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Ms. Nadon is Managing Director of MediaIntelligence Inc. MediaIntelligence offers end-to-end recruitment and training services for the Canadian media and culture employment markets, providing a tangible connection between talent, employers and cultural industry stakeholders.

Training: the road to cultural riches ...

The business case for training the Canadian cultural industries' core business and creative talent is not a hard sell... or is it? Canadian content creators continuously strive to provide training for their workforce, but much work remains to be done at the management level, before they can realize stronger and steadier returns on their human capital investments.

There are many compelling reasons for training employees. Training subsidized or provided outright by an employer is a major attraction for entrants to our workforce. Training also has a domino effect on employee retention. It is a valuable way to keep employees in long-term, static positions involved, engaged and more contributive to employer end-goals. Training further enhances loyalty and performance, and leads to better integrated operations, greater synchronization in corporate culture and ultimately more innovative product. Training also has an external, bottom-line benefit. Customers whose needs are understood and met through stronger representation and delivery of Canadian cultural products and services, are more satisfied and therefore more likely to maintain the business relationship through the greater customer life cycle.

An in-depth review of small and medium cultural enterprises (Nordicity Group/Canadian Heritage Cultural Affairs Survey of SMEs, March, 2004) reported fairly healthy statistics overall regarding training, and offered interesting contextualization of skills shortages issues, unique to the sector. Encouragingly, the report showed a healthy 65% to be conducting some form of informal, in-house training, and that training was not necessarily dependent on government funding. The biggest challenge reported was financial – having the resources with which to offer meaningful and sustained training programs. Another challenge is that many of culture and media workers are employed on a seasonal basis, making it more difficult to achieve a solid return on investment in training, and clearly limiting the retention of corporate knowledge to the core management who remain in command from project to project. This juxtaposed against the reality of a knowledge-based industry...

Skills shortages and lack of management training were highlighted as issues unique to the sector. An interesting artifact of cultural employment was noted, in that many enter Canadian media based on its creative potential. With employment for entry to mid-level individuals in broadcast and production being largely on a project to project basis, it can be difficult if not impossible for these individuals to acquire the necessary business skills so critical to our long-term economic health. A similar effect was found in cultural entrepreneurs bringing new products and abilities to market, yet not necessarily having or being able to acquire the high-caliber management skills needed to take these businesses to greater and more enduring levels of success. A shortage of management skills was also a prevalent finding in this survey, with respondents citing the highest training demands as being in leadership and vision, finance and business planning skills, and sales development skills. This shortage of management skills was mirrored in the Cultural Human Resource Council's (CHRC) findings (Building on Success: A Human Resources Development Strategy for the Cultural Sector, 2004) in which "the management capacity of the sector was frequently cited as a weak link", and which identified management skills development, support for career self-employment and access to career-long learning as the central human resource issues.

And while many culture-specific training options exist, and indeed are being employed by a reported 17% of cultural enterprises, disparities were noted in that, while considered very useful, management training programs are often not practicable due to the associated time and financial costs, and often unsuccessful in addressing the specific needs of the cultural enterprises.

While it recognizes the need for more in-depth and updated data on new forms of culture creation and consumption, the CHRC has successfully pinpointed the cross-sectoral need for strengthening



management functions, acting on skills development for the career self-employed, and the need for an effective program for lifelong learning focused on culture-specific skills. They further note that these issues will require commitment from the sector through greater recognition of management skills, and greater recognition of the value of training, as well as appropriate content and delivery mechanisms.

The merits of concerted training exist, and options for improving cultural training have been identified. The challenge remains in building a network of professionals and/or a community of interest across media and media training institutions, perhaps not unlike the extremely successful CAB Taskforce for Diversity, to spearhead dialogue, to share best practices, and ultimately commit to new models surrounding skills-building and management training. Much of the preliminary research has been done ... perhaps it's time for a real hard sell on creating a framework for management skills training that will better support Canadian content creators in their respective journeys down the road to cultural riches.

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M. Michelle Nadon
Bio

Known for comprehensive knowledge of Canadian media mandates and stakeholders, Mitch now brings her extensive portfolio to provide strategic solutions for recruitment, development and retention for the cultural and media employment markets. With her thorough understanding of the practical aspects of production and the greater objectives of the cultural sector, she brings critical knowledge and subject matter expertise to media organizations seeking greater performance on human capital margins.

MediaIntelligence has completed assignments with Alliance Atlantis, Astral Media, CBC, CHUM Television, Corus Entertainment, Discovery Canada, Ellis Entertainment, Exploration Production, Rogers Promotions, VisionTV, and W Network, among others, filling roles in executive programming and production, research and senior communications, creative services, human resources and production management. Mitch also provides career mapping services for media professionals at all levels, and has placed countless individuals in public service, internship and placement opportunities across the sector.

Mitch's portfolio includes managing policy and regulatory compliance with Bell Globemedia, as well as serving as General & Operations Manager for two commercial and post-production facilities. She also spent five years in production with TVOntario's English and French broadcast networks, and has worked with industry leader Nelvana on award-winning 2D and 3D animated series. Her career orientation has precedence: Mitch conceived the highly successful Power Hour: Connect with the Best! and Power Circle seminars during her tenure with Canadian Women in Communications' Toronto Chapter Steering Committee.

Fluently bilingual, she holds certificates from the Alliance Atlantis Banff Television Executive Program and Queen's Executive Marketing programs, as well as certificates from Canadian Women in Communications and the Toronto Humane Society for public service.

Mitch lives in the heart of Toronto with two beautiful German Shepherds and a former barncat. Any free time is devoted to animal welfare advocacy.

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