



July/August 2011 - Leadership Letter (61)

LOOKING INTO OUR FUTURE

Hello Clients, Colleagues and Friends ...

Organizations of all kinds ... businesses, colleges, civic groups, churches ... are even more interested in strategic planning in this "new normal" economy.

Planning requires that we try to imagine our organization's future situation so these plans have some traction, relevance and usefulness.

Most organizations take a planning time horizon of 3 to 5 years for this purpose, and realize they may need to do it again sooner than that.

In this letter ... **Looking Into Our Future** ... we'll try to give a little perspective and history to the topic and bring it up to current times ...

I hope you find something in it of use or interest.

With best wishes for **your** future,

Mel

Mel Hensey, PE, F.ASCE
Management Consulting Engineer
Hensey Associates
8220 Riversedge Cir., Maineville, OH 45039
513/919-7672, MHensey@aol.com

Don't forget that all past **Leadership Letters** can be found on our website at
www.henseyassociates.com.

REMINDER: If you need to reach me quickly, please do not email. Please call or text me on my cell at **513/919-7672**. I have my phone with me while consulting, traveling, planting trees, biking or canoeing!

LOOKING INTO OUR FUTURE

June 2011

Mel Hensey

Early on, stargazers/astrologists/seers were consulted for clues to the future. The Mayan calendar allegedly called events correctly, far into the future.

For many decades now, futurists have been studying our future by way of signal events, trends, disruptions and other portents for change.

Perhaps most noteworthy was John Naisbitt's *Megatrends* (1988), where he used the war-time intelligence practice of noting the frequency and velocity of certain news, both real and rumor.

ASCE's National Committee found this very helpful prior to crafting their first strategic plan about 25 years ago ... called **Vision to Action**.

There are so many folks engaged in "futuring" today, that we have the **WFS (World Future Society)**, with hundreds of books on our likely future, and how to survive or thrive or leverage coming trends.

One very useful outcome of all this interest in the future is called "**Scenario Planning**" or more aptly: Scenario Development.

We've assisted several of our clients' planning groups in defining likely scenarios their organizations may face and prepare for. Often done prior to strategic planning, it can be a helpful tool.

Van der Heijden's book, *Scenarios* (2005), is a very helpful reference on both "scenarios" and strategic planning.

Last summer, I reviewed *Apocalypse 2012* (2008), by Lawrence E. Joseph. Prompted by the Mayan prophecies for things ending or changing in 2012, Joseph explores all the scientific indicators for that big shift.

He examines ... polar shifts, climate changes, sun spot activity, our solar system and intergalactic changes of a multi-millennial cycle and extinction from past epochs. Joseph concludes big changes are under way (as they have been in the distant past).

Russian scientist Alexei Dmitriev's work suggests that our whole solar system is moving into interstellar turbulence, like a plane into some stormy weather!

THE FUTURE OF THE A/E AND CONSULTING INDUSTRY

More recently, we have *Impact 2020* (Stasiowski, 2010) from PSMJ ... cataloging recent trends in the E/A business, most of which have been chronicled already elsewhere; still, it's an interesting, short read.

In it, Stasiowski identifies changes E/A businesses "must" make ... and most seem sensible. His "new" business model on page 71 has already been used by a number of clients, and ... key to its success is "leverage your hours." In order to do that, E/A's will likely need to do one or more of these ...

- Provide new **or emerging niche** services (early in the life cycle).
- Have excellent **marketing** to present and position the firm's talent.
- Offer technical **cleverness** in fields such as Energy, Water Resources, Environmental Protection, etc.
- Have **excellent management** at all levels, able to see and pursue opportunities.

The book also makes a sensible and strong case for strategic planning. **However**, we know from highly financially successful firms that such planning must meet certain criteria to make a real difference for them.

A word about the oft mentioned "death of the small firm." Two points are contradictory to this belief ...

- Several of our "**smaller**" clients (A/E, E, A) are the **most** profitable, well respected, fastest growing, and widely sought by their clients over large geographic areas.
- Several of our "**larger**" clients (E/A's and E's) struggle with inconsistent profitability, quality issues, internal teamwork and communication, project management, etc. ... most of which stem from senior leadership issues.

Mel Hensey, PE, F.ASCE
Management Consulting Engineer
MHensey@aol.com



HENSEY ASSOCIATES

www.henseyassociates.com