

I'm From Washington ... and I'm Here to Help

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NOT: "Houston, We Have a Problem"



OR

"May You Live in Interesting Times"

Moving on from Crisis du Jour

In discussing trends, we *could* talk statistics – common practices.

Yet common practices not = best practices.

Should we talk about what's we're doing ... or what works best?

Interesting exercise: looked at past texts (7 Measures, Knowledge Based culture) and compared it to what clients/listservs show today.

Trends today=how well we're adopting the last round of good advice.

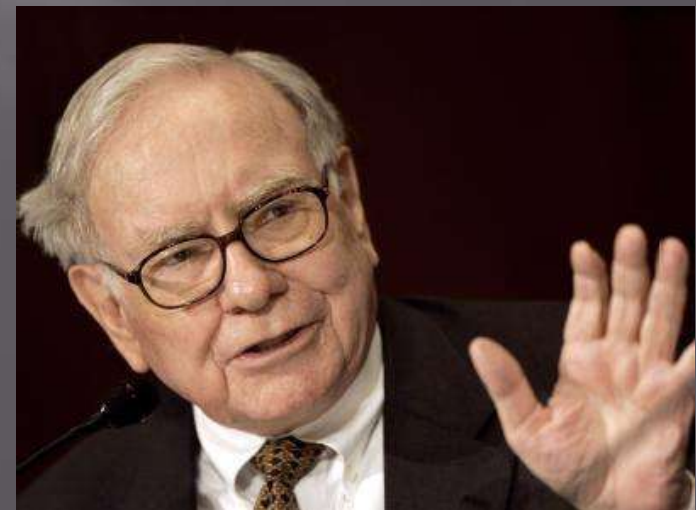
We always need to take the intermediate long view.

Current crises can distract : truly important vs. urgent.

Keynes: In the long run, we are all dead.

Think like Buffett: hold portfolio long-term,
look at fundamentals.

Many of the best future strategies
harken to our past.



Sector Driven Change

What matters most to us are micro-economies.

Incremental change in transportation, energy, business services, etc.

Whatever drives our profession is the “constant of change.”

We have always looked for an edge, embracing change as opportunity and risk.

In associations, keep two minds on things: within our sector, and the world outside.

They are our members’ customers, clients, family.



Stuff I'd like to talk about

The nature of membership

Volunteering & engagement

Finances & efficiency

Innovation & testing

Technology & data driven decision-making



Ignoring the Economy

We feared the headlines, but how were we affected as associations?

Argument: not much ...we represent "winners."

30% penetration = the 30% strongest companies, 30% best-prepared individuals (and a few others).

Advantages enjoyed by members who are employed full-time.

	Average annual household income	Percent who say they are "very satisfied" with their jobs
Association members	\$72,100	72%
Non-members	\$47,503	49%



Be An Enabler

We're getting smarter at engaging *our* best: the 80/20.

We always did well with a Board, even if succession was iffy and first meetings with the new Board feel like "Groundhog Day."

Decision to Volunteer/independent research confirms volunteers like their experience enough to stay.

We're getting better at finding new volunteers: moving from 90/10.

But are we helping members get better at doing *their* jobs?

Need more self-forming groups, communities of practice.

Social networks: early failures in promoting greater engagement?



Generational Differences

Need to address the older, middle-aged, younger, and not-in-profession-yet.

Young people are becoming like us as they grow older.

Treating it less as a 'proportional democracy' and more as an investment to cultivate leaders, future members.

All ages represent potential contributions to the labor pool of "paid and unpaid staff."

Recognize the lost generation potential every time the economy blips: permanent reductions in early-career opportunities.



Keep Addressing Workforce Issues

A generational focus means first and foremost managing a workforce.

Finding qualified entrants, training programs, qualified mentors.

For a time, our fear of lacking workers, not customers.

Now, reversing again on us: more unemployed also means qualified, affordable labor.

Concerns are more age pyramids:
Affording entitlement programs.



Competition: Eternal & Pervasive

Economy led to some shakeouts but not much M&A or closed doors. Historically we've never had much direct competition — membership offers in our space.

Our real competition today for attention is sophisticated edutainment, general media.

Keys to success:

Float like a butterfly, sting like a bee: the elusive “culture of agility.”

Less time assessing feasibility,
more time market-testing:

Tecker: knowledge based cultures
address issues now rather than
developing the perfect, dated response.



“Maintain Respect As a Source”

Studies demonstrate a steady erosion of societal confidence in institutions.

Yet we often act like one with our acronyms.

Some of us grow more feisty (e.g. US Chamber/advocacy).

Often advocacy gives us opportunities to be rebels.

We can't all “negative campaign”
but constant threats remind
others of our value.

Opportunity: be conversational,
demonstrate a personal
approach:

Representing you while
involving you – being above/
beyond rather than part of
local, state or national politics?



“Testing & Innovation”

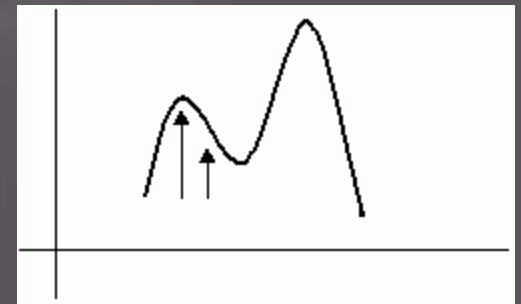
Testing is critical to avoid the local optimum. So often we maximize for yesterday's conditions and consensus decision-making models.

Maximizing & optimization are things we rarely think of.

We should.

Challenging the status quo periodically as a useful exercise.

Put yourself in the "graduation speech" challenge: what is your BHAG?



Efficiency & Effectiveness

Operational concept is critical to what we can accomplish in future.
Budgets have been rewritten to accommodate economy, other drivers.
Conferences: possible permanent cutbacks in business travel.
Membership: eroded employer subsidies/renewal=consumer decision.
Networking: less employer support=lower daytime attendance.

Trends:

Associations retooling & restructuring.
Maybe shadow of former selves but still valuable.
Making more with less, being forced to take chances.
New challenges: building with gun-shy staff.
Outsourcing sensibly.
Recognize that talking \neq doing.



“Better Living Through Accounting”

Finance/budgets. Rule our lives for better or worse.

Contingency budgets helped arguably stifle recent innovation.

Have we embraced ABC (activity based accounting):

- determine what services profit/cross-subsidize activities?

- determine which services are drags on value proposition?

More efforts today to identify, quantify, know best customers.

Make room to fund real innovation – new & improved services.

Giving potential services that need to

- evolve in the time they need:

- not a single budget cycle.



Non-profit: Mindset & Advantage

Association must = creator of utility, time advantages.

Unique functioning: small business purely focused on a semi-homogeneous group of customers.

No profit = inherent advantage of reinvesting earnings ... not being structured to self-enrich.

Being run by your peers FOR you.

But need to build on goodwill, avoid fiefdoms/conflict.

Any perception of being “less than a for profit entity.”

Maintain pride in profession: a “servant leader” doesn’t mean subservient to your members... or your chosen leaders.



“Tools Make the Man/Woman”

Communications & Service Delivery:

Internet technology is even shaping/rewiring our thought patterns.
How are we training our members?

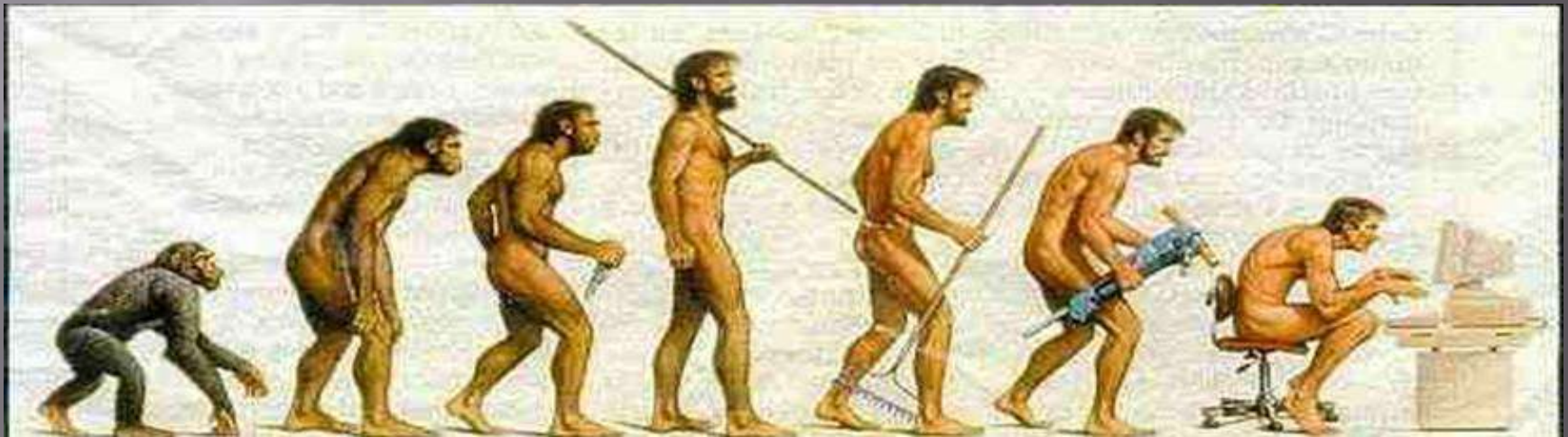
Some of us: still VHS and fax in a Facebook world?

or... embracing the next \$\$\$ change before the bugs are worked thru.

Gold Circle Award lesson: the most innovative, content-rich publications seem to remain print.

“Going green” is 85% there ...

the process of repurposing content into this format is 30% there.



Communicate Better

The rules of engagement have not changed.

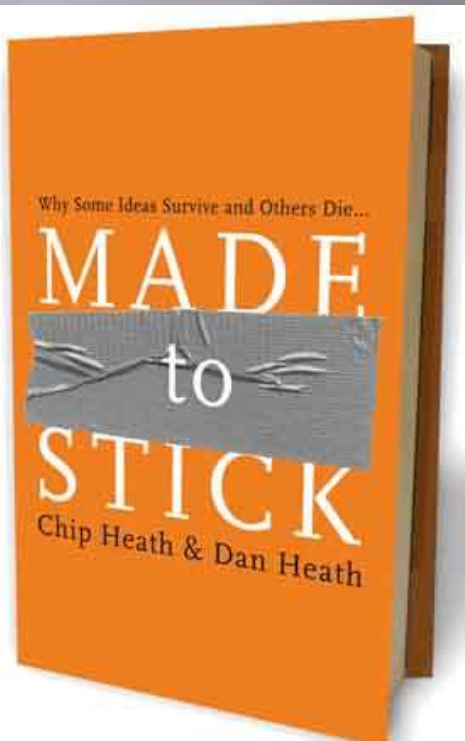
Embrace of technology has not changed how most of our audience reads or what they need to learn.

Most of us aren't terribly good: sheer # of online ads not read.

Be able to tell stories, stick in people's minds.

Create a distinct personality.

Have elevator speeches for each kind of individual.



“Adjusting Your Tone”

Positioning: What people think you are.

The starting point for communicating with others.

Messaging undermines or reinforces that positioning.

It can move the awareness over time.

Conflict can seem like dis-authenticity.



Being Entertaining, Having Personality

We often behave like institutions and act in a less-humored way.

Our competition has ALWAYS been TV, media.

We should embrace youtube but we might want to control the media.



“Cultivate Your Intelligence”

AKA if you can't say something nice about somebody, pull up a chair.

How prepared are we to accept constructive criticism ?

Do we filter this to preserve moral?

Otherwise lose our greatest advantage in operations (our people and closeness to them)?

Key: maintain in a polyglot society where not everyone looks like us, thinks like us, or lives on the same continent.



“Do as We Suggest, Not As We Do”

Remain comfortable as a teacher, not a doer.

As staff, we can't possibly embrace the entire world and live it for others.

But we can translate, taking bits and pieces.

Content aggregator: citizens of world, translating news.

Focus on meaning: revolution of 24/7 news channels:
240 channels with nothing on-
repetition, manufactured news.

“nothing ages faster..”



“Being Accessible”

Time Stress:

Single greatest impediment to trial & adoption.

Members evolved to point
where time > money.

Perceived cost ... and objections...
depend on time + money.

Not enough to stress convenience;
need to make things self-apparent.



Einstein discovers that time is actually money.



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