

Remembering and Using Information from Rick Smyre Handout for Futures Planning Team November 27, 2007

Megatrends identified by Rick

1. Oil Production will peak within the next fifteen years [some say sooner], requiring a shift to complete new energy methods.
2. The limits to traditional representative democracy are appearing because of the increasingly complexity of society, the overwhelming amount of information of real time media, and need for big money to be reelected.
3. Unknown viruses and resistant bacteria are emerging that are untouched by existing medicines.
4. There is an ongoing severe reduction in biodiversity throughout the world.
5. We are approaching a moment of "technological singularity" when runaway advances outstrip human comprehension and all our knowledge and experience becomes useless as a guidepost to the future.
6. The future vitality and sustainability of the economy and society will be dependent on the ability of leadership to develop cognitive complexity and continuous innovation in the capacities of the citizens.
7. Conflict between the trends of aging in the developed world and the increasing numbers of youth in the developing world creates an economic and social time bomb.
8. The increasing symptoms of global warming are becoming obvious in many different ways.
9. There will be an increasing clash of civilizations and rise of terrorism.
10. There are three economies in churn at the same time:
 - a) Last stages of the Industrial Economy
 - b) Twenty year transition stage called the Creative Knowledge Economy.
 - c) The early stages of a Web/Networked Economy around 2020
11. National borders increasingly will be seamless.
12. Artificial intelligence is emerging which, when combined with biotechnology and nanotechnology, may very well transform the concept of what it means to be human.

The above 12 points are quoted from Rick Smyre's article: "The Three Triangles of Transformation." See "Introduction to The Community System for Transformation," pp. 22-23 for a futures bibliography. Both articles are available from <http://www.communitiesofthefuture.org/articles.htm> .

Capacities beyond Recognizing a Need for Change from Rick Smyre

As local communities begin to understand the need to go beyond "reforming" what has existed for years, they will be faced with identifying what other capacities will be needed to transform their attitudes, behaviors, institutional structures and ways of thinking in appropriate ways. Although many new capacities will be needed over time, five are key. The following "capacities for transformation" will become the most

important in the opinion of the Center for Communities of the Future:

1) A community based electronic infrastructure

Wired and wireless access to real time information will be necessary to allow citizens to compete and collaborate at the same time. In a fast-paced world, all people need to be able to receive information at any time from any place as they determine.

Whether responding to a real estate quote or providing an opinion for a community survey on important community issues, no person will be able to meet the needs of real time information flow without having access to electronic connections.

2) Developing a Futures Context

In a world of constant innovation, people have to be shown new ideas. This capacity we call “learning within a futures context.” No longer will it be enough to learn by the experience of others. In the future the “context” of any area of community life will be in constant change. One will have to anticipate these changes and learn how to think differently to be able to create new ways of economic development, new ways of governing, new ways of education/learning....even new ways of thinking. Every community will need to have new ways to describe new emerging patterns and structures.

3) Transformational Leadership Development

The third capacity focuses on a new concept of leadership which emphasizes how to connect diverse people with deeper, more trustful relationships in a constant conversation of innovation. The skills and knowledge needed to be a good transformational or “process leader” is different from that of a traditional leader. A traditional leader provides a vision for others and sets the agenda that is needed. A process leader “frames” a futures generative dialogue and helps people see the need for personal change using questions, stories and other appropriate mechanisms. All process leaders will need

to understand how to integrate 1) a futures context, 2) diverse process of building human relationships, and 3) a journey of internal personal transformation.

4) A 21st Century Concept of the Concomitant Good

A fourth capacity is the need to help each other succeed in an interdependent society. In the past, we accepted the myth that we were self-sufficient and could exist by taking care of ourselves. We confused the idea of being self-reliant with that of being self-sufficient. In a world as interconnected as the one that will exist in the 21st century, we need to balance the needs of the community with the needs of the individual. A new concept of “connected individuality” will be necessary if we are to have vital communities and vital individuals. The two are interconnected and not separate. A 21st century concept of the common good will demand we help each other succeed to support a true learning community.

5) “Future Basic” Skills for the 21st Century

A fifth capacity important to a learning community is the need to redefine what skills and knowledge will be needed in the 21st century as core capacities for all individuals to be able to be involved in a fluid flow of constant transformation. The Center for Communities of the Future believe that three are critical skills for all citizens: a) the ability to access the Internet, b) the ability to facilitate small groups of diverse people, and c) the ability to help people connect and think differently.

The above information is quoted from Rick Smyre’s article: “Building Parallel Processes for Transformation,” available from: <http://www.scribd.com/doc/256249/COTF-BUILDING-PARALLEL-PROCESSES>.

Also, see <http://www.communitiesofthefuture.org/glossary2.htm> for a glossary of terms, some of which Rick used while he was visiting us.

Specific Community-Focused Suggestions from Rick Smyre

The following are specific suggestions for you to introduce the concept of “capacities for transformation” into the thinking and activities of your community:

- a) Approach your library to sponsor a “transformative dialogue group.” Recruit up to 15 volunteers who are interested in talking about new ideas. Provide a list of reading materials (see futures bibliography) and encourage all participants to find articles, papers, web sites, and books that focus on new transformative concepts. Meet once every month or once every two months.
- b) Connect interested organizations into a “generative dialogue group” to focus on thinking about issues from a futures perspective. Have the group become knowledgeable about future trends before they try to resolve any issue. Have a qualified process leader facilitate the group and provide information that helps the group understand the need to rethink how they think about the issue.
- c) Build “futures citizen teams” throughout your community. Have an annual event at which each team presents a transformative idea. Have an outside (the community) panel approve each idea as truly transformative and not just a reforming idea that improves an existing way of doing things. Have a network of at least fifty diverse citizens recruited who will volunteer their time to select the five best ideas. Make sure that at least 25% of those on the selection committee are task oriented citizens. Present the five ideas to a local foundation or co-sponsoring outside source of funding. Have the board of that organization rank the five ideas from best idea, great idea, excellent idea, very good idea and good idea.
- d) Develop a web site for the community that focuses on “ideas outside the box.” Promote the web site using traditional means of publicity. Have a Spotlight Idea of the month for each of the following areas: a) education/learning, b) governance, c) economic development, d) leadership, and e) non – profits.
- e) Work with your local community college to establish a “futures institute” which would be the focus of thinking about the future in your local area. Emphasize three key ideas: a) internal college curricula 1) one day orientation, 2) modules of key trends to be integrated into existing courses, and 3) semester and quarterly courses; b) work with organizations in the community to introduce new trends and their impact; c) provide research and development for specific organizations to help them have a “futures context” within which to think about issues.
- f) Have a group of interested people focus on developing new metaphors and stories to help citizens understand new transformative ideas.
- g) Develop a bibliography and feature “futures” books within key organizations of the community. Use the library as the hub of this effort. Have one person from each participating organization become a part of the selection committee.
- h) Have a funding group provide one year subscriptions of Wired, American Demographics, Futurist, and/or Business Week to citizens who are willing to become involved in one of the community “networks of learning.”
- i) Search for Centers and other key organizations in the country that specialize in “thinking about the future” and develop in-depth connections with one person on the staff.
- j) Establish a “21st century think tank” to develop new transformative ideas. This group will be different from the futures institute and the library’s transformational group in the following ways: 1) the local think tank will develop major ideas for the community and not just respond to the need of other organizations, and 2) a key objective of this group will be to connect

with people and organizations from throughout the world to build networks of people in support of any new major idea.

k) Pick one country that is closely identified with the history of your community and make contact to help local citizens integrate their history and their future simultaneously. Build as many common capacity building projects between the two areas as possible. Have as many interested citizens as appropriate become friends and associates with their counterpart overseas.

l) Establish “21st century learning webs” in different neighborhoods just to have citizens become familiar with future trends. Bring these groups together quarterly or semi-annually in a social event. Focus on the need to have collaboration to gain support for new ways of thinking.

m) Approach your local public health center and work with them to co-sponsor a community survey to find out the percentage of citizens susceptible to resistant viruses and bacteria. Help prepare your community to understand the potential for major health issues and the spread of diseases for which any community is not prepared to cope. Help citizens understand that the increased connections of worldwide travel and economic trade is raising the probability for some major health scare in the future.

n) Work with the local chamber of commerce and community college to establish a “process leadership” development program/process. This is different from the basic local leadership program. It’s core values are three: 1) understanding the impact of future trends, 2) building multiple processes of connections, thinking and decision making, and 3) evolving personal attributes capable of 21st century leadership.

o) Establish a network of entrepreneurs interested in the “digital economy” to begin to think about how to utilize the Internet.

Focus on the new concept of nano-corporations (individuals that are considered corporations of one) that emphasize the collaboration of electronic entrepreneurs throughout the world.

p) Have a community group (individuals representing different organizations) develop a strategic plan to establish an electronic community network to allow all citizens to have instant access to the Internet.

q) Have the chamber of commerce focus on building “capacities for a “Creative Knowledge/Molecular Economy.”

r) Develop a “millennium center” in the downtown area. Select a building with four or more stories that can be retrofitted and refurbished. Recruit people to live on the top floors that reflect the community as well as those from outside the community. Use the bottom two floors as rooms that can be used for: 1) a place for dialogue, 2) a restaurant where ideas are discussed, 3) a game room of the future, and 4) a room of technology that also has the potential to be used as a Millennium Center decision making room. The objective of this concept is to introduce all the transformational ideas in one building. The building will serve both as a symbol of building capacities for transformation for the entire community as well as become a part of it’s economic development.

s) Establish a Knowledge Democracy project in one or more neighborhoods which will utilize the Communities of the Future concept of Direct Consensus Democracy. Insure that each house has a computer. Involve neighborhood leaders in the ideas of Knowledge Democracy. Coach them to become “process leaders.”

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