



Q2 INFLUENCE: RESPONSIBILITY

Influencing Action: The Power of Perspective to Act

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Influencing Action: The Power of Perspective to Act

Steve McConnell

Managing Partner, NBBJ

Clear eyes for climate change action

On January 13th, 2022, I stood on a remote saddle high in the Ellsworth Mountains; it was about 20 degrees below Fahrenheit, but I was geared up for the cold. The view was infinite and amazing to behold. Spectacular mountains as high as 16,000 feet and glaciers averaging 6,000 feet deep below the surface spanned the horizon. I felt I stood at the very edge of the earth — an extreme place to be, yet a place so remote that I could not deny the perspective on life and our planet it offered.

To be here, a place solely of rock, ice, wind, silence and extreme cold, was to know self-reliance, awe and how fragile life can be. Still, something inexplicable was happening — it had snowed several inches the night before and I would soon discover more snow was coming in a raging storm a few days off.

Antarctica is a desert — the driest continent, with an average precipitation of 1.5 inches per year. Yet more than a foot of snow fell over the two weeks I was in the Ellsworth Mountains. “Yes, our climate is changing,” I thought, “this snowstorm should not be happening.” A few days later at high camp, a new storm raged on, and I wondered if the intense 60 mph winds I was experiencing would accelerate and endanger my life and whether climate change was the culprit. That day, in that moment, I feared climate change.

My adventure became a personal field study, clarifying what I’ve sensed, read and heard about climate change.

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Returning to Seattle, 9,000 miles from Mount Vinson and the Ellsworth Mountains, I reflected on the essence of leadership and organizational responsibilities. Leaders ensure their organizations are guided by a compelling vision, relevant goals, coherent actions and on-course trajectories. Organizations that create the built environment must be concerned with the health of society.

Advancing the health of society safeguards our ethical purpose. Ethical purpose is an authoritative force for relevancy. Being relevant guarantees success. Finally, addressing climate change guarantees relevancy.

Perspective is powerful. We must act now to create sustainable, resilient, zero-carbon buildings and communities.

Steve McConnell, FAIA, LEED AP is Managing Partner atNBBJ - a certified CarbonNeutral® company and is a member of the firm's board of directors. He oversees the firm's multi-national organization — some 800 people across 12 offices, serving pioneering clients throughout North America, Europe, Asia and the Middle East. Together, Steve and his colleagues at NBBJ comprise a network of architects, interior and experience designers, innovators, clinical professionals, technologists, researchers and urbanists. NBBJ was recently recognized as the most innovative architecture firm in the world by Fast Company and as a firm “redefining the future of practice” by Architectural Record.