

INVENTING OUR FUTURE

BY
GLENN SMITH,
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CONTEXT AND INTRODUCTIONS

By Glenn Smith

APPA Vice President for Professional Development
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As one of my first official acts as APPA's Vice President for Professional Development, I had the honor of introducing the closing panel discussion at our annual conference in Boston last July — a discussion centered on the theme "Inventing Our Future." Previous general plenary sessions and related breakout sessions had explored the challenges we all face in these chaotic times, and now the challenge had fallen to Lander Medlin, Joe Whitefield, Mike O'Connor, and Mary Vosevich to each share thoughts on how we cannot merely survive, but actually thrive on chaos (to paraphrase the title of a prophetic Tom Peters book from way back in 1987, when, by today's standards, the world seemed a far more stable place).

I was reminded of another plenary speech I had heard a few years earlier at an APPA conference in Orlando, Florida, where David Pearce Snyder summarized his talk by proclaiming:

We are in the middle of a genuine techno-economic revolution. This is the kind of moment that takes up whole chapters of history books. Fifty to 60 years from now, entire history chips will be devoted to this decade, recounting how well—or how badly—the great institutions of the mature industrial economies were able to reinvent themselves for the Information Age. Of all those institutions, the one whose successful reinvention will be most important, is the oldest institution. Older by far than democracy or capitalism, the university and higher education will go through truly revolutionary times over the next 5, 10, 15 years. And in order to succeed in revolutionary times, they will have to be revolutionary themselves.

Indeed, we are living in revolutionary times – times of phenomenally rapid change, exponential growth, and exploding global competition; times of shifting workforce demographics and transformative technology; times of soaring and impatient customer expectations and ever-increasing accountability; times that demand more energy from our creative ingenuity and less from our diminishing natural resources; times that are completely redefining the way we communicate and form relationships with one another. And to actually thrive in these revolutionary and difficult times, we must each accept a leadership role and a stewardship responsibility to ensure that we comprehend the forces around us and become organizational agents of change who invent, not merely react to, our future.

Yet I also recall a most sobering statement made by Adam Wolfe in the *Chronicle of Higher Education* back in 1998, that “No institution in America is more resistant to change than the university.” Our institutions are steeped in tradition, and, in truth, we have remained relatively successful while continuing to do things the way we have always done things.

But that perception of success has spawned a dangerous sense of complacency, and cultures that embrace change-resistant attitudes like “That’s the way we’ve always done it around here,” “Best not to rock the boat,” “If it’s not broke, leave it alone,” “That’s too risky,” and “We tried something like that before and it didn’t work.” So, with that as a backdrop, let’s see what wisdom and advice our distinguished panelists have to share with us about why and how to “Invent Our Future.”

ACCOUNTABILITY

By Mary Vosevich

Director of Physical Plant

University of New Mexico

in collaboration with Dave Button, Vice President, Administration, University of Regina

During the APPA 2010 conference, I was asked to step in for my colleague Dave Button to speak on accountability at the closing general session. Dave was gracious enough to leave me his notes, and I set to thinking about accountability. And then it happened—BP (British Petroleum) had plugged the oil leak in the Gulf of Mexico! Now this really piqued my interest in how one discusses accountability and who determines whether or not one is accountable. Accountability can be in many areas: financial, ethical, political, administrative, behavioral, environmental, etc. Whether you agree or not, these are all areas that we as facilities professionals deal with on any given day.

We are in a unique situation now given the economic environment, and the work we do is receiving a lot of attention and presents opportunities. If you think about the challenges of our profession, the limited resources to complete the task(s) at hand, the shrinking budgets of every department on our campuses and everyone wanting a piece of the pie, we must justify our needs and be accountable to our respective campus constituents. Years ago our discussions centered around utilities, infrastructure, deferred maintenance, etc. These were issues that did not garner a lot of interest at our institutions.

But now, with having to do more with less, with environmental, financial, and political issues looming, these issues are on administrations’ radar and if we accept this as an opportunity then we also accept the responsibility to be accountable. So in taking advantage of the opportunities, we should also take advantage of the opportunity to revisit our mission and vision and examine ourselves and our operations in order to execute any changes appropriately. In the past this may have been difficult but now, it is expected. It is expected, and subsequently we are expected to be accountable.

With all the rapid changes that are happening in the world, our mission is relatively grounded but our vision of the future is changing. In fact, it must change if we are to be current and sustainable. So we begin by outlining the areas where we are being challenged. The playing field is changing; research funding is more scrutinized, and, consequently, our use of those university grants that we support. If you received ARRA funds, you know the enormous amount of documentation that you must provide. Organizations are being audited at a much higher level. Our campus environments have changed almost overnight with the awful tragedies that have occurred on several campuses. It is no longer business as usual. Our roles are being reshaped—sometimes overnight—and expectations have grown significantly.

In the corporate world a perfect example is the scrutiny by the public, media, and shareholders of British Petroleum. Common practices that may have been previously acceptable are no longer condoned. Our institutions that were the “hallowed halls of higher learning” and somewhat untouchable are often “above the fold” in your local newspapers. The public wants accountability for public activities, and if you are a public university this means you!

Dave Button reported there are court cases where students are suing the institution for tuition because they hadn't found a job. Accountability – you bet!

The point is that no matter what action you take, someone is questioning why and under what authority. We have to justify or be prepared to justify every action, decision, expense, and behavior. This is the new norm.

So what do we do?

We need to make correct decisions from the beginning, decisions that are sound. Decisions that will hold up no matter the level of scrutiny....this is just sound management. We also need to evaluate our business. So often we have budgeted our operations across the board or by giving the squeaky wheel the oil. The cuts we are experiencing now will not allow us to sustain business as usual and hence the earlier comment about opportunities.

We need to get to the core of our operations and determine what is truly essential and what is less important. These are hard times and hard times warrant tough decisions that may be unpopular but necessary. We are even seeing academic programming reviews occurring. We have been good about adding programs but not very good about downsizing programs. The financial crisis is providing us the opportunity to do so that previously would not have occurred.

On the administrative side of the institution we need to demonstrate good stewardship of our facilities. We all have old inefficient buildings that have served their time, large influx of funds to these facilities may be unreasonable. We need to get better at space management and extend the hours of use of space. Chal-

Challenge yourself, your staff and your customers to make accountability a part of your organization's culture.

It starts with you!

lenge your customers to justify space and building needs as they are challenging you in your facilities operations. We are becoming more accepting of being challenged, but why wait?

Although we do not like to think of our academic institutions as businesses we do have to think like a business. We need to explore new business models. We must not "circle the wagons" and be complacent and wait for the challenge to pass. Look for opportunities at your institution that foster new partnerships. For example, collaborate with your engineering department on energy conservation or renewable energy projects. These are win-win opportunities and will position your department to

move forward, not stagnate, and foster accountability.

Use the tools that are in your toolkit. Benchmarks, dashboards, FPI data will support your credibility. Remember everyone outside of our organizations know how to do our business better! Information is powerful and will support the decisions that we must make going forward. Using our toolkit and leadership skills will support our accountability, and guide our vision. Seek partnerships that will support your vision. As we seize opportunities based on constituents needs, we also develop a circle of influence. Invest in your knowledge to be accountable and never let your integrity be questioned. Do not forsake the long view for the short view. We do not want to survive but rather thrive.

As simple as it sounds, we must do the right thing.

Challenge yourself, your staff and your customers to make accountability a part of your organization's culture.

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THOUGHTS FROM A CLOSET FUTURIST

Michael O'Connor

Physical Plant Director

Appalachian State University

The noise on my campus is incredible. I'm not talking about aural noise from leaf blowers or fans cheering at our tailgates and football games, I'm talking about all the noise from distractions. The churn from economic uncertainty, dire budget cuts, increased student population, and greater demands from every department without the funding to support them prevent even the most dedicated facilities professional from being able to focus on the future. Throw in a nasty letter from the local environmental authority regarding a sewer spill and you have enough mayhem to make the most ardent closet futurist want to crawl back in his cave.

But in these "Brownian motion" days of increasing commotion or perceived action with no real work being performed, we all need to pause and remember to stop the wringing of hands and gnashing of teeth to take the time to look up and plan for the future unfolding around us. Heck, dreaming about the future is certainly more pleasurable than living the reality of the present. As facility professionals, if we are not planning for the arrival of future technology today, we will be caught off balance and back on our heels when it shows up on our campus.

Let's start by looking into the no so distant predictable future. How many of you are installing or even planning to install plug in hybrid charging stations for your faculty or students? The Chevy Volt and the Nissan Leaf are here, and this generation of sustainably minded students will be clamoring for a place to plug them in as early as spring semester of 2011. How will you pay for charging stations and how will you bill the users? Does your campus master plan recognize or address this paradigm shift in alternative transportation?

Although most of us are not responsible for the Information Technology decisions on our campuses, have you given any real thought to the impact of cloud computing, ubiquitous wi-fi, and the rise of the tablet computer on your future campus infrastructure? I'm sure we all have library projects, bookstore improvements in our work queues. But what if text books move rapidly to tablets and e-readers? Do we need bookstores, or just on line App stores? What's the future of library "Stacks" if the entire library collection is digitized and made available through the "Cloud?" Is the existing or planned stack space better suited for use as a gathering place for students to share thoughts in an "Information Commons?" Are our "Smart Classrooms" smart enough to assimilate new technologies?

What about e-mail, the bane of my existence? Will our new students even use it? Do we need larger and larger energy intensive data centers on campus, or just bigger much less expensive fiber pipes to allow our students to connect to the internet? If we do need e-mail, is it a core function of colleges and universities to provide, or should it be supplied for free by a willing host like Google? Can we make use of wi-fi to greatly improve heating, ventilation, and air conditioning control systems in older buildings without having to tear down ceilings and drill holes in fire walls? Can we use wi-fi to similarly control lighting fixtures to reduce energy without having to rewire an entire building? And finally, can our technicians better communicate via video, voice and data on wi-fi or Bluetooth enabled devices in place of a hand-held radios?

Speaking of communication, how will we communicate with our customers in a future that is rapidly becoming the present? Has your facility organization embraced social networking? Do you have a Facebook page? If you have one, do you truly know how to use it to provide useful information to your customers? Can you text or tweet? Answering these questions myself makes me feel like a dinosaur? I see myself as a "digital immigrant," having been born before the digital revolution, as opposed to my daughter who is a "digital native" having known nothing but digital computing and the internet. If you are like me, all we can hope for is keep to up with understanding the value of these new technologies while hire bright young employees who instinctively understand their value.

On the energy and sustainability side of things, have you established an energy master plan or energy reduction strategic plan? Have you invested in "smart meters" that allow you to capture energy use real time? Many utilities can provide support for additional metering and may even be willing to host websites that will give all campus customers the ability to see their facilities real time energy use. This information will be critical in the future to allow our customers to help us "load shed" by turning off unnecessary lighting and appliance at peak periods to avoid costly demand charges for electrical use. If you can't come up with the funds up front to support smart meters, ask your utility if they can make the investment and amortize the cost across your monthly utility bills. We all know you can't manage what

One method of helping these new technologies gain traction is to "host" a renewable energy project on public lands.

you can't measure, so smart metering is a great step toward everyone on campus understanding in real time how their wasteful habits impact the institutions' budget.

Wind and solar photovoltaic technology are finally transitioning from a technology of the future to a technology of today. Many universities have signed up the American College & University Presidents' Climate Commitment to achieve carbon neutrality. To meet this challenge, generating your own renewable power can be an attractive option. However, few public universities can make the business case to adopt these technologies using public funds.

One method of helping these new technologies gain traction is to "host" a renewable energy project on public lands. In this scenario, a private investor uses the favorable federal and state tax incentives, generous depreciation schedules and renewable energy credits (RECs) to finance and install a system at no cost to the "host" institution. Depending on the term and length of the deal, the institution may take ownership of the system in the future at no cost. Since the institution does not own the system, nor the RECs, the institution cannot claim the generated renewable energy. However, by "hosting" a system, an institution can incentivize further research and development into renewable energy resources.

And now for to really stick my neck out there, what happens when science finds a way in the not to distant future to extend life indefinitely? What impact will that have on workplace demographics? Continuous learning will no longer be an option but the status quo. We will not have one or two careers in a life time, but infinite opportunities to retool and retrain ourselves for what the future holds. I am not predicting this anytime soon, but disruptive technologies are just that. They catch you by surprise and leave you ill prepared to meet the new paradigm ahead.

I have asked a lot of questions to stimulate thoughts on the change happening all around us while we toil a way just trying to keep the paper towel dispensers filled. As facility professionals, we have to be continuous learners who take the time to think, and plan. In the words of one of my old sage bosses "you should never be surprised by a predictable event." As technological change is accelerating at an exponential pace, we need

to be asking ourselves how we will integrate the demands and benefits of rapidly changing technology into our current and future infrastructure.

Shift is happening all around us, so we should not be surprised. So take a minute to just be still, look up and dream for bit and start having conversations with your fellow APPA members on how you intend to address the challenges and opportunities of the future. Things may seem a bit grim today, but I am truly excited and energize by what lies ahead.

I have dreamed enough today. So please excuse me as I come back from the future and go harness a plow to my mule and mosey on down to the state farm to work the fields in support of my university's locally grown sustainable food movement. The more things change...

SEEING THE UNSEEN

Joe Whitefield

Executive Director of Facilities Services
Middle Tennessee State University

Being in Boston for APPA 2010 was great. Being a baseball fan, I was reminded of the famous Red Sox player Ted Williams – the greatest hitter that ever lived (by most accounts). His hitting prowess was legendary. His career stats show a .344 batting average, 521 homeruns, 1,839 RBI, and 2,021 walks. He was the last major league player to hit .400 for a season when he hit .406 in 1941.

A lot has been said and written about Williams and his ability to hit. One possible contributor to this ability was his great eyesight (20/10 vision was reported when he entered the Navy in 1942). It was argued by many his ability to see a pitch was a key to his success. Many of his contemporaries would describe another type of vision as a key to his success, namely a keen understanding of the nuances of the game and hitting in particular. When describing his knowledge of hitting, Carl Yastrzemski said of Williams, "He studied hitting the way a broker studies the stock market, and could spot at a glance mistakes that others couldn't see in a week." When asked himself about the topic relative to his success, Ted Williams said, "Sure, I think I had good eyesight, maybe exceptional eyesight, but not superhuman eyesight. A lot of

people have 20/10 vision. The reason I saw things was that I was so intense . . . it was discipline, not super eyesight."

This often discussed concept of vision is important for managers and leaders today. Particularly when considering the dual application of 1) seeing current events clearly - eyesight, and 2) looking deeper into see the unseen aspects of current and future events - insight.

Regarding eyesight, facts are important in any sound decision making process. Dealing in reality, as painful as it might be, leads to improved planning, prioritization, and execution which is considerably better than simply hoping for results.

Insight, on the other hand, is more of an intangible quality that is critical to long-term success. It is the ability to understand a situation or event more comprehensively thus having a better projection of the dynamic reactions to and consequences of the situation/event. Decision makers must always compare alternatives and make appropriate choices. The ability to read the situation and see the unseen provides a great advantage in this cost-benefit type comparison. Lack of insight contributes to poorer decisions if one is only evaluating the urgent and not able to see the alternatives that address the important as well. When considering alternatives, it is better to think in terms of trade-offs rather than solutions. Insight is important to understanding trade-offs.

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There are several ways one can improve insight. These include studying history, obtaining appropriate council, listening to other perspectives, and learning the hard-earned lessons from previous experiences. Let me provide one small example. I recently participated in a couple of college visits with my daughter who is now a high school senior. I have been on many college and university campuses before – but not as a prospective parent. Needless to say, I saw the campus experience in a new way as I listened to graduating seniors serve as the tour guides speaking more directly to the prospective freshmen than their parents. This perspective made me think about my work in facilities at my institution. I decided to take our tour to hear what others were saying about our campus. I discovered a combination of good and bad, understanding and misunderstanding, and hits and misses. However, the insight has already been useful in priority setting and decision making with some of our facilities services. If you haven't done it recently, I recommend you take your campus tour. It is better than a survey.

In conclusion, consider the wide array of decisions that you make every day. How is your vision? Look for ways to sharpen your eyesight to see current events and choices more clearly. Also, look for ways to improve your insight. Strive to see a little more of the unseen. Both of these skills are bound improve your batting average as a leader.

EXPONENTIAL CHANGE IN EXPONENTIAL TIMES

By E. Lander Medlin

APPA Executive Vice President

It doesn't take a futurist to get educational facilities professionals to think about what is on the horizon. It is a critical part of every facility professional's job today to focus on and critically consider the overarching trends and driving forces that will likely stick with us well into the future; those issues that we suspect will change the very nature of what we do and how we do it. So imagine for a moment what it would feel like if your job was being reshaped right before your very eyes. Well...it is...and now! You could liken it to the change experienced by the Russian Cosmonaut who left Leningrad in 1991 for a 313-day journey into space. He returned to a city no longer on the map, to a country that no longer existed. Now that's change!

In fact, the world continues to change dramatically and at a phenomenally rapid pace. A good way to illustrate the rate and pace of change we are encountering today is to consider the growth of the lily pad.

If a single lily pad began doubling on a pond on the first day of June and doubled every day thereafter until the entire pond was covered by the end of the month, on day 20 what percentage of the pond would be covered with lily pads? The answer is one-tenth of one percent. That's right, 0.1%! And, what happens over the next ten days is a little short of amazing. Although the entire pond gets covered on Day 30, it is only

one-quarter covered on Day 28 and one-half covered on Day 29. And, the size of the pond matters not.

Such is the nature of "exponential" growth. Indeed, this example describes the extraordinary rate and pace of change to a number of driving forces occurring all around us today. We are living in exponential times; we are experiencing exponential change; the rate and pace is staggering and equally difficult to comprehend. Especially since the human psyche is not geared towards thinking in exponential terms. We are much more linear in our thinking.

Consider how the gas pedal operates in a car. We push down on the pedal and the car moves faster forward; we lift up on the pedal and the car slows up equivalently. It is up and down/one to one/on and off. This describes a linear system. This is indeed how humans think. We just don't think in exponential terms. When change gains traction and the rate and pace of change are exponential, that change(s) is ultimately transformational. We are experiencing quantum leaps in the changes we are facing today.

There are several big drivers of change in motion and, given their global nature, have huge implications for education and facilities which should not be ignored. Three of those drivers are: global competition, workforce shifts; and the transformative nature of technology. Each of these drivers has been addressed in even greater detail in the Thought Leaders Series monographs over the past several years.

- **Competition is Indeed Global** as it is intertwined in numerous ways with other countries. From the institutional standpoint, there is open race to capture more international students. In addition, there is clearly an 'arms' race for faculty, all competing for the best and the brightest. If we are to continue as a formidable economic engine, we must capture a greater portion of this rapidly evolving marketplace to secure a continued competitive edge. Our country's economic viability is at stake. To survive this economic hailstorm will require creativity and innovation.
- **Workforce Shifts** are two-fold: 1) demanding student learning outcomes that ensure greater employability, and 2) dealing more effectively with the aging workforce. Understanding the next generation of workers will require us to recognize the realities of job/career mobility now and well into the future. Workers are changing jobs 10 to 15 times over their lifetimes as opposed to the boomer generation's career changes of one to three times during their lifetime. And given the aging workforce, the need for succession and accession planning and continuous training and development are at a critical juncture. The economic downturn in fact stunted the more rapid departure of retirees creating a window of opportunity for all of us. We have a second window of opportunity to make a difference in this area, but that window is closing quickly.
- **The Transformative Nature of Technology** is causing a doubling of information every 18 to 24 months, which is

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at least we can participate in
resolving the new one.

dramatically impacting the learning environment and the way students interact with everything and everyone; hence the power of social media. Let's face it; the Internet is the most fundamental change since the invention of writing utensils and then the advent of the printing press. Yet it is important to remember that not all information has the same value. It has been said that "there is an abundance of information and a scarcity of wisdom." For the educational facilities professional, it will be important to further integrate the "bricks and clicks," improve communication with the IT community, and build relationships for the long term. Are these technologies the harbingers and engines of a new order? What are the chances that a number of these things will happen? Interestingly enough, Louis Pasteur said, when asked about the role of luck or chance in scientific discovery, "Chance favors the prepared mind." Furthermore, when in the midst of such monumental change, history tells us that "the past is dissolved before the future resolves." So maybe we are the "lucky" ones . . . as our old world dissolves, at least we can *participate* in resolving the new one.

So what do we do now? How do we prepare? There are several recommendations as we face this rapidly changing world.

- *Approach with a sense of urgency, yet focus on the most important, highest priorities.* This is best illustrated

by the parable of the boiling frog. If we drop the frog into a pot of boiling water, it immediately jumps out. Whereas, if we drop the frog into a pot of lukewarm water and slowly turn up the heat, the change in heat is so gradual that the frog doesn't feel it and is lulled to sleep, thereby boiling to death. So in the midst of all this change, we must find new ways to turn up the heat. And we must, as E. Gordon Gee, president of Ohio State University, said at an annual meeting of the American Council on Education, "Severe economic pressures have created a defining moment for colleges and

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universities, which must fundamentally reinvent themselves to survive. . . . While giving deference to our proud history, our challenge today is radical reformation. The choice, it seems to me, is this: reinvention or extinction.”

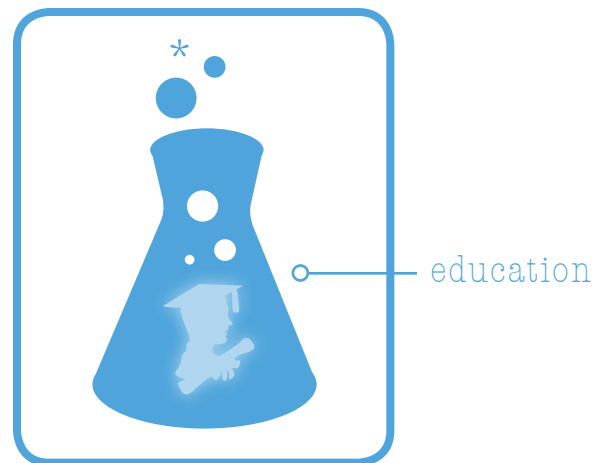
- *Don't be complacent; don't fall asleep; don't fall into a state of denial.* A *Chronicle of Higher Education* writer, Scott Carlson, aptly stated, “This period of time is not just a bad cold that will soon go away. It is a period of transformational change.” So don't just hope the economy will get better. Don't just hope this change is not real. Don't just hope this technological change won't affect you. Steve Healy, a safety and security consultant, said it best when he stated, “Hope is not a strategy. Denial is not a plan.”
- *Plan and strategize for the future.* Utilize scenario planning as a strategic planning tool and play out the various scenarios as best you can. This would be likened to the value of really practicing emergency preparedness training drills. Second, be observant and learn to look externally. You gain perspective. You see more that way. EDUCAUSE writer Richard Katz, warns us that “We must plan for the changes we can reasonably forecast. Otherwise, changes will be accidental and we will be ill-equipped for the demands for the digital age.”
- *Build relationships* across the entire community, especially with those in the IT department and the academic arena. Creating opportunities to educate and inform the community at large are as important as spending time listening to their needs and concerns so you are viewed as a continual resource and gain positive influence over time.

We have always been told that to deal with the future effectively, we must look to and learn from the past. This is certainly a linear approach. A linear way of thinking that is clearly human nature.

- *Exercise leadership* in all aspects of your work. By doing so, you will invest in your future and that of your organizational team, and you will ultimately reinvent yourself as a result. We have always been told that to deal with the future effectively, we must look to and learn from the past. This is certainly a linear approach. A linear way of thinking that is clearly human

nature. As an example from our recent past, we were told to invest in stocks, banks, gold, oil, and/or real estate. Yet, in the past two years we have seen it all vaporize right before our very eyes.

So, I ask you, what is the one investment you can control, you can choose, you can make that no one can take away from you? The answer is: an investment in your knowledge, education, and professional development that will increase your wisdom many times over. And, as leaders in and of your organization, you need to make that same investment in your staff. It is critically important, essential in this new world order for everyone to engage in K-Life or continuous learning. I was told by a colleague that “If you are



not proficient in the use of information technology today, you will become road kill on the side of the information super highway.”

And it is not just increased skill and proficiency, but it is also truly wisdom – the wisdom referred to earlier which is fast becoming a scarce commodity. This is beautifully illustrated in a quote by Mart DeHaan about dog trainer Cesar Millan, also known as the “dog whisperer.” “Millan has the ability not only to rehabilitate troubled dogs, but to do so with a calmness that often amazes the animal’s owner. . . The result is often dramatic. But Millan claims no miracles. . . The dog whisperer’s secret, therefore, lies not in magic but in his wisdom. If wisdom is the ability to use knowledge to reach a desired goal, that’s what Millan does. He applies his understanding of why dogs act the way they do to overcome the problems that are keeping dogs and owners from enjoying one another.”

APPA can help by supplying the knowledge and *wisdom* you need through its professional development programs, books, benchmarking data and information, credentials (the EFP and CEFP), and a rich network of professionals all available at your time and place of choice. By doing so, you and your organization will be able to *reinvent yourselves* time and time again to meet the demands of a rapidly – exponentially – changing world. Eric Hoffer was insightful when he said, “In times of change, learners inherit the earth while the learned find themselves beautifully equipped to work in a world that no longer exists.” Become one of those continuous learners...engage in APPA today! ☺



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