

Lessons
in Leadership:
Buckle Up,
Speed is Coming:
The Urgency of
Adaptability, By
David B. Sarnoff.

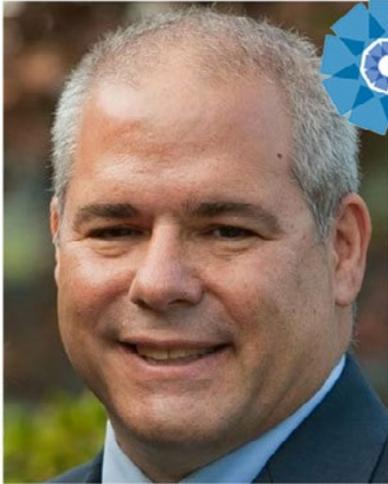
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In early November, the National Academy of Engineering (“NAE”) and several sponsors hosted a workshop entitled the Adaptability of the US Engineering and Technical Workforce. The workshop was inspired by an NAE report, *Making Value for America: Embracing the Future of Manufacturing, Technology and Work*, co-edited by Nicholas M. Donofrio and Kate S. Whitehead. Mr. Donofrio, an IBM Fellow Emeritus and EVP Innovation and Technology (Ret), is at the forefront of sounding the alarm that America must make urgent changes in education, workforce training and leadership development in order to stem the adaptability deficit facing our country. The purpose of the workshop was to raise awareness and address the complex issues surrounding workforce adaptability. The approximately two dozen panelists and speakers expressed concern and highlighted the critical need for action to address workforce and education adaptability.

The kickoff keynote address was given by Frans Johansson, CEO, of the Medici Group. The Medici Group is a management consultancy that helps organizations learn how to innovate. Mr. Johansson gave an energetic and dynamic speech about the speed of change in the workplace and society. He also made an interesting observation that with change comes disruption to industry, and the disruption may come from unexpected places. As an example, Mr. Johansson described how Nokia had dominated the cell phone industry for many years. They were experts on all things cell phone; size, shape, color and ringtone. Yet, it was Apple,

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a computer company, with relatively little prior experience in the phone industry, that was the disrupter and caused a revolution.

Mr. Johansson emphasized that change is coming, and it will be rapid. He indicated that the operative word is speed. Speed will be the new intellectual property, making patents less important in the future. Our challenge as a nation will be to train our students and workforce to be nimble and have the mindset to adapt to the speed of change. He believes that it is critical to the U.S. economy and security to act on this immediately. Global competition is accelerating at a faster pace and the United States must bring this issue to the forefront of its business and education priority list.

Data is king. Panelist at the workshop discussed that by 2020, approximated 44 billion terabytes of data will be accumulated by corporations. It is the applied analytics of this data that will change the markets across the industrial and corporate spectrum. In the next decade, it is projected, that there will be a disruption of almost 50% of current jobs, as well as, the creation of many jobs that do not currently exist. With the increasing assistance of intelligent machines and artificial intelligence, data is being converted to knowledge and those that are harnessing and applying it are driving change.

Mr. Donofrio is concerned for the American workforce, because approximately one-half of the population does not attend college. One of the big challenges is how to get these workers the right skillset and determine where the workflow needs are to employ them. A value strategy for the United States must be implemented and time is of the essence. As Mr. Donofrio stated, "If nothing changes. . . nothing changes."

According to Greg Dudkin, President of PPL Electric Utilities, adaptability requires curiosity, humility and being open to new ideas. Further, adaptability requires continuous learning. Robert Johnson, Chancellor at UMass Dartmouth, said that we need to foster an "agile mindset." He continued, we need to educate young people to be more like operating systems than an individual app. Students need to possess problem solving skills and be flexible to where workflow creates opportunities. Guy Berger, an economist with LinkedIn, added that time is not our friend because speed will be everything. He also explained that there are billions of dollars in unrecognized revenue in the US economy due to a lack of adaptability.

Several of the presenters at the workshop stated that there needs to be an honest conversation to help people in the workforce to understand that there is a new reality and it requires action. Technology is gutting industries and we must address how our country will adjust and adapt to changes.

Leadership drives culture and there must be room to allow people to fail or they will be reluctant to try anything new. Mr. Johansson illustrated this point by stating that Rovio, the inventors of the highly successful video game Angry Birds had developed dozens of other

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games prior to developing that one. If they were afraid to fail, they would not have created Angry Birds. He explained that we should not be teaching our children to seek perfection, but rather teach them to explore, be creative and to learn from their failures.

According to Ernest Wilson, a professor at USC, the skills for adaptability require 360-degree thinking, empathy and intellectual curiosity. Someone who is successful at adaptability, sees the relationships between groups. The more one is aware of change in their work environment, the more one wants to adapt.

Adaptability is not only biological, but cultural as well. Workers, students and leadership need to be convinced that adaptability is demanded in an uncertain world. Leadership training should focus on tactics to improve the soft skills of empathy, collaboration, humility and problem solving. Leadership needs to explain throughout their organizations why we need to change. Adaptability is a multidimensional constant and it needs to be addressed in the classroom, workplace, state houses and in Washington, DC. It should be a non-partisan issue, but it is not being given the urgency that is demanded to prepare our country for the drastic changes that are upon us. Buckle up.

David B. Sarnoff, Esq. is a legal recruiter, career coach and leadership consultant. He is the Principal of Sarnoff Group LLC. He has over eighteen (18) years of experience as a recruiter and career counselor. He has placed partners, counsels, associates and groups into law firms. He has also placed attorneys into companies and hedge funds in many cities. He has been a frequent presenter to various Bar Associations on recruiting, career coaching, marketing and branding for attorneys. Feel free to contact David for a confidential conversation at 646.665.4899 or david@sarnoffgroup.com. David also practiced at a New York law firm in the areas of complex commercial litigation and white-collar defense. He is a member of the Board of Education in Fort Lee, NJ and currently serves as the Board President.



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