

FALL 2012



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## Comm Tech Careers Flourish

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# SMART COMM



Camille Saltman, President of CONNECT recently was a participant in the Clinton Global Initiative (CGI) America Meeting, founded by President Clinton to address economic recovery in the United States. CGI America brings together leaders in business, government, and civil society to generate and implement commitments to create jobs, stimulate economic growth, foster innovation, and support workforce development in the United States. CONNECT announced a commitment at the Summit to address the loss of manufacturing jobs in San Diego by providing workshops to educate San Diego businesses about the benefits of outsourcing locally and matchmaking programs that connect innovation companies and local manufacturers.

Consider for a moment the humble smart phone. Just how many careers go into your iPhone or Blackberry? Surely more than just the engineers to design the phone and the software programmers to create the apps to power the phone. There are human resources people to hire those technical workers, sales and marketing reps to promote the devices, and website developers to educate consumers. The list goes on and on.

So if you were to bet your career on a local industry trend, where would you wager your time and money? An organization that is intensely interested in the answer is CONNECT, the San Diego nonprofit committed to accelerating the innovation economy.

"When it comes to job creation in San Diego, the big winner is communications technology, which means careers around the Internet, wireless, wireless applications, media, software, and the convergence of some of those solutions," says Camille Saltman, president of CONNECT.

Her organization serves as a catalyst for the creation of innovative technology and life sciences products in San Diego County by linking inventors and entrepreneurs with the resources they need for success. CONNECT carefully tracks the regional technology trends.

"Careers in communications technology have made a big jump after just a steady climb through the recession," says Saltman. "As we see growth in communications technology and biotech, we also see growth in jobs related to those industries. The region has almost 140,000 high-tech jobs in total, and our economists project they generate about 225,000 indirect jobs. That is everything from website development to IT support, legal support, accounting, office design, and office furnishings."

The cybersecurity aspects of the communications technology industry is also a bad news/good news story for the local economy, says Saltman.

# COMMUNICATIONS CAREERS

## A Smart Bet

by Henry DeVries

First the bad news: "We are way ahead of ourselves," says Saltman. "We have leapt out and thrown all of this personal and financial information out there without really being able to protect ourselves."

Now the good news: local companies are working with leading experts and law enforcement to address the vulnerabilities. That means even more career possibilities in communications technology in the years ahead.

CONNECT was originally founded as a part of UC San Diego Extension in 1985 during troubling times for the local economy. Back then traditional industries in the region were on the decline, the attraction of companies to the San Diego region was very difficult, and regional leaders were searching for a path to economic renewal and sustained growth. CONNECT was founded on the scene as innovative high-tech and life sciences companies such as IMED, IVAC, Linkabit, SAIC, Qualcomm, and Hybritech were quietly developing in the San Diego region, fueled in part by technology and scientists at research institutions on the Torrey Pines Mesa.

"By leveraging the various assets within the region, CONNECT focuses its efforts on accelerating the commercialization of new technology and life sciences products," says CONNECT cofounder and current board member Mary Walshok, Associate Vice Chancellor of Public Programs and Dean of Extension at UC San Diego and the author of an upcoming book on the history of innovation in the region for Stanford University Press. "While that mission has stayed relatively true since its initial creation, the organization and its program offerings have continued to evolve in response to the changes in the region's economic climate and the demands for a globally competitive talent pool."

Walshok recalls that at the time that UCSD CONNECT (its original name) was founded, UC San Diego was just beginning to mature as a research institution, and there were a small number of other research institutions in the region. Over the years as San Diego's technology and life sciences clusters have matured, UC San Diego has continued to grow, as has the entire research base of the region. Today, San Diego has more than 80 research institutions; about two thirds are part of the UC San Diego system, and the rest include private research organizations and a number of other academic-based research institutions such as Salk, TSRI and Sanford Burnham.

In 2005, to better serve the entire research community, CONNECT spun-out of UC San Diego Extension. As a result of spinning-out from UC San Diego, CONNECT has been able to broaden its mandate to include public advocacy work on behalf of its members through the trade organization.

Today, CONNECT is focused on delivering the fundamental programs that the innovation community depends upon. At the same time the organization is creating new services to meet the needs of the evolving economic and policy landscape and the new clusters that are developing within the region. Challenges include attracting investment capital and engineering and experienced management talent. New clusters they are supporting include Biofuels, Clean Tech, and Sports Innovators. ■

*CONNECT, with an annual budget of around \$3 million, is widely regarded as one of the world's most successful organizations linking inventors and entrepreneurs with the resources they need for commercialization of innovative products. The program has been modeled in more than 50 regions around the world—most recently in New York City, Bogotá, Colombia, and Saudi Arabia.*



Saltman with CONNECT Board Member David Hale and CEO Duane Roth