Sarbanes-Oxley (SOX) is having a profound impact on the Information Technology (IT) profession. Senior IT leaders are experiencing an increased concern with IT governance. The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) is calling upon the Chief Information Officer (CIO) to attest to rigour in IT processes and projects before the CEO signs-off on the company financials. Both the CEO and CIO have to work together to understand what the government regulations require and what is necessary to be in compliance with them.

Regulatory compliance demands rigour in IT governance. Sadly, current IT governance practices as implemented in some organizations are not adequate as evident in the software failures that have occurred in the past few years. In a 2005 report, The Hartwell Group identified 20 recent high profile IT glitches that:

• Affected more than 61 million people;
• Resulted in more than $30 million in financial impacts (plus impacts such as lost business, project delays, loss of reputation, loss of customer privacy, and required additional medical tests); and
• Had potential life and death impacts.

The effect of SOX and other regulatory compliance requirements will be felt well beyond its immediate sphere of influence. While SOX only applies to publicly traded companies on U.S. stock exchanges, the IT audit community will promulgate the lessons of SOX IT governance well beyond that arena. With so much at stake, will CIOs look for more than technical excellence in their IT recruiting practices?

The days of the narrowly specialized are numbered. IT professionals today require a broad IT knowledge, a variety of business experience, a strong foundation in emerging standards of practice, and a code of ethics that puts the public and employer interests ahead of their own. CIOs and human resources executives will be looking for a way to identify these IT professionals. Fortunately, there is a way.

Canada has a professional IT designation: the Information Systems Professional – I.S.P. designation (in French, Informaticien professionnel agréé - IPA) that identifies IT practitioners who possess the education and experience to practice IT at the professional level. The “I.S.P.” is the only IT designation in Canada that is recognized by law as a self-regulating profession. Currently, legislation exists in the provinces of British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Ontario, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia. (Other provinces are working toward legislation.) The I.S.P designation is offered by Canada’s association of IT professionals known as the Canadian Information Processing Society or “CIPS.”

I have been calling on IT leaders to deliver the Information Systems Professional message. They understand the importance of IT professionalism and governance, and how this translates into a more ethical and productive workforce that improves their bottom-line. Quite fittingly, they are moving to adopt the I.S.P. designation in their organizations.

The I.S.P. designation in association with regulatory compliance and IT governance is an opportunity for executives to take a leadership role in further aligning IT with business priorities. For the IT industry and profession, this is a good thing.

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REAL CREDENTIALS MATTER!

A Chartered Accountant’s not the real thing without that “CA.”
The Professional Engineer needs a "P.Eng." to build a real bridge.
The real Information Systems Professional requires an “I.S.P.” for your peace of mind.

Legislated by SIX – and counting – Provincial Governments, the Information Systems Professional (I.S.P.) is the only such designation for Canadian IT professionals.

— A CIO should know this. —

To know more, call 1-877-ASK-CIPS (275-2477) or visit www.cips.ca/standards.