Regional Council of Mayors

January 14, 2013

Jump the Curve

The combined meeting of the Regional Council of Mayors and the ULI MN Advisory Board focused on our changing world and what we can do as regional leaders to prosper in the future.

"Before 2008, we could still make investments and put just about anything anywhere you wanted to put it," said Curt Johnson of CitiStates, the moderator for the discussion. "We need to be more strategic now."

The Greater MSP region has generally been better off than much of the rest of the country, Johnson said, and that relative prosperity has a downside as well. "This region rarely has to respond to a crisis," he said. "But we do need to respond to complacence."

Jack Uldrich

Some key societal forces are changing, said Jack Uldrich, author and futurist; some of these forces are changing 1,000 fold in relatively short time periods. To take advantage of changes, we need to understand them—and that may mean unlearning things we think we already know.

Technologies that have and are dramatically changing include:

- **Apps.** Ten years ago, no one had heard of apps. Today, there are more than 1 million of them, doing everything from offering a Zippo lighter image to hold aloft at rock concerts to doing an EKG.
- **Robotics.** Self-driven vehicles are now legal in three states, Uldrich said. "This is going to have a profound implication for transportation."
- **Sensors.** Embedded sensors can do everything from determining how hot or cold our environment needs to be to presenting us with the products we are most likely to buy. Sensors are getting tinier and tinier, and already are embedded in our cell phones and more. In the future, they may be in our clothing, our structures and even our skin.
- **Gene sequencing.** The technology for gene sequencing is getting better every four months, Uldrich said. Within a few years, the cost of identifying your genome will drop to less than $100, leading us to an era of highly personalized medicine.
- **Computer processing power.** Apple's Siri, the computer voice on the newest iPhones, "is going to get 1,000 times smarter by the end of the decade," Uldrich said. Hospitals have started using super computers to sift through healthcare information to make more accurate diagnoses.

Rather than fearing this, Uldrich said, we should recognize that if the computer can do some things more efficiently, it frees doctors to focus on the personal patient care no machine can do.

- **Data storage.** The storage capacity of desktop computers has increased dramatically, but a prediction of just five years ago that the storage capacity of computers would be 1 terabyte didn't contemplate cloud computing, with almost infinite capability.

"Your world has already changed … you're just not seeing it yet," Uldrich said. He showed a short video of a 14-month-old baby, frustrated while looking at magazines that she couldn't change by swiping her finger across them. Given an iPad, she knew exactly what to do with it. "These are your voters and employees of tomorrow," he said.

He urged those in the audience to carve out time in their busy schedules to simply consider changes in technology and what they can do. And to do that, we need to "unlearn" some of what we have stuck in our heads, he said.

As a quick test, he asked everyone in the group to talk with someone next to them about what color a Yield sign is. Half or more of those in the audience said it was yellow with black lettering. That hasn't been true since 1972, Uldrich said; today, Yield signs are white with red lettering. But those who initially learned the yellow and black signs didn't stop to unlearn the color, even 40 years after it changed. "The future is here, but we don't always see it," he said.

Uldrich's blog, School of Unlearning www.schoolofunlearning.com, offers analysis and ideas about the future, including a blog.

Regional Story Development

Haberman http://www.modernstorytellers.com, which describes itself as "Modern Storytellers for Pioneers," has been working with the Reality Check team for several months to develop a storytelling platform that will support a different kind of growth for the region.

In other words, to answer the question, "Why should we build differently?"

"If we can answer that question, it will inform what we do," said Rich McCracken, account director.

Brian Wachtler, president and partner, asked the attendees to help develop the narrative for Reality Check by responding to a storytelling exercise. Possible answers to the "why" question included:

Attracting talent to grow. *The future prosperity and growth of our community is dependent on being able to attract and retain the next generation of talented people. In order to attract these people, from near and far, we need to invest in our community in new ways. This means creating and growing the infrastructure and environments that future talented workers look for when choosing a city.*

Reaction: A number of people thought this sounded top-down and focused solely on bringing new people to the region, not on discovering the assets already within the community. Susan Haigh, chair of the Metropolitan Council, said, "For people who are here already, 'this is not about me; it's about people who are not here.'"

Adapting to a changing world. *The world around us is changing, so we need to change the way we build and grow our region. Demographics are changing and market preferences are evolving, as people desire to be more connected and clustered together. We need a different model that invests in our community and adapts to this changing world.*

Reaction: "When have we not lived in a changing world?" one person asked. Minneapolis Mayor R.T. Rybak said the statement doesn't recognize that the region has innovated before. "We need to send some message that this is about a place that has always played above its weight," he said.

The statement assumes that everyone wants the same thing, "that there's a right way to live," said John Shardlow of Stantec.

Growing our region to compete. *Let's ask ourselves what's ahead for our community? How will Greater MSP compete long-term? We can prosper as a global leader by choosing to invest in our region differently and push ahead of other regions. This is our opportunity to build a thriving city of the future. This is our chance to create the next great MSP.*

Reaction: Several people felt this statement did not have a great deal of energy about it. "Growth and prosperity is different than vibrancy and thriving," said Eagan Mayor Mike Maguire. "We need words that have some energy."

Rybak said it needed to tie back into personal prosperity, telling people "what's in it for me?"

Building a healthy community. *What does a healthy community look like? The answer is different now than it used to be—it's a community that is making changes to become more connected and more sustainable. It's a community that's growing and prospering with talented workers and innovative businesses. By choosing to invest and grow our community, we can be a remarkably healthy city to live, work and play.*

Reaction: Although some argued with the word "healthy" seemed to indicate solely physical health, this was the favorite statement for many attendees. They saw the statement as engaging and as listing the overall assets of the community. "It's proactive; we're actively working to make changes," said one attendee.

Audience reactions to the statements will be used to craft a stronger "story" about change to be used with the Reality Check events, planned for this spring.

COMING UP

The next RCM meeting will be held on Monday, February 11, 2013 from 11:30 am to 1:30 pm. RCM meetings are held on the second Monday of every month at Dorsey & Whitney.

Mayors are encouraged to email Caren Dewar with their suggestions for topics to add to the agenda.

ATTENDEES

The following individuals were in attendance on December 10, 2012:

Mayors

Jim Adams, City of Crystal; Chris Coleman, City of St. Paul; Jerry Faust, City of St. Anthony; Tom Furlong, City of Chanhassen; Mary Giuliani Stephens, City of Woodbury; Debbie Goettel, City of Richfield; Kathi Hemken, City of New Hope; Jim Hovland, City of Edina; Tim Hultmann, City of Long Lake; Marvin Johnson, City of Independence; Elizabeth Kautz, City of Burnsville; Peter Lindstrom, City of Falcon Heights; Mike Maguire, City of Eagan; Lili McMillan, City of Orono; Mike Pearson, City of Lake Elmo; R.T. Rybak, City of Minneapolis; Terry Schneider, City of Minnetonka; Brad Tabke, City of Shakopee; Nancy Tyra-Lukens, City of Eden Prairie; Ken Willcox, City of Wayzata; Gene Winstead, City of Bloomington

ULI Advisory Board/Guests

Stu Ackerberg, Ackerberg; John Adams, University of Minnesota; Wade Anderson, Gray Plant Mooty; Alison Barman, Itasca Project; Steve Berg, Steve Berg LLC; John Breitinger, ULI Minnesota; Colleen Carey, The Cornerstone Group; Rick Carter, LHB; Mark Casey, St. Anthony Village; Matt Clark, US Bank; Erin Dady, City of St. Paul; Bob Engstrom, Robert Engstrom Companies; Todd Firebaugh, Activ8; Tom Fisher, University of Minnesota; Jenna Fletcher, Trust for Public Land; Kevin Frazell, League of Minnesota Cities; Tom Fulton, Family Housing Fund; Lee Helgen, Envision MN; Michael Huber, Blue Cross/Blue Shield Minnesota; Gordon Hughes, ULI Minnesota; Curt Johnson, Citistates Group; Jean Kane, Welsh Co.; Beth Kessler, Itasca Project; Michael Langley, Greater MSP; Pat Mascia, Duke Realty; Rich McCracken, Haberman; Max Musicant, The Musicant Group; James Nelson, Eberhart Advisory; Marc Nevinski, City of Coon Rapids; Bruce Nordquist, City of Apple Valley; Diane Norman, RSP; Carolyn Olson, Greater Minnesota Housing Corporation; Josh Olson, Ramsey County RRA; Jenn O'Rourke, City of Minneapolis; Danyelle Peirquet, SEH; Sharon Pfeifer, Minnesota DNR; Beth Reetz, Metropolitan Council; Kevin Ringwald, City of Chaska; Elizabeth Ryan, Family Housing Fund; Adam Schiff, Sen. Klobuchar's office; John Shardlow, Stantec; Sudhir Singh, Lighting House USA; Kristine Smitten, Smitten Group; Brian Wachtler, Haberman.

ULI Minnesota Staff
Caren Dewar, Cathy Bennett, Katie Anderson, Linda Picone