



National Center for Technology Innovation
Advancing Technology Innovations for All Students

NCTI 2007 Innovator's Conference

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Panel: Welcome to the Innovators Marketplace
Name of Presenter: John Kemp

There is something amazing going on when we see old technologies and old systems and old cultures colliding with new technologies and new cultures.

We can only imagine that Gutenberg was told that his invention would create a vast population of readers who will receive a quantity of information without proper instruction and who will then be filled with conceited wisdom instead of real wisdom. That **reading** would compete with the older forms of learning. Can you imagine somebody saying to Gutenberg that the printing press is not going to work? You can make all you want, but nobody is going to buy it. We can't stop that kind of activity.

This is where we are today. New technologies compete with old ones for time, attention, money, prestige, but mostly for dominance of their world view: the alphabet attacking hieroglyphic writing, the printing press attacking the illuminated manuscript, the photograph attacking the art of painting, television attacking the printed word. It is not merely a matter of tool against tool when media make war against each other; it is a case of worldviews colliding and throw in a measured dose of disability sensitivity and harmonizing standards worldwide. You might have chaos or you might have hope. I think we are all here about hope.

Are we building a future where everybody can participate and everybody can learn and everybody can grow – and I mean everybody?

There is a world of the printed word with its emphasis on logic, sequence, history, exposition, objectivity, detachment, and discipline. On the other hand, there is a world of television and the web with an emphasis on imagery, presentness, simultaneity, intimacy, and media gratification and quick emotional response. Wonder why we are confusing people? We are confusing kids who are just pulling all this stuff in quickly at home, loving it, keeping up with their young parents and then we have them going to school and we are trying to teach them how to learn using old systems all to often. We know the solutions are right in this room. I know they are here.

Hardly all is lost. I think about the work of CAST (www.cast.org) which is really outstanding big thinking, and others in this room. I know I am singling out CAST. I have a particular soft spot in my heart for CAST because I think they are just doing great work. I've seen this 20-some year old nonprofit evolve very quickly and that's part of what we are going to talk about in a short while. So we have lots of examples here in this world.

Today we are going to talk a little bit about the blending of the sectors. How the nonprofit, for profit and governmental sectors have blurred. Anybody notice that going on? Ever try to figure out how we make all this happen? It's really nice and easy if we can keep them in nice contained compartments. But compartments don't solve social problems and they don't give us the power of capital and the value and drive of profit and sometimes they don't really meet the human needs of all people.

There is a lot of pressure from funders today, and we are going to hear from some funders, about how we create sustainable activities. How do we make sure that organizations are going to be around to deliver what they promised they're going to deliver by taking the money from the foundations? We are also going to hear about a new generation or set of leaders whose worldview is marked by faith in entrepreneurial and market models striving to do good while also doing business. Sometimes nonprofits



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that enter into these kinds of relationships are really looking at double and even triple bottom lines. You got your profit, you got your social good, and then you've got your sustainability. Are you going to be around over a long period of time? Often these businesses overlap the work of nonprofit organizations invented by social entrepreneurs.

So I pose these questions: Would it make a difference if eBay were a nonprofit? If Enron had been a public utility? If Ernst and Young was a branch of the IRS? If the American Red Cross was part of Homeland Security? What if the Museum of Natural History were owned by Six Flags? Or hospices were owned by Marriot? Or Merck Pharmaceutical ran Medicare?

As unlikely as these scenarios are, they call attention to important trends that are today blurring traditional boundaries between public, private, and nonprofit sectors. Until recently, who could have imagined that private companies would play a role in the operation of our community schools? Yet today, some 8% of all public schools have converted to private ownership or have been started as new enterprises. Nonprofit insurance companies like BlueCross/BlueShield have also converted as have many community hospitals in numerous states. The 1980s saw the privatization of prison systems, nursing homes, childcare, and juvenile residential centers. In the 1990s, public and nonprofit funded job training initiatives were absorbed into the private sector and tutoring and reading/math and study skills have become a lucrative business.

A couple of thoughts as we get ready for our keynote speaker: What is the role of philanthropy in all of this? And we have philanthropists here today. How can philanthropists and donors contribute to this reformation of sector boundaries and how can their giving and investing strategies help bring about high potential and sustained growth? What can we learn, how can experimentation best inform us as to which organizational or sector structure works best? What are the factors that lead to the best social change outcomes and produce the greatest social good? Will public policy change as a result of this?

I work in the public policy area and we tend to follow what happens in the world instead of initiating it. Everyone once in a while you get a visionary that says, This is the way we should be restructuring our policies and in synthesizing and removing barriers. Our skills are going to change and the skills that are needed to run our nonprofits and the for profit sector are going to drive new skills in human resources. Financial capital instruments are going to be needed to fill these demands and legislation and policy will certainly follow and be needed for change. We don't want to harness anything in this area, we want to let it grow and grow and grow, but we have accountability systems that do require us to report to the public and deliver on our social good.

So we have many challenges, but thank goodness we have our keynote speaker here. Al Miller is considered one of the country's foremost leaders in this field of public-private collaborations.