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ABSTRACT

This study reviews the relationship that has been established in the steel industry between the Canadian Steel Trade and Employment Congress (CSTEC) and education/training institutions called upon to provide steelworker job training and development programs. It describes the forces that brought the parties together and the difficulties in forming and maintaining this relationship. Finally, it outlines the lessons learned and highlights the important role government plays in supporting these partnerships. The paper opens with a brief introduction of the historical context that fostered collaboration between CSTEC and colleges. It then offers a discussion of the three human resource challenges (worker adjustment, skill training, and entry-level programs) that served as the foundation for the partnership. The authors conclude the paper with a presentation of the six key insights that emerged during the study, three of which are: (1) it is important that all parties are addressing a common goal or challenge; (2) it is important to recognize that, while the goal or challenge is common, the needs of each of the parties will invariably be different; and (3) governments need to play a critical role in both the initiation and sustainability of these partnerships between industry and education/training institutions. (RC)

AN ASSOCIATION OF CANADIAN COMMUNITY COLLEGES
SPONSORED SECTORAL CASE STUDY

HOW TO COLLABORATE THROUGH THE UPS AND DOWNS IN OUR ECONOMY?

A Successful College/Cégep/Employer/Union Partnership in the Steel Industry

Prepared for the ACCC/TASC/CAETO Colleges/Institutes and Sector Councils Symposium
February 22-23, 2001
Ottawa, Ontario

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A. INTRODUCTION

The Canadian Steel Trade and Employment Congress (CSTEC), the oldest of the existing sector councils, was formed in 1986 as a joint venture between the United Steelworkers of America (USWA) and Canada's steel producing companies. Over the last 15 years, CSTEC has taken on a number of important mandates that responded to emerging challenges or crises in the steel industry.

In the area of trade, from the mid-1980s onwards, the USWA and the steel producers combined their efforts to ensure an "even playing field" between the U.S. and Canadian steel trade. Jobs and the future viability of the Canadian industry were at stake.

In the area of human resources, the late 1980s and the early 1990s ushered in a period of growing international competition and significant technological change in the Canadian steel industry. During this period, the steel industry faced a significant restructuring challenge with the loss of nearly one-third of its workforce.

On the other side of the coin, as a key element of its restructuring process, the industry recognized that it needed to compete globally on the basis of quality and value-added production and that a critical element of such a strategy was the skill level of its workforce. As a result, it needed to broadly increase the skill base and improve the efficiency of training.

At this time the CSTEC chose to broaden is range of activity by adding training of its existing workforce to the adjustment and placement services it was already offering. In collaboration with colleges/cégeps, a training program was jointly established that would develop both general and specific skills.

In 1999, CSTEC undertook a review of the Canadian steel industry. The survey revealed that demographic and technological changes in the industry would require a new focus on replacing our current workforce and recruiting young people to an industry that had done little hiring for most of the last 15 years. Specifically, the industry is set to lose about one-third of its workforce to retirement over the next five years, many from the skilled trades area.

In each instance, the steel industry essentially had three options to meet these crises:

- to disregard the consequences;
- to deal with each crisis as individual companies;

- to deal with them as an industry/sector, which meant steel producers not only working with their competitors across the industry, but also with their respective unions.

And, in each case, the stakeholders determined that these challenges could be addressed more effectively by working in unison. Initially, individual leadership and the willingness to take a calculated risk were important factors in this decision. However, as we shall later see, subsequent decisions were made easier because of the very evident results of each successive joint venture.

The thread that runs through all of CSTEC's activities is "Common issues, Different needs." Whether the challenges facing the industry are the result of external or internal forces, in each case all the stakeholders are facing the same issues in some fashion, and all have distinct needs that have to be addressed to ensure their continued participation/partnership. In each common challenge, CSTEC had to help identify what we refer to as the WIIFMs (What's in it for me?).

CSTEC's collaboration with the college/cégep system was also the result of the same phenomenon - common critical issues for each of the players and distinct interests/needs that had to be addressed. The federal transfer of labour market and training policy to the provinces, reduced funding and limited resources were issues critical to the colleges/cégeps. Greater efficiencies, higher quality, higher standing, accreditation and transferability/recognition were critical to the industry. To the degree that these needs were addressed, this partnership has been successful.

This study will review the relationship that has been established between the steel industry through CSTEC and the education/training institutions (primarily the colleges/cégeps). It will describe the forces that brought the parties together and the difficulties in forming and maintaining this relationship. Finally, it will outline the lessons learned. This paper will also highlight the important role that government can play in supporting these partnerships.

This case study will look at each of the human resource challenges outlined above and examine the steps that were taken to address them.

B. ISSUES, BARRIERS AND HOW THEY WERE ADDRESSED

Worker Adjustment

In the late 1980s and into the 1990s, the Canadian steel industry lost close to 15,000 jobs in nearly 85 basic steel, pipe and tube, and wire draw workplaces throughout Canada. With the important support and assistance from HRDC, the industry chose to experiment with a sectoral approach. Through CSTEC, the steel companies and United Steelworkers of America initiated a unique and innovative sector-based adjustment program that achieved "buy-in" from the stakeholders and ownership of the process by those most affected. It also enabled each local adjustment committee to access targeted training and other quality services at a lower cost through economies of scale.

CSTEC faced a number of challenges in the implementation of its adjustment program. The average age of those laid off from the steel industry was 47, and the average years of service was about 17 years. The average years of formal education was Grade 10, and many were clerical workers and non- or semi-skilled production workers.

Studies had repeatedly indicated that these are all high-risk factors for those affected by layoffs. Most unemployed steelworkers had neither the skills nor the tools to enter the labour market. In addition, high risk participants traditionally did not use local employment offices and tended to exhaust their benefits.

One of the critical contributions of the federal government to the steel industry adjustment process was a cost-shared agreement in 1987 that was funded through the Innovations Program. This agreement was used to provide adjustment services and to upgrade the skills of the laid-off workers, in many instances for the purpose of career change. Under Section 26 of the Unemployment Insurance Act, CSTEC had the authority to approve training plans, to pay tuition and to enable participants to collect income support for up to three years while in training.

To address the need for training, CSTEC pursued partnerships between the industry and education/training deliverers. Little by little, the college/cégep system became the primary provider of training for laid-off workers.

The initial relationship between CSTEC and the colleges/cégeps was on an ad hoc

basis, project by project, to access skill training programs for these laid-off workers. However, where large numbers of workers wanted the same program, CSTEC staff, in conjunction with local adjustment committees, was provided with the opportunity to develop closer relationships with the colleges/cégeps. The colleges/cégeps were open to arrangements that involved reduced per diems, usually at a rate considerably lower than government-sponsored programs. Even on an individual basis, the colleges/cégeps gave CSTEC people a preferred rate based on the volume of business.

In addition, colleges/cégeps sat with local adjustment committees to identify skills/knowledge gaps of individuals so they could receive the appropriate prerequisites to ensure success in their skill training program. This approach fit well with CSTEC's targeted approach to adjustment, i.e. individual services tailored to individual needs.

In this partnership each of the industry's, colleges/cégeps', and governments' WIIFMs were identified and addressed.

Companies recognized that a positive approach to downsizing can impact the "bottom line." Studies showed that how companies deal with a downsizing has significant impact on those still working - the "survivor impact." Put negatively, if management does nothing to assist those affected, the morale of those remaining suffers and productivity suffers as well. This is particularly true in the case where the downsizing is part of a restructuring process which may include the introduction of new technologies. "Survivors" feel more vulnerable to further layoffs. Conversely, a positive response by management ensures a positive reaction at the workplace that reduces the negative impacts.

The same may be said for the role of the **union** in an adjustment program. As representatives of the people affected by a lay-off, they are expected to act as advocates on their behalf. Failure to do so increases the cynicism of "surviving" members towards the union and leaves the laid-off workers to fend for themselves in a labour market that has totally changed since their entrance some 15-20 years before.

The **colleges/cégeps** also benefited from this partnership. In the short term, they received considerable business from CSTEC projects throughout Canada, helping to compensate for reduced government spending. Empty seats in many programs were filled. In the longer term, they learned how to develop effective relationships with industry and had a better understanding of its needs.

Governments also quickly recognized that these partnerships between industry and education/training providers produced significant benefits for them, including:

- employment insurance (EI) savings through improved re-employment rates and quicker placements, especially for high risk participants who usually exhaust their benefits because they do not use adjustment services;
- further EI savings from repeat claimants who now had the skills and confidence to find employment quicker;
- training cost savings through better negotiated rates; and,
- lower adjustment costs as a result of leveraged industry contributions, which have ranged around 35% of total cost in CSTEC projects.

The relationship between the steel industry and the colleges/cégeps to deal with adjustment was not without its difficulties. For example, negotiations over costs of programs or specific courses occasionally broke down. However, the colleges/cégeps worked with CSTEC to make the process transparent. By "opening their books," they were able to show and to explain to CSTEC staff their costing structure. As a result, a standard per diem rate for any project around the country where CSTEC dealt with the college/cégep system was established.

Another minor difficulty from the perspective of the industry was the tendency of some colleges/cégeps to excessively promote their existing programs. Colleges/cégeps were invited to attend information meetings for the purpose of informing laid-off workers of available resources from CSTEC, federal/provincial governments and the local colleges/cégeps. Some colleges/cégeps were too intent on filling seats in their programs, particularly electrical and industrial mechanic programs. This approach ran counter to CSTEC's targeted approach, and CSTEC found themselves redirecting laid-off workers to programs of greater interest and value.

In spite of these initial difficulties, this relationship between the colleges/cégeps and steel industry through CSTEC became a productive and valuable one and formed the basis for dealing with further human resource issues as CSTEC's mandate expanded.

In addition, CSTEC's adjustment services and programs became a model for those offered by other sectors and industries in Canada. More recently, CSTEC has also provided services on adjustment issues to other governments in Brazil, Chile, Cuba, Japan, and Egypt. In many of these cases, CSTEC has worked with one or more of its college/cégep partners and with the Association of Canadian Community Colleges (ACCC).

Skill Training

A 1992 Human Resource Study of the steel industry revealed that the Canadian steel industry was facing some very significant global changes. It also demonstrated that the steel industry had some major challenges regarding its training practices and needs, including:

- most of the industry's training was in the areas of orientation, sales, health and safety or apprenticeship;
- most of the training was company-specific, ad hoc, non-strategic and untracked;
- most of the training was geared to supervisors and tradespeople; and,
- many workplaces either did not have access to quality training courses or found training too costly to deliver.

In addition, 20 years ago, most workplaces could address their specific training needs in an ad hoc, individual manner. Globalization compelled these companies to restructure their operations, reduce their workforce and introduce new technologies to the labour process. The results produced both the need for increased training and significant constraints in manpower and financial resources.

Small and medium-sized workplaces, in particular, did not have the time, money, or personnel to develop courses, to provide qualified instructors or to deliver them in efficient classroom sizes.

While more and more firms were recognizing that the pace of technological change and the shrinking training resources required a more efficient approach to training, there was no tradition in the industry of working with each other to capture economies of scale and to reduce duplication in the development and delivery of training. But as with worker adjustment, it became clear that these workplaces had to work with each other to ensure that their human resource needs were met.

In 1992, CSTEC negotiated a three-year cost-shared agreement with the federal government and the Province of Ontario. This agreement promoted the delivery of generic courses in basic or foundation skills, steel industry general skills and steel industry specific technical skills.

CSTEC's Skill Training Program was established to increase the quality and accessibility of training by providing a wide range of common training services and training courses to workers in the steel industry (bargaining and non-bargaining unit).

Later, a second agreement on course development was negotiated. The steel industry, through CSTEC, coordinated the development of eight courses by industry subject matter experts, both union and management, ranging from **Metallurgy** to **Work Reorganization**. In the process of developing these courses, the steel industry recognized that many of their training needs were **common** and could be developed industry-wide in order to reduce duplication, reduce training costs and ensure industry-wide quality. At the same time, these generic or transferable skills would benefit both the workers in the industry, through improved employment skills, and the companies who were undergoing significant changes in technology. All the courses were recognized by the industry.

The steel industry, however, felt that the recognition provided by these courses was too limited. Transferability should be pan-Canadian and cross-industry. Recognition also required that courses have assessment standards and methods of measuring whether learners had acquired the appropriate skills from the learning process. The CSTEC courses did not include these important features.

CSTEC also found that the course development took too long because the industry did not have the time and/or the resources to efficiently develop these courses on their own.

As a result, in 1994 CSTEC approached the Canadian college/cégep system to address these deficiencies. With the purpose of increasing efficiency and improving transferability and recognition in its training courses, CSTEC and the participating colleges/cégeps entered into an articulation agreement to jointly develop and implement a training and accreditation program. The articulation agreement was signed by CSTEC and the following colleges/cégeps:

AGREEMENT PARTICIPANTS

Canadian Steel Trade and Employment Congress (CSTEC)

Nova Scotia

University College of Cape Breton*

Quebec

Cégep de Sorel-Tracy* Cégep St-Jean-sur-Richelieu

Cégep Lionel-Groulx	Cégep de Trois-Rivières
Cégep André-Laurendeau	

Ontario

Sheridan College	Durham College
Conestoga College	Niagara College *
Algonquin College	Sault College *
Mohawk College	La Cité collégiale

Manitoba

Red River College of Applied Arts, Science and Technology*

Saskatchewan

Wascana Institute - SIAST*

Alberta

Southern Alberta Institute of Technology (SAIT)*
Northern Alberta Institute of Technology (NAIT)
Red Deer College

***Note:** These colleges and cégeps represent the college/cégep participants on the Joint Program Standards Committee (JPSC).

This program produced the following standards and services:

- the joint development of 40 modular, outcome-based courses that are common across the steel sector and, in many cases, relevant to other industries;
- delivery standards that address the critical issues of trainer qualifications, training delivery options, instructional methods and techniques, and assessment methods and techniques
- college/cégep accreditation for these courses whereby the credits may be applied towards a Steel Industry Training Program (SITP) certificate or used as part of a block transfer towards other college/cégep programs;
- the recognition of prior learning (PLAR), through portfolio development and program review, which enables workers to access college credits for workplace training and work and life experience;
- the combination of courses into certificates or diplomas; and,
- per diem rates that are cost-effective and that provide additional cost savings to the industry as the volume of training increases.

Over time, CSTEC and the colleges/cégeps have provided and or licensed these same services to workplaces and/or sectors and governments outside the steel industry in Canada and abroad in countries like Brazil and Argentina. These and other countries have not only been interested in the specific services, but they have been equally interested in our experiences with building industry and education/training partnerships.

CSTEC's process for course development is indicative of the partnership in practice. It involved the union and management at each workplace, the local college/cégep, and eventually the entire steel industry. It included the following key elements:

- the local Joint Training Committee (JTC) informs CSTEC of a course need. CSTEC surveys the steel industry to ensure that the course has some application beyond the workplace that made the request.
- these requests are submitted in the form of a joint proposal to CSTEC's Training and Adjustment Committee for approval.
- an agreement is made under which the JTC provides relevant information (course title, learning outcomes, content and duration) to the local college/cégep. The requesting workplace also commits to piloting the course.
- the requesting JTC and/or local college/cégep develops the **Course Outline**, which CSTEC distributes to reference group members from other workplaces that have expressed an interest in the course. CSTEC forwards

comments and available materials to both the local JTC and local college/cégep.
- the requesting JTC and/or local college/cégep develops the **Course Manual** (including the trainers' manual and the learners' manual) based on the **Course Outline** and comments from the above named parties.

Even more so than in the worker adjustment relationship, the creation of this training partnership between the steel industry and the college/cégep system was fraught with dangers. These included a number of challenges:

- in many regions throughout the country, there were no linkages between the workplaces and the colleges/cégeps in their catchment area - relationships had to be established from scratch;
- there were limited linkages among the colleges/cégeps themselves. When CSTEC first attempted to bring the colleges/cégeps together, it didn't know where to begin;
- when the colleges/cégeps arrived at the first meeting, they came armed with their calendars and catalogues, ready to sell, not to listen;
- the steel industry came with its own pre-conceived notions of colleges/cégeps as "ivory towers" with limited knowledge of the industry's needs and constraints;
- neither side understood the other's issues eg., the companies' cost and manpower constraints, the worker's fears of the impact of training on seniority issues, the colleges/cégeps' financial and resource constraints from government cutbacks, etc.;
- even where relationships existed, misunderstandings arose over language, over motives, over credits (whether they should be based on learning outcomes or classroom hours), over costs, over instructors and over block transfers of credits; and,
- college and industry representatives could not initially deliver on their commitments.

Despite these initial problems, both the steel industry and the colleges/cégeps demonstrated that they were more than willing to deal with these issues. Over time, they were able to set out a mutually beneficial process where over a two-year period:

- all the WIIFMs (What's in it for me?) were articulated;
- motives and agendas were placed clearly on the table;
- definitions and language were clarified;
- concerns/issues were forthrightly enunciated;
- outcomes were agreed upon; and,

- all parties agreed to convey the above to their respective constituencies in whatever manner they deemed appropriate.

A key reason why both the industry and the colleges/cégeps were willing to continue to work with each other over this fairly long time frame was the results from the relationship that had been developed in the worker adjustment area. Similarly, the reason the training relationship has continued to the present is that all parties have seen concrete results and benefits. These benefits are outlined in the tables below.

COMPANY BENEFITS
✓ greater access to quality training
✓ incentives to increase training
✓ cost savings
✓ expanded role in the design of training
✓ more highly skilled workforce

UNION BENEFITS
✓ new services for their membership
✓ a role in training development
✓ improved employability of their members

COLLEGE/CÉGEP BENEFITS
✓ effective industry relationship
✓ more relevant training
✓ an expanded enrolment base

GOVERNMENT BENEFITS
✓ higher skilled workforce
✓ improved labour mobility
✓ higher industry training investment
✓ more cost-efficient training programs
✓ benefits to other sectors

Although each party involved in the development of the training program undeniably benefited from the process, some stumbling blocks to professional training still remain.

Regarding accreditation of training, a necessary process to qualify the program, the partners are faced with various obstacles. On one hand, the union fears that formal exams could lead to failure as well as success, perhaps due to the lack of an accepted procedure to deal positively with the results, whatever they may be. On the other

hand, without formal exams, it is difficult for the colleges/cégeps to precisely determine the skills acquired by the learners and to award credit on this basis.

Credit transfer is another challenge. How can credits from the CSTEC program be transferred to existing college/cégep courses, since the latter are far more comprehensive than the former? For example, how to properly transfer the skills developed in CSTEC's seven-hour Basic Hydraulic course to a similar college/cégep course that runs 60 hours?

Recognition of prior learning remains an important issue. A complex process, costly in terms of both human resources and finances since it must be done on a case by case basis, prior learning recognition poses a sizeable challenge to systemize practice in one step that would:

- minimize related time and cost;
- maximize the experience;
- compare actual skills;
- provide significant and valuable results.

From this perspective, Ontario institutions Mohawk College and La Cité collégiale undertook a pilot project which favoured an approach based on the overall internal training given by industry over the traditional individual approach. They concluded that this step was still too long, but no one has thrown in the towel yet.

Finally, although the program development phase should lead to the program delivery phase, in reality few industries demand the training, a fact which surprised the colleges/cégeps in certain regions. Some industries already have their own training centres with mandates for productivity, some use the program material internally, outside of the agreement. Colleges must therefore convince industry of the benefits of recognized, sanctioned training not only for its employees, but for itself as well.

Entry Level Programs

In 1999, at the request of the steel industry, CSTEC undertook a review to identify current trends and future challenges facing the industry to determine what services and programs CSTEC should deliver over the next five to ten years.

The survey of all the steel producing worksites in Canada and demographic trends in the industry showed that about one-third of the workforce could retire in the next five to ten years. This meant that the industry would need to put a high priority on recruiting young people whose perception of the steel industry is probably dated. In

addition, the industry itself has done little hiring in the past 15 years and had to develop effective recruitment strategies in a new economic and social environment.

Once again, the industry asked CSTEC to assist in this important challenge at the industry level. As a result, CSTEC worked with the companies and unions to develop a three-pronged approach that included:

- **a Youth Science and Technology Program,** in partnership with HRDC, which provided assistance to workplaces in hiring new science and technology graduates into technician, technologist, engineering and other similar categories of employment;
- **career awareness materials** which included an information kit and related materials which promoted the career opportunities available in the new steel industry; and,
- **pre-employment college/cégep programs** for new entrants (The Manufacturing Techniques Certificate Program) and for trades (The Steel Industry Trades Replacement Program).

As in the area of skill training, the steel industry was not used to working with each other in the area of entry-level program development. In addition, the industry had little relationship with the college/cégep system in developing entry- level programs.

At the request of the industry in Québec, Cégep de Sorel-Tracy took the lead in developing the first pre-employment program, l'Attestation d'études collégiales en techniques de procédés sidérurgiques (certificate program in steel manufacturing techniques). This 11-month co-op program is now serving its fourth and fifth group of students. The CSTEC then approached other colleges/cégeps to develop a manufacturing technology certificate as an entry-level program to assist the industry across Canada in dealing with its pre-employment training needs.

In this area, CSTEC worked on a regional basis with colleges/cégeps to co-ordinate the development of relevant programs that meet the needs of the local workplaces. Following Québec, Manitoba also developed a Steel Manufacturing Techniques Certificate Program and a third is in the process of being developed in Ontario.

When regional programs are developed across Canada, CSTEC will coordinate the comparison of these programs to identify similarities and to design a pan-Canadian certificate.

The skill trades issue was approached in the same manner on a region-by-region basis. The first pilot program was developed in the Golden Horseshoe area.
Future pilots will be pursued according to where the industry expresses a need for skill trades.

In this area, there have been very few problems between the industry and the colleges/cégeps. This is not because this area has been easier to deal with than the worker adjustment or training area. Instead, these programs have been developed effectively and quickly because of the lessons learned by the industry and the colleges/cégeps in their previous relationships in the worker adjustment and training areas.

C. LESSONS LEARNED

If we look at the steel industry and college/cégep relationship over the last decade, several very important lessons emerge for industries and colleges/cégeps that want to initiate similar relationships. While these lessons have emerged from the steel industry experience, our work with other industries would lead us to believe that they are more universal.

LESSON#1
It is important that all parties are addressing a common goal or challenge.

The commonality of a challenge or problem is the initial basis of an effective joint-venture or strategic partnership. The previous section outlined how important this was to CSTEC's development. However, it is also very important to the development of relationships between industry and colleges/cégeps. If the problem or challenge is not relevant to one or the other of the parties involved, it is unlikely that a serious commitment will be made by that party. The result is usually frustration for all the parties involved. For example, if the industry wants to develop a new program and the college/cégep just wants to market an existing program that they think is relevant, the two parties could find out they have different goals.

LESSON#2
It is important to recognize that, while the goal or challenge is common, the needs of each of the parties will invariably be different.

The previous section highlighted the fact that successful joint ventures or strategic partnerships were able to identify the different needs or WIIFM's (What's In It For Me) of each of the participants in the partnership. This means that all of the parties must be willing to listen to each other's needs and to constantly keep them in mind when they are addressing their own needs. Even more important is the need to avoid discussions that attempt to prioritize each party's needs. This invariably results in one or the other party believing that their needs are being ignored, which could quickly derail a potential partnership.

LESSON#3
All of the parties must commit to pool their time, resources and expertise.

All of the parties must contribute in a way that is proportional to the benefits they will receive from the outcomes of the partnership. While the specific contribution of each of the parties could be different, it is important that there is a sense that everyone is pulling their weight. This is especially important in longer term partnerships, as was the case in the development of the Steel Industry Training Program (SITP) which had a two-year development phase. It is also especially important in the early stages of any partnership, when each of the parties decides to work with the other.

LESSON#4
The individuals representing each of the parties must be able to follow through on their commitments.

This is a critical factor especially in partnerships, like the Steel Industry Training Program (SITP), which involve a large number of participants. Each of the parties must be represented by individuals who can make decisions on behalf of their organization or who can get a timely approval from the appropriate individual in their organization. One of the reasons the SITP development process took so long was that the college/cégep representatives had to ensure that their institutions were able to commit to the agreement that was developed. In this case, the primary representatives were from the continuing education or contract training departments and they needed to ensure that the registrars and appropriate deans were in agreement with the decisions made. This was especially difficult and time consuming around issues of course credits, PLAR and block transfer. This issue is also important because there is usually quite a bit of turnover in both college/cégep and industry personnel. Without the institutional support, issues need to get rediscussed and redecided and this invariably contributes to frustration and ultimately to failure.

In our experience, this potential problem can be minimized if each institution appoints an effective contact person that can access the relevant people in the institution. In addition, industry needs to get more active on education program advisory committees where they reflect their industry needs and not only their personal views.

LESSON#5
The ultimate test of a partnership is its results.

Good faith and good relations can be developed early in a partnership. However, the experience of CSTEC and the colleges/cégeps clearly shows that partnerships will only

be sustained and expanded if they result in innovative solutions that provide concrete results. In addition, the results must also benefit all the parties involved, ideally in proportion to their contribution. If this is not the case, one or more of the participants will not continue with the partnership. This was the case in the steel partnership where some of the colleges/cégeps dropped out of the agreement because they did not believe there was a large enough steel industry in their region or because there was insufficient student demand demonstrated following the course development phase.

While results are important, the participants in the partnership must also remind themselves that each of these benefits will usually be incremental and ongoing. If expectations are set too high, especially in new partnerships, the chance of failure increases.

However, the steel partnership example also demonstrates that ongoing relationships bring quicker and better results to successive challenges. This is because each of the parties has learned how to work with each other and has seen concrete benefits from the partnership.

LESSON#6
Governments need to play a critical role in both the initiation and sustainability of these partnerships between industry and education/training institutions.

The example of the steel partnerships highlights the very important role that governments need to play in these partnerships. These partnership are not easy or they would be more numerous and much more successful than they are today.

Governments need to provide a legislative framework and appropriate incentives and resources to the parties to initiate these partnerships. Specifically, governments should facilitate access to information (best practice), assist in setting up the initial meetings and provide cost-shared start-up funding. They should make courageous decisions to support the recognition and transfer of prior learning to give workers the right to have their acquired skills recognized by the educational system.

However, governments also need to develop their policy in a manner that allows these partnerships to be sustained by the different parties on an ongoing basis. In this area, the current shift to individual client-based programming (e.g. Registered Individual Learning Accounts, Part II training funds etc.) is putting many of these partnerships, including the steel partnership, at risk. In the past, partnerships were able to access

such programs on a sectoral or community-based basis. However, for the most part, this has not been the case in the last few years.

Governments need to understand that there is no self-evident tradition for these types of partnerships around worker adjustment and training issues. Since the participants are for the most part competitors or adversaries, there are risks in common development and delivery that need to be shared between these partnerships and governments. As relationships are built, the need for incentives could be reduced. As stakeholders appreciate that partnerships enable workplaces to meet their training needs in a more effective and cost-efficient manner than working alone, the contribution of government could be reduced.

Finally, since the partners have the best frame of reference to determine their own needs, governments need to allow the partnerships to set their own agendas and find their own solutions. The cost-shared agreements should be results-based and should allow as much flexibility as possible for the partnerships to find innovative and appropriate means to address their needs.

FUTURE CHALLENGES

As this case study has shown, the partnership between the steel industry through CSTEC and the college/cégep system has been a very productive one that has benefited each of the players in each of the areas outlined above. Working together on common issues has broken down the trust/motive difficulties that initially plagued the relationship.

There remain challenges, however, that must be addressed to sustain the relationship. We mentioned earlier that steps have been incremental through fits and starts, but for the partnership to continue, it must still bring tangible results to each stakeholder, and they must be convinced that the objective is defined, positive and achievable.

Among the difficulties that still have to be addressed are:

industry and the colleges/cégeps need to talk to each other more frequently and establish closer, more durable relationships. There has to be an even better understanding of different needs or WIIFMs that are central to any successful articulation agreement. Rules which bind each party, such as collective agreements or ministerial regulations, should be put on the table, explained and understood by all. In addition, results need to continuously be reviewed, evaluated, and conveyed to respective constituencies;

industry and the colleges/cégeps need to learn to respect the expertise of the partners. So the "what to learn," or technical knowledge and skills to be learned should be taken from industry, while the "how to learn" or principles of learning, popularization of content by an accessible process, academic and didactic principles are the colleges/cégeps specialty;

colleges/cégeps need to further strengthen the co-ordination between the various services involved in program development and awarding of credit such as continuing education, registrar and administrative services. They need to develop a better understanding of their partners' needs and agree to come out of the woods to find practical and innovative solutions to the problems posed by training in the industrial context;

industry needs to develop an even greater appreciation of the value of partnerships with education/training providers and to rely on their expertise. In addition, they need better define their needs and place them in a more long-term perspective in order to avoid piecemeal or improvised solutions; and,

industry and colleges/cégeps need to work more effectively together to let governments know what they need from them to make these

partnerships successful and sustainable. This is an especially urgent priority in light of the recent significant changes to federal and provincial labour market policies that were mentioned in the previous section.

CONCLUSION

The type of significant, structured and evolving partnership described above did not exist prior to the experience of CSTEC and its partners from industries, unions, colleges/cégeps and the government. Although it sometimes stood still, the partnership did progress in the long run, it was innovative and it led to undeniable results that merit examination in order to better learn, progress and combine efforts toward the achievement of common goals.

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