



AIA

Michigan

The American Institute of Architects

President's Report - December 2020

In early December I attended a couple of great leadership conferences. The first was the AIA Large states conference. The 8 largest states by AIA membership come together to discuss issues that can be more easily prioritized and forwarded to the AIA National leadership. The second was Catalyst University a regional leadership conference held in Kalamazoo annually. This year's event was held as an all live but virtual event. The speakers included Jon Acuff, Patrick Lenzioni and Tom Izzo.

There was a consistent theme that emerged from the two conferences. Thinking and making decisions for the long term allows three important characteristics to become strengths: endurance, flexibility, and compassion.

Endurance is the power to get through a difficult process or situation without giving up. Working through this pandemic has been an exercise in endurance.

Organizations that think in the long term incorporate ways to be resilient. We have learned how to navigate differently. Someday became today. In our AIA Michigan strategic plan a year ago, we talked about someday having the right technology so we could host committee meetings virtually. Someday became today. We thought how great it would be if in two years we could have a session or two live streamed so we could get greater participation to the Health Care conference and the Mid-summer conference live streamed for several of its sessions. This year's entire leadership retreat, and the design retreat were entirely virtual. As we plan for next year, we hope we can continue to offer a combination of in person and virtual experiences for all our members as we hope to return to in person events by the end of the year.

Flexibility the quality of bending easily without breaking. We survived this year through our willingness to change and compromise. I know Cathy and the AIA Michigan staff, with the AIA committees learned many valuable lessons from the design retreat. Within a week they were already adjusting to how we could and should put on the AIA Honor and Recognition Awards. Adjusting on the fly, asking the questions on how we can improve. The fastest path to flexibility is curiosity.

An interesting business report was shared at the Catalyst conference. Mask wearing has become a new fashion statement as the study revealed that lip stick sales were down 30% this year, while eye makeup sales were up 60%. A fun example of how masks have driven a change in focus on beauty. Ask questions and be flexible.

Compassion defined by Jon Acuff is Kindness + Action. Being flexible and compassionate by asking what our members need now. Do we raise dues or allow a temporary deferral for those who have struggled until all sectors of the economy can rebound? How can we collaborate better between local chapters, state chapters and even AIA national in a way that is collaborative and not competitive? How can we create opportunities for architecture students who have seen their internships evaporate, or for emerging professionals who are working to improve their leadership and professional skills through efforts such as the CKLDP (Christopher Kelly Leadership Development Program) and keep it relevant. How do we make real progress on creating opportunities for making the profession of architecture accessible to all people?

We still face a great deal of uncertainty as we look ahead to 2021. Endurance, flexibility, and compassion will help lead us to solutions to our most challenging issues as a profession.

Thank you to our many AIA Michigan members who generously shared important information on navigating through these unprecedented times. Thank you to the AIA Michigan Board of Directors and the AIA Michigan staff: Elizabeth Mosley, Evelyn Dougherty, and Cathy Mosley for your exceptional work and continued commitment this year.

It has been a privilege serving you as AIA Michigan president.

Onward to 2021! Happy New Year!

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