

Organizational Intelligence for Hampton Roads

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Another indicator that entrepreneurship should be a larger part of our regional economy came from the recent State of the Region (2014). At this point, I think we have had adequate evidence that we need to do more in this area.

I've written about knitting the regional quilt (connecting separate pieces of fabric), which I think is still a good metaphor. However, there's a new consideration about the need for Organizational Intelligence (OI) necessary to navigate, coordinate, stimulate, execute, market and (hopefully) succeed.

From Wiki, here's a snippet from their OI [Link](#): Organizational Intelligence (OI) is the capability of an organization to comprehend and conclude knowledge relevant to its business purpose.

- An ability to make sense of complex situations and act effectively
- An ability to interpret and act upon relevant events and signals in the environment
- Ability to develop, share and use knowledge relevant to its business purpose
- Ability to reflect and learn from experience

The departure I suggest is to think of Hampton Roads as the "business of our region" which seeks to succeed. OI, as a system and process, with the right groups and people working together, is perhaps an initiative worth trying.

Flight	Time	Status	Gate
ATLANTA	2.34p	DELAYED	B3
NEW YORK	2.34p	DELAYED	C12
BOSTON	2.35p	CANCELLED	C14
LONDON	2.37p	DELAYED	A4
NEWARK	2.40p	DELAYED	B9
LOS ANGELES	2.44p	DELAYED	C9
VANCOUVER	2.47p	CANCELLED	A7
MIAMI	2.49p	DELAYED	B11
NEWARK	2.53p	DELAYED	C6
CHICAGO	2.56p	CANCELLED	B3
SEATTLE	3.02p	DELAYED	C17
MONTREAL	3.06p	CANCELLED	A10
DETROIT	3.07p	DELAYED	C5

As an example, the recent fire at the Aurora IL Air Traffic Control (ATC) not only took out all coordination of flights in Chicago, but impacted the nation as well. The lack of coordination impacted people economically, as well as, their quality of life (at least temporarily). The fire took out the ATC's Organizational Intelligence for the flights in/out of Chicago, which creates ripple effects everywhere. No coordination

translated to failure.

Now consider just some of the great things happening in our region:

- We have entrepreneurship getting far more mindshare with incubators on the south side and peninsula.
- We have study groups on Leadership, Workforce Development, Entrepreneurism, and Industry (Tech) Clusters.
- Colleges are engaged (Old Dominion, CNU, Regent, more).
- We have a renewed emphasis on investment dollars being placed in the right young business opportunities.
- We have groups like the Entrepreneurs Organization Southeast who, via their strategic alliance with Future of Hampton Roads, have been very active in mentoring young businesses.
- We have high technology (STEM) education in our high schools, as well as technology group tech and entrepreneurship camps including Shark Tank events.
- We have TEDx events back in Hampton Roads after being gone for several years. Chesapeake in 2013, Norfolk in 2014 and more coming (perhaps).

All good news right? Yes, but we still have several risks and challenges ahead to make it all stick. The question I ask is: *"Do we have the regional Organizational Intelligence to make progress as effective as possible on a regional basis?"*

In business, some companies are highly centralized or highly decentralized (and, in fact, fluctuate due to business conditions). There is no right or wrong answer. My experience has taught me that it depends on what you're trying to accomplish. Is it broader reach? Is it cost control? Is it geographic/cultural alignment? Is it available workforce? All these factors (and more) come into play.

Back to our region. We are highly decentralized (with a few noteworthy examples), based on our history and evolution. We work hard to create common threads on transportation, sanitation, etc. However, we are a whole bunch of cities (and counties) who are often times doing their own thing. That's actually OK to a degree as it creates a competitive market. However, when we think of regional progress, it's like nudging corners of a heavy couch across a room.

There are certainly opportunities to move faster and in unison so that we capitalize on our opportunities. Technology, entrepreneurship, and land use to name only a few and some that were listed earlier in this article.

Another question I would pose is: *"How can we optimize our region's chances of succeeding with all these new initiatives?"* Perhaps the answer is to create some Organizational Intelligence for our region. Think of it as an air traffic control mechanism for entrepreneurship and more in our region.

If we had a collective Organizational Intelligence (awareness, evaluation, collaboration, recommendations, marketing and more) we could perhaps be a little less decentralized intellectually. Note that I am not talking about ownership of separate efforts. We respect the independence and initiative of several efforts. However, we are talking about "knitting the quilt" and creating a layer of Regional Organizational Intelligence. I can think of several advantages:



1. We could market ourselves in a more unified manner, demonstrating ALL our regional advantages and opportunities to the outside world.
2. We might help to defeat Brain Drain and create Brain Gain.
3. We would have a better regional collective of opportunities to build what we have and even attract more entrepreneurial business to our area.
4. We would create the control tower for our Entrepreneurial Ecosystem which we've been advocating.
5. We would simply look more attractive and organized.

I may overly simplify things, but I believe we need processes and systems to create the highest level of regional effectiveness in these areas. We need to create our regional ATC of innovation, creativity and business development. [Hampton Roads Organizational Intelligence](#).

Considerations

- 1) Create the regional ATC equivalent for Entrepreneurial Business (Organizational Intelligence).
- 2) Leverage resources that we have if at all possible.
- 3) DON'T create any new organizations if we can avoid it. That's been part of the region's challenge, too many overlapping groups/efforts.
- 4) Link the logical groups we have and develop new regional solutions as needed.
- 5) Assemble a coordination entity from our existing solutions.
- 6) Develop an organized approach with measurements, success criteria and gap analysis.

Actionable Possibilities

Look at what we already have:

- The new Regional Council (Future of Hampton Roads, CIVIC, Chambers, HREDA, HRMFFA).
- Strategy groups in several cities (VB Vision, Chesapeake Alliance, Greater Norfolk Corp, Portsmouth Partnership, Greater Peninsula Now to name a few).
- Urban Land Institute for Transit Oriented Development and Live/Work/Play Development to attract and keep younger generations.
- Technology Council as a traditional technology entity who could be re-shaped and re-purposed for general entrepreneurism support.
- Our colleges on both the south side and peninsula.

Could we create a coalition of these strategic thinkers, linking efforts to create coordination and deployment of various ideas?

Could we provide input and thoughts to our various municipalities for consideration?

Could we create that layer of Organization Intelligence for the business of Hampton Roads?

We need thinkers, but we also need **DO-ERS**. There has to be responsibility, execution, and accountability or efforts will potentially fail. Realize that many of the new activities listed earlier have been initiated by well-meaning, smart people who have day jobs. These great people have participated and want to stay involved, but may not have the full time cycles to dedicate to some of the larger regional coordination efforts.

Here's an example from Pittsburgh: [Pittsburgh High Tech Ecosystem](#)

Here's an example from Tennessee: [Startup Tennessee](#)

I could fill pages with other examples of Organizational Intelligence from around the country.

As always, we have to place efforts into the details of coordinating and managing any regional effort in Hampton Roads. It's not about ownership as we are a region of multiple owners. It is a matter of coordination and effective execution with those truly interested in collaboration for a greater good.

I believe we have all the puzzle pieces. Let's assemble our vision and advance effectively into the future. Who's tired of nudging a couch?

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