

2017 – 2020 UNIAPAC Strategy Plan

Rolando Medeiros

As contemplated in Article 8 of UNIAPAC's Statutes, the Board shall validate the Union strategy and its yearly program of activities upon proposal by the President. Obviously, since the members of the Board were just elected, they have not had the chance of reviewing the proposed Strategic Plan that I will present today. Consequently what I will describe now is a preliminary proposal which provides all of us and our regional and national associations with the opportunity to enrich it with comments and suggestions that I will include in my final proposal to the Board.

What I would like to propose is a **vision-driven strategy** convinced about the significant positive impact this approach may have on the effectiveness with which UNIAPAC at all levels – International, Regional, National and Local—deploys and executes its mission of promoting amongst business leaders the vision and implementation of an economy serving the human person and the Common Good of humanity at large. The deployment of this vision-driven strategy is expected to result in higher levels of collaboration and synergies amongst the different associations for more powerful and significant achievements of UNIAPAC's objectives.

There are 4 key aspects to the vision-driven strategy I'm proposing:

1. Creating and setting the vision
2. Communicating the vision
3. Building commitment to the vision
4. Organizing people and what they do so that they are aligned to the vision

Let's start the process today by working together in the creation and setting of **UNIAPAC's Vision of the Future**. For reasons I will explain afterwards, my proposed Vision of the Future is the following:

“UNIAPAC will be recognized worldwide by its distinct promotion of Business as a Noble Vocation”

Once this vision of the future, or an alternative, is agreed upon, we need –all of us—to ensure that it is clearly communicated to all the members of our UNIAPAC associations. Then, each association needs to diagnose its present condition on the same dimensions of our shared vision. This diagnostic analysis constitutes the basis for a systematic identification of the gaps. Once the gaps are identified each and every association will be enabled to manage the process of closing gaps with the desired level of autonomy as demanded by each organization's particular situation, circumstances and capabilities. However, by getting all the associations to act for the realization of a common vision of the future, we will be able to capture the synergies at local, national, regional and international levels and each association will benefit from the progress other associations have made in their closing of their own gaps. The process will help everybody to learn from the others' successes and failures and allow access to specific actions, innovative programs, creative initiatives, etc. and to the opportunity to share best practices and to replicate them.

It is easy to envision how such a high degree of alignment could result in powerful and significant contributions to put UNIAPAC's mission effectively forward in all regions for the betterment of the whole world. However the key element for the success of this vision-driven strategy is the quality of the vision of the future. Let's review this aspect. The reputed business strategist Burt Nanus put it in very clear terms:

“There is no more powerful engine driving an organization toward excellence and long-range success than an attractive, worthwhile, and achievable vision of the future, widely shared.”

The key elements of an effective vision for the success of a vision-driven strategy are contained in this statement. What is needed is a unique vision that attracts commitment, inspires people, revitalizes organizations, and mobilizes the resources needed to turn vision into reality. The vision needs to have such a quality that enables effective leaders to communicate it, and persuade others to become so committed to this new direction that they are eager to lend their resources and engines to make them happen.

Is *“to be recognized worldwide by its distinct promotion of business as a noble vocation”* a realistic, credible, attractive future for UNIAPAC? In my opinion this is the right vision because it is not only an idea or image of a more desirable future for UNIAPAC but, if properly understood and deployed, would be so energizing that in effect would jump-start the future by calling forth the skills, talents, and resources to make it happen; it would empower our associations to maximize our contribution to the well-being of our members and the larger society of which we are part; it will help to create meaning in our lives, to establish a standard of excellence and to bridge the present and the future. The invitation is for all of us to become the architects of UNIAPAC's future by setting its direction; to become its change agents to make the vision achievable in the future; to be its spokespersons as chief advocates and negotiators for UNIAPAC, and its vision, with the outside constituencies; and, to turn us into its coaches as team builders who empower individuals in our associations and passionately “live the vision”, thereby serving as mentors and examples of those whose efforts are necessary to make the vision become reality. In other words, the invitation is for all of us to become UNIAPAC's visionary leaders.

As pointed out by the distinguished Christian philosopher Teilhard de Chardin, *a great hope held in common is the greatest force for the advancement of the human species [and] everybody knows that nothing is more impossible than to inhibit the growth of an idea.* I tried to convey to all of you this message in the document ***“UNIAPAC's Time is now... Our Time has come”*** which I wrote and distributed to all the associations early this year. In that document I said that if business as a vocation is an insightful concept, business as a noble vocation is a very powerful idea; an idea which demands a deeper sense of purpose by the business leader –so timely in a world which is experiencing a serious crisis of meaning and of trust—and which also requires that the enterprise lead by such a leader be oriented to serve the Common Good. I encourage you to read again that document some of whose elements I will summarize now to validate my proposal for UNIAPAC's Vision of the Future: *to be recognized worldwide by its distinct promotion of business as a noble vocation.*

What's the meaning of *business as a noble vocation*?

“Business is a vocation, and a noble vocation, provided that those engaged in it see themselves challenged by a greater meaning in life; this will enable them truly to serve the common good by striving to increase the goods of this world and to make them more accessible to all”

The first element in this *business as a noble vocation* definition is the need for ***the business leader to be challenged by a greater meaning in life***. This is an invitation for us, as business leaders, to assume our leadership roles as a calling; an invitation to have the courage to use personal transformation to positively impact our lives and our organizations moving ourselves and others to the highest level of excellence to access and apply the power that lies within us in ways that will change our world for the better. Thus, it is an invitation to look within to make a fundamental change which has to do with our purpose in life, with making fundamental choices about who we are, about our own life and what we stand for. A fundamental choice to live in accordance with our highest spiritual truths, to be true to ourselves and to align our attitude and behavior with our principles and values in all that we do, including our responsibilities as business leaders. It is an invitation for us to overcome a key obstacle to serve the common good in our business endeavors: a divide life, i.e. the split between our faith and our daily business practice. The challenge is to undertake our duties and responsibilities as a vocation illuminated by our faith. In fact, the definition of *vocation* is that it is *a conviction that one is called by God to do a particular kind of work, that one is fitted for it and has a duty to do it*.

And, in my opinion, to do so we first need to acknowledge that our business acumen is a God’s endowment. Then, to strive to return this gift to society as a servant leader and to build spiritual capital in the organization we lead. In turn, this is a quest to instill –and lead by example– an organizational culture where all stakeholders are seen as *neighbors to be loved as oneself*. It is to engrain values founded in the unconditional respect for the dignity of every person in all interactions taking place in business contexts. All this has to do with the second element of the definition: for business to be a noble vocation it needs **to serve the common good by striving to increase the goods of this world and to make them more accessible to all**.

This second element addresses the role that business plays and could play in modern life and its critical contribution to the Common Good of the communities in which we live. A common good understood as the sum of those conditions of social life which allow social groups and their individual members’ relatively thorough and ready access to their own fulfilment. It is a call for business leaders to engage with the contemporary economic and financial world in light of the principles of human dignity and the common good which requires a set of practical principles summarized in the “3Gs” for the service of the Common Good: Good Goods, Good Work, and Good Wealth. These are the goods of business in the definition of business as a noble vocation:

- **Good Goods:** Making goods that are truly good and services that truly serve meeting the needs of the world without forgetting, in a spirit of solidarity, the needs of the poor and the vulnerable. Underlying this concept is the principle of universal destination of goods and the right to common use of them.
- **Good Work:** Organizing work for the employees to develop their gifts and talents. While businesses strive to create goods and services, it should not come at the expense of good work and the integral development of the workers (i.e. the subjective dimension of work). Underlying this concept is the principle of subsidiarity which fosters a spirit of initiative and increases the competence of the employees who are thereby considered “co-entrepreneurs”.

- **Good Wealth:** Creating sustainable wealth and distributing it justly. Creation of wealth without compromising the dignity of any stakeholder to contribute to a robust and fully humane economy; an economy that truly serves people and not the other way around. The principle of just distribution calls for wealth to be allocated in a way that creates “right relationships” with those who have participated in the creation of such wealth.

When businesses properly order these three goods, they serve as the economic engine of a society and play an indispensable role in generating material prosperity for wider numbers of people. When they disorder any of these goods, businesses fail to mitigate poverty as well as they could and more specifically, exclude others from prosperity. If business is to build a more inclusive economy, it has to achieve all three of these goods. This is not an easy task in a global competitive economy, but no one said that the noble vocation of business would be easy.

In promoting the concept and implications of business as a noble vocation, UNIAPAC could apply two modes, or functions. One mode is a critique of positive and negative aspects of business conduct and of the context in which business operates, insofar as they influence the well-being of human persons (and perhaps insofar as they can be influenced). The second mode is a set of proposals concerning the shape and substance of a business that would fully respect human dignity and pursue the common good.

In its critique mode, by denouncing bad business practices and showcasing good ones, UNIAPAC can be instrumental to help to understand that the purpose of a business firm is not simply to make a profit, but is to be found in its very existence as a community who offer their talents, skills, and knowledge to help build and fulfill a purpose of common good. Profit is a regulator of the life of a business, but it is not the only one; other human and moral factors must also be considered which, in the long term, are at least equally important for the life of a business and at the core of turning business into a noble vocation.

In the propositional mode, UNIAPAC should not pretend that all businesses live up to any particular model at all times and should take into account that businesspeople are not immune to sin. UNIAPAC has to maintain its contribution to a dynamic process towards an ideal, but an ideal that many businesses can approach in their day-to-day activities. In other words, UNIAPAC should help to build a standard to which businesspeople can and should aspire –and the standard may be upheld sometimes more fully, sometimes more poorly, but always as a compass.

Thus the great challenge before us is to demonstrate –in thinking and behavior—not only that traditional principles of social ethics like transparency, honesty and responsibility cannot be ignored or attenuated, but also that the principle of gratuitousness and the logic of gift as an expression of fraternity can and must find their place within normal business activity for it to really constitute a noble vocation. What a challenge for UNIAPAC...! A meaningful challenge clearly expressed in the Vision of the Future:

**“UNIAPAC will be recognized worldwide by its distinct
promotion of Business as a Noble Vocation”**

Buenos Aires, Argentina, Julio 1, 2017