

people in print

INFORMING FUTURE DECISIONS

In-depth Study of HR Issues Facing the Printing and
Graphic Communications Sector



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Canadian Printing Industries Sector Council



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ABOUT CPISC

The Canadian Printing Industries Sector Council (CPISC) provides a national forum for collaboration on human resource and workforce development issues within the printing and graphic communications industry. Incorporated in April 2006, CPISC's mission is to identify and implement strategies to address skills development and learning within the sector. Our overall goal is to improve the quality of the sector's labour force.

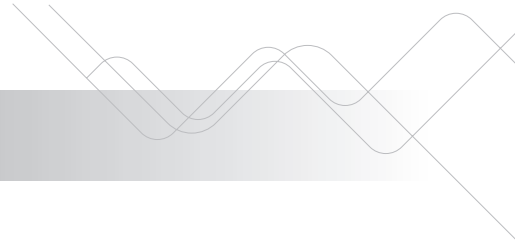
The guiding principle within CPISC is partnership. We bring together employers, employees, unions, education and government to develop innovative approaches to skills development for the current and future workforce of this technology-based industry. The intent of CPISC is not to duplicate what exists but to build on what is currently being done and to develop on a national basis the programs and services that will meet the human resource development needs of the industry as a whole.

INTRODUCTION

It is no exaggeration to say that the printing and graphic communications industry has embraced technology. The past two decades have been characterized by rapid changes in technology, increasing global competitiveness and the restructuring of business practices. Despite this, the Canadian printing and graphic communications industry has continued to grow and flourish.

Rapid changes in technology continue to drive all aspects of the industry but particularly human resource and workforce development. The Canadian printing and graphic communications industry is not alone in facing issues such as changing technology, economic restructuring and global competitiveness. Nor is it alone in recognizing the need for improved training and retraining. But all of these changes have resulted in a constant need to upgrade and retrain the current workforce while ensuring that bright, motivated young people are attracted to this vibrant industry. All workers – current, new and potential – need to have opportunities to acquire the high level of skills they will need to succeed in the future.

Jobs within the printing and graphic communications industry fall into the following production process areas.



Pre-press – Pre-press includes preparing digital and traditional material for the press, according to customer’s specifications. Traditionally, pre-press occupations included scanner and camera operators and film strippers – we used to talk about proofing the blues, going to film and preparing a camera-ready version. However, digital technologies and increased customer participation in pre-press activities have blurred previous traditional classifications. Responsibilities now include revisions and corrections of customer files, digital creation of type, page layout, scanning, imposition, colour separation, film and plate preparation and digital asset management. The majority of the work performed during the pre-press process requires highly sophisticated software.

Press – Press involves the actual printing of the document on a sheet-fed or web offset press. A sheet-fed press is just what the name implies – sheets of paper being fed into a printing press. Web presses operate with rolls of paper rather than single sheets – for example, newspapers are usually printed on web presses. During the press process, employees install and adjust plates, prepare blankets and cylinders, select and mix inks, run the press, monitor print quality and press performance, troubleshoot problems, ensure a safe operating environment and perform preventive maintenance on presses. As well, two other press systems – flexographic printing and digital printing – are rapidly growing areas that warrant particular attention.

Finishing and bindery – Finishing, bindery and distribution are the final steps in the production process. They include the assembly of finished products for the customer or consumer. Employees collate and bind printed sheets, perform finishing operations such as drilling, embossing and laminating, and prepare the final product for mailing and distribution. This process area now frequently includes the creation of a website that can host catalogues, databases and even e-commerce. As such, aside from the traditional occupations involved in finishing and binding a document together, this area now also includes a rapidly growing graphic communications component.

In addition, there are a number of jobs that support the production processes. **Production support** occupations include customer service and sales representatives, estimators, production managers and schedulers, and plant supervisors, as well as accounting and office staff, mechanics, electricians and material handlers.

The three production process areas and the production support area are each highly complex and integrated, and vary widely with the size of the company, types of presses, range of job titles and production output.



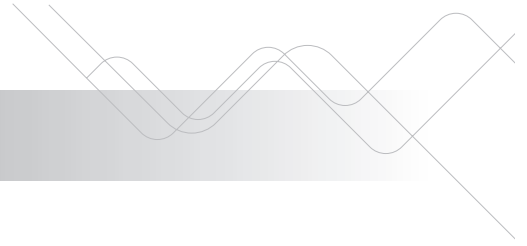
IN-DEPTH STUDY OF HUMAN RESOURCES ISSUES FACING THE PRINTING AND GRAPHIC COMMUNICATIONS INDUSTRY

In 2001, a sector study was undertaken to provide information and statistical evidence for the printing industry and HRSDC as they considered the merits and feasibility of forming a sector council. The study, published in 2003, provided the background information for a workshop of the sector stakeholders held in June 2004 to validate the industry's support for the creation of a sector council. The study brought to light a number of challenges facing the printing and graphic communications industry, including a growing shortage of skilled labour together with a lack of awareness of the jobs in the sector, particularly among young people who make up a major portion of the sector's potential labour pool.

In the intervening years since the sector study was completed, the printing and graphic communications industry has continued to face a number of challenges as it moves to sustain and even strengthen its position. These include the globalization of markets and production, which, coupled with the increase in off-shore competition and the high Canadian dollar, have heightened the competitive environment. Rapid changes in technology now characterize all process areas, from pre-press through to finishing and bindery. The expense of keeping up with technological change is particularly difficult for the smaller firms, which make up the majority of printing establishments.

As well, the workforce itself is changing. The reality of the technological changes operating in the sector is that fewer workers are needed because many of the processes are handled by technology. However, while fewer workers may be needed, those in the industry must be highly skilled, with a broad knowledge of printing processes as well as knowledge and skill in their particular area. Finding and retaining skilled workers is reported by employers to be increasingly difficult, leading some to seek foreign-trained workers. Many of the occupations in the printing and graphic communications sector are classified under the NOC codes as unskilled, however, making the recruitment of foreign-trained workers somewhat difficult within the current points system. It is also reported that there is not a sufficiently strong linkage between what training institutions can provide and what the industry requires for job-ready workers. This is particularly true in the face of ever-increasing demands for computer-based skills in virtually all trades and management positions within the industry. As well, the workforce mirrors the Canadian labour force as a whole in having a substantial proportion of aging workers who will have to be replaced in the not-too-distant future.

In order to be able to help the sector address its human resource challenges, CPISC must first have a clear, up-to-date profile of the sector. We can then use this information as a springboard to explore in-depth those human resource issues that are most important to the industry as it adapts to the changing realities.



PROJECT OBJECTIVES

In order to inform strategic planning and future projects, CPISC will develop an up-to-date industry profile and explore in-depth current and emerging human resource issues in the printing and graphics communications sector.

PROJECT ACTIVITIES AND TIMELINES


The project will run from May 15 to November 15, 2008 and will involve two phases.

During the first phase of this project, CPISC will conduct an environmental scan of human resource issues to identify gaps in current information. CPISC will then update the 2003 industry overview and human resources profile, based on information obtained from our current Labour Market and Skills and Technology Roadmap projects, and data from Statistics Canada.

Based on the environmental scan and consultations with the industry, CPISC will then prepare three or four background papers on emerging human resource issues, providing an in-depth analysis of the each issue and identifying potential strategies.

For example, CPISC may choose to explore in-depth some of the following questions:

- How can non-traditional sources of human resources help the industry to meet its demand for skilled labour?
 - Immigrant women make up a substantial part of the workforce in the finishing and bindery process area. They are, for the most part, unskilled and trained on-the-job. What are the particular needs of this segment of the printing and graphic communications industry's workforce?
 - As more immigrant and foreign-trained workers join the industry's workforce, what are their particular needs in terms of ESL/FSL and training in core and essential skills relevant to the Canadian context?
 - Aboriginal workers make up a very small percentage of the industry's workforce. What are the particular needs of the Aboriginal workers? How can CPISC help the industry to recruit and train Aboriginal workers?
 - According to available data, those over 45 years of age make up more than one third of the printing and graphic communications industry's workforce. Conversely, fewer younger people are entering the industry. Should the industry try to retain older workers for longer?

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- Printing and graphic communications operations are found in every province and territory, making it a truly pan-Canadian industry.
 - Do the issues outlined above affect each region in the same manner?
 - Are there issues that are particular to a given region?
 - How can CPISC ensure that regional differences are accommodated?
 - As the sector restructures to meet changing technological needs, are the changes occurring in all regions equally and in the same manner?

AND THIS PROJECT WILL LEAD TO ...

At the end of the project CPISC will have an updated industry overview and human resources profile as well as a series of background papers on human resource issues of importance to the sector. Based on the information gathered during this study and in consultation with the sector, CPISC will then be in a much better position to develop a solid human resource strategy for the printing and graphic communications sector. As well, the background papers will inform the Council's strategic planning and the development of future projects.

