

**Jonathan Schechter – “Corpus Callosum” Column**  
**Jackson Hole News&Guide – February 20, 2013**

Today's is the third of three columns inspired by “22 in 21: Jackson Hole in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century;” a conference run last month by my Charture Institute.

In my remarks to attendees, I made three points I feel are critical to understanding the opportunities we have to influence where our region is heading.

The first is that Jackson Hole is one community spanning two states and three counties. If Teton Pass or the Snake River Canyon close, the effects are felt not just in the Jackson Hole valley, but also in the Teton and Star valleys.

The second is that Jackson Hole has always been a community of entrepreneurs.

According to the Random House dictionary, an entrepreneur is “A person who organizes and manages any enterprise, especially a business, usually with considerable initiative and risk.” This definition captures not just the people opening new businesses today, but also the first settlers who came here in the late 1800s.

The third is that, during the last decade or two, the nature of entrepreneurship in our region has changed.

By this I mean that, thanks to significant changes in six factors – technology, the economy, transportation, mores, values, and America's ever-growing urban and suburban areas – it is becoming increasingly easy to do more and different types of work from anywhere. As important, it's becoming increasingly acceptable to do so.

This shift has had profound consequences for Jackson Hole and similar communities. In particular, it has cleaved our entrepreneurial community in two. One half is the region's traditional entrepreneurs, whose businesses focus on local customers, whether residents or customers. Examples range from retail stores and hotels to contractors and physicians.

Because of their inward focus, let's call the owners of these business “Intrapreneurs.”

The other half of the local entrepreneurial world are owners I call “Extrapreneurs.” Ranging from internet-based companies to professional services firms, these businesses focus on customers outside the region.

At least two qualities distinguish the region's extrapreneurs. One is that they can locate their businesses anywhere, but choose the Tetons because this is where they want to live.

The other is that, for the most part, no one really knows the region's extrapreneurial businesses exist, for they have no obvious connections to traditional power structures. Extrapreneurial businesses neither advertise locally nor generate sales tax. Further, unless they're based in the Town of Jackson, they don't need local business licenses. Further still, because it makes no difference to their success, their owners rarely join civic groups such as the Chamber of Commerce or Rotary.

Yet despite flying under the radar screen, there are hundreds of such businesses out there today. More importantly, by the end of the decade those hundreds will be thousands. Whether we realize it or not, extrapreneurship is going to drive our future economic growth. (Figure 1)

Unless we blow it.

How might we do that? By soiling our own nest and make ourselves unattractive to extrapreneurs.

As Figure 2 suggests, ultimately Jackson Hole can offer tourists only two truly distinctive qualities: our landscape and our wildlife. If we remain good stewards of these, our tourism economy will continue to thrive. In addition, we have a third truly distinctive quality we can offer residents: our character and culture. Keep these qualities healthy, and extrapreneurs will continue to come to the Tetons. Mess them up, however, and as quickly as they came, the extrapreneurs will disappear, going wherever suits their fancy.

The good news here is that we have a great deal of control over our future, because the thing extrapreneurs crave – a truly distinctive place to live and establish their business – is very much in our control. (Figure 3)

We have this opportunity because of the conservation legacy left by our forebears. These foresightful men and women not only protected the open spaces which sustain our wildlife, but created a distinctive community character, one grounded in respect for the land and for others; in passion for the place and compassion for those attracted to it; in hospitality towards all; and in a willingness to give back – through whatever means available, and to the greatest extent possible – to this beautiful, remote, and often-challenging locale.

Our generation has been entrusted with this extraordinary legacy, and history won't forgive us if we squander it. But to succeed in honoring it, we must also be willing to embrace new tools and new ways of thinking; to learn new skills and new ways of approaching challenges. This won't be easy, particularly because the region has become too rich and complex for individuals acting alone to successfully address our challenges. And sadly, while it's clear that collaboration is the key to future success, we have no experience in acting together. Indeed, too often it seems we'd rather work alone and fail than work with others and succeed.

Which is silly, if not stupid. But it's also part of our charm. And in its own way, our challenge of figuring out how to collaborate is no less daunting than the challenges our forebears faced. They succeeded despite their own foibles; here's hoping we can do the same.

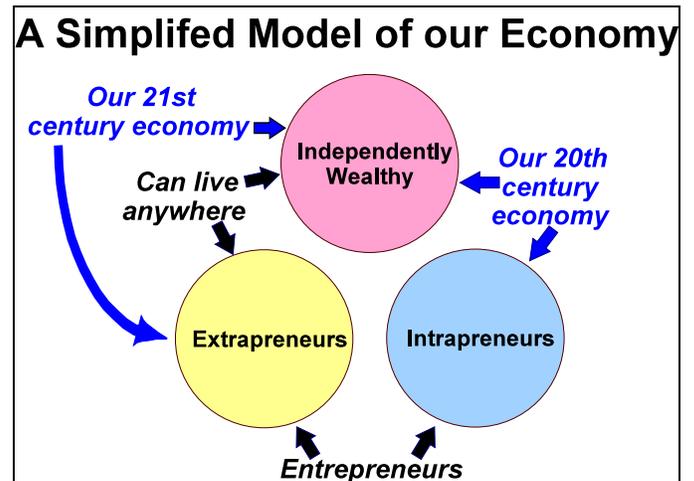


Figure 1

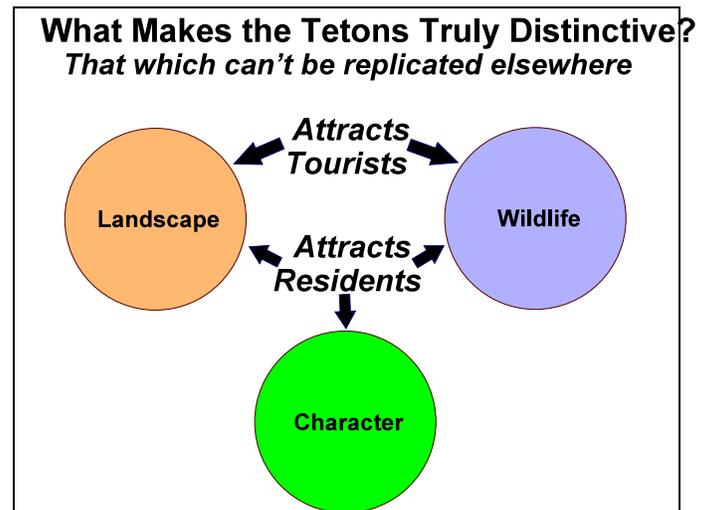


Figure 2



Figure 3