
CLOSING COMMENTS AND FINAL OBSERVATIONS

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Excerpts from a speech delivered by Jerr Boschee
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Hello, again . . . and thank you for letting me be part of this wonderful session . . .

You know, his colleagues frequently chided Albert Einstein for using the same examinations year after year for his classes at Princeton . . . but the criticism never bothered Professor Einstein. “The questions may be the same,” he’d say, “but the *answers* are different.”

And isn't that where we find ourselves today in community economic development, in nonprofits, in everything that we do? The challenges are still the same: to serve people, to serve more of them, to do it better. But the ways of doing it are very different, and I want to leave you today with five words that represent a lot of what I heard coming from a number of different places over the last day and a half. I'll spend most of my time on the first word because I believe it's the most critical.

The first word is “**BLINDERS.**” Think about that word. So many people during the last day and a half talked about perceptions. Perception is reality, we all know that, and many of you have probably heard about Joel Barker's work in the field of paradigms. He's written books about it, he's done videos about it, corporations have made his video on paradigms the best-selling training video in the world.

His definition of a paradigm is very simple: it's something that enables us to make sense of the world. It takes all the incoming data, sorts it into categories and helps us make sense of it. Very useful. At the same

time, very dangerous, because it gives us blinders, and ***we begin to interpret all that incoming data according to what we think we already know***, and we put the information into categories we think we already understand completely.

Unfortunately, when we start trying to form partnerships, whether it's with a corporation or simply between two people in the community, we come to each other with blinders. We have preconceived notions about our potential partners. You heard a number of corporate people the last couple of days, and you heard a number of community people, talk about what happens when we fail to remove those blinders. Community people start feeling as if they're being talked down to and dictated to by the corporations . . . and corporate people feel as if we think they don't have values, that they don't have a social conscience. Everybody gets edgy and upset . . .

These kinds of blinders can be exceedingly dangerous for us, and I've felt a palpable hunger on the part of the people in this room to be understood by the corporations of the world, the politicians of the world. "Look at us," we're saying, "feel us, see us, know us, understand us, care about us -- this isn't just about you!" But the blinders others are wearing mean they frequently have low expectations of you . . . and the expectations *you* have of *them* are frequently, "They're not going to understand, they're not going to come through for us, we can't trust them, we can't depend on them."

It really *is* about trust. Many people have said that over the past day-and-a-half, and the thing that gets in the way of trust are the blinders we wear . . . and we ***all*** wear them. Each of us needs some way to figure out what's happening . . . so we create our own paradigms and, inevitably, our own set of blinders.

We have to take them off when we come to the partnership table. We have to be open to the humanity of the person sitting across that table, regardless of whether that person comes from a corporation, a government agency, a foreign country, another city, wherever it might be. "Blinders" is the first word I'd like you to remember.

The second word is “**ABUNDANCE.**” Enough of negativity! Enough of talking about what's wrong with our communities! I heard you say that over and over again during the last day and a half. Let's talk about our assets. Let's talk about the value we bring to the table, “the table of prosperity,” as our friend called it this morning. The power that lies within each of you, within each of us, to make a difference in our communities.

The third word is “**RISK.**” A lot of what you will attempt to do, as I said yesterday morning, will fail. But you *must* reach out there, you *must* find the courage, you *must* reach within yourself -- and then *start again* . . .

Edwin Land, who founded the company that eventually became Eastman Kodak, made a point a long time ago that I like. He said, “***You should never undertake a program unless the goal is manifestly important and achieving that goal is nearly impossible.***” Isn't that what we're all faced with in our communities? Take some risks. As somebody said yesterday, “think differently . . . be challenged . . . and then *act* differently.”

The fourth word I would like you to remember is the power of the word “**NO.**” Stop thinking about ourselves as if we're lugging around a begging bowl, waiting for somebody else to give us something . . . or, as Howard Snyder said yesterday, “taking anything we can get” rather than waiting for the things that bring value to our community and to which we can bring value.

Remember the power of thinking about yourselves as being the customers, not the buyers, in these partnerships. The power of being able to say to government, corporations, and other potential partners, “No, that's not good enough.” We can be selective. Howard talked about that yesterday. We can be the ones that decide for ourselves, rather than letting somebody else decide for us.

The last word I want you to remember is “**GLUE.**” Because in everything that goes on in our communities, whether it's housing, whether it's jobs,

whether it's retail banking, whether it's small business, there is a human element to all of it. An infrastructure that includes everyone in the community . . . the true glue for community economic development.

You -- each of you individually -- are the glue that holds all of this together. It's not some dictate from government, it's not a grant from a Foundation, it's not a corporation moving in or out of the community, it's each one of us. Each one of us adopting a relationship with one other person, and then one more person, and then one more person . . . that's the glue, the humanity that holds everything together. We are the glue, we are the ones who can make this happen. Nobody else. It comes down to us . . .

And I'd like to close by sharing with you four thoughts that have always inspired me . . .

Dream more than is practical . . .
expect more than is possible . . .
risk more than others say is safe . . .
and always, always, care more than others think is wise . . .

Thank you.