INFORMATION & CONTENT
CoreNet Global embarked on an 18-month initiative in 2017 to envision the association model of the future in four key areas: belonging, convening, learning, and information and content. Work groups met virtually and around the world to develop future forecasts that will inform the strategic direction of the organization for years to come. This is one of four reports also accompanied by an overarching document that includes an executive summary and a further explanation of the project.

The following Future Forecasts were formulated, vetted and synthesized following input from hundreds of members across the globe who participated in this association-shaping thought leadership exercise.

1. CoreNet Global will leverage the collective power of its membership through an information exchange designed to support member-to-member sharing and real-time problem solving and decision making.

2. CoreNet Global will leverage technology tools and solutions such as artificial intelligence, virtual and augmented reality, predictive analytics and virtual assistants to deliver timely, customized, interactive content experiences.

3. CoreNet Global’s digital information and content platform will break traditional language and geographic boundaries, remove barriers and ease access for audiences.

4. CoreNet Global will become THE trusted source for timely, relevant content as it will audit and test the veracity of the data and information it provides.

5. CoreNet Global will provide relevant information and content to professionals beyond corporate real estate to include those engaged in the built environment, work experience and corporate enablement.
In business, information is currency. Companies make large investments simply to know everything they can about what matters most to them, whether that relates to consumer preferences, economic trends, or competitive intelligence. Technology and automation are driving information to the point where it is readily available to the consumer in an instant. Information, when it is both accurate and timely, can drive smart business decisions and provide a competitive edge. The absence of reliable information can leave a company behind.

The 2017 Communications Market Study conducted by the United Kingdom’s communications regulator, Ofcom, found that the average person spends almost 45% of her waking hours, or about seven hours, either online, on the phone, or watching television.1 Also, a recent study by Adobe found that consumers in the United States spend about the same amount of time sleeping each day—an average of 7.8 hours—as they do engaging with digital content.2 Computers and the internet have improved our lives in so many ways that it is difficult to imagine how work was done before their advent, and more recent advancements in AI, big data, and the Internet of Things (IoT) have enabled an era filled with multitaskers who handle different functions at the same time. This technology has made business transactions more efficient, created the opportunity for people to organize and be heard, and made research easier. In fact, Amazon Web Services asserts that a utility company was able to increase technician efficiency by 50% using IoT.3

### What does the Future of Information & Content look like?

Putting members and information together and allowing them room to develop and become something greater than the sum of their parts is one of the most profound ways in which CoreNet Global can differentiate itself from other associations and demonstrate the true value of membership. This was the consensus of the work groups that convened around the world to discuss the future of information and content in the year 2025 and beyond. The FutureForward 2025 initiative itself supported the notion that better decisions are often made by groups, but the most powerful decisions come from groups armed with timely information and ways to put it all together. This is where CoreNet Global can add real value to its members and customers for years to come.

As we consider how CoreNet Global will need to adapt to a changing business environment over the next several years in order to better serve its members and the larger real estate community, this report examines several factors impacting the future of information and content. These include who provides content, what will change about information and content, and where good content can be found, as well as how best to organize vast amounts of content in order to be useful to and to attract and serve—what is anticipated to be a more diverse membership. These issues are complementary and interlocking, but they help to frame CoreNet Global’s future as a trusted source and content provider.

The FutureForward 2025 work groups shared the collective hope that CoreNet Global would better leverage the information that already exists, along with new content generated by the association, in order to fulfill its potential and add value to members. There was consensus that this could be accomplished through curation, aggregation, contextualization and verification of content. Making intelligent investments in technology in the near term that strengthen content location and delivery platforms will position the organization for success in the coming years. This report offers some ideas that were generated by members that can point CoreNet Global in that direction.

Membership associations like CoreNet Global are particularly well-positioned to take advantage of evolving technologies and the possibilities they present. The ASAE Foundation’s ForecastWorks, a research group that serves associations and nonprofit organizations, has noted that associations can use AI to “identify patterns of behavior and preferences that help customize the member experience. AI can recommend products and services” that members might otherwise not find and this can assist in deepening member engagement. Better utilizing information and content, and the technology that enables its utilization, can help CoreNet Global to both grow its membership base numerically and to strengthen the ties of members to one another and to the association with a clear understanding of the value CoreNet Global can bring to their careers and professional lives.

Each forecast was carefully crafted with thoughtful input, context, insights and research as noted in greater detail on the following pages.

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3 “AWS IoT” Amazon. https://aws.amazon.com/iot
Fostering a Sharing Community and Culture

As CoreNet Global continues to evolve, one of the most useful and informative sources of content is the membership itself: a diverse group of professionals with a wide range of experiences, disciplines, and roles located all around the globe. Collectively, they are powerful tools to leverage when solving problems or developing thought leadership. Work group participants noted that their peers are collegial by nature and that sharing is a common practice already.

At its best, an association like CoreNet Global becomes a kind of professional community that can be supportive in problem-solving, thought leadership and industry advancements, and even career guidance. Many members understand that they will get out of the organization only as much as they put in, and this is the message that should be conveyed more generally. There is the potential for great power in the contributions and collaboration of all members, and CoreNet Global can put systems and platforms in place to enable members to reach that potential by working together and seeing the advantage of being part of something that in turn empowers each professional in the association.

By creating a platform to make that sharing easier, faster and more efficient, the association could add real-time value to members. The ability to increase members’ access to experts and collaborators would be a powerful benefit that could address members where they are on their career path or where they are in the completion of a particular project. Just-in-time insights and solutions presented “on the fly” would answer pressing questions facing an individual working on a specific task, for example.

Members say this type of information exchange could be accomplished through a virtual network that would facilitate conversations, learning and “idea streams.” Incorporating user profiles into this technology, people would be able to find experts and collaborators to help with any problem they might encounter.

Whatever the product to be used or developed, there is general agreement that this kind of networking system will be needed to promote active engagement on the part of members and to tie them more closely with the resources that can only be found in CoreNet Global. CoreNet Global will need to determine which systems offer the most opportunity for the required investment and then pursue those venues. CoreNet Global is well positioned to customize the experience through all phases of a real estate career.

It was suggested that CoreNet Global could hyperlink to other platforms, increasing one’s access to contacts and information. For example, one would be able to click on someone’s name and it would immediately bring you to their social media accounts, etc. Using such a tool could increase connections based on needs and experience. In the same way that an individual can use social media platforms to find a plumber or carpenter in her neighborhood, this technology will facilitate a corporate real estate (CRE) professional or her company to find a workplace strategist or an expert in brownfield remediation.

Other members also discussed the idea of leveraging existing, popular social and event platforms since those companies have already built something that can be scaled and have worked through many of the challenges that software development would incur. Members expressed a desire to see an online forum where members can post a question and receive virtually instant feedback from other members. This real-time connectivity and peer-to-peer interactivity would make the network an indispensable resource for members and vastly improve the value of information and content, because not only would information be available at a touch, but one could also obtain needed context and the considered opinions of peers in the profession.

This kind of networking platform has the added advantage of bringing people together that might not have connected otherwise. The use of profiles to determine interests and geographic regions can also be used to discover common interests. In the same way that Facebook or LinkedIn users will often see suggestions for connections or content based on what is already known, this network could identify people with similar concerns and introduce them to one another, or suggest content to read or programs to attend. These connection points may surprise users by putting them in touch with someone in the same building or neighborhood, or connecting people who are wrestling with the same issues in another part of the world.

Ratings Matter: Follow the Crowd

Some work groups suggested that CoreNet Global “democratize its data” and create a rating system that would allow members to recommend information to others, thereby seeing the most popular or most viewed content rise to the top as it does in Google searches. They also encouraged CoreNet Global to “make the data more transparent by informing members of sources so that members could then decide if they can trust the quality of the data or not based on its provenance.”

An information exchange could provide an opportunity for members to rank the information and content provided in a way that is helpful to other users. With response tracking and data analytics...
built into such a platform, it would be simple to keep a running list of the “Top 10 Topics Trending” or “Most Viewed Content” that is constantly refreshing. Some members expressed a desire to have content an open forum with the kind of segmentation that would allow them to search for the “Top 100 Research Articles” on a subject and feel confident that the results would be relevant and reasonably current. The existence of this list provides an ongoing update on what other members are looking at or talking about. Content is thus validated by professional peers and may bring a new topic to mind or justify a decision that is under consideration. The ability to see what other members find important could provide useful information at a critical time.

Other participants found the model of a “CRE wiki” or crowd-based content management system helpful, as they imagined a crowdsourced system whereby members could chime in and improve content or make alternate recommendations. This kind of system pools together the knowledge of a group of people to create better content than any one person could supply. In this way an article on any subject becomes the sum of knowledge of all of the people who worked on it.

Karim Lakhani, professor of business administration at Harvard’s Institute for Quantitative Social Science, first noticed the value of this way of working in the 1980s when he worked at General Electric. At that time he noticed that open-source software developers, or groups of people volunteering to write code, were producing better software than GE did. Since then he has worked with NASA to crowdsourced technology solutions and develop contests to help address problems the agency faced. Lakhani found that people form crowds to solve problems for three reasons: extrinsic benefits (improved professional profile or rewards, such as money); intrinsic benefits (it helps solve a problem, or it’s fun); and pro-social benefits (participants enjoy being part of something that makes the world a better place).4

Of course, any time rating or crowdsourcing is utilized there is some risk of fraudulent behavior, such as users rating their firm’s work highly and a competitor’s work poorly. According to NBC News Ted Lappas, an assistant professor in the School of Business at Stevens Institute of Technology in New Jersey, found that “15 to 30% of all online reviews may be falsified.” He suggests that this can be combated by giving more weight to verified consumers, or those who review more frequently or review a broad range of products and services, as these are more likely to be trustworthy.5

### Generating New Content

Given the combined strength of CoreNet Global’s membership, there is a role for the association not only in aggregating and storing content but in generating it as well. In addition to problem solving and information sharing, there may be a role for CoreNet Global to play in serving as a central hub for creating workstreams with teams of members conducting research and sharing findings on a particular topic for the benefit of others. This may support the growth of the organization and its members by producing “content – and context - that would not happen without the organization’s thoughtful position,” one participant noted. CoreNet Global can encourage members to work together on research or to share the findings of internal studies when appropriate so that the content cannot be found anywhere else. This will truly enable CoreNet Global to be the premier content warehouse, and generator, for corporate real estate and the built environment.

### The Best Source of Information is ‘All of Us’

CoreNet Global is, among other things, an information broker. When a professional association can leverage the combined knowledge and resources of its members around the globe, that acts as a force multiplier for that knowledge. This is one of the many reasons members find CoreNet Global so valuable. And as technology evolves, an association like CoreNet Global only becomes more valuable to its members as it helps to keep them apprised of new developments in the economy, business and technology that can aid members in adapting to the changing world environment. In this way, technology will enhance CoreNet Global members’ ability to react to market forces more quickly and to make better decisions for their workers, their space and their companies.

#### Future Forecast: By 2025, CoreNet Global will leverage technology tools and solutions such as artificial intelligence, virtual and augmented reality, predictive analytics and virtual assistants to deliver timely, customized, interactive content experiences.

CoreNet Global will build on this culture of collaboration and see improved communication by creating or licensing tools that will allow members to engage more closely with one another. These can take the form of online tools such as proprietary apps or other tools in combination with one another. Whether CoreNet Global invests in proprietary platforms or utilizes the best of what has been developed by others, being able to leverage all the available data to reach conclusions and move a business quickly in another direction if needed would be revolutionary.

Work groups suggested that CoreNet Global must focus on the elements of corporate real estate that are changing so as to help members stay ahead. By harnessing the digital era, one member added, CoreNet Global can help inform members’ understanding of AI, bots, and machine learning – and advance the association’s own technology advancements along the way.

There is little doubt that technology is changing every industry it touches – or, in other words, every industry. According to the McKinsey Global Institute, one-third of jobs created in the United States over the past 25 years – such as IT development and systems management – did not exist, or barely existed, a quarter

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of a century ago. In the coming years, companies like Salesforce that leverage technologies such as AI and IoT to create new business solutions will create millions of jobs, while increased automation could eliminate jobs in manufacturing, retail, and healthcare. In fact, the World Economic Forum finds that approximately 42% of the skills demanded for jobs across industries will change between 2018 and 2022, and many children entering primary school today will work in occupations that don’t even exist yet. It may not be possible to “future proof” the corporate real estate profession, and many interviewees expressed concerns about what changes technology might bring to their jobs, including the possibility of eliminating them. But the majority of participants are excited by the challenge and intrigued by the potential to bring more value to their work and their companies by becoming true “experience managers” and seeing their roles evolve and expand within their organizations. They believe CoreNet Global can and should be key to helping them to sort out that future.

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Tools Members Can Use

When asked to dream big, CoreNet Global members did not disappoint. The desire to advance the profession is palpable in some of the responses and predictions made by individuals and work groups. The Northern California Chapter work group forecasted an environment where “industry benchmarking information becomes ubiquitous through the use of Internet of Things (IOT) technologies and other data sources (such as space management information, lease admin information, financial information, etc.) that monitor every aspect of the built environment.” The chapter envisions that data analytics will “bring the smart city and intelligent spaces to corporate real estate via IOT and 3D hologram technology,” enabling members to connect, exchange, and engage without concern for boundaries, borders, or time zones. In this scenario, technology platforms will be able to gather information automatically and use it in a predictive manner to provide benchmarking information. As a result, space optimization can be done in real time using up-to-the-minute data and research so that users will be able to respond quickly to changing dynamics. Benchmarking, they add, will be curated for the user and delivered in an ongoing, real-time proactive manner and “CoreNet Global will be able to incorporate this technology to enable a game-changing service to become the norm.”

In addition, the chapter also postulated the development of what they called “Adaptive Workplaces,” in which IOT, cloud technologies, presence technologies, VR, and user interfaces, and predictive analytics work together to allow workplaces to adapt to their occupants in many ways. CoreNet Global’s role in this development would lie in shaping the thought leadership, learning, and community around Adaptive Workplaces, as well as providing a hub (the “Watson of the Workplace”) for its members to feed data into and then draw from to help power the workplaces for each of its members.

Real-time Input to Shape Programming

Likewise, the Mid-Atlantic chapter expects to be able to create actionable benchmarking and metrics by measuring in real time in order to adjust local educational programs on the fly. This could include real-time polling and instant feedback as well as predictive technologies to facilitate and inform program content and any resulting decisions. Benchmarking was also on the mind of the New Jersey chapter, which suggested crowdsourcing data for that purpose as well as to generate new and big ideas.

Similarly, the Australia chapter anticipates CoreNet Global’s future ability to make predictions with confidence based on an analysis of the accumulated data gathered from its members. Again, big data will play a role in aggregating and analyzing the available information to see trends that could impact members and their needs before they emerge more fully. This would be quite an accomplishment, and would bring exceptional value to corporate real estate teams across industries and around the globe. While the human factor will make some element of the workplace harder to forecast than others, predictive analytics has already tackled that complication in other fields, such as predicting consumer trends in the new beverage and food service industries, so predicting workplace trend changes with reasonable accuracy is within the realm of possibility.

Move Over Alexa

Several chapters and work groups also expressed interest in CoreNet Global having its own developing proprietary software, such as a virtual assistant similar to Amazon’s Alexa, that would allow for content to be easily searched for the information housed in a location such as the association’s Knowledge Center. The assistant was affectionately named “CoreNexa” or “CoreKey” by two work groups that coalesced around the same concept.

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This would add to the perceived benefit of membership by allowing members to search articles and other content from their device. Like Alexa, this could even be voice-activated as well as personalized to each member’s profile. Advances in voice recognition and digital search machine learning have made digital concierge services a common tool for personal use. Alexa, Siri, and Google Assistant are now commonplace in our mobile devices and are expected to provide ready answers to many questions across a range of general topics. These capabilities are likely to be extended into more specialized areas to provide specific information about a number of topics such as corporate real estate.

Initial implementation could be focused perhaps on enhancing member interactions with CoreNet Global itself – becoming a member, finding and connecting with existing members, volunteering for a committee, or finding and registering for an event. The application could then be expanded into real estate transactions, answering real estate queries, providing market information, finding standard contract templates, or even identifying available sites. The Hong Kong Chapter predicted that this platform “will become a large part of CoreNet Global’s value proposition going forward.”

Information is Virtually Everywhere

Currently, many of CoreNet Global’s informational offerings take place in physical space – at Global Summits and chapter events, and sometimes in classrooms – with content also made available online when possible. Making greater amounts of content available virtually will be essential moving forward. This content will include white papers and presentations, but also livestreaming, video content, computer simulations, and perhaps even virtual reality and other technologies we cannot yet imagine. CoreNet Global will leverage this full range of methods and tools to enhance the information gathering experience for all its members, including those who cannot attend events in person. If, as the Connecticut Westchester chapter puts it, “if you’re not in the room, you are not participating,” then virtual attendance will be a boon to members and to the overall organization. This can be accomplished by holding more virtual sessions in which many, if not most, participants can participate from their desk, as well as by livestreaming events and speakers.

Some suggested that the association is only capturing a fraction of what it produces for later use and that there is much greater potential to expand the usability of that information and content as a real value add for members.

Livestreaming is only one way in which CoreNet Global can extract maximum value from its events both at a global and local level. The recording of as many events as possible gives CoreNet Global the opportunity to repurpose that content in a variety of ways for a wider audience. The content can be viewed at any time in the future as part of an online Knowledge Center or Resource Library. And for members who are pressed for time, this content can be sliced into smaller components and turned into video content for YouTube or another outlet. People who might not sit still for a 30-minute presentation will often find themselves willing to get the same content from as many as three 10-minute videos running in sequence.

Video, in general, is one of the most accessible forms of content, and one of the most popular. The time commitment is generally much shorter than with most printed materials, and unlike newer technologies such virtual reality or augmented reality no additional equipment is needed to watch a video. As such, any strategy to improve access to content needs to include more aggressive use of video. To maximize efficiency and spread the labor around, CoreNet Global could develop and implement guidelines for local chapters to put their own material on video. These videos can then be shared on CoreNet Global’s website, or on YouTube if more global outreach is desired, giving everyone the ability to search and watch content from other chapters.

A number of work group participants suggested that CoreNet Global create a series of videos or regular industry updates that might be called the “CoreNet Global Learning Channel.” This would allow users to instantly access a vast array of content that can be viewed to help educate users. This will have various levels of content from basic real estate and facilities management skills to more sophisticated offerings. These would include an active library of tutorials and content that could be applied to real-world situations.

These steps enable CoreNet Global and its members to continue pulling value out of a major event for months and even years to come.

It was noted that there is an obvious cost to acquire and maintain good content, and the filming and repurposing suggested here is no exception. It may be that CoreNet Global chooses to make a significant investment in technology that helps to streamline these processes, or the association may decide to be selective regarding the events and content that rise to the level requiring such treatment.

Capturing Content

Members pointed out that information needs to be sorted and flagged based on different criteria, so that members searching for materials related to space planning or coworking trends, for example, will find the most relevant and valuable information and not have to hunt through an assortment of less helpful materials to find what is needed. Along those lines, other subgroups or categories can be determined through predictive technologies similar to Alexa, but curated through a CoreNet Global technology platform to analyze user interest patterns and anticipate the subjects’ relationship to one another. Technology can provide a key interface through which CoreNet Global members can tap into the vast array of content resources, and as noted above, also learn what content is of greatest interest to the others. A combination of human curation and predictive analytics will allow CoreNet Global to provide world-class thought leadership, content sharing, and presentations that will assist members individually and collectively.
Personalize the Online Experience

One of the simplest ways to customize members’ interactions with information and content is to personalize the website experience. The Mid-Atlantic chapter suggested that the CoreNet Global website curate content based on user profiles and behaviors in order to anticipate members’ information needs and demands. To do this effectively, users would be asked to set up their profiles upon joining CoreNet Global in a much more robust way. In the same way that people joining LinkedIn or Facebook do, CoreNet Global members would answer some questions and check various boxes to clearly identify areas of interest; these can be related to industry, geography, and subject matter, among other things. Those answers will then allow information to be customized to each member’s needs and circumstances. For instance, a member who expresses interest in facilities management and space planning in Australia or the Asia Pacific region, and is in the packaged food industry, will see content – and when appropriate, search results – that understand those preferences. Content specific to those areas would not necessarily be the only information this member sees, but the most relevant material would be at the top of the page. This would combine the best elements of professional social media like LinkedIn with the most useful attributes of social networks like Facebook.

The technology to accomplish this already exists, and is at our fingertips. User profiles begin the process, telling the software what interests each member. Predictive analytics then take over, as each member conducts searches and queries. The content that the member chooses or clicks on gives the algorithm new data from which to adjust search results. This machine learning will then give each member an always-evolving profile and ensures that news, updates, and other informational content will be relevant and timely. The number of results is less important than the quality of those results, and CoreNet Global could save members’ time and increase the value of membership simultaneously by streamlining content to more closely match the needs of each member. Of course, any member could still locate any piece of data regardless of area of interest, but the “home page” experience would be customized and therefore more compelling. If a CoreNet Global member saw such a site as an essential first stop in preparing for each day based on the content that was offered, CoreNet Global would become “stickier” for members, increasing their sense of loyalty for and need of the association.

While one might assume that retail brands lead the charge on customer profiling, a recent Forbes article notes a spate of recent studies conducted by Forrester, Gartner, and Infosys among others, that suggest that fewer than 10% of top-tier retail brands believe that they are “highly effective” at personalization. Additionally, nearly one-third of the same companies say they have “limited to no capabilities” to support personalization.9

And yet, the study conducted by Adobe noted earlier found that “personalization strategies are becoming table stakes for brands that want to effectively compete in the digital landscape.” Fully two-thirds of respondents said that it is important for brands to automatically adjust content based on their current context, and 42% of respondents said they get annoyed when content is not personalized. Most critically, 66% of consumers said that this could stop them from making a purchase.9

In the context of an association like CoreNet Global, these statistics indicate that not only is personalization a potential source of increased loyalty to the association, but the reverse may also be true. An inability to use these tools could prove a disappointment or annoyance that makes members less inclined to use CoreNet Global resources.

Customization can also be found in the way information is stored and sorted for specific industries or tasks. The Connecticut Westchester chapter suggests that from time to time, a member may be looking for one specific item, such as construction cost data broken out by country or region. CoreNet Global members should be able to find that content quickly if it is available. Conscientious tagging or sorting by topic would allow that data to be located quickly. This presents a valuable reminder that sometimes CoreNet Global members want to use their membership to access very specific and limited information, while at other times the task may be to learn everything possible about a subject. The information platform should be able to aid CoreNet Global members in accomplishing either task.

CoreNet Global is a global membership association, but its usefulness is judged at the individual level. Each member decides for herself whether membership brings a sufficient return on her investment. As such, it is imperative that CoreNet Global ensure that each member has a quality experience when interacting with the association. Since each member wants and expects different things from CoreNet Global, that experience will need to be customized as much as possible, with the help of user profiles and predictive analytics. This will ensure that members will see less unwanted content and more relevant information. Social media, online news and affinity sites, and even advertising provide useful examples for how this might be accomplished in the CoreNet Global member’s interactions with the association, whether online through or via any of the other avenues discussed herein.

3 FUTURE FORECAST: By 2025, CoreNet Global’s digital information and content platform will break traditional language and geographic boundaries, remove barriers and ease access for audiences.

In only a few years, technology has immeasurably changed what is possible in term of accessing information and content. From the ubiquity of smartphones, charging stations, and Wi-Fi to the convenience of innumerable apps, we live and work differently than we could have imagined even a decade ago. If we want to know when our train will arrive at the station, or the stock price of General Electric, or how much we can expect to pay for a flight


Collaboration will improve, participated suggested, by demonstrating that diversity is valued in the corporate real estate profession. Seeking diverse engagement and perspectives should be a priority for CoreNet Global as the more diversified the pool of resources is, the wider the range of solutions to problems there could be.

Chapter-to-Chapter Sharing

In addition, many work groups expressed interest in a future with an information platform that is dynamic, social, connected and open to facilitate a wide variety of interactions. The New York City Chapter envisions a “one-stop shop” wherein CoreNet Global’s portal is a single entry point globally, but members can then filter down to desired chapters, regions, or interests as they see fit.

A better-connected network at a local, national and global level would make the sharing of information even easier, as well as strengthening relationships across the association. The kind of networking platform under discussion would facilitate a wide variety of interactions, including chapter-to-chapter, even matching members to visit other chapters when they are traveling. The New England Chapter agreed noting a desire for the ability to simplify and amplify cross-chapter collaboration.

Open Source Information

The Washington State Chapter took the content platform concept further by encouraging members to commit to “open source” information sharing, asking that information be shared freely between members and the companies they represent. It seems likely that every individual and company would have information and proprietary practices that they would not want to share, but the point is still well made that the more content that is shared, the greater the benefit to each member. They went on to note a potential “pay-to-play” content model by which uploading certain information - in the form of reports, studies, or raw data - would unlock information uploaded by other members or companies.

Data Access

In any event, when these materials are compiled, they will need to be added to a platform that is highly searchable and filtered for relevance. Content will need to be tagged or sorted in a variety of ways with a robust system in place for assessing data quality and maintaining an expanding library. With newer players entering the data space, competition is expected to increase and it will be important than ever for CoreNet Global to keep content up to date and well organized for its members.

Information Needs Will Change Over Time

It is also worth noting that as professionals move through their careers, their needs for content will change. People often move from being specialists in finance, operations, or another area to becoming either generalists who need to manage and direct a wider portfolio of responsibilities, or hyper-specialists that require

Diversity and a Global Focus

In order to see the fullest possible level of collaboration, every voice must be heard and valued. One can never predict from where the most revolutionary insight could come. For this to happen, the Japan chapter suggested that technology should lower the language barrier in communicating and sharing information within CoreNet Global. Translation software and chatbots are just some of the artificial intelligence tools that could address this challenge, and advances in machine learning can put instantaneous and accurate translation within reach. In the meantime, it is important to remember and be sensitive to language and cultural barriers when communicating or even when presenting content.

Members outside the U.S. noted that much of the content currently produced by CoreNet Global is Western in presentation, particularly with an American influence. In order to lower barriers to collaboration and knowledge, other regions and emerging markets will need to have voices in the planning and delivery of content. This has a multiplier effect as professionals in the Middle East or Africa, for example, will be more inclined to join and contribute to an organization if they see evidence that their peers are represented and valued.

In addition, corporate real estate was identified by work groups as “male-dominated” though there was more significant diversity by both race and gender in the FutureForward 2025 work groups convened across multiple countries.
much more granular content than before. Content will need to appeal to those who are dealing with operational nuts and bolts as well as those who grapple with more complex questions. CoreNet Global should be well positioned to customize the experience through all phases of a corporate real estate career.

Finally, while the need for barrier-breaking content is desirous, many work group participants noted that good content is often universal. It may just need some additional insights and context for different markets, geographies, and cultures. CoreNet Global will need to deliver insights and content that is locally appropriate while acknowledging that best practices often transcend geography.

**FUTURE FORECAST:** By 2025, CoreNet Global will become THE trusted source for timely, relevant content as it will audit and test the veracity of the data and information it provides.

If information is currency, then access is the equivalent to having the keys to the vault. Work groups noted that people crave accurate information and getting insightful information in a timely manner and in a consumable fashion will be key to the association’s information and content success. The issues surrounding where CoreNet Global acquires its information and who has access are economic, legal, security and sometimes political, but it is clear that information is a valuable resource and that CoreNet Global members value the ability to obtain it from a trusted source. Work groups noted that people crave accurate information, and getting insightful information in a timely manner and in a consumable fashion will be key to the association’s information and content success.

In the current cultural and political climate, it is more important, and difficult, than ever to find or be a trusted source of information. The term “fake news” has become ubiquitous as a descriptor of information that is biased, furthers an agenda, or is otherwise untrustworthy. A 2018 survey by public relations firm Edelman found that approximately 60% of respondents said that social media companies were ineffective in “controlling fake news, deterring hate speech, and protecting privacy.” Further, only 41% of respondents said that they trust social media (in the United States, that figure drops to 30%). While the same survey recorded an overall increase in trust in journalism to 59% of respondents, this remains an environment in which consumers choose which news outlets to trust, and it is difficult to reach a consensus on the state of play in the world, much less find common ground in identifying and pursuing specific solutions.10

The ability to access content that is trusted by all parties – whether through a neutral verification process or rating regimen – is a crucial value proposition for CoreNet Global members, and can differentiate the association to a great degree.

**Content Comes with a Cost**

Of course, this kind of access comes with a price tag. Whether or not one is charged for that access to information, someone somewhere has paid for it. Technology infrastructure requires some investment, even if hardware and software costs are lower than they once were. And the information itself carries costs associated with acquiring or maintaining it. It is natural to want a return on that investment, and to ensure that others who did not make that investment are not benefitting unfairly from your hard work. This presents a two-sided challenge: how to make information and content accessible to everyone who is entitled to it while not leaving access wide open to anyone. Within CoreNet Global, this challenge can be seen as respecting the quality of one’s membership by not giving non-members the same level of access, if any.

Many news organizations and other online content providers have attempted to come to grips with this in a variety of forms. Some, like The Atlantic and The Guardian, have made everything free while soliciting donations, while others like The Wall Street Journal put everything behind a paywall. Institutions such as The New York Times and The Washington Post try to balance cultural relevance with sustainable economics, and therefore allow non-paying readers to access a limited number of articles per month before directing the reader to subscription options. In this manner, they hope to whet consumers’ appetite for content and then convert non-paying readers into subscribers. Each of these organizations is trying to balance the desire to make content available with the need to cover expenses and honor the value of the product.

CoreNet Global and other membership associations face a similar challenge in raising the visibility of the organization and the entire CRE industry while also offering members quality content that could not be found elsewhere, thus helping to justify the cost of membership.

There are two questions related to this that work groups frequently raised. First, should CoreNet Global protect its access as a privilege for members or open it up somewhat in order to be known as the profession’s leading data source? And secondly, if access comes with membership, should different kinds of members have different levels of access? These are important questions that get to the heart of CoreNet Global’s mission and membership structure, but they will need to be addressed by the association.

leadership. The answers to these questions lie outside the purview of this report, but the questions are included here to acknowledge that they were of concern to participants and in the hope that further discussions of access to content will include these core questions.

CoreNet Global First, Everyone Else Later

One option is to favor members with early access to valuable data and then making it available later, or in truncated form, to the general public. In this way CoreNet Global would preserve some level of exclusivity for its dues-paying members while also retaining the ability to more widely publicize its leading-edge research and content as a service available to those members, perhaps enticing more members in the process. Though one participant noted that there is a “fine line between marketing and giving it away,” but the ability to whet the appetite of those who are not members or customers. Different kinds of content bring different levels of sensitivity, and while a case study or best practice analysis may offer some of the most useful content, the underlying strategies, financials, and other components may be more valuable and not available for all users.

Curating Content

Many work groups suggested the need for information and content to be intentionally curated for quality, relevance, and timeliness. Much of the content that exists in CoreNet Global's current Knowledge Center is retrospective, introspective and not forward-looking.

The Singapore Chapter work group suggested that CoreNet Global operate as a neutral auditor or validator of content, which they see as one step beyond simply curating. In addition, not all content needs to be developed by CoreNet Global. Members also noted that the content platform must be viewed as a trusted source of powerful information mined from a variety of sources and perspectives. This would require fact checking or offering multiple points of view that would allow members to reach their own conclusions.

Some equated such an effort to applying something like the “Good Housekeeping Seal of Approval” to content, in which a set of rigorous standards can be applied to verify the accuracy and utility of the content. But who would “approve”? Some work groups suggested that content could be curated, vetted and prioritized by an editorial board that would provide editorial guidance. Alternatively, a rating regimen comparable to Amazon product reviews could be followed, offering new consumers of content a sense of how much value was placed on the material by others. Amazon also uses a ranking system for reviewers, weighing the reviews of “Verified Customers” or frequent reviewers more heavily with the implication that those reviewers bring more credibility to the task. CoreNet Global could do something similar with frequent users of content, or particularly active members with demonstrated expertise in the relevant area.

In the most recent Local Consumer Review Study conducted in 2017, consumer services firm BrightLocal found that 91% of people regularly or occasionally read online reviews, and 84% trust online reviews as much as they do personal recommendations. Further, 68% of consumers form an opinion after reading between one and six online reviews.11 Given this level of trust, it stands to reason that verified or curated reviews by identified specialists would provide an additional level of security and confidence and allow for content to be ranked so that the most highly ranked content appears first in searches, saving valuable time and increasing confidence in CoreNet Global’s information and content.

Information will also need to be moderated, archived or purged if it is no longer useful or accurate. With the accelerating rate of change in business, this role becomes critical to the success of CoreNet Global if it seeks to become that trusted information hub for corporate real estate and related professions.

Members cautioned that the work of assessing the data and weighing in as to its usefulness or accuracy could be challenging on a number of fronts. It was noted by many work groups that there would be a number of political sensitivities around the association “picking and choosing” certain content while rejecting others. The neutrality of the information hub should remain a priority and the notion of vetting documents could become problematic though it may raise the quality of the content offered.

CoreNet Global as the Clearinghouse

No matter the course of action for a content platform, all of the suggestions point to a stated desire on the part of many participants that CoreNet Global become a community of choice for content in corporate real estate, bringing the most useful materials forward to help members at every stage of their careers. A number of participants noted that global, verified content is in demand and that CoreNet Global could be a clearing house for data.

All work groups generally concurred with the concept of CoreNet Global serving as an aggregator of the best industry knowledge. Some suggested the platform could expand to incorporate video content from global sources such as TED talks and YouTube, podcasts, educational material from universities, productivity tools, market data and best practices from peer organizations.” While this may seem like a grand goal, many were confident that this is both attainable and desirable, and would place CoreNet Global at the forefront of real estate-oriented membership associations for the foreseeable future.
Content is Not One Size Fits All

The goal of CoreNet Global is to ensure that members enjoy the CoreNet Global experience in a way that is most useful and valuable to them. That value will be determined differently by each CoreNet Global member.

Some members said they want peer-reviewed white papers with footnotes and sources, and others said that they were not interested in reading even a short article but preferred video content over all else.

Becoming a stronger and more reliable source for information and content means respecting these differences in preference and offering different kinds of content in different formats.

Groups noted that different formats speak to different audiences, making that an important element of customizing the user experience and not only an issue of access. If a white paper is presented at a conference, CoreNet Global members could get that content by any or all of the following means:

- attending the event in person
- watching the presentation online at another time
- reading the white paper itself
- perusing the presentation slides online

Either concurrently or a later time, non-members might also be able to experience some of the same content in one of those ways, or the association could choose to share a smaller portion by:

- preparing a press release about the original paper or event
- developing an infographic that tells a visually compelling part of the story
- sending an email to prospective members and others in the industry
- posting brief video content that offers a taste of the material

None of these is any more valid than any other, and members can obtain valuable content without having to dive into the whole presentation unless desired. Of course, some content is better suited to one medium than another, but accommodations should be made wherever possible to ensure that valuable content can get to all of the intended audience.

The goal of CoreNet Global is to ensure that members enjoy the CoreNet Global experience in a way that is most useful and valuable to them. That value will be determined differently by each CoreNet Global member.

It would be unthinkable today for a corporate real estate organization to embark on a major new initiative or project without consulting the growing array of internal (and external) partners whose support and expertise will be critical to its success. The importance of these linkages was forecast in CoreNet Global’s landmark Corporate Real Estate 2020® research:

Over the next 10 years, high-performance corporations will demand greater efficiencies of their infrastructure and services to be competitive, requiring deeper forms of collaboration among enterprise support functions to enable the employee’s productivity.12

Beyond corporate real estate, those enterprise functions include HR, IT, Finance, Legal, Procurement, Supply Chain, and Risk, among others.

But it’s not a one-way street. Just as corporate real estate needs the engagement and support of HR and IT, those functions need the support and engagement of corporate real estate. It’s a symbiotic relationship, one in which the success of each major function is increasingly linked to the success of the others. If HR wants to boost its hire rate among the best and brightest now entering the work force, it will very much depend on CRE’s ability to provide dynamic, inviting, engaging workspaces that will attract that new talent.

As a result, each of those enterprise support functions has staff whose day-to-day responsibilities most definitely involve corporate real estate. The legal department is reviewing leases; Procurement is leading a major request for proposals (RFP) for lease administration and facilities management services across EMEA; IT is looking into the security implications of new technology intended to measure occupancy and workplace utilization; Finance is determining when a proposed investment in ‘green’ technology will truly pay off; Supply Chain is weighing in on whether raw materials can be more effectively and predictably supplied to a new factory in China vs. a new factory in Malaysia; HR is exploring which staff could be eligible for a new remote-working program, which has potential to reduce real estate costs by 20 percent over the next three years; and Risk is assessing, in light of ‘Brexit,’ the merits of renewing a lease in London’s Canary Wharf or simply moving the operation to Paris, Amsterdam or Frankfurt.

That brief example illustrates the increasingly diverse group of professionals who need access to the latest information and insights on corporate real estate and the workplace.

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Conclusion

In exploring the future of information and content, it seems clear that the most important advances will be made at the intersection of the physical and digital worlds. The development and use of information and content is best seen as a partnership between the two, because technology is most successful in the workplace when it is seen as a partner rather than a competitor. While technological innovations may change the employment landscape for some professionals, it is more likely that workers armed with new skills will work with technology to garner better insights, make better decisions, and create better strategies for their employers and workplaces.

The corporate real estate profession, like the world at large, is in a season of great change, and information is the key to understanding and keeping up with the shifts taking place across the corporate landscape. While not all information is equally valuable, value can be found in many places. Work group members view knowledge-sharing that results from networking as CoreNet Global’s strongest value. Bringing people together to work on problems and solve them collaboratively allows professionals to leverage information for the good of the larger group by making sure everyone has the same access to information.

Still, CoreNet Global will need to balance exclusivity vs. inclusivity as it relates to content access. People who join an association may want a certain level of exclusivity for their investment, while technology makes everything more ubiquitous. CoreNet Global will need to navigate this with care and advocate for its position with members and the industry as a whole.

Building a robust information and content platform will take the investment of resources in the form of time, money, creativity, and leadership.
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