



ACTION PLAN

1999 - 2002



From 14 to 17 April 1999, ORBICOM convened a conference on *Connecting Knowledge in Communications: Bridging the Gap between Training and Employment in Communications* in Montréal, Canada. The event was organized in collaboration with UNESCO, the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) and the Global Knowledge Partnership (GKP), a consortium of some 45 international and national development agencies, non-governmental organisations and the private sector.

Building on past initiatives in the field¹, the participants agreed that:

- access to and effective use of knowledge and information are key ingredients of the emerging global knowledge economy and essential tools for sustainable economic and social development at the individual, community, national and international levels;
- significant investment will be required – from both private and public sources, including the academic – to strengthen the information and communication infrastructure of developing countries, as well as their ability to generate and disseminate content; and
- the world community will need to develop a plan of action that enhances the utilisation of information and communication for educational, cultural, social and economic development.

1.0 - BEARING IN MIND THAT:

- 1) Information and knowledge is a staple of the globalising world economy.
- 2) Freedom of expression and access to information are essential for development, national identity and democracy.
- 3) Governments are often slow to adapt to technological change and that their information and communication policies lack transparency due to lack of resources (human and financial) and/or the absence of political wisdom and confidence.
- 4) Affordable access is a prerequisite for any knowledge and information society.
- 5) There is no single blueprint and there may be different paths to success, however a vision and appropriate national strategies, policies and plans are indispensable.
- 6) Rapid technological change in the information sector puts cultural identities and diversity at risk.
- 7) Shortages of personnel with the necessary skills and expertise constrain the production of new content as well as the processing and distribution of existing knowledge.
- 8) Technological literacy and fluency is increasingly a requirement for success.

¹ Among others , The Second World Congress on Education and Informatics (Moscow, 1997), INFOethics (Monaco, 1997, 1998), The Global Knowledge Conference (Toronto, 1997), and others.

2.0 - POSSIBLE STRATEGIES AND RESPONSES:

- 1) Communication professionals have a vital role to play as both designers and providers of content in the information economy.
- 2) Human resources are at the heart of economic development – we have the people, what they need is meaningful training , skills development and access to appropriate technologies.
- 3) Information technologies must be harnessed to induce individual creativity and innovation, and for equitable social advancement globally.
- 4) Massive public and private investments are urgently needed to develop national communication infrastructures, capacities and content.
- 5) Training must be multidisciplinary, intellectually flexible, socially mobile, multilingual and culturally sensitive.
- 6) The information revolution requires a new generation of trainers with a different skills-profile.

3.0 - CONCRETE ACTION MEASURES:

- 1) No single player can muster enough resources to meet these challenges alone. Strategic partnerships among the media, academia, industry, governmental and multilateral sectors as well as civil society are required for any action to be effective.
- 2) Organisations specialised in information and communications, such as ORBICOM, are encouraged to launch initiatives.
- 3) These issues must be placed on the top of the international agenda everywhere and addressed through partnership and teamwork.

4.0 - SPECIFIC ACTION PROPOSALS:

- 1) Creation of a Knowledge Network to serve as an electronic forum for on-going assessment and exchange of information on communication trends and training needs and opportunities.**

This network shall:

- a) act as a clearing house for the collection and distribution of information;
 - b) analyse trends to inform ORBICOM's activities and its Learning to Learn Workshops;
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- c) collect and circulate information across institutional and professional boundaries – policy-making, the multilateral sector, universities, private think tanks, journalism associations, professional organisations, etc.
 - d) publish regular electronic and printed reports on the state of information and communications in each region;
 - e) circulate successful case studies relating to capacity building; and
 - f) have suitable staff and other resources to perform these functions.
- 2) Learning to Learn – organisation of a series of regional workshops for the training and retraining of communication professionals for the new knowledge economy.**

This training shall:

- a) be based on needs identified for different regions;
- b) target management, professionals, new information workers, and educators;
- c) develop both concrete multimedia skills and team-building skills;
- d) be designed and delivered through partnerships between learning institutions and the private sector;
- e) conduct evaluations of both initiatives in order to refine and build the capacity for the next phase.

5.0 - FOLLOW UP:

The Conference recommends, funds permitting, that ORBICOM initiate one or more multisectoral meetings of professional associations, multilateral agencies, academic and private sector partners to develop recommendations and present a plan of action at the second Global Knowledge Conference in Malaysia in March 2000.

O R B I C O M

P.O. Box 8888, Downtown Station
Montreal (Quebec)
H3C 3P8 CANADA

Telephone: (514) 987-8743
Fax: (514) 987-0249
orbicom@uqam.ca