

# NEWS YOU CAN USE

## Crisis Looming?

By Eva Kaplan-Leiserson

A U.S. labor shortage may seem unbelievable as workers continue to face layoffs and a poor job market. But some people are predicting a coming labor crisis.

*Business Week* asserts that a “wrenching manpower and skills shortage,” set in motion as the economy strengthens and baby boomers retire, could last for decades. The Herman Group forecasts that “cocooning” workers will leave

their jobs in droves when the economy recovers, to join different companies, start their own businesses, or retire.

Thirty percent of workers will leave their jobs when the economy rebounds, says the National Survey Institute. The Herman Group calculates that 2,146,150 jobs could go unfilled by 2010.


Those are sobering numbers for HR professionals and training departments, but

some untapped human resources can help keep companies running smoothly.

**Retirees.** More older workers are electing to postpone retirement and stay in the workplace, offering their wisdom and experience as mentors, coaches, and strategic advisors. As the labor crunch develops, says *Business Week*, companies will support that trend by overhauling benefit plans that encourage early retirement

A severe U.S. labor shortage may be on the horizon. But there *is* hope.

and by creating incentives for older workers to stay on.

 "Aged to Perfection," NYCU (October 2001 *T+D*) for more on older workers.

**College students.** No more will students have to choose between classes and a full-time paycheck, says The Herman Group. New partnerships between employers and schools will iron out schedule conflicts, the group predicts, to let students work at career-track jobs while they attend classes. The trick will be getting colleges and corporations to communicate effectively.

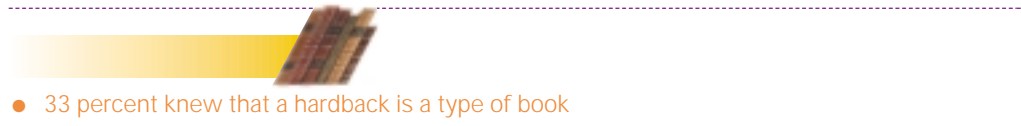
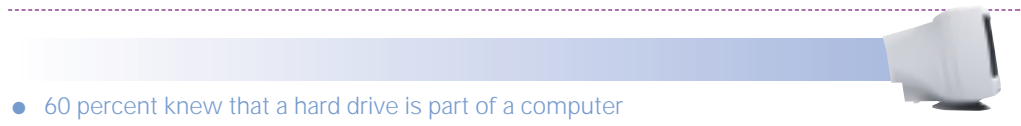
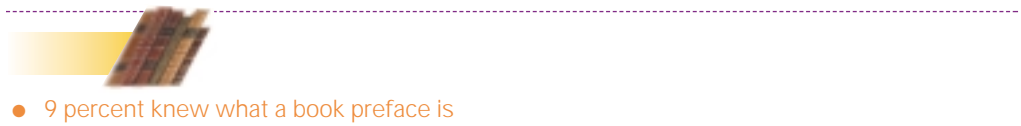
**The working poor.** Skill building and work readiness training will be crucial for this population. For example, a Web-based program called EnterTech is helping disadvantaged people create a larger labor pool. The program simulates on-the-job experiences to help people gain employability skills. EnterTech is being used in school districts, at community-based organizations, and by state workforce commissions.

 [More/entertech.org](http://More/entertech.org)

**Other groups.** Working mothers, minorities, people with disabilities, and former prisoners are other groups from which companies can recruit, *Business Week* says—especially if the organizations develop programs to meet those workers' specific needs. In general, there's no one solution for a labor shortage, but untapped resources combined with education and training will play an important part.

# RealityCheck

Are books a dying breed? It may seem that way based on a study of children in the United Kingdom.




Draw your own conclusions on the implications for training and education.

 [Source/ Nua Internet Surveys](#)

## Knowledge Stagnatement

Buying fancy knowledge-management software is all well and good, but what if people don't want to share what they know? From *Knowledge Management* magazine

 [destinationkm.com](http://destinationkm.com) come these KM obstacles and potential solutions. According to *KM*, people who are reluctant to contribute may have

**a belief that knowledge is power.** Reward sharing by recognizing and promoting people who do.

**insecurity about the value of their knowledge.** Make people feel safe and valued. Encourage and respect everyone's contribution.

**a lack of trust.** Allocate time for people to develop relationships and evaluate others' trustworthiness.

**a fear of negative consequences.** Allow people to ask "dumb" questions and share crazy ideas.

**supervisors who don't tell what they know.** Higher-ups should model sharing negative info as well as positive.

 [More/ destinationkm.com/articles/default.asp?ArticleID=960](http://More/destinationkm.com/articles/default.asp?ArticleID=960)

### FastFact

76 percent of people surveyed by Generation21 say they turn to colleagues for job-critical information before formal learning tools or programs

## Global 360

In some areas of the world, people have never seen a computer, much less had the opportunity to use one. Well, a new device might help bridge that gap. The 3-by-5-inch plastic *Simputer* (it's "simple, inexpensive, and multilingual") was developed by a not-for-profit company in *India* to help bring information technology to isolated communities.

The device is priced at US\$250, which still may be an unattainable sum for many people, but the distribution company, Bangalore, India-based Encore Software, says villages can pool their money to buy one and share it. The machine comes with 65 megabytes of RAM and runs on Linux. A touch-sensitive screen displays simple icons, and a *text-into-speech* program will enable people who are illiterate to use it.

Possible applications include researching prices for agricultural products, examining government property records, and educating children. Can we add e-learning for adults to that list?

Source/ [scientificamerican.com](http://scientificamerican.com). To access the article, search on "simputer."

## Executive Update

It seems as if CEOs these days are plagued with a host of problems—from ethics scandals to security issues and economic pressures. To add to the list, a new study by DBM finds that CEO tenures are declining steadily around the world. The median tenure for CEOs globally is 2.75 years, and only one in four CEOs serving at the end of 2001 had been in office for five or more years. That figure was one in three at the end of 1999.

The reasons for short tenure are shifting as well. In DBM's previous study, half of CEO departures were due to mergers and acquisitions. Now, only a quarter are.

What's growing is the number of departures due to resignation or retirement.

DBM warns that the trend of rapid turnover will keep companies focused on short-term goals instead of long-term success. Effective organizations, DBM asserts, will implement comprehensive succession planning and leadership development programs to stem this trend.

More/ [www.dbm.com](http://www.dbm.com), select Research

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## E-NewsOpenCourseWare Update

The decision last year by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology to make course materials available for free on the Internet was hailed as the greatest thing since virtual classrooms by some and the ruination of colleges and universities by others. Well, good or bad, the die has been cast. Visit <http://ocw.mit.edu> and you'll find syllabi, lecture notes, assignments, exams, and more for a fairly large sampling of courses in each of the five MIT schools.

After launching this pilot program, MIT will expand the course library gradually until, by 2007, materials from almost all of its 2000 courses will be online. MIT president Charles Vest says the project aims to "create a global web of knowledge that will enhance the quality of learning and, therefore, the quality of life worldwide." Whether that goal comes to fruition, this is a groundbreaking project, and many eyes will stay glued to see its effects.