



How Do You Measure Up to What Matters Now?

In preparing to teach the **Industry Forecast** and **Strong Chambers of the Future** courses for the [Institute of Organization Management](#), a U.S. Chamber of Commerce program for association professionals, I explored the thinking of other “thought leaders” in the industry to see how it concurs with my perspectives. As a national faculty member, I feel it’s our role to bring forward the best of our traditions while ensuring that the industry thrives going forward.

I really like Jeff De Cagna’s blogs because his thinking pushes the envelope even more than I am bold enough to do (and I’m pretty bold in my messages!) His e-book [Associations Unorthodox](#) struck a chord with me as he challenged associations to rethink how they deliver value to stakeholders. Some of Jeff’s quotes from the book really make one think:

- *“What assets, capabilities and resources does your association have available to create radical new value for its current and future stakeholders?”*
- *“With more real-time data, what kinds of ‘smart value’ could your association create for its current and future stakeholders?”*

Demand Perspective is another blog I follow and Anna Caraveli is also on the same wavelength about the need for associations to reconnect with members and consider how to deliver value in a changing landscape. In her blog post [Seven Warning Signs of Decline](#), she shares how the demise of associations is akin to what Gary Hamel shared in his book, [What Matters Now: How to Win in a World of Relentless Change, Ferocious Competition, and Unstoppable Innovation](#). Gary’s seven signs of decline include:

1. **Gravity wins:** sticking with things that are no longer successful as the easiest and most familiar course of action. Force of habit wins.
2. **Strategies die:** e.g. they are replicated, superseded, eviscerated, etc. [Asking the same questions](#) you have been asking for the last decade; answering them with the same strategies and expecting different results.
3. **Inflexible business systems:** when an organization’s focus is on maintaining and fine-tuning its current systems rather than innovating, reconfiguring and adapting.
4. **Fossilized mental models:** over the years “what was once the best way, becomes the only way.”

5. **Abundant resources:** when the emphasis is on more of the same -programs, staff etc. – rather than on better strategy and solutions. “..Affluence dulls the appetite for innovation.”
6. **Contentment and entitlement:** no hunger for new knowledge; no sense of urgency or drive for innovation.
7. **Defensive thinking:** defending the status quo takes priority over learning, improving and innovating; and the organization takes priority over its customers.

I see the parallels of thinking with other industries in associations, do you? I realize that in my classes at Institute there would be some professionals who want to maintain the current association mental model. There are also those who are either younger or enlightened who believe that real change is needed to build a new mental model that will serve a more diverse membership over the next decade and beyond.

For my classes, I use the “Big Question” technique from scenario planning to drive discussion and to challenge current thinking. Some of the questions proposed by Jeff in his newest blog post [Asking Different Questions](#) created some good ‘food for thought’ in my classes in Madison in June. Maybe they’ll be good discussion starters for your next staff meeting or two!

- *What will it take for our association to thrive over the next decade and beyond?*
- *What will our stakeholders need to thrive over the next decade and beyond?*
- *Why should our current and future stakeholders want to have a relationship with our association?*

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