1. **Impact of the Economy on the Organization**

   The economic downturn coupled with the changing demographics within the profession has had a significant impact on the AIA at all levels. Fewer resources are available and membership recruitment, retention, and member services and delivery are suffering. This is further evidenced in increasing competition between local, state, and national components over non-dues revenues, and has inhibited collaboration within the organization. How can the AIA respond to these challenges?

   If at every level we advocate for the interests of our members rather than for the status quo or for our own interests, we can’t help but overcome barriers to cooperation and collaboration among local, state, and national components. Certainly there are fewer resources. But we can’t think of this as a zero sum issue. Leadership at every level must rethink our baseline goals desired by our members. This isn’t as hard as it seems. All us firm owners have had to do this regularly in recent years. A couple of years ago we on the AIA Board had to make some draconian decisions to drop the budget. I was very proud of our work to rethink our priorities bottom up. And, we didn’t move on any resource question until CACE had a chance to weigh in on what worked at the component level. Did that satisfy everyone? Of course not, but it was the right approach. However, if we do at national what national can do best and export and share the outstanding best practices and programs at other levels, we can be responsive and efficient.

   Although the specifics of any of our current challenges vary, the way we should respond should be grounded by solid principles. I offer my thoughts in DonBrownFAIA.com.

2. **Competition in a Global Market**

   During the Grassroots Leadership and Advocacy Conference the profession was challenged to look outside U.S. boarders for new opportunities to export architectural services. Is the AIA structured to adequately support members wanting to engage in international practice, and perhaps more importantly, the challenges of design and delivery in foreign marketplaces? How can the AIA best support its members who want to practice abroad?

   I believe one of AIA’s core obligations is to connect members to knowledge. We must provide the whole tool kit to our members- articles, best practice examples, checklists, references, legal offices in US and foreign government offices to contact for further information, and the like. Ordinarily, it would be incumbent on a firm to do this homework ourselves. Nevertheless, these times are different. Since US work is scarce, it would help members to have a head start available from AIA. In the last year I have attended AIA sponsored seminars given by firms doing work abroad, particularly in Asia. I also have found colleagues willing to share their experience. I learned a lot.

   That being said, all that glitters is not gold. Those of us who have worked abroad, or tried to, know that the hill is steep. I have lived in Europe for 5 years and Japan for 2. Overseas cultures have remarkably different perceptions, expectations, and consequences. AIA should help educate those who want to understand the differences so they can be successful. At this year's convention, we will be presenting ideas for strengthening International AIA component support for our overseas members, which is a good thing.
3. **Member Resources**

*Conventional wisdom suggests that at the conclusion of the recession, the architectural profession will be forever changed. While the economic climate has been challenging for all in the design and construction industry, it has been especially difficult for “seasoned” professionals who are often times unable to compete in today’s technology-based delivery environment. How is the AIA positioned to support these members?*

The only thing constant is change. Once again, a critical role of AIA is to help our members of all stripes how to cope with change. Again, we must **connect members with knowledge**. If we tell the stories, cite the examples, remove the fear, show solutions, offer choices, then we will empower our members. Every member from seasoned professionals to new interns has a unique need. We fill these by convention courses, increased web based education, and freshly constituted knowledge by the Knowledge Communities. We have special work groups such as the Small Firm Roundtable, COTE, and the IgCC Task Force that provide current solutions in a more complex environment.

AIA can’t be all things to all people, but we can create the paths so that our members can choose their way. And, as a postscript, many seasoned architects rely less on technology and more on the great body of special knowledge useful to a larger team or special client. Those that adapt prosper.

4. **Mentoring**

*Across all levels of the organization members lament the decline in the number of new licensees. Some suggest the lack of a culture of mentoring within firms and the profession is to blame. What can the AIA do to effect a cultural shift among the profession and encourage those educated and involved in the delivery of architectural services to stay connected with the organization?*

First we must profoundly understand the importance and valuable future contributions of the next generation. Second we must give them a voice. In my firm - an AIA Intern Friendly Firm - I give all our young associates much responsibility and authority because they have earned it. They are all very engaged in civic and professional outreach work where their voices count. They are shaping the future of our community and our profession because they choose to, and, I might add, because I encourage and support them. This attitude backed by real resources is what nourishes the next generation and the AIA. They begin to own the outcome.

5. **Changing Demographics**

*Evidence shows the architectural profession is “aging,” and this will have a significant financial impact on the AIA in the very near future. How can the AIA position the organization to mitigate this impact while continuing to provide value to existing members?*

I believe we must focus our AIA to provide the value to our members that they want most want. They want us to **speak for them** when a larger voice is needed. They expect AIA to **advocate** for their interests at every turn. And they want AIA to be a source of **knowledge** to enable them to leverage their efforts. Membership in AIA needs to be seen as a smart investment, not a cost.

At the moment this aging curve is the result of dramatic market financial conditions following an extended period of full employment. This has happened three times in thirty
years. Near term this has reduced our membership in total and skewed the age median. As we go through this shift, AIA at every level can and must revise expenses to match income, all the while listening carefully to our members and potential members, now sidelined because of this economy. Our “customers” are also those who may not now be active members. Our interest in the needs of our emerging professional is a matter of necessity. I am more concerned about a paradigm shift in our income, documents sales for example, than meeting the challenge of regaining membership. I believe that members base their affiliation on value rather than cost. And I know we can provide value.

6. Governance

Despite the focus in recent years on strategic planning, some argue that the AIA still lacks focus, which reduces its effectiveness on any one priority. Recognizing there is a myriad of issues and priorities facing the organization, what are the priority issues that AIA should focus on?

Sometimes when we back up to 30,000 feet we lose sight of the objects on the ground that matter. We in AIA leadership have to see both. My priorities are three-fold, and are described further in DonBrownFAIA.com:

1) We must elevate the voice of architects. We must do a better job of telling our story to the public. We must improve our public outreach in many ways and levels to enhance the reality of the significant value we bring to the built environment at every scale. Just this week on the Daily Beast (thedailybeast.com) there was a story on the 13 most useless professions. Architecture is #5. This is a travesty of perception that we must do something about.

2) We must advocate the interests of our members. First we must know what these interests are. We must listen to the grassroots, the average member, our components, and take action that responds to those needs, not what we in Washington just think they need. Our members expect us in leadership to advocate for their interests on the larger stage on their behalf. And, if we don’t speak up, then who will? I have had the privilege of authoring a number of national advocacy projects for AIA and believe firmly in the power of civic engagement and speaking up for our members.

3) We must connect our members to knowledge. We are valuable to ourselves, our clients, and to the public we serve if we have answers. One of our current AIA leaders said, “We are good at creating great knowledge and resources, but we put them into storage”. My goal as your Vice President will be to put keys to success in your hands, not on the shelf.

7. Value of Design

There is increasing concern among AIA members that the value of architecture and design is being differentiated by a focus on “design” in the absence of the context of “practice.” What can the AIA do to bring attention to the problems of practice and project delivery in an environment of growing complexity? And, in what ways can we better recognize the majority of professionals, who are seldom published and little recognized for their efforts?

Great question. I have heard this comment repetitively over my AIA career. As a person who started a practice from scratch many years ago, it has personal meaning. The answer is that we focus on both. They are not mutually exclusive. We must continue to expand the knowledge of our members so they can do their best. One example is the AIA’s work on Integrated Project Delivery, which gave us tools and training to help us compete in a more complex world. The work of the Small Firm Roundtable has the potential for providing insight and tools for the needs of the small firm practitioner. The Knowledge Communities
have created marvelous bodies of reference material to help us with practice and project
delivery. Our challenge, and one I am personally committed to solving, is to connect our
members to knowledge by making this body of work as accessible and useful to members as
possible.

A very important example is our latest work on the International Green Construction
Code (IgCC). This new code will create new opportunities and new challenges for our
practices. And it presents new design implications as sustainability is also an integral
component of design. I am on the AIA Task Force which has developed the toolkit to be
released at convention which will address education of our members, advocacy on their
behalf, energy modeling, further code development, and business and contract implications.
There are also serious compensation and liability issues which we are addressing for our
members. Our goal is to give our members the knowledge to be leaders in design and
practice, and advocate in code development and adoption on their behalf.

Lastly, the vast majority of our members fall into the category of being seldom published.
What we can do at AIA is to enable our members to reach their potential to be successful at
whatever they choose to do. That will be my mission as your AIA Vice President.