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## DOST urges countryside youth, folks to take IT-BPO careers

By Allan Mauro V. Marfal  
S&T Media Service, *DOST-STII*

The Department of Science and Technology's Information and Communications Technology Office (DOST-ICTO), industry partners, and a number of local government offices are pushing for Information Technology – Business Process Outsourcing as a career option to people, especially the youth, living in the regions.

Last year, ICTO held a series of ICT road shows in selected cities of various provinces to introduce the IT-BPO sector and some of its key players and to promote the career field. One of the aims of the roadshows too is to make people understand that it is not only call centers that compose the BPO industry but also other outsource sectors.

Cities that hosted the roadshows include Palayan, Tagbilaran, Legazpi, Bacolod, Zamboanga, and Davao. In said road shows, players, experts, and executives from the IT-BPO sector shared their success stories and industry benefits from industry to participants, mostly graduating high school students with their parents.

Jesse Rebusillos, who currently works at Philippine Daily Inquirer Classified Ads section, credited his employer for giving him a chance to attend several trainings and workshops in the past to improve his skills as IT practitioner.

He said that as he was exposed to various industry conferences and seminars provided by his employer in the past, he was able to meet the relevant people in his industry and enabled him to be updated in the emerging trends.

Now, he is an IT project manager and handling a team of web developers and SEO specialists. For him, it is a very challenging and gratifying task but that what makes his career much more colorful and enjoyable.

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The Department of Science and Technology (DOST) partners with the Philippine Cable Television Association (PCTA) in developing a dedicated 24/7 weather information channel called 'DOSTv' to complement the weather information dissemination of DOST's Program NOAH. In photo (from left) are Program NOAH's Dr. Alfredo Mahar Lagmay, National Telecommunications Commission Commissioner Gamaliel A. Cordoba, DOSTPAGASA Administrator Dr. Nathaniel T. Servando, PCTA President Allan P. Dungao, DOST-Science and Technology Information Institute Director Raymund E. Liboro, PCTA Chairman Engr. Elpidio M. Paras. (Photo by Gerardo Palad, S&T Media Service, *DOST-STII*)

## DOST teams up with major cable providers for 24/7 weather channel

By Mona Carina E. Montevirgen & George Robert E. Valencia III  
S&T Media Service, *DOST-STII*

**The Department of Science and Technology (DOST) has sealed an agreement with the country's biggest cable provider alliance, the Philippine Cable Television Association, Inc. (PCTA), to create "DOSTv", a 24/7 cable weather information channel to complement the services of DOST's main weather agency, the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA).**

DOSTv shall broadcast accurate and up-to-date weather information of PAGASA, along with hourly satellite and Doppler images and weather sensors data from the Program NOAH

website. NOAH, or the Nationwide Operational Assessment of Hazards, is DOST's flagship program for disaster preparedness under the directive of President Benigno Aquino III.

The partnership between DOST and PCTA was formalized through the signing of a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) recently during the PCTA 2013 Convention at the SMX Convention Center in Pasay City.

"This partnership significantly contributes to our ongoing efforts to mitigate the destructive effects of natural calamities such as typhoons and monsoon rains under the backdrop of climate change," said DOST Secretary Mario G. Montejo.

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“Imagine being able to train young talents and being able to equip them with the knowledge, skills and attitude for them to be accepted in the global job market. For me that is career satisfaction at its best,” Rebutillos said.

Meanwhile, Rosalie Buenaagua, SEO Specialist and a resident of Legazpi City, expressed her gratitude on the significant contributions made by the series of ICT road shows held in their province that helped communities there to increase their awareness about different careers in ICT.

“Dito sa Albay before, very vague ang idea ng call center and I am very thankful to the prime movers of the BPO industry who are here like Ms. Rey. Dahil sa kanya nakilala

ng paunti-unti ang industriya ng BPO at call center at nabigyan ng opportunities ang kabataan dito,” Buenaagua said.

(Here in Albay before, the idea of call center was very vague...Because of her, the industry is being recognized little by little and the youth are given opportunities.)

She also encouraged parents that aside from time, they should also invest on computer and internet for their children, which will eventually help young graduates in many ways.

IT-BPO also offers alternative career options for other graduates, especially for those courses that offer slim job opportunities.

During his interview in the radio program “Bago Yan, Ah!” last year, Alejandro P.

Melchor III, Deputy Executive Director for ICT Industry Development of ICTO pointed out that in the IT-BPO field, four fast growing sectors are emerging, aside from the call center sector. These include the Healthcare Information Management Outsourcing, Finance and Accounting Outsourcing, Human Resources Outsourcing, and Animation and Game Development Outsourcing.

The Philippines could be a world leader in the said outsourcing sectors in the coming years, according to Melchor.

In the recent years, the country has produced sufficient number of students and graduates of Nursing, Information Technology (I.T) and other multi-media related courses to fill up the need of the IT-BPO Industry.

Healthcare IT-BPO careers have expanded into various disciplines that open windows of career opportunities for nursing graduates and allied medical professionals. Through the IT-BPO sector, these professionals can opt to take alternative careers such as medical transcriptionists, medical secretaries, medical coders and billers, medical assistants, medical representatives, medical butlers and clinical research associates.

There is a big job prospect in healthcare insurance, even in the United States alone, as President Barack Obama’s administration enacted a law that requires all American citizens to have healthcare insurance by 2014.

This is a big factor in providing opportunities for local residents, especially for those who belong to the 200,000 unemployed and under employed nursing graduates in the country.

**DOST teams up...  
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DOSTv will be administered by the Department’s information arm, the Science and Technology Information Institute (DOST-STII) and is scheduled to debut this May 2013, to be carried by around 90 percent of PCTA’s cable franchisers. PCTA has more than 300 cable provider members all over the archipelago, according to PCTA Chairman Engr. Elpidio M. Paras.

Apart from DOSTv, PCTA members in the MOA also agree to host stations weather data gathering sensors, servers, and equipment to be provided by PAGASA, especially for its regional offices’ unreached areas and to improve the weather agency’s forecast capabilities.

“This is an important milestone for the cable industry as it is for the economy. Our lives are greatly affected by weather and climate, especially those in the regions whose primary source of income is agriculture”, PCTA Chairman Paras.

DOST-STII Director Raymund E. Liboro meanwhile stressed that “now is the time to look for means to increase the risk perception, mitigate the hazard, and prepare

communities” as unprecedented meteorological events have recently struck the country.

Program NOAH Executive Director Dr. Mahar Lagmay presented during said convention a brief shocking footage of people being swept away to their deaths by even a knee-level flashflood.

“Had these people known the danger of an impending flashflood, they would have run in time for safety,” he said. “It is what we’re trying to avoid—the surprise—for it is what causes disasters and loss of lives. We simply cannot stress enough the importance of information.”

PCTA Chairman Paras also cited the importance of collaboration with weather and disaster experts, noting Cagayan de Oro’s recent linkage with PAGASA and Program NOAH. According to him, the linkage spurred by Cagayan de Oro’s devastating experience with typhoon Sendong enabled a two-hour warning before typhoon Pablo of last year hit the city, and resulted in zero casualties. An unprepared neighbor, Compostela Valley, unfortunately, was left with a many fatalities, he said.

**About us**

The DOST Digest is published by the Science and Technology Information Institute- Department of Science and Technology  
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# BPOs need workers with 21st century skills, says DOST

By Framelia V. Anonas  
S&T Media Service, DOST-STII

New graduates nowadays usually flock to call centers and business process outsourcing (BPO) offices that promise jobs with high starting salary plus various bonuses and benefits. With the Philippines as the top global provider of IT-BPO services in Asia, many opportunities indeed await the right candidate.

However, a report from the Business Processing Association of the Philippines (BPAP) indicates a 95 percent mortality rate among call center and BPO applicants. This means that out of 100 candidates, only five get hired. Related reports reveal that the reason for the high mortality rate is because BPO companies just cannot find the right people with the right skills for the number of jobs offered.

"We need to develop 'smarter people' to keep abreast with the developments," said Department of Science and Technology Secretary Mario Montejo. "Developing smarter people means building up knowledge workers with 21st century skills."

Developing "smarter people" is one of the components of DOST's latest umbrella program called "Smarter Philippines" which aims to facilitate and deliver more effective and efficient services in several sectors.

Other components of the program include Smarter Government, Smarter Economy, Smarter Mobility, Smarter Environment, Smarter Living and Smarter Cities.

"Smarter people' are in a nutshell information technology-oriented," explained Dr. Alejandro P. Melchor III, deputy executive director for ICT Industry



Illustration by Rafael Regidor

Critical thinking is what makes a person able to discern new challenges and opportunities out of all the information available in order to make high-impact decisions, think strategically, manage change, solve problems, and embrace risk and rejection as needed in entrepreneurial thinking.

**Effective communication.** The 21st century worker needs to be able to express himself or herself whether face-to-face, via media, or via Internet such as e-mail exchange or online forums. BPOs and call centers communicate and coordinate with people of all nationalities, such that workers need to be flexible in dealing with

include planning skills and generating ideas; developing abstract thinking by exploring relationships, patterns, and association; and maintaining curiosity.

**Accessing and analyzing information.** It is important to know where to find the right information at the fastest possible time, distinguish between fact and opinion, evaluate the relevance and importance of other people's arguments, and know what to do with information that are conflicting, inadequate, and ambiguous.

**Initiative and entrepreneurialism.** Today's corporations have evolved from being top-down to a "flattened" model, thus employees are often left on their own to figure things out. Workers today need initiative and to do things without being told, including offering creative solutions to the company's unique problems.

**Flexibility and adaptability.** This skill is very important, as good opportunities come to those who are willing to relocate or move from one position or job to another. This is one mark of a person's good managerial and leadership skills. Moreover, agility and adaptability makes employers confident of their workers, trusting them to be stable even during turbulent times and able to cope with new and challenging responsibilities.

Today's businesses do demand more from the current crop of workforce, thus 21st century skills are critical factors that affect the chances of applicants' success. The Smarter People component of "Smarter Philippines" will have the government through DOST work closely with the industry and the academe in coming up with ICT-enabled tools to help today's workers develop these skills.

**"We need to develop 'smarter people' to keep abreast with the developments and developing smarter people means building up knowledge workers with 21<sup>st</sup> century skills."**

*DOST Secretary Mario G. Montejo*

Development of the Information and Communications Technology Office (ICTO), DOST's lead agency in handling the BPO sector.

Smarter people, in short, are what the BPOs and call centers need. And these are the skills they are looking for, according to Melchor: 1) critical thinking; 2) effective written oral, multimedia, and multilingual communication skills; 3) collaboration across networks; 4) creativity and innovation; 5) accessing and analyzing information; 6) initiative and entrepreneurialism; and 7) agility and adaptability.

**Critical thinking.** "The most important skill that BPOs are looking for in every worker is critical thinking," said Melchor. "This refers to having a modern scientific mind."

people of various age groups, ethnicities, socioeconomic conditions, and profession. Further, effective communication also means being able to listen to others.

**Collaboration across networks.** Today's workers should get familiar with learning other people's methods, cultural references, and work habits to ensure effective collaboration. Learning to trust others in the midst of a virtual environment is also essential, as communication is only done via e-mails, net meetings, and conference calls with little or no personal interaction.

**Creativity and innovation.** This is the ability to think out-of-the-box and attack problems from a new angle. Related skills

# Stronger manufacturing industry will reverse aging economy, says DOST advisory body

By Angelica A. de Leon  
S&T Media Service, *DOST-STII*

**The economy may be backsliding, but this situation can be reversed to make the country coast along a route that leads to national progress.**

This was how Academician Dr. Michael Tan, University of the Philippines professor and member of the National Academy of Science and Technology (NAST), an advisory body of the Department of Science and Technology (DOST), summed up the NAST-organized Round Table Discussion (RTD) on the country's economic situation. During the discussion, the term "development progeria" was used to describe the Philippine economy in comparison with progeria, a medical condition seen in young children that causes them to age faster than normal.

The economy at present is said to be "a young economy mimicking a mature one," like a child afflicted with progeria, and this may worsen the country's poverty situation, according to National Scientist Raul V. Fabella.

A child suffering from progeria develops an enlarged head, small and wrinkled face, baldness, and dry skin, among others. However, despite this seemingly rapid aging process, the patient displays limited growth, remaining small in stature with limited movement. The patient remains in this condition until death which mostly occurs in his teenage years.

## "Aging" economy can be reversed

The Philippine economy displays similar symptoms, according to Fabella. He noted that its limited growth is due to several factors, namely the depreciation of the Indian rupee which threatens the local BPO industry, the stock market and real estate bubbles, the country's exclusion from the list of preferred sites for direct foreign investments in tradables, and the overvaluation of the peso, among others.

Fabella, citing studies by Rodrik in 2008 and by Berg and Miao in 2010, said that a 10 percent overvaluation of the currency leads to a growth reduction of 0.2 percent.

These factors hinder industries, thus limiting the movement of business activities and making the economy dry and wrinkled instead of being fresh and rosy.

In his synthesis of the discussion however, Dr. Tan said that unlike progeria which is incurable, development progeria is receptive to treatment, and thus can be cured.

One kind of treatment or solution suggested during the RTD was to strengthen the manufacturing industry,

## Strengthening manufacturing industry

Dr. Ramon L. Clarete, dean of the University of the Philippines Diliman School of Economics, suggested that efforts should focus on export-oriented manufacturing industry.

Sixty percent of the total number of exporting firms in the country comprises small and medium-scale enterprises (SMEs) that generate 53 percent of total employment volume and make up 99.6 percent of all registered businesses in the country.

Additionally, Calixto V. Chikiamco, president of the Foundation for Economic Freedom, suggested a manufacturing industry rooted on agricultural growth and productivity, or agro-industrial growth. "Agricultural growth and development supports the manufacturing sector by providing a higher domestic market, affordable labor, and supply of raw materials," said Chikiamco.

As one of its priority programs, DOST leads and supports industry development initiatives,

including those that strengthen local manufacturing. Through its Small Enterprises Technology Upgrading Program (SETUP), the agency provides a package of technology assistance to bolster the productivity and competitiveness of SMEs including those engaged in exports. Among the industries DOST's SETUP currently supports include food processing, metals, ICT and semicon, furniture, agriculture, aquaculture, among others.

However, to promote net exports, Dr. Clarete cited the significance of peso undervaluation, echoing Fabella's earlier statement about overvaluation as one of the factors negatively affecting the economy. "When you have a low exchange rate, and you're in the export business, your revenues in pesos will be lower. And then your costs are in pesos so your profits are going to be squeezed. So the lower the exchange rate or the stronger the peso, the lower would be your profits," Dr. Clarete explained.



Department of Science and Technology (DOST) Secretary Mario G. Montejo (right) discusses the possible areas for collaboration on various DOST ongoing programs with USAID Mission Director for the Philippines and the Pacific Islands Gloria D. Steele who made a recent courtesy visit to jumpstart the partnership plans between DOST and USAID. Ms. Steele is a Filipino and a career member of the U.S. Senior Executive Service and served as Senior Deputy Assistant Administrator for the Bureau for Europe and Eurasia from 2001-2004. Also in the photo (middle) is Science and Technology Information Institute Director Raymund E. Liboro. (Photo by Henry De Leon, S&T Media Service, STII).