AIA Town Hall Forum Summary of Discussion

At the Town Hall Forum, AIA Minnesota President-Elect Steve Fiskum, AIA, provided an overview of the national and Minnesota AIA Strategic Plans. AIA CEO Chris McIntee provided her overview of the current state of the profession and confirmed the estimate that total fees, and therefore total employment was down 25% from the 2007 peaks. After a review of the Carlson School Report, those present were asked to discuss the following questions at their respective tables, and to report back to the large group at the end.

Questions:

1. How will our profession change over the next few years and next decade?
2. What are some game changing ideas?
3. What can individuals and firms do to increase their value?
4. What can the AIA do to help?

Here are some selected responses to these questions:

*How will our profession change over the next few years and next decade?*

- Technology (BIM, Internet, etc.) will change our work. We will need fewer staff and face global competition.
- Executing CD’s will become a smaller part of our work.
- The current generation of young architects could be lost to the profession due to lack of jobs.
- Maintaining fair fees for our valuable work will be a constant challenge.
- More special consultants will compete for part of the fee in the future.

*What are some game changing ideas?*

- Architects should become bankers, or at least get to know and work with bankers who loan on commercial real estate projects.
- Reverse engineer technology (asset databases, BIM, etc.) from the building owner’s point of view to see how we can craft the full life cycle of tech tools to create value for the owner.
- Create a TV reality show about what architects do that will attract and educate viewers.
- Develop detailed metrics that explain how the operational efficiency of a building over its
lifetime is a much more important financial issue than its first cost. Show how architects can create this value.

What can individuals and firms do to increase their value?

- Sharpen and improve your valuable core services.
- Know your clients and their needs. Tailor your skills to those needs.
- Strengthen your partnerships with other key members of the constructions process - contractors, consultants, developers, etc.
- Improve your business and numerical skills. Work with metrics, understand financial analysis, learn the business model of your clients.
- Train your staff in categories of specialized knowledge so that you can provide a wider range of services to match owners’ needs.
- Partner or merge with other small firms to share resources and expand services.
- Work to become the closest advisor to the client. Develop and market your project management capabilities. Become experts at asset management and reducing building operational expenses.
- Learn how to use BIM within an integrated approach to projects. Share the model, resolve registration and certification issues, provide value to the contractor and owner.

What can the AIA do to help?

- Create a framework for maximizing the value of new technologies. Resolve legal and registration issues. Show how value can be created.
- Develop a clear and repeatable survey structure that provides regular metrics about our profession and the changing needs and attitudes of our clients.
- Promote the profession with our potential clients. Show how we provide value and use proper media channels to reach the right audiences.
- Reconsider whether we should develop a strategy for establishing certifications in sub-specialties that are important within the building process. Could the AIA certify project managers, owner’s reps, programming specialists in specific building types, etc.? Should we establish an interior design certification for architects?
- Provide educational opportunities in the specialized areas that our clients want and where we feel unprepared.
- Provide educational opportunities about business issues that affect our firms - legal issues, employment law, business strategies, expense reduction, etc.