

Viewpoint

From where I sit

Opening the pod bay doors

Dave: Open the pod bay doors, HAL

HAL: I'm sorry, Dave, I'm afraid I can't do that.

– “2001: A Space Odyssey”

Recently, I had the opportunity to attend the Savannah District’s offsite meeting, 2020 Futurist.com Think Tank, in Hilton Head, S.C. Facilitated by futurist Glen Hiemstra, the goal of the meeting was to envision what the Savannah District would look like 10 years from now. Attendees ranged in experience from the District Commander and executive staff to first-year interns. Over the course of three days, we explored the future of the district, the federal government, and the world at large.

During the meeting, we discussed “pie-in-the-sky” ideas like nanotechnology, biometrics, and limb regeneration. We also discussed issues more pertinent to the future of the district, such as implementing an electronic filing system, creating a more effective intern program, and facing the challenge of employee retention in a more competitive environment. While I certainly enjoyed the discussions and exercises, as civil servants we work for the presidential administration, and we respond according to congressional directive. In that sense, we have less control over what our work environment will resemble in 2020.

Surprisingly, despite the numerous video vignettes with every *2001: A Space Odyssey*-esque scenario imaginable, the topic that energized the group and resulted in the liveliest exchanges between group members was much simpler—demographics. While we can’t control or predict the agenda of a given administration, budgeting priorities, or core mission focus, we can shape one aspect that is more important and more mission-critical—our people.

The Savannah District like many other federal agencies consists primarily of two distinct groups of workers. We have the seasoned, experienced, yet aging specialists, which we commonly refer to as Baby Boomers, and the young, ambitious, technologically-savvy, yet inexperienced professionals referred to as Millennials. As a member of Generation X, I am one of a smaller group caught in the middle, trying to absorb as much wisdom and knowledge as possible from the older generation, preserve it, and attempt to integrate it into all the new technologies at our disposal.



Mackie McIntosh, Civil Programs and Project Management, presents the results of a discussion about what their group liked most and least about the Corps, during the Savannah District 2020 Futurist.com Think Tank in Hilton Head, S.C.

So, where do I see the people that comprise the Savannah District in 10 years? I certainly see a shift in senior leadership from a group comprised almost exclusively of Baby Boomers to include some Generation Xers and a few Millennials. More importantly, the ability of this diverse group to work together, focus on commonalities, and recognize the value of one another’s experiences will be crucial in determining the future of the district. Accomplishing this will allow the district to create its own niche within the core mission areas, and truly capitalize on what certainly will be a talented, well-educated, diversified workforce that will be reaching its stride 10 years from now. I just hope HAL 9000 won’t be listening in. 📺

By Mackie McIntosh, Civil Programs and Project Management

Editor’s Note: Another session of the 2020 Futurist.com Think Tank is scheduled for the fall, and additional team members—Baby Boomers, Generation X, and Millennials—will be invited to attend to exchange ideas and help chart the course for 2020.