern:

- For the business world where employment happens, finding the right metrics around productivity and retention will make the case to employers for investing in career development.
- For senior level employment and workforce policy planners in government, their eyes glaze over when you say career development; what they are interested in is economic development.
- Companies are being asked for returns on investment (ROI) from stakeholders, and for collaborative support in their economic communities. It's tough to make the case to engage career development services, when what you need to do is prove you are solving a problem for employers.

Does this not beg the need for a shift in the presentation of career development services?

Thank you goes to our across-Canada Sponsor **Millier Dickinson Blais**, for helping to make these roundtable discussions a success.