

**Challenges of an Aging Workforce:
Technical Employees the Most Serious Dilemma;
In-house Training and Targeted Post-Secondary and
Apprenticeship Programs the Main Solutions;
Special Roles for Business and Government**

**Weekly CEO/Business Leader Poll
By COMPAS in *Canadian Business***



**COMPAS Inc.
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1.0. Introduction

Among the challenges of an aging workforce, a dearth of technical employees remains as the top dilemma in the eyes of the CEOs and business leaders on the COMPAS panel. That this is seen as a serious problem is suggested by the continuity of opinion, essentially unchanged in three years. Panelists continue to see special roles for both business and government in in-house training, post-secondary education investments, and investments in apprenticeship programs. Immigrants and recruitment abroad could be part of the solution, but not the most effective in the eyes of panelists.

These are the key findings from this past week's Internet survey of CEOs and business leaders on the COMPAS panel. The weekly business survey is undertaken for *Canadian Business* magazine.



2.0. Detailed Findings

Table 2.1: (Q1) Aging workforce In which of the following areas do you foresee the biggest problems in replenishing our aging workforce? Please check all that apply. RANDOMIZE¹

	June 2011	March 2008
Skilled technical workforce	76	71
Senior management	54	54
Managing operations	48	49
R&D	33	26
Sales and marketing	17	25
Finance	15	19
HR	11	9
IT	9	11
Other	7	3
Don't know or no opinion	0	3

¹ Column may not add to 100 percent because respondents were allowed to select more than one response.



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Table 2.2: (Q2) Solutions Please score each of these possible solutions on a 7 point scale where 1 means not a solution and 7, a significant solution. RANDOMIZE

	Mean	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	DNK
Investing in in-house training									
June 2011	5.8	28	45	17	6	3	0	2	0
March 2008	5.8	29	38	21	12	2	0	0	0
Recruiting through post-secondary institutions and apprenticeship programs									
June 2011	5.7	29	41	13	12	2	1	1	0
March 2008	5.7	28	37	19	12	2	3	0	0
Keeping employees past normal retirement age									
June 2011	5.5	29	31	22	7	4	4	3	0
March 2008	5.3	25	30	22	13	5	2	4	0
Hiring immigrants									
June 2011	4.7	11	26	21	21	6	10	4	1
March 2008	4.8	12	24	25	19	12	7	2	0
Recruiting abroad									
June 2011	4.5	11	19	19	29	11	4	8	0
March 2008	4.3	7	19	24	21	16	8	7	0



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Table 2.3: (Q3) Government On a 7 point scale where 1 means governments should do little or nothing and 7, a lot, how much should governments invest in each of the following ways?

RANDOMIZE

	Mean	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	DNK
Expand apprenticeship programs through incentives to employers and apprentices									
June 2011	6.0	37	41	10	4	6	1	0	1
March 2008	5.9	38	33	19	6	3	2	0	0
Expand post-secondary training programs where the supply of graduates is too small									
June 2011	5.7	28	35	21	10	3	1	1	1
March 2008	5.8	29	40	20	7	3	2	0	0
Increase incentives for employers to invest in training									
June 2011	5.6	29	37	18	7	6	3	1	0
March 2008	5.8	38	30	19	5	5	2	2	0
Invest more in adaptation programs for immigrants									
June 2011	4.7	12	24	21	18	12	9	3	1
March 2008	4.8	14	25	24	15	13	6	4	0
Make it easier for employers recruit abroad									
June 2011	4.6	10	23	21	29	6	6	7	0
March 2008	4.7	13	21	23	22	9	7	3	2

The following verbatim comments provide a nuanced sense of respondent opinion:

Many companies, including my own, face more of a leadership deficit than a skills deficit. Skills can be taught and learned. Leadership skills can be improved and enhanced if the innate talent is there, but many of the young people today who are in the early stages of their careers seem to lack that innate leadership talent and the will to work as hard as it takes to succeed.



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Experience costs, it's pay now (lower costs) or later when you get to do it twice at - pick a figure in costs, lost time, resources, I could go on. No free lunch!

My region has 12%+ unemployment. Before we aggressively recruit offshore we should invest in those who are here now.

Given the preponderance of small business (<50 employees) in our economy, and their reluctance or inability to invest in in-house skills training, government needs to partner and invest in training for this sector.

This is a huge problem - and we are only seeing the tip of the iceberg at this time. It will get worse!

Promote in-house training and development.

Sourcing workers to fill gaps in the employment base within Canada means we have failed to develop programs that provide the skills we need. It is unfortunate that many go to post secondary educational facilities taking courses that are not very useful in real life or where there is an over supply of potential employees. There is no need to go outside of Canada to seek people to fill gaps. There are enough people within Canada to do so. All that is needed are programs that target the areas with greater deficiencies and create programs that encourage the young, or those going through retraining, to develop those skills. If there is a deficiency in different parts of the country, governments should look to encourage movement from higher unemployment areas to those that require skilled people. Working with businesses governments at all levels should be able to create the programs we need to fill the voids by whatever means possible. The costs thereof are more than offset by higher employment and higher tax collections.



3.0. Methodology

The COMPAS web-survey of CEOs and leaders of small, medium, and large corporations was conducted June 22 – 24, 2011. Respondents constitute an essentially hand-picked panel with a higher numerical representation of small and medium-sized firms.

Because of the small population of CEOs and business leaders from which the sample was drawn, the study can be considered more accurate than comparably sized general public studies. In studies of the general public, surveys of n=91 are deemed accurate to within approximate 10.3 percentage points 19 times out of 20. The principal investigator on this study is Conrad Winn, Ph.D.

