

Off to school

Conference update

by Summit staff

Canadian Public Procurement Council

THE CANADIAN PUBLIC Procurement Council (CPPC) held its annual forum in early October in Calgary. (See page 19 for the newly elected board.) The welcoming address by Deputy Mayor, Druh Farrell highlighted the impact that procurement has on the efficient and effective delivery of programs for citizens and the operations of the organization. You do make a difference.

The CPPC addresses public sector procurement in its totality, as there is much to learn from experience gained across the various levels. That networking, that sharing of excellence was the vision of *Summit* magazine when it began 10 years ago. It still is. This was recognized by Farrell when she mentioned *Summit* magazine, as being an important tool for procurement practitioners.

This year's forum had three streams: leadership, green procurement and construction. I can say from personal experience that each stream had much to offer participants. In addition to the individual sessions in each stream, a hot topic – represented by panel sessions on two consecutive days – was professional certification.

Training and certification is becoming increasingly important as the public sector is facing a significant loss of experienced procurement professionals within the next 5 years. Discussions are taking place in virtually every procurement organization on retention, succession planning, recruitment and professional certification and training. Some organizations have taken steps to address the human resource issues. For example, BC and PWGSC have developed their own in-house training/certification programs and the Department of National Defence has established a new office devoted to the "strategic management of procurement staff." Not everyone has progressed at the same pace or in similar directions.

Panel sessions held on two consecutive days illustrated what is available now in the training/certification area. Panel participants included: the Canadian Supply Chain Sector Council, the Province of British Columbia and National Education Consulting Inc., the

Purchasing Management Association of Canada, Treasury Board of Canada, the federal Materiel Management Institute, the Canadian Institute of Traffic and Transportation, The Logistics Institute, the National Institute of Governmental Purchasing and the Universal Public Purchasing Certification Council.

The first panel session consisted of these organizations presenting their mandates and offerings for training and certification in some aspect of procurement. It quickly became obvious that both the audience and some panel members were not aware of all the programs and expertise represented at the table. The panel sessions and other sessions during the conference that highlighted HR issues, made it clear that the training available is hit and miss, and the awareness of what is available is also hit and miss.

This is consistent with the results of the *Summit*/Talentmap survey that many of you participated in last June. The survey revealed that the perception of available training and mentoring varies widely between the "old guard" and new recruits. I suspect that everyone participating in the CPPC Forum found that several new and different options exist. At the close of the second panel session, the new CPPC board of directors committed to provide CPPC members with a comprehensive matrix of currently available training and certification programs.

GTEC 2007: Government 2.0

Held in October in Ottawa, GTEC is a large conference targeted at the public sector and the information technology tools – goods and services – that can support both operations and program delivery. This year a special stream of content was provided for the information management community, which appears to be as broadly and loosely defined as is the procurement community.

Brazil was the featured guest country and shared how it uses technology to advance programs in education, justice, social security and shared infrastructure solutions.

The special guest speakers provided the audience with food for thought. Noted author Don Tapscott, saying "God created the world in 6 days, but He didn't have an installed

base," set the tone for his examination of the next generation of public sector workers – he calls them Netgeners. Networking and collaboration, sometimes with those at great distances and in other cultures, happens intuitively with this group. It also occurs at speeds and with a certain dichotomy of anonymity and lack of privacy that older generations in the workforce might find discomfiting. Through technology like FaceBook or MySpace, one may work with a global group that you have never met personally but know very well virtually. According to Tapscott, Netgeners expect to use these social networking tools at work as part of work and to have "fun" while doing it. Their future employers must figure out how to integrate the social networking technology into the job. Procurement staff will likely find themselves both sourcing the technology and using it too.

On the final day of the conference, a procurement panel chaired by Bernard Courtois, president of the Information Technology Association of Canada, discussed various issues in the procurement of IT goods and services from a supplier perspective. Everyone knows that many large IT system procurements have gone awry and relationships with suppliers are at times strained. The Chair recognized the "fishbowl" aspect of public procurement and the moderator, John Davies of Partnering and Procurement Inc., concurred. However, Davies also said that for governments to move to "2.0," they "must focus on business outcomes, not process."

Panelists spoke to the procurement transaction itself as not being the issue, rather the procurement decisions being made prior to the actual transaction – what is needed, by whom and when – are the riskier part of IT procurements. Success requires open, honest and efficient discussion between the buyers and the suppliers as well as the application of larger strategic thinking. The consensus seemed to be that governments should look for best practices and partnering to find and implement the solution to create an effective shared services base from which to provide seamless service, both internally and externally.

The panellists included: Kim Devooght, VP Public Sector, IBM; Daren Nippard, Managing Director, Accenture Canada; Dave Perley, Branch Manager, Technology Solutions Group, HP Canada; and Garth Scully, VP Capital Region, Cisco Systems Canada. ❧



Canadian Public Procurement Council announces the new board of directors

Elected October 2007

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