

Internet are minimal, training firms are gaining access from their desktops to world wide markets. Canadian firms now operating in the virtual marketplace have to compete with well known firms and institutions from all over the world. Strong name recognition, combined with the use of NMLM can give suppliers an enormous advantage on world markets. An example is the Interactive Manager Series on CD-ROM by Harvard Business School Publishing.

In order to survive the intense competition, Canadian training companies will need to differentiate their products, ensure their user friendliness, find niche markets or form alliances with firms to compete successfully. Traditional classroom based training companies wishing to provide training services on the Internet will not only have to adapt to unfamiliar technology based delivery mechanisms, but also will have to make significant initial investments to buy the necessary technology, retrain existing employees or find new staff with the right skills.

4.5.8 Data and Research Gaps

The 1992 profile for Industry, Science and Technology Canada (ISTC) represents the first attempt to report information on the size and characteristics of this sector. More recent and current information now is needed on performance over time, sales, revenues, employment creation and export activity. Very little work has been done to research, document, analyse and communicate the contribution of training to productivity, profitability, competitiveness, the performance of business and employees, and the integration of training into organisational strategic planning, or on the cost effectiveness of training. Basic research is a fundamental and continuing need of this sector, but most suppliers are too small to undertake the type of research that could benefit the sector as a whole.

The current investment of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) in research networks in education and training will help fill some of these gaps (see "SSHRC funds training networks," University Affairs, February 1997, p. 17). The council is investing \$5.6 million over five years in five broad based research networks in education and training. The networks include universities, community colleges, schools, companies, government agencies and non-profit organisations, and international researchers. They are investigating the effectiveness of education and training technologies, private/public training partnerships, informal learning, training for the underemployed and long term unemployed, and educational outcomes.