



Focus on the Future

Guest Predictions: Rob Lohr

Guest Predictions is a regular feature in which we ask leaders in a number of professions questions that affect us all.

Rob Lohr has served as the Town Manager for the Town of Purcellville, Virginia for 15 years and New Market, Virginia for 8 years. Mr. Lohr received his undergraduate degree from James Madison University in Harrisonburg, Virginia with a degree in Political Science and minors in Public Administration and Paralegal Studies. He also earned a Masters of Public Administration from that school and is a credentialed manager through the International City/County Managers Association (ICMA).

Q: What changes in your professional environment in the past 3-5 years have you found to be the most beneficial?

A: Movement by ICMA and other professional organizations to encourage continued professional development and peer networking through the credentialed manager

Q: What changes have been the most troubling to you?

A: The continued deterioration of the relationships that professional managers have with new incoming elected bodies. It appears the civility and understating of the traditional Manager/Council form of government is lacking. Many managers and newly elected bodies are struggling to develop trusting and good working relationships due to the political belief that professional managers need to changed with new elections.

Q: How will globalization (e.g. the emergence of new global powers, such as China and India) affect your professional area in the near term?

A: The greatest impact I see is that it will require all communities to look much farther when making decisions rather than the traditional local and national perspective. Everything from procurement bond issuances and recruitment retention of companies for economic development will be impacted from a global perspective.

Q: What significant challenges might be anticipated in your professional area in the next few years?

A: Succession planning will be the biggest challenge. So many senior mangers will be leaving at the local government level that there will be a significant shortage of young professional administrators to step up. Intern programs and professional development within organizations will be critical.

Q: What are the greatest challenges confronting young professionals in Western culture today?

A: Entering a public field where the rules are changing and issues are occurring faster than they ever have. Government has traditionally been characterized as slow and stable and now all rules are out the window. Public leaders will be entering unprecedented times where there are no rulebooks or guidelines. You must remain flexible, creative and hold true to your moral/ethical compass.