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AIA Vice –President Candidate 2012-2013 - Grassroots Speech  
Russ Davidson, AIA

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Frank Lloyd Wright refused to join the AIA. He told the AIA President,

“...he was more interested in Architecture than in the Profession.”

Still America’s best known architect, more than fifty years after his death, and he did not join because the AIA was more about Architects than Architecture. This should not be an either - or proposition. Surely effective and sustained public advocacy for the value of design will elevate the value of architects.

I believe it is time for the AIA to again return to this as our core objective with all of the energy and resources available. This renewed emphasis on the value of architecture and architects should not preempt any of our current strategic initiatives. It should really become the lens, a really big one, through which we magnify all that is important to our profession. The best way for us to forward the interests of emerging professionals, sustainability, integrated project delivery and diversity in the profession is to make architecture and the profession itself more valuable to everyone.

Our strategic plan is excellent. In the words of another American still famous years after his death, now is the time for,

“A little less conversation, a little more action please”

These actions should be applied at the local level, like the new initiative to reach the public through “templated opinion pieces” for publication by local component presidents. This idea emerged from the sub-committee on which I serve and is part of the Board Advocacy Committee.

As an AIA leader I am passionate, committed and direct as I value all of our time enormously. The lost billable time in this room alone is roughly worth \$120,000 an hour. We all give up these earnings willingly to advance our profession and now, more than ever, we need to better promote the value of our practitioners.

Design does matter but now perhaps, as my grandfather used to say, it is time for a little “enlightened self-interest” and the message should be re-crafted so that the public really understands that,

“AIA Architects matter every day to every one.”

Eventually after his architecture was recognized, Frank Lloyd Wright told another AIA

President,

“...the Institute proves me wrong in not having joined that body long ago to work within it for the things I have been consistently working for outside it”

I am Russ Davidson and I ask for your support so that I can continue to work within the AIA.  
Thank you for listening.