

# The Magellan Initiative

**Mike Granatt, Dr James Young and Dr Patrick Lagadec** launch a new initiative to link people who try, at an international level, to understand and tackle emerging mega-crises

## THE MAGELLAN NETWORK

Initiative aims to link an open number of people who try, at an international level, to understand and tackle the issues related to emerging mega-crises. In the forthcoming issues, they will share with *CRJ* readers 'From the Unknown' – concrete advances in unconventional crisis intelligence and management (see p64).

The Magellan Network is presently linking three hubs around: Mike Granatt, former Head of the Civil Contingency Secretariat, Cabinet Office, UK; Patrick Lagadec, Ecole Polytechnique, France, and Special advisor to *CRJ* on Unconventional Crises; and Dr James Young, former Special Advisor to the Deputy Minister, Public Safety Canada.

The accidental, compartmentalised crises of the 20th Century have mutated into systemic dislocations calling for new intelligence – and

new tools – in the 21st Century, and on all fronts. Trans-complexity is the name of the game; financial turmoil in the USA triggers riots in China and shakes the whole planet.

Organisations and economies can only survive if leaders adopt the necessary strategy. Four gates have to be opened:

■ **Culture:** build a culture of informed, broadminded and intuitive watchfulness;

■ **Operation:** apply discipline to preparation, immediate response and the strategic decision cycle;

■ **Intelligence:** apply rapid reflection and determined back-up processes; and

■ **Education:** produce people capable of thinking and acting in a new way.

We need the culture of the Hubwatch – people who understand this highly connected world of networked society. Our ability to deliver huge flows of money, energy, goods,

information and emotion between the hubs on the network is also our vulnerability. All those channels – physical and virtual, wired and wireless, verbal and non-verbal, soft and hard – can deliver the bad, as well as the good.

We need Hubmasters – people who have mastered the broad view and understanding of this intensely connected and susceptible world. They see how the storms and disruptions of crises travel, cross boundaries, and call for constant remapping of our environment. Where others only see today's local emergency, hubmasters also see the leading edge of the crisis as it travels outwards, disrupting the far away and the future, jumping from one issue to another.

If we have hubmasters in the right places, aware of the potentials, able to press the right buttons, and above all who are able and duty-bound to talk to each other, we will have the Hubwatch – our first line of essential defence against crisis.

Hubwatch needs the understanding, support and authority of leaders to make it happen. It will be a federation prepared for the next war, not the last, a great common

undertaking for the common good.

But where the Hubwatch is loose, flexible and sensitive, the response mechanisms must be determined, practised, and disciplined. A crisis robs us of time; immediate standard responses will buy time, but a disciplined and practised strategic management process must be ready to convene. John Boyd's OODA loop decision cycle must be fully understood and used: Observation – gathering the information; Orientation – providing a single co-ordinated assessment of ground truth, risks and options for decision-makers, and aligning resources in preparation; Decision-making – a determined, agenda-led meeting, driven strongly to focus on the assessment and decisions; and Action – pursuing the decisions with determination and energy.

Boyd's central point was that the decision cycle is the central mechanism enabling adaptation (apart from natural selection) and is therefore critical to survival. OODA uses discipline to drive learning, adaptation and innovation, forcing decision-makers to consider the real strategic challenges, not the old assumptions. Again, for this new pattern to emerge, leaders must fully accept that now the quintessence of their responsibility is to map new routes through unknown stormy territories. This will require solid, innovative



*Throughout the 16th Century, the calculations and theories of the ancient Greek and Egyptian mathematicians and astronomers served as the basis of cosmology, even as new discoveries undermined time-honoured assumptions. [...] To reach his goal, Magellan would have to master both a great Ocean Sea and a sea of ignorance. [...] His sophisticated approach to navigating uncharted waters went far beyond technical ability in boat handling and direction finding; it revealed an ability to deploy novel tactics to overcome one of the great challenges of the Age of Discovery: namely, how to guide a fleet of ships through hundreds of miles of unmapped archipelagos in rough waters." Laurence Bergreen, Over the Edge of the World – Magellan's Terrifying Circumnavigation of the Globe, 2004*

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ways to deliver expert support in real time.

OODA still works 50 years after its conception. But it needs augmentation for the multi-channelled, multi-hub, multi-media environment in which modern crises thrive. The stress of crisis inevitably drives thinking inwards towards familiar experiences and solutions. There are two proven and efficient models to counteract this tendency.

The Rapid Reflexion Force (*CRJ* 4:2; 3:2) is probably more suited for corporate leadership already prepared to deal with huge complex crises. The RRF is designed and implemented to provide a direct input to decision-makers, offering independent views, unhampered by preconceptions and irrelevant imperatives. The RRF focuses on four crucial questions: Problem framing throughout the crisis; anticipation of pitfalls; stakeholder mapping; and initiative design.

The Leadership by Committee model is more compelling. The vision is that on the brink of total confusion, the right ideas on which to act should come from a strong group of trained advisors. Such a committee should be strongly managed by a chair, who is focused on producing results in a timely way. This approach, solving evolving crisis issues, needs to operate as a sanctioned body and leaders should be obligated to listen to the committee's advice or explain why it was not taken.

Whatever the model, it would be used to look at issues as an ongoing basis, not just when a crisis arises. In the best of all worlds, private industry and government would work together in managing with that kind of expertise.

We used to teach leaders and future leaders about best practices built on globally accepted paradigms. But crisis changes the paradigm. We must shift from seeking the best answers to previous questions, to seeking out the new and strange questions. The goal is not to produce people who can apply pre-planned answers; we need people who expect and embrace the new and the novel. We need them to accept strange signals and 'impossible' scenarios, to enter strange seas without being paralysed by the absence of maps. We need people who relish the challenge of creative thinking and action, even in the most inconceivable and rapidly developing contexts.

So our challenge is to find ways into our *Terrae Incognitae*, learning a great deal quickly and innovating at great speed. This new world demands appropriate new capabilities. Hence our international Magellan Initiative. Contemporary Magellans will need a great deal of intelligence, courage and determination. But failure is not an option.

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## CRJ EDITORIAL ADVISORY PANEL



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**Arthur Rabjohn** President, IAEM Europa

### Editorial Advisory Panel news

We are delighted to welcome two new members to our Editorial Advisory Panel

**Andy Marshall** is Director of Civil Contingencies for Staffordshire, one of the four Local Resilience Forum areas of the West Midlands region of the UK. His main role is to lead Staffordshire's Civil Contingencies Unit (CCU), a centre of specialist support and guidance for emergency and disaster management. In addition to his extensive experience of contingency planning, Andy brings a rich international



background to Crisis Response Journal, having previously lived and worked in Japan, studied in the United States and travelled extensively during commissioned service with the Royal Air Force.

**Craig Nemitz** has been involved with humanitarian and disaster services for more than 15 years and is a Certified Emergency Manager (CEM) through the IAEM. He is currently the Director of Disaster Services for the international charity Feed The Children, with headquarters in Oklahoma City, USA. Craig is a dynamic, award winning professional, with outstanding success working with US State and local governments, FEMA, corporations, citizens' groups and non-profit organisations in all phases of the humanitarian assistance/disaster cycle (mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery). Nemitz has earned the prestigious International Diploma in Humanitarian Assistance from the University of Geneva, Switzerland/Royal College of Surgeons, Dublin/Fordham University, New York. Craig has served as a Member and Vice-President of National Voluntary Organisations Active in Disasters (NVOAD) and as the Chairman of the National Donations Management Committee.

