

Delivering Happiness – about shoes and nuclear power plants!

As I write this I am on my way home from speaking at an event in Hong Kong put on by a think tank called Civic Exchange. I want to thank Civic Exchange for asking me to participate and congratulate them on their format. The topic for this, their 14th energy forum, was “Expanding Hong Kong’s Nuclear Power Base”. Hong Kong has recently issued a paper on climate change and is having a consultation to seek input on its recommendations. One of these recommendations is to increase the amount of nuclear generation coming from the mainland from the current 23% to 50% of electricity supply by 2020 as part of a plan to reduce Hong Kong’s carbon intensity.

The format of the event was excellent. More than presentations (I was asked to provide an international perspective on nuclear power), it was a conversation. After opening remarks by 5 speakers – on Hong Kong’s plan, on China’s nuclear plans, an international perspective, a view from Greenpeace and finally thoughts from the utility – the floor was opened to more than an hour and a half of questions and discussion. The room was full and the discussion was very lively. I believe that we all left that room with a little bit more understanding of the issues and I expect that many attendees were able to continue to develop their own point of view. Overall a success!

This brings me to the book that I read recently called “Delivering Happiness” by Tony Hsieh, founder and CEO of Zappos.com. Now zappos.com is essentially an online retailer that started selling shoes over the internet. After 10 years in business growing to over \$1 billion in revenues, the company was sold to Amazon for more than \$1 billion dollars.

So what does selling shoes online have to do with nuclear power? A pretty good question. But it's not about shoes – it's about providing a customer experience that WOW's the customer (I like that term – the objective is absolutely clear!). Or as zappos.com evolved their vision – their business is about “delivering happiness”. They also created a unique work environment where employees are valued and feel a part of something. I could go on but I would rather suggest you read the book.

What struck me at this event in Hong Kong is that after years of trying to defend our industry, we seem to have accepted the current position; the position that yes, we may not want nuclear power, but it is what we've got and if we want to fight climate change, then it needs to be part of the mix. We have accepted the “we are the green option of last resort” argument. It is what finally allowed politicians to stand up and support nuclear power after years of avoiding the issue. But is that enough? I don't think so. In fact, being the option of last resort just plain sucks.

What we really have with nuclear power is something special, an electricity source that is essentially carbon free, offers a high level of security of supply and uses a fuel that is both abundant and has no real other use or value. It is also an economic option offering both competitive electricity costs and of even more importance in this volatile world of fossil fuel pricing, it offers long term price stability.

Are there issues? Yes. And it is positive events like this one in Hong Kong that enables us to have the conversation that we need to have with our stakeholders. And yes we need to improve our delivery capability so that projects are routinely on time and on budget. We are far from perfect. In fact, I welcomed the talk by Greenpeace as I think we need to be constantly challenged to improve. We work in an industry with the world's most rigorous safety standards with regulators always pushing us to improve safety. This is our safety

culture and we should be proud. We have a good case and we should be out there building the relationships with our customers so that they understand what we all understand, that nuclear power is not the option of last resort but rather is one of the best options available to meet our global needs as an essential part of a low carbon electricity infrastructure. Nuclear plants are wonderful places to work providing high quality stable jobs and the nuclear industry can be a vibrant exciting place to have a fulfilling career. The communities where we have plants have clean air and good jobs.

After completing a project for a new client earlier this year, we received a compliment that still resonates with me. Yes, we were told that they were happy with our report – and that's great as we strive to provide a high quality service providing unique insights into the nuclear industry. But of more importance, we were told that they enjoyed the experience of working with us – and that is what I will always remember – as that is what we all need to work towards in our jobs as we play our role in this industry. So what does this have to do with selling shoes? I want to achieve the same customer experience as zappos.com – a unique customer experience building strong lasting relationships with high quality services that meet their needs, all with an exceptional overall experience. In other words, I want them to always be "WOWed".

We all need to strive to deliver this level of service to our communities to ensure that nuclear power achieves its potential as a key contributor to solving the issue of climate change while providing low cost reliable electricity.

I don't want nuclear power to be the option of last resort. Let's all do our part to ensure that we are wanted for our positive attributes, not just tolerated as the least bad solution. And that means always working hard to improve.

A bit rambling, but that's what I thought about when I read this book – we all need to work together to “deliver happiness”.