

Executive Summary

Shaping Ourselves for the Future

by E. Lander Medlin

“Just imagine what it would feel like if your job was being totally reshaped right before your very eyes? Well, it is. That’s right! The look and feel of our jobs, our organizations, and our institutions has changed dramatically and is continuing to change right before our very eyes. It’s stunning! Therefore, we must reinvent ourselves; we must reinvent our organizations; we must explore new ways of thinking; we must explore new approaches to doing our business; we must be problem-finders and not just problem-solvers. Our roles are shifting and, even more importantly, the education community needs our best efforts.

Like our jobs, the driving forces and competing pressures of today’s world are converging to significantly reshape higher education. I have stated several times over the past year that our regents are worried about accountability; our presidents are worried about accessibility; our vice presidents are worried about affordability; and we (educational facilities professionals) are worried about the continued viability of the physical infrastructure. The Association of Governing Boards’ public policy paper series corroborated that statement in its recent piece identifying the top ten issues for this academic year:

“Higher education leaders are focused on the price of tuition, soaring enrollments, and new demands for accountability to the public. . . . What is different now, in addition to the anxieties all of us feel, is a sense among those of



us who follow the public-policy debates that higher education appears to be struggling to hold its own ground. . . whether higher education effectively makes its case. . . . It does not feel as though we are making progress. . . (the appropriate response) about how to maintain higher education as a worthwhile public investment. . . (we) will need to articulate the fundamental value of a vibrant and vigorous system of higher education.”

It is indeed like Charles Dickens said in the opening of his book, *A Tale of Two Cities*, “It was the best of times and it was the worst of times.” For us, it is the best of times given increased, even burgeoning, enrollments and the public’s unquestionable recognition of the value of a college degree. However, it is also the worst of times given the unprecedented decline in funding support from the state and federal governments and untenable congressional scrutiny around college costs and business practices. It is sad to think that our public institutions have gone from being state-sponsored to state-assisted to state-located institutions.

Beyond the status of just the education community to that of the global

economy, the Business-Higher Education Forum stated:

“Jobs that were once thought to be untouchable in this country now gravitate overseas, and, as a result, America’s technological dominance is being challenged. . . (our) prosperity is tied to the health of the international economy. . . (yet) The age of globalization is producing transnational problems ranging from terrorism to infectious disease to climate change that spill across borders and frustrate the best efforts of governments to control. . . Americans now live in a world in which the American homeland is the planet.”

A recent pundit captures the conundrum we face and depicts a worldview that is ever present (much of the disparity and discordance) in the world we live today.

“We have taller buildings, but shorter tempers; wider freeways, but narrower viewpoints. We have more degrees, but less common sense; more knowledge, but less judgment; more experts, but more problems; more medicine, but less wellness. We’ve learned how to make a living, but not a life; we’ve added years to life, not life to years. We’ve done larger things, but not necessarily better things. We’ve learned to rush, but not to wait. We plan more, but accomplish less. We have more acquaintances, but fewer friends; more effort but less success. We build more computers to hold more information, to produce more copies than ever, but have less communication. These are the times of more leisure and less fun; more kinds of food, but less

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nutrition. It is a time when there is much in the show window, and nothing in the stockroom.”

Frankly, the cynicism can be staggering. Unfortunately for many of us, it all seems impossible, even feels impossible, to turn around or to overcome. Yet, we cannot succumb to these thoughts, this attitude or belief that all is lost; that it's just too impossible to change. The unseen forces of our belief system are powerful and can actually shape our thinking and responses to such situations. Will we be a positive force for change?

One clear example of the power of our belief system is that of the 4-minute mile. Up until 1955, no one in the world, including members of the medical community, believed it was humanly possible for a runner to break the 4-minute mile. However, in 1955 Roger Banister did just that, he ran the mile in under four minutes. He did the impossible! In that same

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year, three more people did the same thing and within two years 17 people had accomplished the same feat. Lance Armstrong is another example, in the bicycle sports community, of someone who did the seemingly impossible.

All that changed is what they believed was possible. Therefore, you have to think creatively enough, believe passionately enough, and engage actively enough to overcome the forces in your belief system that hold you back. As leaders at our institutions, the same holds true. So what should we believe passionately to aid in our success at work?

- **Believe passionately in what we do/our jobs**—Consider the priest who stepped onto the construction site of the church building project and approached four workers. He asked each of them to tell him about the work they were doing. The first said, “I am chipping stones”; the second said, “I am building a wall”; the third said, “I am erecting a cathedral”; and the final gentleman said, “I am advancing the kingdom of God on earth.” All were engaged in similar work activities on this project; each of them had a different perspective about their jobs, their contribution, their work performance. What is your perspective? Is there fire in your belly or has the pilot light gone out? You can't instill passion in others if it's not in *you* first and foremost. Just think of the awesome responsibility each of you has on your campus. You create that sense of place, that sense of community that enhances learning

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both formally and informally. You have a demonstrable impact on the educational process. Frankly, you're changing the world one student lifetime at a time. You're building our children's future.

- **Believe passionately in your people/your staff**—Your impact on your staff is no different than the impact a teacher has on his or her students. The famous study done by Harvard in 1964 later called the “Pygmalion Principle” identified the impact a group of teachers had on their students’ IQ and achievement just by being told that all their students were gifted. Their expectations were high and they taught them as if they were intellectually gifted students. Their expectations were met and in some cases exceeded. The same goes for you and your staff. You can have an unbelievable impact on their performance.
- **Believe passionately in a brighter future**—We must be incurable

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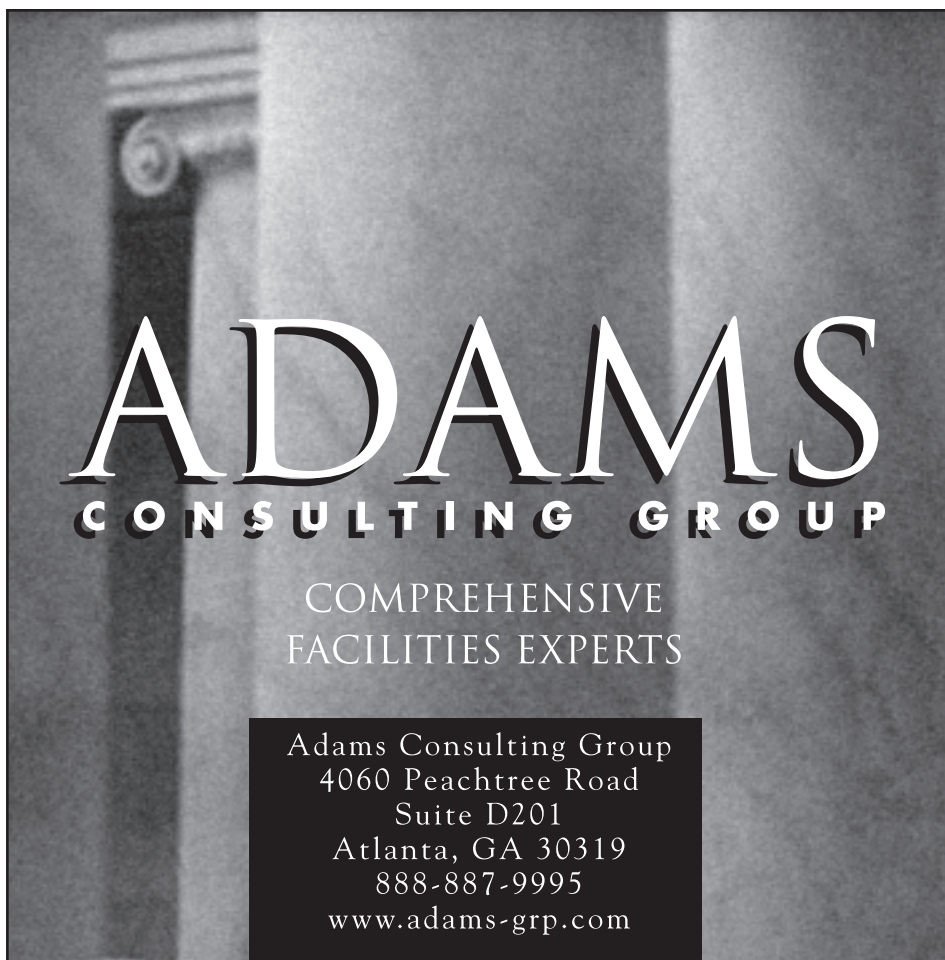
optimists. No one wants to follow you into a bleaker future. We must understand and identify the fears we all have about the future and still press on with necessary changes to ensure that brighter future is achieved. However, we have to exude confidence in our ability to lead folks to that brighter future. Lou Holtz, head coach for NCSU, was considered the “turnaround coach.” No matter if the team was down two touchdowns and all seemed for naught, he would clap his hands and say, “That’s okay—we’ll come back!” And he meant every word.

Those players believed in him and followed him. Your staff believes in you and they look at you and your face to get clues in how they should respond.

- **Believe passionately in yourself**—The statistics say that we engage in negative self-talk 75 percent of the time. The mental tapes we play in our heads script our outward behaviors. Earle Knightingale of Knightingale-Conant (the largest producer of audio educational cassette tapes in his time), said that one of the secrets to life’s success is, “We are what we think about!” What do you think about day-in and day-out? What are you projecting to your staff? Ultimately, we have a choice in what we believe. Life changes when we choose to believe we can change it!

So how can APPA help you with some of the changes you need to make?

- **Utilize Available Information and Benchmarks to Your Advantage**—
 - ✓ THINK “Facilities Performance Indicators”—Data and information gathered from the most recent, highly successful facilities core data survey and correlated with SAM, the Strategic Assessment Model. By utilizing this data as a baseline and/or comparing and contrasting the data with other institutions, you can dramatically improve your organization over time.
 - ✓ THINK “CFaR”—APPAs Center for Facilities Research—when it comes to research on our most pressing facilities issues. APPA is in the final stages of completing two research projects that will be important information for you to have.
 - ❖ The first project is called the “Asset Investment Strategy: A Framework for Integrated Facilities Decision Making” and is focused on the development of a comprehensive framework for



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understanding the total cost of ownership of our educational facilities and for making strategic, integrated decisions about facilities by senior institutional officers.

❖ The second project is called “The Impact of Facilities on Student Recruitment and Retention,” which received enormous participation from the spring 2005 survey by collecting over 16,000 student responses across 46 institutions. Although much of the data remains to be analyzed, it is clear that facilities play a key role in the selection process by incoming students.

• **Train and Develop your Staff—**

✓ THINK “Supervisor’s Toolkit” which is APPA’s newest educational offering to support the facilities organizations initial, important supervisory training needs. This week-long program is offered at the same time as the Institute for Facilities Management (September and January of each year) or can be delivered to you at your time and place of choice as well. Remember, the only thing worse than losing a long-term employee is to never have trained that employee in the first place.

✓ THINK “Institute” and “Leadership Academy”—both these educational programs offer an enormous training opportunity around the body of knowledge of facilities management and the necessary leadership skills required for growth and development at all levels of the organization. This training is essential if we are to successfully move from being great maintainers of things to becoming great leaders of people.

• **Develop Yourself—**

✓ THINK 2006 Joint Conference with APPA, NACUBO, and SCUP in Honolulu, Hawai’i next July 8-11 to increase the

awareness of the facilities profession with senior institutional officers.

Goethe once said, “Knowing is not enough, we must apply. Willing is not enough, we must do.” Therefore, it is more important than ever before that you:

- **Become Engaged and Involved in your Association—**You will develop your management and leadership

skills immeasurably and you will establish a rich network of relationships that will prove invaluable over the life of your career.

Remember, your job isn’t about just building buildings. Your job is ultimately about building our children’s future by making each student’s seemingly impossible dream of a college education a possible reality. 🏛️

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