

**Chapter 6****IS Education in the New Millennium: Determining the 'Right' Curriculum**

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INTRODUCTION

The last quarter of this century has seen a sea change in Information Systems (IS) and Information Technology (IT), including computers, communications, and office automation. The effects of these changes have been widespread and as a result, have caused major transformations in the way we live and work. One major effect has been the creation of a global marketplace on an unprecedented scale. This marketplace, in turn, has shrunk the world in such a way as to create tremendous opportunities as well as threats for even relatively small organizations. As a consequence, many organizations today have discovered that their profitability and perhaps even their survival, now depend on their ability to successfully play the game in a new, complex, and often unfamiliar, global arena.

IS and IT have played crucial, pivotal roles in the creation of this global market, and will, we firmly believe, have an enormous impact on its future. The management of organizations that must and will operate in this environment now and in the future will demand a comprehensive array of attributes and skills from their personnel. IS professionals particularly will be subject to an increasing list of de-

mands. As is already often the case, in many instances IS personnel, much more so than their counterparts in other functional areas, will be truly “global” personnel, living and working in places that are often far removed from where they were born or educated.

One obvious reason for this is the tremendous shortage of qualified IS personnel the world over and the demand for skilled services. In fact, the tremendous shortage of IT professionals has resulted in a worldwide “head-hunt,” or as one recruiter uncharitably put it, “nerd-hunt” for qualified professionals. Obviously, teams of professionals assembled from all over the world are going to present rather unique management challenges. And even though companies today are scrambling to hire almost anyone who even vaguely resembles an IS professional, maturity in the market will place increasingly complex demands on these personnel.

THE NEW IT PROFESSIONALS: WHO ARE THEY?

In many ways, today’s global economy is reminiscent of the age of empires. During that period, professionals had to have a working knowledge of other areas of the world, notably the various colonies of the mother country. Toward this end, there was the grand tour, an education strongly based in the liberal education traditions of history, geography, languages, and the arts, and the somewhat dubious distinction of always having the upper hand as a citizen of the ruling country. Circumstances today are vastly different; nevertheless, certain lessons are still valid. The imperial powers, from Rome to Britain, ensured that their professionals had a thorough understanding of the cultures and values of the areas to which they were sent. Those who did not possess this understanding proved to be incapable of operating effectively.

Today’s business professionals operate in an increasingly global arena, and as such, must possess global skills. The authors would submit that this is true of IS personnel as well, and that the IS professional of today and tomorrow will need to be a globally oriented. These IS personnel may face a host of issues that may range from technical telecommunications issues to global corporate management (Deans et al., 1991). In addition, they must be familiar with other, non-technical issues as well, such as culture and tradition.

The management of a global IS thus poses special challenges for IS managers (Deans and Ricks, 1993) and the global IS professional will need a far greater depth and breadth of knowledge in comparison to his or her domestic counterpart (Cheney and Kasper, 1993), although professionals that operate solely in the domestic arena are declining in numbers. Global IS professionals will also need to have international experience in interactions with global competitors and global customers (Nelson, 1996). It goes without saying that the successful global IS

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