



Training for what...a good question

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Change is constant.

Change can be seen in the way B.C. companies do business, they are leaner, more flexible organizations and many are using the downturn to reshape their operations, including their workforce.

Talented people don't put their careers on hold during a downturn, but many are changing their focus to consider how their talents and training applies to those high growth and emerging industries, and are re-directing their training towards those industries.

We know that people are often a company's most important source of competitive advantage and we see how successful companies are changing the way they invest in their people.

These companies recognize that they will need these employees' skills and talents when the economy recovers and are positioning their companies with their employees, to signal their strength and resilience in the face of the challenges of these economic times and demonstrate their integrity as an employer.

So what does all of this mean for Campbell River? Well certainly we can see how companies within some of the existing resource sectors in our community and region have changed their business operations, and the direct impacts that has had on Campbell River.

Perhaps, more importantly, we are seeing those same sectors actively discussing alternatives to business production and operations that could have significant positive implications for our community.

A critical impact will be how Campbell River positions our community to meet the needs of these rapidly transitioning and emerging sectors through training and skill development of our workforce, for these high-growth and emerging industries.

But there's a question that still needs to be answered: Training for what? What are those career opportunities that will keep our young families here in our community and provide meaningful employment?

What are those existing and emerging industries that have the highest potential for growth and investment?

When those questions are answered, the answer to "training for what" becomes much more apparent. Industry is driving the answer to these questions, the sooner we are able to respond to meet their needs, the sooner we can leverage Campbell River as a source for a trained, skilled workforce to these emerging industries.

There's a rapidly growing realization that clean and green technology is where the jobs are, and will, be. They will attract diploma-fresh, mid- and late-career job changers, and accomplished individuals with advanced technical degrees and impressive career paths.

They will be drawn to the promise and benefits of working to advance clean energy, advanced materials, organic products, locally-based business and any of a number of other opportunities.

An example of the rapid response to training for these industries and emerging economic themes can be seen in programs throughout B.C. To see another quick response to industry demand, check out what's happening at the University of Oklahoma and their new Wind Turbine Technology program.

It's a great example of how a community can take the lead to drive industry forward through responsive training. Imagine the economic impact this

type of response could have on our economy and community.

Innovative companies in emerging industries have diverse and important training needs. Campbell River has the opportunity to take the lead in working collaboratively with emerging industries, existing industries in rapid transition and innovative companies in determining training needs, and developing and providing customized training applicable to the leading edge technologies involved.

And working collaboratively with producers and vendors of products and materials to these innovative companies and emerging industries, to help those vendors develop specialized training.

And finally, working with the employees and future employees of those transitioned and emerging industries to meet their needs for a trained and skilled workforce.

A recent example of this was in meetings with representatives from the coastal forestry industry. It's clear that Campbell River is the hub of the coastal forestry industry and it will be interesting to see what our community's response for training to support this evolving industry will be.

Doing nothing in a downturn is not an option and Campbell River leaders need to act, or we risk seeing others race ahead when economic recovery gains momentum.

To discuss this topic further, contact the Campbell River Chamber at 250-287-4513.