

# NIGP 2019 Forum In Review

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Roy Spence, the first of the plenary speakers at the NIGP Forum, stated:

## **The Purpose of Public Purchasing Professionals:**

*"To buy the best products and services at the best possible price to serve the greater good...to deliver a solid return on investment to the taxpayers of the US and Canada...whether they ever know it or not."*

I would have to agree that the majority of what we do as Public Procurement Professionals is behind the scenes. In the USA alone, procurement professionals' impact three and a quarter (3 ¼) Trillion Dollars annually along with nineteen (19) million public employees.

**R**oy Spence is a marketing and advertising giant who has impacted millions of people with his advertising campaigns. One such advertising campaign created to impact and reduce littering was "**Don't Mess With Texas**" which within the first two (2) years reduced littering by seventy nine percent (79%) and now has taken on a life of its' own.

Roy spoke of the Power of Purpose Driven Messages. He drove home that when you have a purpose, you find purpose. Don't spend the rest of your life being average at what you are 'not' good at but rather focus on being great at what you are good at. Find out what you are good at, take that and start going to higher ground with your skill, versus remaining on common ground.

Roy's newest passion is America's Front Porch – The Promiseland Project. He was inspired by Tracy Lawrence's song "If the World Had a Front Porch." with the lyric "If the world had a front porch like we did back then, we'd still have our problems, but we'd all be friends." For a challenge and a glimpse of the inspiring Roy Spence and Matthew McConaughey, check out this website:

<https://www.thepromiselandproject.com/americas-front-porch-north-dakota/> .

With this inspiring message, the full four (4) day conference was off to an invigorating start. There were a great number of first time Forum attendees and even more annual attendees. Everyone that I met was impressed with the conference speakers and educational sessions that were all focused on different aspects of current and future Public Procurement. There were close to 1,600 people, predominantly from across the USA and Canada. Some of the sessions were so packed there was not a seat to be had. It truly was hard to choose each day between the multitudes of sessions that were happening concurrently. Part of attending these forums is not to silo the information but rather to share the knowledge and experience and hopefully take a few pieces of gained knowledge back personally and professionally and implement it into your life and work.

Here are a few that I gathered:

**D**are to Matter, Pete Smith, International speaker and trainer in the fields of leadership, management, personal growth and development and Author

After having had a stroke and being near death, Pete asked himself during this episode "Am I 'significant'?" Not "What did I do?" but rather "Did what I do matter to my family, friends, people I work with?" One of the things that is at our core is "Did I live / am I living a life that matters, a life of significance?" Figure out and **CHOOSE** what your purpose is and **Live Out That STAND**. The key to significance is being trustworthy, kind and a doer. **Be intentional, make your actions be in line with who you say you are**. Allow yourself to be uncomfortable to reach greater achievements.

**M**aking Connections: Building Relationships with Key Procurement Partners, Mike Purdy, Public Procurement and Contracting Consultant with thirty nine plus (39+) years of Public Procurement experience and NIGP Instructor of Construction Procurement.

## Key Message:

- Maintain relationships internally and externally, as they matter.
- Pick your battles wisely.
- Inform, not control.
- Tell your end users that you are there to protect them.
- Solve problems early.
- Be part of the budget process to more effectively develop a business plan. Be at the table early.
  - The University of Washington would sit every Thursday at a boardroom on campus at a 'neutral' location to allow anyone to come and meet with them to talk about upcoming procurements. This investment of time helped them get a seat at the table early in the process. A Housing Authority represented in the seminar used this same approach which proved to be a great success.
- Encourage visits to procurement early and often.
- Promote collaboration, not conflict.
- Ask questions.
- Learn about new lines of business.
- Work to creatively and legally meet the end users' needs.
  - Logical ways of doing business is not always legal.
- Provide training to the end users.
- Manage Up! Educate your boss. Ensure the boss is aware of the 'good works' and any issues.
- Acknowledge your staff, thank them and show appreciation for them, and often.
- Change the business model from a gatekeeper to a resource, an added value and strategic advisor.
- Engage the business community, know the market and do research.
- Engage Attorneys, Risk Managers, etc., as needed.
- Ensure on all insurance documents that your organization is listed as additionally insured. Do not accept an insurance document with a check box.
- Provide a fair and transparent procurement process.

**A**chieving Excellence: Using Technology and Performance Metrics to Drive Improvement,

John Pelligrino, Director of Procurement and Contracting, County of San Diego

## Key Message:

- When you "survey", are you doing anything about it? OR are you being a barrier?
  - Use the information provided in surveys to "move the needle". This may include helping end users make some changes to help procurement do their jobs.
  - How is Procurement viewed?
  - Ask how procurement can do better when there is no procurement on the table.
  - A survey should have no more than eight (8) questions.
  - Don't survey more than once a year.
  - After improvements have been made then move the survey to every eighteen plus (18+) months.
  - Avoid 'survey fatigue'.
- Find out what your spend is and where the money is being spent.
- Educate the organization's leader(s) in procurement value.
  - Change any perceptions of procurement from a hindrance to a team partner.
    - Change this one conversation at a time.
- Take HEART - Helpfulness, Expertise, Attentiveness, Respect and Timeliness
- Have consistent processes between buyers
- Communicate regularly with the customer / end user

Each of the sessional speakers had a wealth of knowledge and experience, with many academic and professional accomplishments. Their bios were just as impressive as their sessions. **Strategic Delivery: Strategies to Optimize Capital Project Outcomes** is just one example where the packed (no room left) session was led by Robert Garland and Craig Unger. Reading the title of the session drew me in to consider this as a session to attend however the bios of these two (2) speakers confirmed that choice,

The key takeaway was that thirty (30) years ago the typical construction project was Design Bid Build (DBB). Using this project delivery model, it went from five (5) years to two thirds ( $\frac{2}{3}$ ) the time. DBB was approximately ten percent (10%) design and ninety

percent (90%) build. Using this method, the majority of Change Orders are created by the sub-contractors and there are many!

**T**hen out of Australia comes Integrated Project Delivery (IPD), a type of tri-party agreement with cost plus. Fast forward - Why would I ever want to do this? It's too risky and too expensive. Where does the risk lay?

Contract Risk of Designer: Fee

Contract Risk of Contractor: Fee

Contract Risk of Owner: Everything!

With Design / Build the public entities are saving money, time and far less change orders. This method rewards superior behavior, creating both a supplier and owner benefit.

- Ensure procurement and the key stakeholders have a seat at the table.
- With Design / Build, the Owner and End Users should do a Risk Workshop looking for Risks as this effort will save you time and money.
- Get the training for the Design / Build process before you start!

There were multiple other speakers that are more than worthy of mention however the four (4) full days cannot be captured in this article.

**A**s a public procurement professional, I would highly recommend the NIGP Annual Forum. The takeaways are too numerous to mention, and the value is tremendous. Next year's Forum is taking place in Chicago, Illinois!

As I close, here are a few more thoughts from the Plenary Speakers:

**Smiley Poswolsky, Millennial Workplace Expert and Author:**

- A Coach will guide you / them through life. A Leader will 'lead' you / them into life with care and empathy.
- Millennials want a Manager who is ethical, fair and transparent.
- 'Culture' is everyone's job. It is a living breathing job. Treat culture like a product and try different programs to improve culture - if it doesn't work, regroup.

- Take employee wellness seriously. Celebrate your people, and often, and have more "Stay" interviews versus Exit Interviews.
- Let your employees show up and be who they are, let them be their full authentic self.
- Show people their work matters.

**Kevin McCarthy, International Motivational Speaker and Author:**

- My blindspots allowed me to make bad choices that led to serving thirty-three (33) months in a federal prison for a crime I didn't knowingly commit.
- Blindspots are those unconscious biases, memory traps and thinking errors that affect our behavior and decision-making abilities.
- Perception: I adopted these words that were said to me - "**Based on what I currently know, this is what I currently believe.**" Can you imagine what that level of humility would do in a workplace!
- When we put on our thinking CAP, we make strategic good decisions. Ask what:
  - Context am I missing?
  - Assumptions am I making?
  - Perceptions are available?
- Ask yourself "Can I be a better person?"
- Make more intentional decisions.
  - STOP Temporarily (red light)
  - THINK Deeply (amber light)
  - PROCEED Intentionally (green light)

*"Our greatest freedom is the freedom to choose our attitude."* — **Victor Frankl**