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Proud to be Federal Government Internal Auditors

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May 2016**



The Institute of Internal Auditors
L'Institut des auditeurs internes
Canada

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At a recent meeting, a colleague asked me how I came to become an internal auditor. I laughed and said that I fell into it! During an interview, while in my last year of university, a recruiter from the Treasury Board Secretariat asked me if I was interested in either the Finance or Internal Audit Recruitment Development Program. I had recently completed a financial management course which did not suit my interests so I quickly responded that I was interested in the internal audit stream. At the time, I had no idea what 'internal audit' was nor did I realize that this answer would prove to be a great career decision!

The conversation with my colleague got me thinking about how other federal government internal auditors came to choose their career? Results from a random poll showed cases similar to my own where many federal government internal auditors ended up in internal audit not through any conscious career choice but through a variety of circumstances such as looking for autonomy, increased organizational awareness, promotional opportunities or based upon a recommendation from a colleague. I believe that these results demonstrate that there is a definite **need for branding within the community**.

The Institute of Internal Auditors (IIA) has been successful in branding the function and is promoting the month of May as International Internal Audit Awareness Month. This is an opportunity for the internal audit community, in collaboration with the local IIA chapter, to promote the profession and demonstrate that we are '**proud to be federal government internal auditors**'. A branding strategy would promote the internal audit profession within the federal government while increasing awareness and perceived value to management. This could be achieved through the following four step approach¹:

Step 1: Assess current brand awareness and positioning

What is the current awareness within the community and amongst stakeholders? The results of the Government Internal Auditors Council of Canada research study² on '*How to Better Position Internal Audit Now and into the Future*' may provide

¹ IIA Internal Auditor - What's Your Brand? Andrew L. Cheskis, October 1, 2012

² Government Internal Auditors Council of Canada/University of Ottawa Research Project – Initial report of results expected for June and final report presented at the IIA Canada National Conference in September 2016.

information on the current brand awareness, especially in terms of senior management perceptions. As well, development programs such as the Internal Audit Recruitment and Development have been successful in recruiting entry internal auditors; however, there are no community recruitment programs for other working levels.

Step 2: Determine desired brand awareness and positioning

What characteristics does the community want to convey in terms of its brand? 'Being an on-trend, relevant, inspiring, purposeful, innovative and community-centric brand – these are the things that will make people pause, listen and pay attention.'³ Characteristics such as those noted within the IIA mission statement '*enhance and protect organizational value by providing risk-based and objective assurance, advice, and insight*', the professional values and promoting the role of trusted strategic advisor are critical for a successful brand.

Step 3: Develop and implement a plan to close the branding gap

What is the difference between the desired brand and the current awareness? The plan should include key messages to support the main characteristics identified in the previous step. A promotional campaign with these messages should increase awareness not only within the community but also with stakeholders.

Step 4: Ensure a continuous improvement through brand metrics

How will the branding strategy be considered a success? The development and monitoring of brand metrics will determine if the strategy is successful. Continuous improvements should be implemented to address any deviations from the strategy noted as part of the monitoring of metrics.

A successful branding strategy will enable the federal government internal audit community to better promote the internal audit profession and the value of our services while increasing awareness amongst its stakeholders. It will then not be left to happenstances that future federal government employees choose a wonderful and enriching career in **internal audit!**

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³ Forbes/Leadership - 6 Brand Strategies Most CMOs Fail To Execute, March 10, 2014