



Photo: PCI

Thinking in the Future Tense

William Nickas, *Editor-in-Chief*

At two separate, transportation-related meetings in 2013, engineers in attendance heard addresses by futurists. I thought, “What an intriguing career!” My mind began to speculate, “Do they really predict the future? Can they help a person regarding a career or personal decision? Do they have insight into investing?”

Exploring the subject a little further, I found a book by a well-respected futurist, the late Dr. Edward B. Lindaman. Dr. Lindaman had an earlier, 22-year-long career as director of program planning for the design and manufacture of the Apollo spacecraft at Rockwell International. In his book, *Thinking in the Future Tense*, Lindaman wrote: “It used to be that the future, like the weather, was something that everybody talked about but that remained totally beyond human control. Today, we not only dream about the future, worry over it, save for it, and invest in it; we also are consciously and unconsciously creating our future. The future may be very different from today. The future will be what we make of it. What a revolutionary idea!”*

Futurists work beyond horizons of 20 or 30 years, where it is a real challenge to imagine the future. Working with futurists and through various leadership exercises, organizations can avoid becoming stale and complacent, thus creating an environment of growth and creativity.

Often we map out a week, a month, or even a year’s worth of goals and tasks. The longer the scope of the plan, the more we need to build in contingencies. Often, we evaluate more than one possible scenario and the range of responses to each. This is preparation for change and consciously creating the future.

The construction industry is constantly coping with change and managing expectations—future outcomes. Those who are not prepared, often suffer very expensive consequences.

In my editorial in the Summer 2013 issue of *ASPIRE*,™ “Do Not Let the Perfect Be the Enemy of Good,” I proposed some thoughts about dealing with planning and change in our industry.

Then, in the Fall 2013 issue, “You Better Have Teamwork, or You Better Be Perfect,” I presented my observations about the need to be a part of a well-functioning team that grows, tests concepts, evaluates ideas, and delivers the best possible product.

So, the latest change for *ASPIRE* became obvious: An extended FOCUS series starting in this issue of *ASPIRE*.

For too long, the pages of *ASPIRE* have overlooked the bridge builder as an integral part of the team! Yes, often project articles have included an author who represented the contractor and much attention was paid to ensure accurate reporting on the contractor participants in each project. But, we have yet to feature a contractor in these pages.

The Editorial Advisory Board and all the supporting associations agreed to alternate the FOCUS series between contractors and consultants. With this issue, *ASPIRE* presents its first contractor company profile. I hope you are as excited as I am about glimpsing inside the minds of concrete bridge builders as they apply new materials and create new techniques to build our nation’s infrastructure and deliver the community icons from high-performance concrete. **A**

*Lindaman, Edward B. 1978. *Thinking in the Future Tense* (pp. 15-16). Broadman Press, Nashville, TN. 192 pp.



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Cover

To build 554 bridges as part of Missouri’s “Safe & Sound” Bridge Improvement Program, Kiewit teamed with Traylor Bros. Inc. and United Contractors Inc. to build a new bridge every 1.6 working days for 3.5 years. For more information on Missouri’s “Safe & Sound” program, see the state article featuring Missouri in the Spring 2013 issue of *ASPIRE*.

Photo: Kiewit.

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