

Executive Summary

Learning How to Learn... and to Change

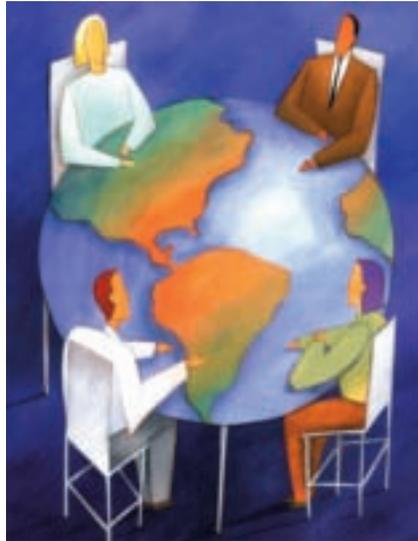
by E. Lander Medlin

We are all being impacted by such drivers of change as competition, accessibility, affordability, accountability, technology, and demographics. However, the critical question remains: "Will we shape the future of education and our workplace or will we be shaped by the future?" What you continue to learn and apply in your daily work, how your team plans for this new future, what you choose to care about and practice daily, and how seriously you take your stewardship responsibilities for the future will make all the difference in the shape of your institution or organization and its ability to respond to its future challenges and opportunities.

As I sat and listened to the plenary session at the Campus of the Future conference in Hawai'i this past July, I was struck by two statements/questions posed by the speaker, Pulitzer Prize author Thomas Friedman, the *New York Times* journalist and author of the book *The World Is Flat: A Brief History of the 21st Century*.

- "The global economic playing field is being leveled and you Americans are not ready." (A quote through Friedman by the CEO of the Indian company, Emphasist, Inc.)
- "When the world is flat, whatever can be done will be done. Therefore, will it be done by you or to you?"

Higher education is not immune to the fact that everything is changing (or has changed) radically. In fact, higher education is in a pivotal position to impact our future as an economic power. Indeed former gov-



ernor of North Carolina, James B. Hunt, and Patrick Callan of the Center for Public Policy in Higher Education, have stated that higher education is the fuel for the world's economic engine. So our fundamental challenge is to get more people better educated. Or, as Thomas Friedman so aptly put it, "We don't need more education; we must have the 'right' education." This becomes extremely important since jobs will go to the most efficient and effective, smartest and cheapest producers. Unless your job is specialized in its nature or anchored and localized in its delivery, most remaining jobs will be outsourced, automated, or digitized. Therefore, to be marketable in this new global marketplace, you must possess skills, abilities, and talents that have become critical to the global workplace which creates the kind of value that makes you "untouchable." So why is this important information for those of us in higher education and facilities in particular to pay attention?

What we need to focus on in education in general, to prepare our

students for this future competitive global marketplace, is the same thing (skills, talents, and abilities) we need to focus on in the facilities environment to effectively recruit and retain the best and the brightest individuals as employees. Frankly, the stakes are just as high in this regard since the Baby Boomer generation is leaving the workplace in vast numbers and a lesser quantity of Generation X and Millennial generation are entering that workplace.

Thomas Friedman highlighted several highly important skills, talents, and abilities we must focus on if we are to prepare our students and our workforce for the "new" middle-class jobs. Individuals must become:

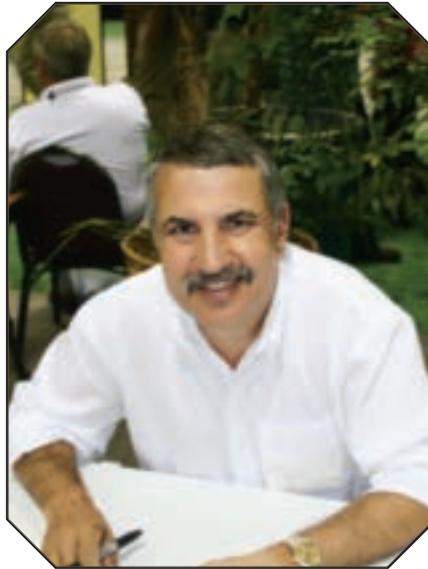
- **Great collaborators**, especially internationally, as the knowledge, service, and manufacturing entities build larger supply chain networks
- **Great leveragers**, especially of technology, where one person can do the job of 20 people
- **Great explainers**, where the understanding of the world's complexities can be reduced and ultimately produces explanations that expand beyond one individual to another individual, to one individual to 1,000 individuals
- **Great localizers**, where people are more effectively able to use these new global platforms to create successful local businesses
- **Green-savvy**, since technology and clean power will be one of a few great growth industries
- **Passionate personalizers**, by the ability to bring passion to that which is seemingly "plain vanilla" and making it even more special through invoking their passion
- **Great adapters**, where the focus on constant adaptation ensures you are one step ahead of the pack

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Thomas Friedman shared a wonderful illustration of both the complexity and uncertainty of the future and the change(s) upon us. He said, "Training for an Olympic job market is like entering the Olympics not knowing in what sport you are going to compete." It requires us to focus on engaging in continuous learning, stimulating our passion and personal touch, and inspiring innovative thinking and approaches to our problems and issues.

I can safely say the turning point in a person's life is when he or she learns how to learn. It is at that point the world opens up to you. You now possess your "entrance card." Before this occurs, you are just a "worker bee" with no real ability or confidence to contribute in critically important and meaningful ways to the organization.

Photo by Chris Christofferson



Thomas Friedman

So the questions to explore as you look at your workplace today are:

- What environment are you creating to ensure your staff is engaged in continuous learning activities and actively applying that new knowledge?
- What environment are you fostering to ensure you are igniting your employees' passion, not extinguishing it?
- What environment are you inspiring that encourages innovation and creativity?

And finally, what can APPA do to aid in your and your staff's professional growth and development in order to achieve the organizational excellence your institution deserves? 🏆

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