RESOURCING THE PROFESSION for prosperity.

It is clear the profession is changing and successful architects will have to modify their business practices and refocus their energies in this new economy. This will require a cultural "shift" of the AIA to resource firms and actively increase the prosperity of the profession. How can the AIA prepare architects and emerging professionals to respond to trending issues such as the changing marketplace, new economic models, and the increasing complexity in design requirements and the regulatory environment?

Response:

At all component levels, one of the most important purposes of AIA is to provide resources that can help architects practice more effectively. Architects must be capable of meeting high standards in an evolving marketplace while also sustaining a thriving profession economically. Without a strong economic engine for the profession, all other goals are unachievable.

In the "repositioning" research developed by AIA in 2012, two fundamental themes emerged regarding the challenges and opportunities facing our profession’s prospects for future prosperity. First, many who work with our profession most closely question our value in the development and construction industries. Second, there is a broad spectrum of new relevancies for architecture, ones that can provide a foundation for the prosperity of architects over the next generation.

Einstein famously noted that repeating the same action while expecting different results is the definition of insanity. Architects have fretted for decades about shrinking fees for making drawings of buildings. The reality is that technology and industry practices have disrupted our conventional business models, a trend that is likely to accelerate, not reverse. While we must aggressively defend the importance of licensure and our profession’s responsibility to protect public safety, health, and welfare, our future prosperity will be found looking forward, not backward.

Here is one powerful example. On Earth Day, Friday, April 22nd, 175 nations signed the Paris Agreement, implementing the climate change framework established at COP21 last December. One provision of U.S. carbon reduction targets is to cut carbon released from the existing building stock by 50% by 2050. To achieve this reduction, every architect in the U.S. (not every firm, every architect) must complete at least one deep energy retrofit project annually from today through 2050! Talk about a prosperity engine!

Architects played a significant role in developing carbon reduction targets for COP21, most notably Edward Mazria, FAIA, founder of Architecture 2030, who presented the 2050 Roadmap for the building sector in Paris. (I had the privilege of sponsoring Ed for the 2015 AIA Kemper Medal.) As architects in California, you have the opportunity to be industry leaders on this issue. California is the first state to implement a cap-and-trade system that monetizes carbon reduction.

Our challenge is not to claim relevance, but to seize it! In addition to the growing carbon economy, there are other potent opportunities across many fields. Those related to design and health could take up dozens of pages here, touching on issues as diverse as improving educational outcomes in school design, increasing productivity in the workplace, and even affecting public health.

The AIA must play an increasingly active role in illuminating emerging opportunities for architects. The Design + Health Summit and Sustainability Leadership Opportunity Scan serve as terrific models. (I had the privilege of participating in the Design + Health Summit in 2014 and serving for two years on the Advisory Board for the Scan.)

As evolving opportunities are identified, AIA’s challenge is to help architects understand the value proposition therein, translate value into tangible business plans, “scale” the plans so that sole
practitioners and large-firms alike can apply them, and provide practice tools that facilitate integrating them into day-to-day practice.

The AIA 2030 Commitment Digital Data Exchange (DDx) is an excellent example of how AIA can encourage progressive practice by providing practice tools of value to every architect. 2030 signatory firms are required to report project energy performance annually, a reporting burden that many architects cite as their reason for not signing onto the Commitment. For reporting 2015 projects, AIA released the DDx, product of a two year collaboration with the U.S. Department of Energy. Data entered into the DDx is “benchmarked” against the entire DOE national building database, literally millions of buildings. Even without preparing an energy model, architects can use the DDx during design to compare their design decisions against the database, effectively “scoring” the performance of their buildings without an exhaustive investment of time. AIA has converted a burden into an advantage. (I had the privilege of serving as the AIA National Board of Directors Liaison to the Committee on the Environment Advisory Group and participating in the development of the DDx.)

As 2018 AIA President I will work with you to identify the evolving value of architecture and translate it into innovative practices scalable and accessible to all AIA members.

INFLUENCING our clients and our communities. Clients are looking for a more predictable outcome in the building process and thus, collaborative project delivery models are becoming the norm. Some would argue the legal and regulatory environments are not supportive of this change. How can AIA best advocate for a regulatory framework that will enable architects to be successful leaders in the design and construction industry?

Response:
There are many legal, economic, and “cultural” forces compelling the A/E/C industry to explore new project delivery approaches. There are an equal number pushing back, resisting change and protecting the status quo, warts and all. As a profession, we know the shortcomings of the current system all too well.

Architects are legally accountable through professional licensure, yet, frequently lack full authority over all factors. Despite our best efforts as a profession to standardize code, practice, and licensure requirements across the nation, each state still retains full authority over the building and real estate industries within their jurisdiction. Anyone who follows activities of AIA’s State Government Network (SGN) knows firsthand how much regulation varies from state to state and how volatile the issues are that affect the architectural profession. (Who could have predicted that teeth whiting would threaten the structure of state Boards of Architects?)

The three-party framework of AIA’s standard contracts, and also those promulgated by the Associated General Contractors of America (AGCA), separate the design and building teams contractually. Courts are kept busy with cases that result from the inability of owners, designers, and contractors to bridge contractual gaps.

A decade ago, AIA National and AIA California Council invested heavily in developing a new contractual structure intended to alleviate the most fundamental tensions in conventional project delivery by creating an alternative approach: Integrated Project Delivery (IPD). IPD is a holistic approach that redefines the project development framework to support a cooperative and collaborative process among owner, architect, and builder. AIA prepared the IPD “family” of contracts to support this new project delivery approach. (AIA Standard Forms A195, A295, etc.)

Adoption of the IPD system has been slow. There has been concern across the industry about IPD, including the Single Purpose Entity (SPE) and other provisions that are understood to limit legal recourse. While these concerns miss the forest for the trees, the IDP approach has not achieved the desired transformation.
AIA should not be discouraged. There remain opportunities to encourage the adoption of IPD by seeking potential adopters (like government entities and other large portfolio owners), educating AIA members, and building AIA's relationship with AGCA and others. As 2018 AIA President I will work with you to advocate for broader adoption of IPD and increase efforts to understand and overcome the perceived shortcomings of IPD. The principles of IPD are sound.

OUTREACH to our communities.
The AIA has made a significant commitment and investment in public outreach efforts. How can the AIA leverage this initiative and empower both local components and individual members with the tools to be integral players in their local communities?

Response:

While most architects applaud the ilookup campaign, there is also broad recognition that a national advertising program is only part of an effective public outreach strategy. The greatest potential for public outreach is at the local level where architects and citizens can engage in relevant and meaningful community issues.

One approach that has been proposed is to modify the ilookup commercials locally. This scenario imagines the substitution of a brief locally-relevant segment into the ilookup commercials developed by AIA National. The question about this approach is when and where such local adaptations would be viewed: linked to chapter and community websites? distributed through social media? Buying airtime is out of reach for most local components.

Another approach that has gotten considerable attention is to incentivize the development of many more Centers for Architecture (CFA). The CFA initiative was addressed at the Big Sibs meeting in Detroit. A “white paper” resulted. Discussions about advancing the initiative into a formal proposal for the AIA National Board are underway.

Centers are an extremely effective means for public outreach, providing a broad spectrum of opportunities to engage the public and an effective forum for promoting the impact of architects in the local community. Sustaining Centers financially and programmatically remains a challenge and more needs to be done to assure their viability. AIA National must play a role.

To date, all eleven CFA’s are located in large urban areas, the smallest being Austin; therefore, it will be important to develop ways to scale Centers down for smaller chapters. One approach may be to create Centers that are “programmatic” rather than “brick & mortar” locations.

It has been a decade since the AIA150 program was implemented. I served as “champion” for the AIA Potomac Valley Chapter Greener Greenbelt Initiative, which is still bearing fruit in the Greenbelt community today. Just as importantly, the Initiative engaged our architectural community and strengthened the chapter substantially.

The 2018 AIA Convention will be conducted in New York City, the largest media market globally. We have the opportunity to make it a threshold event that announces the evolving value of architecture to the world. No matter how powerful this one-time event proves to be, its impact would be multiplied many times by implementing a program modeled after the AIA150 Initiative that translates the vision expressed at the 2018 Convention through locally-relevant chapter activities across the nation.

As 2018 AIA President I will work with you to connect national public outreach to local efforts, particularly through the continued development and support of Centers for Architecture and exploring the potential for a nation-wide program modeled after the AIA150 Initiative to follow the 2018 Convention.

Enhancing MEMBER VALUE.
AIA’s recent Member Needs Survey indicated a strong connection between member engagement and member value. For many members who access the organization primarily at their local component, providing opportunities to demonstrate member value is challenging given the ongoing struggle for resources. How can the AIA support local components’ efforts to increase member awareness to engage the organization?

Response:

Over the past three years, during my term on the AIA National Board of Directors and Strategic Council, perhaps the most difficult and divisive debates occurred over the findings and proposals of the Member Services Resource Task Force (MSRTF). One focus of the MSRTF was the distribution of more than Four Million Dollars of non-dues revenue from AIA National to local chapters.

This substantial monetary distribution was established many years ago when chapters served as the conduit for selling paper copies of AIA Contracts. As documents were increasingly distributed electronically, the purpose and equity of the monetary distribution was questioned.

In 2014, the AIA National Board voted to accept the MSRTF recommendations to phase out revenue sharing and tie any remaining distribution to chapters that demonstrate their ability to provide the full spectrum of “core” services to their members. (I voted to support the recommendations.) State chapters were placed at the center, initiating the review of core services among local chapters and negotiating the distributions of funds from National within the state.

In my conversations as a candidate with chapters around the country, with few exceptions I have heard two points repeated: first, were initial concerns over the burden of documenting chapter performance; second, in the end, were positive results including improved core services, better communication and cooperation among components, and reduced operational costs. By my unofficial reckoning, the program has been a success.

Into the future, it is important for AIA National to play an active role in assuring that state and local components understand what performance standards they are expected to meet and help resource chapters to provide services members want and need. Today, this is being done through direct staff support, providing standards and guidelines, coordinating peer-to-peer exchange, and monetary support through grants and other incentives. While things can always be improved, by my unofficial survey as a candidate, chapter support from AIA National is working better than ever before.

This said, most state and local chapters remain very concerned about the net loss of revenue. Some chapters stand to lose 20% to 30% of their annual budget. Uncertainty this year, both in terms of revenue amount and timing, has created great difficulty for some chapters, casting a shadow over an otherwise successful program.

Even though chapters may no longer be actively selling documents, local chapters are still AIA’s “sales force”, the face of AIA in the local A/E/C industry, and laboratories for innovation. There should be incentives, including monetary incentives, for AIA chapters that promote the architectural profession in their communities and enhance the value of AIA membership. As 2018 AIA President I will work with you to promote equitable and effective means to incentivize exemplary local and state chapters. Support for Centers for Architecture noted above is one specific program. There should be others.