

Associations 3.0: "The New Normal"

—by G.A. Taylor Fernley

"Are we learning as fast as the world is changing?" How would you answer this question?

The business landscape as we knew it is forever changed. Many associations are remaking themselves or disappearing entirely. Some experts claim that it is not a recession we have been going through; however, an economic "compression" — the painful process of reconciling an economy based on perceived value with its actual value.

The landscape that emerges after this so-called storm will be vastly different from anything we have experienced. That's the bad news. The good news for those who see opportunities through the haze, the future is rich with new and exciting possibilities.

Enter the "New Normal"

The sooner we recognize that this downturn has been the precursor to another seismic shift in our economy and society, the quicker we can shift from a doom-and-gloom mindset to being excited about new growth and ready to embrace the next area of, let's call it, reinvention.

Many forward thinking association leaders are already beginning discussions about what the new landscape will be. And again, rest assured, it will not resemble anything we have seen before.

Enter "Associations 3.0." We as association leaders need to invent the next "traditions" for our organizations, ways of thinking and being that will allow us to move forward with greater confidence so that we may realize our full potential and progressively and aggressively move our associations forward.

—LETTER TO THE EDITOR—

RE: NSPS w/o ACSM

Ah! What a refreshing and stimulating surprise it was to read the September 2010 (vol. 70, no. 3) issue of *Surveying and Land Information Systems (SALIS)*! The six LAND INFORMATION SCIENCE papers are all focussing on future surveying, i.e., the future of surveying methods, tools, and technology. They address ongoing state-of-the-art development and research aspirations for the surveying community. The articles are loaded with abbreviations and acronyms that may well overwhelm some of us old timers! But they are here to stay. By now, everybody, and not just surveyors, know GPS. That fantastic technology is at the foundation of what is to come. From the papers, we can learn about the ever growing connections with LiDAR, MEMS, IMU, CARS, and unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV). Lightweight UAV may well be the most promising gadget in our professional future. Tiny GPS receivers in cellular telephones, today, may give us a clue how research may lead us toward centimeter accuracy positioning, soon.

Every ACSM member, and especially our NSPS activists clamoring for total separation from ACSM, ought to read at least the well written "Editorial" by Prof. Ahmed H. Mohamed, PE, of the University of Florida who says: "Surveying and Mapping organizations need to get together with the FAA" and discuss reasonable regulations for commercial surveying business. In order to operate a lightweight UAV (with a 1 kg payload and flying below 400 ft above ground) "one needs a solid understanding of positioning and navigation." Geodesy and geodetic datums do play a vital role in survey practice and cadaster. This fundamental fact confirms Prof. Hazelton's point that technical "silos" are not the answer to our land surveyor problem (*ACSM Bulletin* No. 244, April 2010, and *SALIS* vol. 65, No. 3, 2005). Let's hope, somebody is listening!

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But what defines leaders in these uncertain times is a universal sense of optimism and a relentless search for opportunity; put another way,

- They do not focus on the current problems, but on new solutions;
- Their view is one of long-term growth, not short-term survivability;
- They identify and exploit changing dynamics in the marketplace;
- They see who is joining, what their priorities are, what needs they can satisfy now, and what is just around the corner (The members of today will not be the members of tomorrow);
- They see downturns as an opportunity to "de-clutter," reevaluate and refocus their strategy;

- And, last but not least, they accept that what we have come through is a natural cycle and an opportunity to build capacity and resilience to face head-on the next challenge down the road. They use these times to aggressively position, or reposition themselves for the upturn just around the corner.

And, that's just where we are today. Growth and consumer confidence continues to improve, albeit at a snail's pace. So again, and at the expense of being redundant:

"Are we learning as fast as the world is changing?"