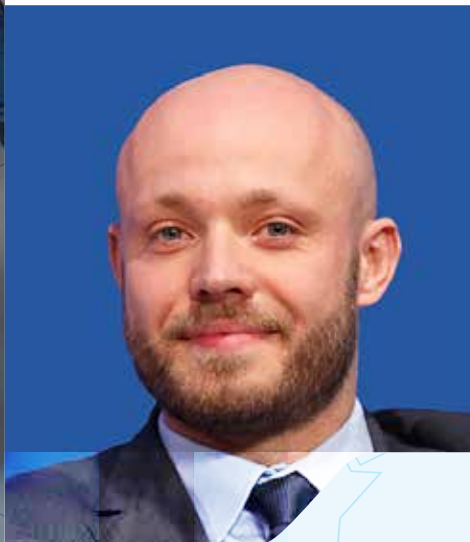


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Adam Bialachowski
Chair, FIDIC Future Leaders Council
Vintage Consulting, Poland



The way forward for small and medium enterprises

In a world where the 'old' way of doing things theoretically revolves around common sense, one must consider whether the common sense of 'old' can handle the new challenges that have arrived due to past decisions using 'old common sense'. Today, people are burning their shoes as protest^{xxi}, luxury watch producers are destroying their inventory^{xxii}, clothes manufacturers are utilising their own products^{xxiii} and it is predicted that in 30 years there will be more plastic than fish in the ocean^{xxiv}. This is a pretty grim picture that requires a paradigm shift especially when it comes to infrastructure investment. Such a paradigm shift is offered by this *State of the World* report and just as this paradigm shift will occur, small and medium firms in the consulting engineering industry will have to react with their own change of how they wish to do business.

In order to adapt to the changing paradigm, we as engineering consulting companies, need to acknowledge it is Time To Take The Trillion Task seriously. We need to innovate, change the way we work and change our 'old common sense' - this will require investment of time and effort into our six Ts.



It is time to \$Tn-vest into:

- The way we market our services.
- The way we deliver our services.
- The way we manage human resources.
- The way we interact with clients.
- The way we pick partners and alliances.
- The way we secure finances and cashflow.

The above list is a prerequisite for SMEs to be relevant and prepared for the next cycle of infrastructure delivery.

SMEs are agile companies by nature and can implement change quickly. Marketing our services by offering remotely delivered webinars, arranging sale pitches virtually, changing the way we identify potential clients and their needs using simple online news data mining are just a few low-cost paths. Using online cloud project management/delivery tools, whose prices have decreased significantly, can solve many problems, decreasing travel time, kilometers traveled, costs, efficiency, and account for the new normal of working from home and automatically leverage a different approach to human resources management. Implementing these changes automatically appeals to what is expected from Millennials and Generation Z employees – working from home or otherwise remotely, decreasing carbon footprint, measuring employee output by results, not time in office and flexible working hours. Due to travel restrictions and the increased availability of internet-based connectivity, this year has shown that finding alliances and partners has become cheaper and easier than ever before. Securing finances and cashflow for these changes can be difficult but some proposed solutions in the EU like country-backed warrantees, insurance and pandemic assistance programmes have been implemented and are there for SMEs. Securing finances and cashflow for SMEs is also something that can be part of partnership and alliance solutions.

The above requires action by owners and managers. If we want to be in business after the dust settles, in the new normal, we need to take charge and join the \$Tn-vest paradigm shift and make it central for our decision-making processes.

