2020 was supposed to be the year 5G rolled out with all these phenomenal applications created and distributed to handle everything from collecting data from 1,000s of various sensors for innovative capabilities to move new video applications across many resilient, reliable networks. Instead, the "super" applications and universal solutions, the silver bullets of innovation, fizzled or never materialized as they were continually over-hyped by major network carriers and equipment manufacturers in the previous years.

The age of the digital huckster is upon us. Digital hucksters are nothing more than the snake oil salespeople of the 21st century. They come in all shapes and sizes with different corporate logos on their golf shirts trying to sell people on all new naming conventions and the latest in nano-baloney and augmented techno-blather. Add to their hype, the obtuse, social wokeness buzzwords of diversity inclusion and digital equity and they qualify for government grants and funding which grabs a lot of money, but after being spent, never show any real tangible results in the infrastructure they are trying to improve.

The digital hucksters need to address hard engineering issues focusing on reliability, redundancy, routing (diversity), and improving resiliency across the municipality. Usually, the hucksters fall short of having real engineering skills and experience, so they make up for it by using a lot of "cutting-edge" techno-blather to impress their audiences but cannot deliver what they promise. They also never assume someone will be in the audience to call them on their lack of understanding of the fundamentals of the problem they are trying to solve.

They will use the latest technology terms and claim everything works well from blockchain technology to cryptocurrencies, but they gloss over the lack of safeguards and cybersecurity by sprinkling in some new phrases like, "That's the tokenomics of today" or "we didn't just make this in a garage, we are following Department of Defense standards." Well, that doesn't mean things work, show me a working prototype. Better yet, show me one that is profitable and will add to the city or region's long-term viability.

These digital hucksters mesmerize many municipalities as well as venture capitalists with their promise to add new capabilities and solve all their problems.

With their egos not wanting to appear unknowledgeable on technology trends, politicians easily buy off on the hucksters' techno buzzwords, their techno-glitz presentations, and worthless applications being sold to them. In fact, politicians sign off on projects which go nowhere, but leave a sense of feel-good emotions because they were told, "This is combatting digital inequity by implementing 'digital inclusion' and shrinking a carbon footprint or two."

Many of today's politicians do not see the real vulnerability their municipalities are in. They think everything will eventually go back to the way it was before COVID.

Any city thinking it will go back to the same pre-COVID occupancy rates in their commercial office buildings as well as collecting the same tax revenue streams are very misinformed.

This is critical as we enter the new post-COVID era of commercial leasing which reflects the reverse of musical chairs. As more companies shed unneeded commercial office space because more of their workforce is working from home, the availability of empty office space is going to skyrocket in many, if not all, major downtowns and suburban office parks.

Companies are already reassessing their corporate leasing arrangements and are shrinking space requirements to the tune of 50% or more. This will create a deluge of empty office space on the market. Those who are looking for space will have their choice and their choice will not be any building that does not have the intelligent amenities of reliable, redundant power and broadband connectivity. These intelligent amenities are must-haves, not hoped-fors.

What civic and political leaders of municipalities should be doing is assessing all the vulnerable levels of their current infrastructure, and discovering how to make it more reliable, more redundant, and more resilient in order to attract new tenants.

If an office building does not have fiber optic cable running into it, it is technologically obsolete. A quick assessment of how viable a downtown area is can be accomplished by taking an inventory of how many buildings are connected by fiber to the central office. Let's say two out of 20 meet that criteria. The assessment? 90% of your buildings are technologically obsolete. Not a good score if you are trying to entice new corporations to lease space.

Real improvements, like adding on routing diversity and redundancy for both power and broadband connectivity can only improve the value of all the buildings in a downtown area and make them both more reliable and resilient which are the real intelligent amenity features corporate tenants are demanding today for their mission-critical applications.

New corporate facilities mean new job creation. As I have said for over the last decade, "economic development equals broadband connectivity, and broadband connectivity equals jobs." Those cities who have heeded that proclamation have surged ahead of the pack.

They also need to pay attention to the neighborhoods and ensure they have high-speed connections as well because more and more people are working from home.

Getting people in the inner-city to handle a good-paying job without having them commute to work could open up many new opportunities and change the economic landscape for many people. That is why neighborhoods that were passed over in the past for infrastructure upgrades need to be viewed as just as important as downtown areas, which usually get the lion's share of resources. You don't need to invent new buzzwords and politically correct euphemisms in order to attack those underserved areas, you need to act.

Economic survivability is something some smaller towns are really focused on. They realize regional economic sustainability is important if they want to remain economically viable in these competitive global markets.

Leaders of big cities better pay attention to this as well, instead of believing they will solve 21st-century challenges by relying on 20th-century infrastructure. Or worse yet, the tokenomic technobabble of the digital huckster selling virtual solutions which don't address real infrastructure shortcomings.

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