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# HARNESSING THE FUTURE: GETTING OUR ACT TOGETHER

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## **Dr. Roz Rosen, Keynote**

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## **Opening Remarks**

It is my pleasure to be here to present to you here in San Antonio, right after lunch. As the saying goes, when in San Antonio, do as San Antonians do, which means after fiesta, siesta!

So I may put you to sleep.

I had the good fortune to be born to a deaf family in New York City; my family instilled in me and my brother a love for both American Sign Language (ASL) and English via daily language access, storytelling and reading books. I also loved comic books and picking up language. I went to Gallaudet, the happy hunting grounds, as it was known 50 years ago, to find myself a husband, get barefoot in the kitchen and raise passels of kids. The world changed and we changed too. My first real job was as a vocational rehabilitation counselor, which was vastly more enriching than just book-learning about the wide diversity of the deaf community. My hat is off, with much admiration and appreciation, for all you folks in the service field – counselors, mental health workers, social workers, community and agency service providers. Thank you for all you do!

## **Introduction**

This presentation focuses on how to plan for the future and the rationale for doing so. Components of futures planning include analyses and knowledge of: trends, human rights, consumerism, educational and occupational goals, technological advents, and visionary and strategic futures planning tools.

## **The Future**

Futurists will inform you that there is not one future but many futures: 1) possible, 2) probable and 3) preferred. To wit, there are many possible futures,

some probable futures but just a few preferred futures. There are choices to be made. Not to choose your preferred future is in itself a choice. To achieve your preferred future, you must envision, analyze, strategize and implement plans, in collaboration with other stakeholders, assess progress and make modifications as needed. “The most reliable way to anticipate the future is by understanding the present,” proffers John Naisbitt, author of *Megatrends* (1980). This includes analyses and syntheses of current happenings gleaned through newspapers, the media, research, and other sources of information, to arrive at clusters of events and directions, thus framing trends.

A tourist was riding in a taxicab in Washington D.C., admiring the many monuments and the inscriptions on them. He noted one, “The Past is Prologue.” Not quite understanding, he asked the cabdriver for a translation, and the cabdriver responded, “I’m not sure but I think it means you ain’t seen nuttin’ yet!” The future definitely holds awesome changes for all of us. The last 25 dramatic years are a harbinger of the tremendous promises the future may bring.

It is interesting to note how intelligent industrial leaders have been proven so very wrong:

- “This ‘telephone’ has too many shortcomings to be seriously considered as a means of communication. It’s of no value to us.” – A memo at Western Union, 1878 (or 1876).
- “When the Paris Exhibition [of 1878] closes, electric light will close with it and no more will be heard of it.” – Oxford professor Erasmus Wilson
- “Heavier-than-air flying machines are impossible.” – Lord Kelvin, British mathematician and physicist, president of the British Royal Society, 1895.
- “The horse is here to stay but the automobile is only a novelty – a fad.” – The president of the Michigan Savings Bank advising Henry Ford’s lawyer, Horace Rackham, not to invest in the Ford Motor Co., 1903
- “The cinema is a fad, just a canned drama. Audiences prefer flesh and blood on the stage.” – Charlie Chaplin, actor, producer, director, and studio founder, 1916 “[Television] won’t last more than the first six months. People will not stare at a plywood box every night.” – Darryl Zanuck, movie producer, 20th Century Fox, 1946.
- “Why would anyone want a computer in their home?” – Ken Olson, president, chairman and founder of Digital Equipment Corp (DEC), maker of big business mainframe computers, opposing the PC in 1977.

- And the granddaddy of them all – “Everything that could be invented has been invented.” Patents Office Director, 1900s.

Also telling are those missed the opportunity to move to the next level and thus have fallen by the historical wayside. The gaslight company missed the next quantum leap, and shrugged off the possibilities of the light bulb. The Western Union Company neither invented nor incorporated the telephone and telephony. The horse buggy manufacturers did not transform into the automobile industry. The telephone company did not expand to include point to point computer networks. Nowadays it is essential to maintain an open mind for infinite spin-off possibilities.

Some current predictions in technology and biology (as noted on the website [www.futureforall.org](http://www.futureforall.org)) may not be far-fetched: Artificial intelligence; biotechnology (growing organs, manipulating DNA); designer babies or bodies; mind/emotion control; age reversal/eternal life; instant info; virtual info; wireless all-in-one devices; holographic messages; colonizing space; paperless/cashless; phone implants; merge of computers and brains; nanoscale computers; global network; robots everywhere to clean, care for all your needs at home and even serve as your partner; instant language translators; downloading brains; encoding yourself to live as a matrix in a computer, and self-driving or flying cars.

### **Megashifts in our Field**

What about predictions within the field of education and services within the deaf community? What did they think 30 years ago regarding “far-fetched notions” which are more or less today’s realities?

Could anyone have conceived that P.L. 94-142 (IDEA) would have flipped education of deaf students from 80% in special schools and programs for deaf students in 1980 to 80% in mainstream settings? That Gallaudet and NTID together would serve less than 10% of the national population of approximately 25,000 postsecondary deaf students? (However, the vast majority of deaf college graduates nowadays do graduate from those two colleges.) That communication and information access would increase exponentially through interpreters and technology? That interpreters would be provided at no cost to consumers for most situations and that there would be laptop computers, pagers and videophones nearly everywhere? That the

Americans with Disabilities Act would transform the face of public services and employment. That government support in terms of policy, funds and leadership would reduce so dramatically? That there would not be the likes of Boyce Williams and Mac Norwood in the leadership echelons of the government, to advocate for us? That there would be mega-shifts in ASL, culture and community, with growing respect and bodies of research in those fields? That ASL would be the third most used language in the United States, after English and Spanish? Fortunately, the fact of all this is that deaf person is more empowered today yet faces daunting challenges.

## **Groundswell for Change**

What may be some predictions for the year 2020 related to the Deaf community, access, education, employment and community services? These can be good, bad and/or ugly. It behooves us to begin envisioning and collaborating towards preferred futures. As Abraham Lincoln stated, the best way to predict your future is to create it.

A quick view of the megatrends can help us expedite and frame our thought stream. The shift from industrial to informational economy indicates the valuation of people over products. Diversity and globalism are very much in evidence in the U.S. We have clearly moved beyond standard answers to the knowledge that there are multi-alternatives. Instead of pathological paternalism, we seek and expect our human right to self-determination and partnerships. Rather than engage in provider-patient relationships, we expect rights and participation as consumers. “Nothing about us without us” is our mantra. In reviewing programs and processes, accountability for outcomes has replaced mere activities or progress. For success in communities and the marketplace, collaborations are more potent than competitions. We appreciate the need to move from silos to seamless webs of interdisciplinary, integrative, global solutions. Technological advances are impressive but “high-tech, high- touch” approaches or “humanity first” stances are viewed by corporations and communities as an increasingly paramount value. *Megatrends 2010* points out that “The most exciting break-through of the 21<sup>st</sup> century is not technology but the expanding concept of what it means to be human,” (Aburdene, 2005).

Demography is destiny. But more than that, people in the United States have become accustomed to diversity as a value rather than merely as a word. As explained in *Tipping Points* (Gladwell, 2000) converging forces create

situations which have become infectious and thus transformative in our society. Activists for civil rights in the 1950s and 1960s have made a number of litigative and legislative breakthroughs. Although these were momentous, they were not in themselves sufficient to breathe life into sleeping giants. More, much more breakthroughs were needed. The great divide and daily social injustice led to “Black Power” and clenched fists. Black Pride with its “Black is Beautiful” slogan emerged. More importantly, television shows in everyone’s living room portraying successful African Americans such as Bill Cosby, the Jeffersons, and Different Strokes have paved the way for greater social acceptance and consequently the United States’ first African American president. The National Theatre of the Deaf, Sesame Street, and Deaf West Theatre have and are doing a monumental job in promoting appreciation of the beauty and depth of ASL. Marlee Matlin has shown the world that deaf people are as capable as anyone else. Further groundwork and converging across disciplines can and will create paradigm shifts to actualize equality and equity for deaf and hard of hearing people in society, language acquisition, education, employment and community.

## **Technological Innovations**

What are the kinds of technologies available today and how has technology enabled advancement to the next level? The different tools for technologically enabled communication access today include: Real Time Captioning (CART, TypeWell), Remote Conference Captioning (RCC), handheld communication devices, computer supported discussions, assistive listening devices (ALDs) & CAPTEL, video remote interpreting (VRI), videophones and video relay services, using portable videophones, netbooks, laptops and desktops, VRI, video conferencing including web-supported conferencing with screens showing several people in remote locations at the same time such as e/pop, Smart Boards, Network System/Think Tank group processing, and online educational support. Innovative service providers have used technology to reach out to target audiences for less cost and individuals may wish to navigate the web to gain the needed information prior to subsequent meetings. For example, Ohio uses web-supported video conferencing to connect ASL users in a virtual Alcoholic Anonymous support meeting rather than having them travel great distances statewide for accessible meetings. The cost becomes incrementally less. The national postsecondary network, PEPNet, (2009) provides training and support services, online, in transition to professionals on using online iTransition tools for high school students which includes:

Career Interests and Education Choices: It's My Plan; First Year College Success: Be the One; Essential Skills for College Living: It's My Life; and eFolio: My Online Portfolio.

One of my best friends is Mr. Google. Millennial teenagers are technologically networked with variations of pagers, instant messaging, Twitter and Facebook. Distance education, electronic tutorial assistance and online help further interconnectivity and education. Technology is marvelous. I personally can't wait for my pocket hologram interpreter. However we need to go beyond "brick and click" systems and look at the knowledge and skills needed in people.

### **Educational and Employment Relations**

The federal department of Occupational Employment Statistics projections (2000-2010) explodes conventional curricula with the statement that "Knowledge in science and mathematics will be needed for 80% of the fastest growing jobs. A new definition of literacy is required for understanding documents and quantitative material."

We need to expand the definitions of literacies to include the current body of research on multiple functional literacies and intelligences to include: language and linguistics, numeracy and science, cultural, technological and interpersonal relationships (Seider, 2009). Federal Reserve chair Ben Bernanke adds financial literacy to important functional literacies, especially for minority and disadvantaged groups.

Expected competencies for students at the California State University, Northridge, wrap around the academic curriculum and encompass five additional common learning themes: Becoming One's Own Person, Achieving Capacity for Mutually Supportive Relationships, Demonstrating Social and Civic Responsibility, Utilizing Effective Thinking, and Applying Knowledge and Practical Competence. Each of these comes with its own set of learning outcomes and rubrics.

Education contributes not only to the desirable quality of life but also functions as an economic leverage, more so for the deaf person. According to the U.S. Department of Commerce, the American worker's average annual salary usually corresponds to the education level attained, as follows: \$19,000 for a high school dropout; \$26,200 for a high school graduate with

no postsecondary education; \$33,400 for an Associate's Degree; \$42,200 for a Bachelor's Degree; \$52,300 for a Master's Degree; \$70,700 for a Doctoral Degree; and \$81,500 for a Professional Degree. As former President Bill Clinton postulates, "The more you learn, the more you earn."

Research on educational achievements of deaf students continues to be discouraging. Only one out of three young people graduate from a residential school with an academic diploma (Schroedel & Watson, 1991). Thirty percent of deaf and hard of hearing high school leavers are eligible for community and four-year colleges; furthermore 70% of them drop out of college without receiving a degree (Bowe, 2003; Schroedel, Watson & Ashmore, 2003). The dire statistics should behoove advisors and rehabilitation counselors to recommend colleges which do offer programs with critical masses of deaf students, quality support services, and some direct communication courses and co-curricular student development programs. Economic changes, more now than ever before, will impact adversely upon educational success for students. Vocational rehabilitation counselors in California are encouraged to send students to lower-cost community colleges as a first choice. The "false" savings will result in high costs with drop outs, decreased self-esteem, and subsequent rehabilitation programs or welfare payments. It is far better to send those students to solid community colleges and four-year programs such as CSUN and others, where retention and graduation rates are proven. As graduates and employees, they will pay the state back manifold in taxes.

## **Human Rights, Education and Consumerism**

How should schools, agencies, consumers, families and policy makers collaborate on improving educational success for young deaf children? For enlightenment on appropriate pedagogies for deaf children, one may need to look beyond practices in this country to human rights on the international level. The 1987 Resolution of the World Federation of the Deaf (WFD) asserts: "The distinct national sign languages of indigenous deaf populations should be officially recognized as their natural language of right for direct communication... Teachers of the deaf are expected to learn and use the accepted indigenous sign language as the primary language of instruction." A WFD position paper in 2001 reaffirms: "Deaf children must have the same quality access to education as non-Deaf children. Furthermore, sign language (bilingualism) is their birthright." The United Nations in 2006 ratified the International Convention on Human Rights for Persons with Disabilities (2006), which unequivocally spells out the human right to sign language and

bilingual approaches in education for deaf and hard of hearing learners of all ages. Success for children requires a seamless system of educational support for deaf and hard of hearing infants with qualified bilingual professionals, both deaf and hearing.

Artist Maureen Klusza of [www.moeart.com](http://www.moeart.com) heartbreakingly illustrates in a cartoon the difference between two typical infants, one hearing who is signing gleefully and the other, deaf, with shackled hands. However, the bottom line is that the deaf child does not fail; the system fails the deaf child. A coalition in California is working on transforming policies and practices in early identification and intervention and in advocating for quality regionalized educational programs. Deaf people, ASL, culture and community are part of the vibrant mosaic of society in the United States. An understanding, appreciation and admiration of these will lead to greater acceptance and thus success for deaf children, their families and the profession. It does take a whole village to raise and to graduate a deaf student. A rising sea lifts all boats. How can the educational paradigm for deaf and hard of hearing students be changed? Habilitation now, not rehabilitation later.

## **Strategic Planning**

Where does one start in planning the future? Linear routes to the future are not possible. Out-of-box thinking and envisioning possible futures are essential. There are challenges, choices and changes to be made. Mutual goals and collaborations can bring the proverbial mountain to schools and programs. Central values need to guide the conversation. *Firms of Endearment* (Sisodia, 2007) illustrates the process of successful corporate changes; empathy, excellence and empowerment lead to engaging and enduring changes. Van Der Werff (1998) provides steps on harnessing the future. Aburdene (2005) expounds in *Megatrends 2010* that humanity (and human rights) needs to be the bottom line, essential for success. Guidelines need to be deaf-friendly, networked and system-focused.

- Clarify human rights, shared mission, vision and values; use as guides for planning and decision making.
- Create preferred futures and “what-if” scenarios. Likelihood-Impact analyses are helpful.
- Keep an open mind, listen, and learn from outsiders. Expect the unexpected.
- Create synergy via think-tanks, analyses of trends, current events, data & needs, collaborations and political coalitions.

- Value your associates and consumers.
- Maintain balance in your life.

All in all, it's all about you, your program, and your ability to meet the needs and goals of the deaf student or consumer.

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