

What a year; what a decade!

By Barry Varcoe

Chair of the CoreNet Global Board of Directors

I am sure that few of us will be sorry to see the end of 2009 – a year without precedent. Many difficult situations have been tackled and hard decisions taken. The severity of the downturn has probably compelled us to think through ideas and challenge convention like never before.

Considering this optimistically, we could well look back at this time from the future and see it as a period of tremendous growth in learning and capability, albeit borne out of adversity.

I have valued the benefits of CoreNet Global membership this year more than ever. The access to industry colleagues around the world and their ideas, experiences and advice has been invaluable.

The Association overall has fared reasonably well. It was to be expected that membership numbers would dip, but there are still a healthy 6,500 of us in our global community, and we are now connected in many more ways than before.

We have truly moved into the 21st century as far as networking and knowledge sharing are concerned. In particular if you haven't yet completed your '[NetWORK](#)' member profile and used the other new tools that are available, please visit the [CoreNet Global website](#) and make sure that you do so soon!

This past year also saw the retirement of Dr. Prentice Knight as our CEO. He left a significant leadership gap, but I was delighted that Ron Zappile was able to more than fill the void. Ron is continuing to drive the Association forward, and is helping us to recruit our new long-term CEO.

We are now well under way with this process, and remain on track to announce and introduce the successful candidate by the Spring North American Summit in New Orleans. By design we are searching for talent from a wide industry spectrum. If you would like to be considered, or know someone who you think should be in the frame, please contact Bill Ferguson of Ferguson Partners Ltd who is leading the process for us (wferguson@fergusonpartners.com).

Looking back over the last decade, apart from the frightening speed with which these years seem to have come and gone, it is worth reflecting for a moment on how much the world and our industry have changed.

A decade that began with the dot.com boom and bust has ended with the complete and ongoing infusion of new generation web capability into almost every aspect of our lives.

The world has never before been so connected, nor so interdependent as a global market place. As we have seen and experienced, this offers huge opportunities for us all, but also significant threats and unseen dangers.

Within the real estate industry we have learned (yet again!) to remember the fundamentals of value, and will probably be working through the consequences of our forgetfulness and its resulting over-inflation for a while to come.

But we have also seen the emergence of service enterprises of true global scale that perhaps for the first time holds out the promise of a rapid advance for knowledge-fuelled customer value on an industry-wide basis.

The future of our planet has also been called into question and raised as a burning issue in our collective conscience like never before. As an industry that is reputedly responsible for, and at a minimum able to significantly influence, a large chunk of the carbon footprint problem we seem to have maintained an unreasonably low profile so far. I will be very surprised if that doesn't change.

We have also seen the findings of two major pieces of visionary work, for the most part, become fulfilled. Both Corporate Real Estate 2000 and Corporate Real Estate 2010 were landmark studies that set a future path and distinct vision of our future state for us all. Now that we have realized those visions, it is probably time for another piece of transformative, future-facing research initiative.

As we look forward to 2010 and beyond, while there will probably still be a few more 'aftershocks' from the recessionary 'earthquake' that has affected us all.

Increasingly, I feel we will see new levels of strength emerging throughout all aspects of our industry. Much of this will be centred on bringing to bear decision-enhancing knowledge and value-adding service that delivers profit for provider and receiver alike, in ever more innovative ways.

The methods and outputs of just about every other industry you can think of will significantly change and advance over the next ten years – and so must ours! We have an advantage though – we are surely still a young industry in a state of flux and development with a long way to go and much potential to be found on our journey of discovery. CoreNet Global's role as the industry convenor and professional home for all of us is now more important than ever.

So, at the end of the so-called 'noughties' I wish you all the very best for 2010 and the next decade. Let's hope it is not to be known as the 'tense', 'tentatives' or 'tenuous', but rather as the 'tenacious' and 'tensile' period for all of us.