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**Positioning the Profession for the Future**
The impact and duration of the economic downturn has impacted the design and construction industry in ways we are just starting to realize. While by all accounts the tide has turned, the architectural profession has yet to fully recover. Firms that have “survived” the recession are now looking ahead toward a very different future, one where they will potentially have to change their business practices, and refocus their energies to be successful in a new economy. At all levels, how can the AIA support members to network and pursue opportunities in a recovering market?
The expected answer to this question is to intensify exposure, provide more programs, increase networking opportunities, and create more toolkits. Sound familiar? Those are business as usual practices.

We must help our members improve their Brand messaging. Brand messaging is the voice they use. The 30,000 data points of Repositioning results have provided some insights that will allow the AIA to help all members:

Architects like to talk about process and their architecture. Clients (and the public) don’t care much about process. So, AIA can help architects change how they communicate about their work. In fact, studies have shown that just speaking louder isn’t the answer. Clarity and consistency are key:

- Speak about impact: What is the difference made because of your work? What have your clients been able to do because of the architecture?
- Speak in accessible and compelling terms
- Speak to YOUR audience, not ALL audiences
- Keep it simple. Clients want trustworthy information that is simple to understand

AIA must continue to expose members to opportunities, but we can do more. We can expose our members to research findings that will positively impact their businesses. Repositioning findings are just the beginning to position AIA Architects for the future.

**Repositioning the AIA for the Future**
The success of the Repositioning requires our collective energy to shift our perspective about what the AIA can do to serve members, advance the profession, and provides a tremendous opportunity for change. If you could make only one change to the AIA as part of the Repositioning Initiative, what would that be? Please be specific in the details and explanation of why.

Do you remember pre-recession architectural firms that would NEVER partner with another architectural firm to secure a project? Today, it happens all the time! It’s time for AIA leaders to apply this type of business savvy to AIA.
I view the one significant change as identifying shared resources on all levels. The key is clarifying, simplifying, and most importantly making members aware of initiatives and resources available.

We can no longer afford the luxury of each component acting independently. An individual component cannot be all things to all members. We need to prioritize our initiatives and define what each level of our organization does best and support them. We need to take the partner model, I mentioned, to our AIA.

Let’s consider a very visible example. Continuing education programming is provided by all facets of the AIA: local components, knowledge communities, state components, committees, national, conventions, etc. While it’s great we give our members so many choices, we compete with ourselves for attendees and sponsors. I’m confident there are some continuing education programming models that could be shared among components and/or hosted in multiple locations by several components.

Leveraging our multi-level resources will lead to a more effective business model and when coordinated, result in more services to our members.

**Member Resources**

**While the economic climate has been challenging for all in the design and construction industry, it has been especially difficult for “seasoned” professionals who are often times unable to compete in today’s technology-based delivery environment. How is the AIA positioned to support these experienced members?**

Do you remember when your mother taught you that it is not polite to ask someone their age? Well, that still holds true because age doesn’t always tell us about someone’s career challenges. Dr. Donald Super argued that people pass through five career stages during their life span:

- Growth
- Exploration
- Establishment
- Maintenance
- Reinvention

Many seasoned professionals who were expecting to be safely in their “maintenance stage” are finding themselves needing to reinvent or explore again. AIA can play an effective role in supporting architects at all career stages when they respect each stage and support a culture where “it’s never too late to reinvent yourself.”

AIA can take action to create programs that appeal to “seasoned” professionals; programs that enhance their skills, demonstrate their value, expand their versatility in the marketplace, improve expertise in a specific area, and expose them to new networks of people.

I know of local components (including in California) who are addressing the technology needs of “seasoned” professionals (or re-emerging professionals) directly. Seasoned professionals may never be the BIM tech; however, they can learn the value of BIM, understand how to leverage its capabilities, discover how to open and generally navigate files, and most importantly, bring even greater value to the BIM tech as our “seasoned” professionals really do know how a building goes together.
Organizational Structure
While all can agree that a revitalized, relevant, and robust AIA to lead and support the profession is critical, there is still uncertainty whether the AIA has the will to make the significant and substantive changes necessary. In view of the findings of the Repositioning Study, what recommendations would you make about the AIA’s current service and delivery model to the membership?
This cannot be a top-down proposition and all members need to possess the will to shift the mindset of services.

When a member pays for three levels of service, they deserve distinct services from all three levels. Please don’t misunderstand my statement. I believe AIA members receive services from all levels; and we recognize some of those services are duplicated at multiple levels.

As I have stated before, we no longer have the luxury of components acting independently. Despite our autonomous governance structure, we need to work together and clearly define the responsibilities for each level. At a minimum,
1. Local chapters should urge members to tap into the international network of architects and resources to propel business growth and expand personal and professional development.
2. State chapters should keep members ahead of state-wide issues, especially related to the practice of architecture and licensure.
3. National should encourage and support members to actively engage their local chapter to gain access to networking, community involvement, and continuing education opportunities.

Additionally, I believe the current Member Resources Task Force must be BOLD in its wide spread considerations of member service delivery and financial models. It’s not your father’s AIA. Models that maintain a status quo are not the answer.

Emerging Professionals
Across all levels of the organization members lament the lack of engagement of emerging professionals both in practice and within the AIA. The decline of a culture of mentoring within firms and the profession is blamed for the correspondingly low numbers of new licensees. What can the AIA do to affect a cultural shift among experienced professionals and encourage all involved in the delivery of architectural services to stay connected with the organization?

Architects were taught in school to identify a problem and assess multiple solutions to reach a final conclusion. In addressing the generational expectations problem, AIA leaders must actively acknowledge generational differences to engage them on their terms. Some key generational differences that will impact AIA’s approach:

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<th>Generation X</th>
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<td>What they value</td>
<td>Community</td>
<td>Success</td>
<td>Time</td>
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Repositioning illuminated what unites architects: We want to make a difference in the world! It’s the value proposition that bridges our generational differences and will be the foundation of our future. And mentoring is not what it used to be. Mentoring is at its best when it spans the generational divide and goes both ways.

I have also witnessed the strength of mentoring across generations when our schools of architecture connect directly with local AIA components. I believe our schools have a responsibility to expose and encourage students to explore their professional institution and connect with professionals. Ensuring AIA is a “known entity” to our graduates is an important step in establishing engagement.

So there are many solutions to this issue. Ultimately, I believe AIA will only secure emerging professional engagement when EP’s witness an organization that respects them and an AIA that is willing and eager to take risks. EP’s are willing to explore new avenues, make mistakes, and classify them as learning experiences. That is their culture. So, the question is, can “we” make the cultural shift?

Join me in transforming an organization that is less about self-promotion and more about attraction. I.e. become the organization that they value and “want to be part of.”