

## New Brunswick – A Center of Excellence for Advanced Learning and Technologies

As I near the end of my term as President of LearnNB, I'm aware that the creative juices that flowed through my "rant" of last month's message must now be redirected into a much more reflective, yet compelling piece. It seems natural to be more easily drawn to the essence of sharing what's wrong with the world. I'm mindful that it will be much more difficult to rally people around celebrating what's right with the world! We all recognize that bad news sells, and sells really well!

So, I don't have bad news, and I'm not exactly sure how to draw you in, except to say, if you are at all involved in contributing to the growth of individuals or organizations that focus on the learning industry, or indeed, that of other industry sectors, you will probably want to read this!

When I became involved in the work of LearnNB I quickly discovered a collection of visionary, like-minded people in the learning space who really believed in the innovation, expertise and capacity of our province's leading companies and individuals. I was attracted to their ideas, their boldness and tenacity in order to achieve greatness for our Province.

Here's my moment of reflection: no matter how forward-thinking we are (or think we are!), finding community, a place to belong and feel appreciated for the uniqueness of thought and experience that you bring to the equation, is essential to the satisfaction and indeed, survival of individuals and organizations. Is that too touchy-feely for you? Do you pride yourself on your bold, aggressive and "business oriented" actions?

My advice - take a deep breath, pick up some new business books, and find out what is really driving business success these days - it ain't what you think!

As you are aware, LearnNB has been providing industry and community leadership to support the establishment of a Center of Excellence in Advanced Learning and Technologies (CEALT). Such a Center will focus on business development, commercialization and research in this industry sub-sector.

Much input has been sought from the stakeholder community, and this past summer, key stakeholder groups consisting of provincial universities, NRC, LearnNB, LearnSphere, and the Province of New Brunswick pooled resources to prepare a Letter of Intent (LOI) for submission to the National Centers of Excellence.

The LOI outlined a framework for a New Brunswick Center of Excellence in Advanced Learning and Technologies. Included in this submission was a series of letters of support from community and industry stakeholders. The document that was forwarded for consideration demonstrated New Brunswick's strategic advantage. Our small size allows for creation a more cohesive community of leaders who understand that only through collaboration and fresh solutions will we realize sustained growth of the learning industry. It is our secret sauce!

Unfortunately, our submission to the National Centers of Excellence was not accepted to move to the next step of preparing a formal proposal for submission. However, all stakeholders involved in the preparation of the LOI agreed that the vision, and development of an organizational structure to support that vision, was absolutely critical to support the growth of business, research, and commercialization in advanced learning and technologies.

A plan is currently being drafted to advance this important initiative. Over the next few months a framework for the realization of a smaller scale initiative for a CEALT will be developed. LearnNB's primary focus will be to input into that process. LearnNB will maintain its volunteer Board of Directors, with Dave Grebenc, who is responsible for Sales, Marketing & Finance at Innovatia, serving as the Chairman of the Board. No further funds will be sourced from government to support the operations of LearnNB, as has been the case in the past.

Over the course of the next few months, Mr. Grebenc will represent the industry voice, supported by the LearnNB Board of Directors, at the planning and development stages to assist with alignment of resources, people, and industry participation for the establishment of a Center of Excellence. The NRC will play a key role, as will government and university stakeholders.

In a province of our size, it is absolutely critical that our limited resources be invested into this industry sub-sector in ways that ensure that roles and responsibilities are tightly integrated, and that all decisions are based upon solid data. Some of the data for this initiative will arise out of an asset mapping exercise that is being sponsored by Business NB and the NRC. This is set to begin later this month, and due to be concluded by later this fall.

The objective of this mapping exercise is to not only clearly identify the companies and their capabilities that make-up and support our advanced learning & technologies sector, but as well, obtain input and do a comparison with other geographies in terms of what is required to drive growth in our sector.

This information will be digested by key stakeholders, including LearnNB, with the mandate of establishing the optimal go-forward framework required to support the growth of our sector. I encourage your involvement in this mapping, if and when called upon.

A significant project in which LearnNB has invested energies in recent months has been around the development of a semantic web application, Mynexia. The development of this business-matching tool is the result of a number of representatives of organizations that realized that they shared a common vision surrounding development of a tool that would facilitate increased, easier access to people, finances, and information that could accelerate their organization's growth. Mynexia will be formally launched at the NRC Innovation Forum at the end of October.

I encourage all of you to take advantage of this important business development tool. You can find additional information on the pre-launch web site at [www.mynexia.com](http://www.mynexia.com). Mark my words - you will want to engage with what I predict will be New Brunswick's "ace in the hole", Mynexia!

It has been a pleasure to have been able to serve within this learning stakeholder community. On behalf of the Board of Directors, I wish to express sincere appreciation for the insight that each of you has shared, both within your respective organizations, and as part of the wider community.

I am looking forward to now attending full-time to my own consulting practice, and to the advancement of the training and development profession within New Brunswick, through my involvement with the New Brunswick CSTD Chapter.

For those who have an interest specifically in professional training and development, I invite you to contact me at [awatt@nbnet.nb.ca](mailto:awatt@nbnet.nb.ca). I look forward to continued progress within and among our province's Leaders in Learning.

"Desire is the key to motivation, but it's determination and commitment to an unrelenting pursuit of your goal -- a commitment to excellence -- that will enable you to attain the success you seek. " &ldquo;  
--Mario Andretti