

Today's turbulent, contentious, tight-money world invites satellite engineers, builders and data providers to feel anxious. We see funding for our products and services as inadequate, fragile, and intermittent – and zero-sum. This leads us to take shortcuts in communicating our value. Obsessed with our needs for adequate, sustained federal support, it's all too tempting to fall back on “sales pitches” – and what's worse – to overpromise and oversimplify what (we think) we have on offer. Ironically, at the same time we grossly understate and undersell the true importance of our work.

More than ever, now is the time to focus on single, most basic precept of communication – *seek to understand before seeking to be understood.*

If we'll take the time to do this, satellite service providers and the public and Congress together will realize the value of satellite data is far greater than either providers or users had previously supposed.

Why? In short, the public and the Congress face a daunting agenda with respect to jobs, healthcare, education, etc. But behind these visible, urgent needs are hidden but massive vulnerabilities with respect to our requirement for uninterrupted supply of essential natural resources (water, food, energy, and more), public safety and business continuity in the face of hazards, and the protection of the environment and vital ecosystem services. To fall short in addressing these three challenges, even locally or temporarily, let alone globally or long term, is to court geopolitical instability, diminished public health and worse. To forestall such risks, world leaders and policymakers are on schedule to invest \$100T in worldwide critical food, water, and energy infrastructure over the next twenty years -- 5% of world GDP over the period. Realizing the fullest return-on-investment (ROI) of such large sums will be a priority.

Communicating the value of satellite data therefore starts with asking questions of political and business leaders and various publics: what do they make of these problems they face? What would "solutions" or effective coping strategies be worth? What approaches are they trying now? What's working, not-working? How do they know? Even the most cursory investigation reveals a world flying blind into a problematic future. It turns out that the most important critical, urgently needed, yet cheapest infrastructure is that which can guide the much larger investments in the other critical infrastructures, transforming them from sunk costs into investments with high ROI: namely, environmental intelligence.

A closing thought: the value of satellite data to the public and the Congress is not some physical constant, difficult to measure, but essentially immutable. Just the opposite! Such value is highly pliable – a creature of governing national and international policy frameworks. Policy choices can drive the value of satellite data up or down, as well as determine who pays and who benefits. If the United States makes wise choices in this arena, it can remain the Indispensable Nation for the remainder of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Make poor choices, and we will suffer decline.