



Visualizing a Virtual Metro Area

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Epiphany

The Winter Olympics in South Korea and two recent trips have triggered a renewed interest in regional development. In full disclosure, while once involved in governmental systems (Ref: A, below), my passion is a Competitive America, resource stewardship, Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP), LEAN methodology, and a clean, green world.

The first epiphany was watching the fantastic technological [opening](#) of the Olympics with the [super-modern drones](#). Most impressive was the [young team from Intel](#) that made and presented it. The second was visiting Hawaii, and then Seattle, two similar yet very different locations. The third was an accidental meeting with the type of person every viable region requires.

There are two PowerPoint presentations on [CompetitiveAmerica.us](#) dealing with regional groups (Ref: B) below. Both require upgrades but there is keen interest in the subject, and they have downloaded hundreds of times every month.

http://competitiveamerica.us/publications/New_North.pdf, and
http://competitiveamerica.us/publications/Regional_Collaboration.pdf.

My early conclusion is that most regions, like most individuals, are UNPREPARED FOR THE DIGITAL DISRUPTION and ultimately destined for the backwaters of time. Think about YOUR community. Is it in better shape?

Situational statement-the digital disruption

The digital disruption is the technological merger of the Internet, robotics, and artificial intelligence. Integrated microchips power the Internet of Things (IoT) and the Industrial Internet of things (IIoT). IoT includes various consumer products, such as Smartphones, changing how core transactions like scanned payment, take place. These technologies and products have modified human behavior. Technological transformation in the business place is pervasive.

The digital disruption resulted in the rapid connecting of everything. The Smartphone personalized the Internet. The constant connection among Millennials changed the way we communicate, and how we approach problem-solving. Both formal and informal natural organic-like self-managed teams have replaced the individualistic style of earlier generations.

Technology has created a digital clone of each of us that interacts in a connected world. We, as individual humans, cease to exist in the traditional sense of the word. Our digital clones are transparent, and while identified by sex and sometimes by race or religion, the computers controlling our future are indifferent. Any interaction between the clones is insensitive to human bias unless programmed to recognize it. Data are fungible. Persons with access to the data determine its usage.

The disruption places a high priority on education, more specifically for STEM and digital science graduates. The development of automated processes, products, and methods, including sophisticated forms of visualization and analytics are highly integrative in both data and human terms.

I am not going to rehash the implications of these massive social and technical transformations. To gain a deeper understanding of cause and consequences, please go to Ref: B at the end of this newsletter.

Regional development

Regional development is the lifeblood of the future for American cities. From my perspective, the cities in the Wisconsin River Valley, including Wausau, Rothschild, Weston, Stevens Point, Marshfield, etc. while focused on local development, are failing to develop the strategies and tactics necessary for future viability. For example, collectively, the population of the Wisconsin River Valley is much less than the city of Seattle. Acting alone, none of these entities is large enough to devote the resources needed to provide the infrastructure that Millennials and high-tech workers not only expect but demand.

Skilled worker availability will continue to be problematic, and those graduates from local colleges and technical schools will take those skills to communities offering the lifestyle they want. The consequences are economic stagnation and life in the backwaters of the digital disruption.

For readers in other areas and states, use this discussion to evaluate where your region is at on the development scale. While there are hundreds of groups, few are having a long-range economic impact. The second problem is the very late awakening and the [consequences of falling behind](#). IT MAY BE TOO LATE TO CATCH UP.

Lessons learned from Hawaii and Seattle

Both Hawaii and Seattle have an impressive number of diversified young people, all integrated, and all connected. You can feel the life and the viability they bring. The degree to which the state and cities have gone to provide the needed support systems is staggering. There are high tech collaborative work facilities, both formal like Microsoft, and entrepreneurial centers. Additionally, there are abundant places to gather in work/social context. Bicycle and hiking trails network the area. There are things for young

people to do. The educational opportunities are exhaustive. The green philosophy is pervasive. The entire atmosphere is one of inclusion, with something for everyone.

When touring the beautiful Chihuly Garden and Glass museum in Seattle, I met a young person, Amanda, who works for Amazon. Her job is to develop strategic startups. We briefly discussed the digital disruption, blockchain, and the future of work. Amanda was very impressive, putting a face on the high-tech company. They are brick and mortar in addition to being virtual organizations, but mostly they are composed of knowledgeable and highly educated and motivated young people. She represents the type of talent that regional groups must attract in abundance. They will determine the location for business development at a corporate level, or as an entrepreneur for high-tech start-ups. Those startups will only be in regions where everything they need is connected, instantly available, and green.

Extra Lessons Learned from Hawaii

Hawaii is not just a state; it is a collection of islands in a vast ocean, each with different attractions. Collectively, it is an iconic travel location. As separate islands, there would be less travel. The people like Seattle, are diverse and integrated, attracting people from all over the world.

My observations

Jim Warsaw, the Executive Director of MCDEVCO, the Marathon County regional development group, sent me a copy of the Metro Region Economic Development Assessment 2017. In reading through the material and thinking about Seattle and Hawaii, it is apparent the commission, while working hard and focused on the parameters of the project, may be fighting a war against impossible odds. The problem is not desire or passion, but geography and the degree of political commitment.

Wausau and immediate area equate to an island, the largest in a chain comprising the Wisconsin River Valley. All are isolated from the nearest mainland of technology, Minneapolis, by 200 miles or more. Madison is in many ways an island, but as the state capital and home of the University of Wisconsin, it has diversity and power. The Northwood's are the playground not just for Wisconsinites, but people from cities like Chicago. These visitors, by definition, are potential entrepreneurs who want a slower pace of life without giving up any conveniences, or future employees looking for a job in a people-friendly place. That means embracing, not just accepting diversity.

Virtual Metro Area

Part of the issue is how to connect the Wisconsin River Valley cities into a virtual metro-area.

I believe that alone, none of the Wisconsin River Valley areas has the resources to become everything to everyone, but collectively, they have significant potential. I will give you an example. An integrated calendar of events between the Performing Arts Foundation, UWMC, and UW Stevens Point expands the regional attraction to the arts. Another example is coordination between the universities, technical schools, high schools, business establishments, and government entities with [MFGDAY](#).

The Wisconsin River connects many of these cities and offers abundant potential green and recreational opportunities aimed at today's workforce. The downtown Wausau river district is a prime example, but it needs an entrepreneurial center connected to the other island cities. A virtual metro means that everything is connected and business is seamless across the eco-system. That brings up a critical issue.

Broadband

The more significant problem, from my perspective, is the failure to provide the finances for installing Broadband all the way across the north. Nothing screams "BACKWARDS" at a higher pitch than neglecting to provide this necessity for doing business. In today's coupled world, work happens everywhere, and that includes sitting on a deer stand, or using GPS to optimize land usage.

It will be impossible to build a virtual metro central Wisconsin without a significant investment in information infrastructure. Broadband is a start, but other applications, such as fiber optics, must carry the high transmission volumes involved with advanced technology. These will service high tech startups, universities, business enterprises, and manufacturing companies that use advanced technology for design, production, and business integration across the globe.

Everyone, the Planning Commission, Universities, business, and citizens need to speak out and insist that Broadband receives a high priority, and to do it NOW. The future of our region depends on it.

Core issues:

1. Is it more advantageous to develop a core island? The implication is that we can be all things.
2. Document the risk and opportunities associated with a virtual island concept (SWOT Analysis). What actions are required to stay viable?
3. Establish a plan for making the playground of the North an integrative extension of the connected lifestyle. For example-can I run a Wausau based virtual business while at a cottage in Tomahawk by hooking up, sending, and receiving high volumes of data to a Chinese distributor? Implicit is the capability of storing the data seamlessly in the cloud and on the Wausau system.
4. Find out if other cities are interested in the concept and at what level of participation.
5. Differentiate and develop an island chain, each with its personality, attributes, and attractions.
6. Determine if the islands connect to larger cities such as Madison, Green Bay development, etc. or remain independent.

The questions

These are all binary issues-Yes or No. We have to ask our regional planning commissions, government officials, and ourselves:

1. Are the strategies and tactics bold enough to create a new paradigm and get the job done?
2. Are we willing to commit the resources?
3. Will hard decisions be made?
4. Will we define the hard tasks and take the necessary actions to make them a reality?
5. Will we stand up and be accountable?

If not, future generations will continue going to cities like Seattle where the jobs and opportunities are, while our regions slowly stagnate.



Best regards,

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<http://www.competitiveamerica.us/>

Ref: A - Resumes

[Business and Professional Resume](#)

[Governmental resume](#)

I served on the Regional Data Commission for eleven years, one year as the Chairman, helping preserve the centrality of the center. As a member of the Governmental Study Group chaired by Mort McBain we took a comprehensive look at the composition of the county board. I was a member of the New North Regional group comprised of eighteen counties in eastern Wisconsin.

Ref: B [Additional reading about the digital disruption](#)

[Keep Up, Not Catch Up](#)

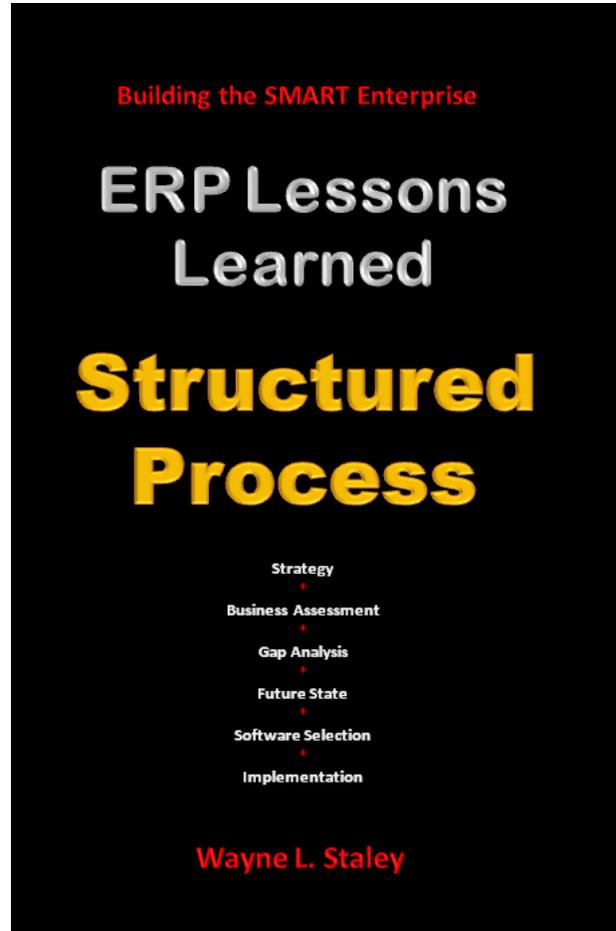
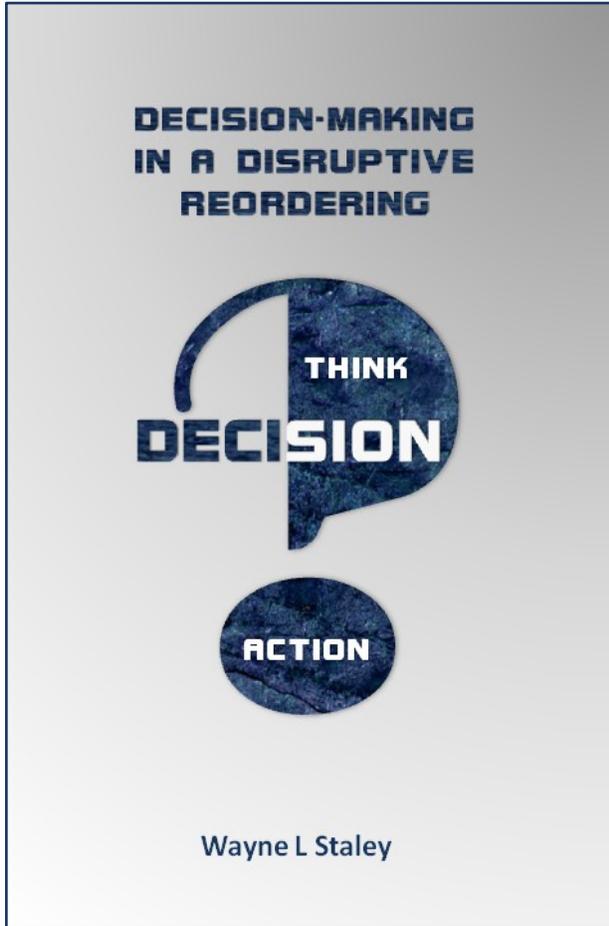
[The New Change Journey](#)

[Habits, Portals, and Business Opportunities](#)

[Change at the Edge of Chaos and Order](#)

[Data Rules](#)





[Decision-making in a Disruptive Reordering](#)

[ERP Lessons Learned at Amazon.com](#)

