



CIO 100 Assembly: A meeting of the IT minds

By: David Carey and Rosie Lombardi On: 31 Jul 2006 For: CIO Canada

For three days in June, over 60 of the country's leading IT executives gathered at the inaugural CIO 100 Assembly in Niagara Falls, Ontario to participate in an interactive think tank aimed at building a body of actionable knowledge around the most critical issues facing CIOs, the IT organization and the enterprise. Produced by CIO Canada with the assistance of the CIO Executive Council, the conference helped set a new course for the Canadian IT executive community.

For a complete change of pace, the day's second presentation focused on "The Brand called You!" Most successful executives consider themselves as a unique brand and market themselves accordingly, argued Frank Cuttita, CEO of The Center for Global Branding. And his entertaining presentation, which elicited more than a few belly laughs, showed CIOs how to go about personally branding their role as the IS leader of their organization.

There likely wasn't a CIO in the room who didn't breathe a sigh of relief at not having to take on the Olympian task faced by Ward Chapin, CIO of the Vancouver Organizing Committee for the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Games. Chapin outlined the vast responsibilities faced by the IT organization, culminating in a "product" that is only used for the 16 days of the Games and for the Paralympics.

Here's a small sample of what he and the IT team are facing: 100,000 hours of applications testing; many millions of visitors to the www.Vancouver2010.com Web site during the Games; thousands of alerts and dozens of serious attacks on the Olympic network a day; and the need for a myriad of absolutely failsafe systems supporting the Games themselves.

Chapin's guiding principles: "keep IT simple, efficient and affordable", while avoiding bleeding-edge technologies. He concluded with an appeal to all the CIOs in the audience: "We truly believe these are Canada's games, and we're looking for volunteers with technical experience. An option would be for companies to second employees to us as a reward for good work."

Finally, it was CIBC Mellon CIO, Helen Polatajko's job to pull all of the conference content together, incorporating the voting results on priority areas and agreed upon next steps in developing the first recorded 'CIO Playbook'.

In so doing, she made the following observations: "CIOs must establish a one-to-one relationship with the CEO. They must sell the value of IT and have the business sell this value on our behalf.

"We've also identified marketing IT as an area in which we have to do more. We have to move IT from the back room to the board room.

"And we have to move to predictive models to identify opportunities for innovation. Let's look forward, not backwards. Think globally."

She summarized the conference by saying, "This assembly was all about building up a body of knowledge around building the CIO profession, helping alignment, and sharing best practices around innovation. Eighteen presenters shared their experiences and their knowledge, and the conference has produced 80 pages of data. I think it's a phenomenal achievement."

We say 'amen!' to that. If you missed it, you can find out lots more about this year's conference on our Web site. More importantly, make sure you sign up for next year's edition of The CIO 100 Assembly (date to be announced). You won't be disappointed.