

Symposium/Workshop Proposal for

**2007 CCSBE – CCPME Conference
November 1 – 3, 2007
Kelowna, B.C.**

Connecting...Policy, Practice & Research

Session Title:

Breaking down the barriers of IT integration for small Canadian business:
How Canada's Student Connections (SC) program tackles the need to help
SMEs make the jump to e-business.

Presenter(s):

Paul Toupin

Manager, Student Connections
Association of Canadian Community Colleges
200-1223 Michael Street North
Ottawa, Ontario K1J 7T2

Phone: 613.746.2222 ext 3153

Fax: 613.746.6841

Email: ptoupin@accc.ca

Website: www.studentconnections.ca

Abdelouahab Mekki Berrada (to be confirmed)

Doctoral Student in E-commerce at the RBC Ecommerce Research Chair
Hautes-Études Commerciales (HEC) – Montréal
5255, Decelles, local 4604
Montréal (Québec) H3T 1V6

Phone : 514.340.7313

Fax : 514.340.6911

Email : abdelouahab.mekki-berrada@hec.ca

Website : www.ebb.com

A third presenter (SC partner or Student Business Advisor) may be invited to participate in the presentation. See proposal for details.

Breaking down the barriers of IT integration for small Canadian business:
A look at how Canada's Student Connections program has addressed the ever-present need to help SMEs make the jump to e-business.

Introduction:

Britain's online magazine www.trendwatching.com predicts in its latest report on trends that the "other big online trend" for 2008 will be "the ongoing rise of ecommerce". It states that within this trend, new trends will emerge "all aimed at helping your brand sell more online than ever before, from intention commerce to the use of product videos to new delivery methods". But how can Canadian SMEs with less than 20 employees who haven't yet bridged the IT gap, exploit the vast array of opportunities that exist in this dynamic environment for opportunity?

StatsCan indicates in recent studies that this segment of small business isn't keeping pace with small business in other industrialized nations and that such neglect will have a detrimental effect on our country's competitiveness.

Given that these SMEs generally have no dedicated staff for ecommerce initiatives, this session aims to examine the successes and strategies used by the Student Connections program that aim:

- *to change the environment for small business by introducing them to new channels that increase their competitiveness, allow them to operate more efficiently, and enable them to provide better customer service and better products or services;*
- *to improve IT literacy rates among small business personnel;*
- *to introduce skilled workers (ie. 300 youth annually) to the realities and opportunities of working in the small business sector; and,*
- *to help SMEs understand the need and opportunities brought about by investing in IT.*

We invite participants to witness how the Student Connections (SC) program has made an impact in developing skills and changing attitudes in a sector of the business community that has been reluctant to embrace IT and the world of e-business.

Proposed Audience:

- Individuals who support and seek out grassroots initiatives for small business
- Organizations that aim to improve the economic development of their region by building the IT capacity of their small businesses; more specifically SMEs with less than 50 employees or 20 FTE.

Length of Session:

- 60 – 75 minutes – will be determined by availability of other guest presenters (and would include Q&A). The session can be modified in accordance with the needs of the conference upon request.

Room requirements:

- Overhead projector and screen
- Hi-speed Internet access
- *(and possibly, a number of session participants representing either small business organizations or organizations helping small business who would be interested in having their website evaluated **prior** to the session.)*

Abstract:

Britain's online magazine www.trendwatching.com predicts in its latest report on trends that the next big trend for 2008 will be "the ongoing rise of ecommerce". It states that new trends will emerge "all aimed at helping your brand sell more online than ever before". But how can Canadian businesses with less than 20 employees bridge the IT gap and exploit the vast array of opportunities that exist in this dynamic environment for opportunity?

We invite participants to witness how the Student Connections (SC) program has made an impact in developing skills and changing attitudes in a sector of the business community that has been reluctant to embrace IT and the world of e-business.

Overview of presentation:

- Quick overview of key barriers that challenge the ability of SMEs to embrace IT
- A brief examination of why SMEs can't afford to not be online
- Convincing an SME to make the switch - a look at the impact of the SC program in making SMEs more competitive
- *The "student" in Student Connections. How Student Connections impacts students' perceptions of entrepreneurship and its realities.
- Future of SC - It's more than computer literacy and awareness. It's about the need to accompany the IT integration process of small businesses with less than 20 employees
- **The need for partnerships - A call for improving the viability and presence of mutual initiatives aimed at strengthening the e-business capacity of small business in Canada.

**We would hope to profile a Student Business Advisor in order to showcase how their experience as a Student Business Advisor changed their perspectives and respect for the SME reality.*

***As part of the session, we would like to invite a winner from the Dell Small Business Excellence Award or Dell representative to discuss the need for small businesses to take on an online presence and how they can't afford not to be online.*

We would need to confirm this idea with our partner Dell Canada. To date, Dell Canada has expressed initial interest but has not yet confirmed as their 2007 winner will not be determined until Fall 2007.

To find out more about the award, visit

http://www1.ca.dell.com/content/topics/topic.aspx/ca/corporate/pressoffice/en/2006/2006_12_15_tor_000?c=ca&l=en&s=gen

<http://www1.ca.dell.com/content/topics/topic.aspx/ca/corporate/pressoffice/en/2006/2006_12_15_tor_000?c=ca&l=en&s=gen> or <http://www.winwithdell.ca/SMB/index.html>

<<http://www.winwithdell.ca/SMB/index.html>>