Engineers warn Microsoft BRANDING: Professionals say use of term 'engineer' is strictly regulated

by KAREN RAWLINES, Telegraph-Journal

(August 8, 2002) The Association of Professional Engineers and Geoscientists of New Brunswick says there's a lot more in a name than a simple slogan, and warn they're willing to implement enforcement measures against those who use "engineer" incorrectly.

Microsoft recently announced they will continue to use the term "engineer" as part of their Microsoft Certified Systems Engineer (MCSE) designation. That has caused the professional engineering group to warn MCSE holders they will be subjected to New Brunswick laws and prosecuted should they improperly represent themselves to the public as an "engineer."

The Canadian Council of Professional Engineers, the national engineering body, has also expressed its concern.

J. Allan Giberson, president of the APEGNB, said the term "engineer" and the profession itself are strictly regulated across Canada in much the same way as those in the medical and legal professions are. "This is a professional practice," Mr. Giberson said. "If you're going to be a professional, you must adhere to the regulations required of you to maintain that professional status."

Mr. Giberson said the term "engineer" is actually owned by the CCPE.

According to Microsoft, the MCSE credential is a certification for professionals "who analyze the business requirements and design and implement the infrastructure for business solutions based on the Microsoft Windows 2000 platform and Microsoft.NET Enterprise Servers. Implementation responsibilities include installing, configuring, and troubleshooting network systems."

In May 2001, the software monolith advised Canadian holders of the MCSE certification not to call themselves "engineers" or use the full title "Microsoft Certified System Engineer." They could continue to use the abbreviation, however, and all other countries continued to use the full version of the name.

But since then, Microsoft has consulted a variety of industry groups and individuals, including MCSEs, technology associations and Microsoft-certified training centers.

Patricia Meta, training and certification manager with Microsoft Canada, also discussed the situation with legal advisors, who deemed the term was acceptable in the full context.

The firm ultimately decided "the term 'systems engineer' is a well-recognized title that has been used for many years in the high-tech industry and it does not represent that one is a professional engineer."

"Changing the term engineer would hinder the way they do business in Canada and globally, and we believe that Microsoft Certified Professionals in this country should be able to carry the same designation that is used by their colleagues throughout the rest of the world," Ms. Meta said.

MCSE holders are required to use the title in full or the abbreviation in full, she said.

But according to the New Brunswick engineer's act, section 20 (1), "any person who is not a registered member of APEGNB and presents themselves as an "engineer," (e.g. stating it on business cards or resumes), commits an officence punishable by the penalties set forth in the Engineering and Geoscience Professions Act of up to $50,000.

So far, the APEGMB has not proceeded with any legal action. If anyone is found contravening the Act, he or she will first be warned. Should the person continue after notification, the group will enforce penalties that could run as high as $50,000.

There are more than 25,000 Microsoft Certified Systems Engineers in Canada.