

# in the final analysis

*“A connecting principle, linked to the invisible, almost imperceptible, something inexpressible, science insusceptible, logic so inflexible, causally connectible, yet nothing is invincible. . . . If you act, as you think, the missing link. Synchronicity.”*

—The Police, “Synchronicity I”

While Sting and the Police said it more artfully, Carl Jung, the man who originated the term “synchronicity” (and helped found the field of psychology), explained the concept with greater succinctness (succinctity?): “Synchronicity reveals the meaningful connections between the subjective and objective world.” Me, I think of it as meaningful coincidence. Can there be such a thing? I’m skeptical, but I experienced a textbook example yesterday when I was a day past the deadline for writing my editorial (per usual), I was struggling to get started (per usual), and I got distracted by perusing my email inbox (per usual).

The Jungian experience began when I opened an email from Lobbyit. This is a firm that TMS uses to keep society leadership up to date on Congressional moves that might have impact on TMS and the interests of its members. Scrolling through the latest tidbits, I paused at an item concerning U.S. House of Representatives bill HR 2031, the Government Spending Accountability Act of 2015. The bill would prohibit government agencies from spending more than \$500,000 on conference planning or attendance; all conference spending would have to be reported to Congress. Furthermore, any government agency would be prohibited from paying travel expenses for more than 50 employees to attend any conference unless specifically approved by the Secretary of State. Finally, the bill would limit total travel expenses for government agencies in fiscal 2016 to 70% of the total spent in fiscal year 2010.

A second meaningful message took the form of an invitation for TMS to cosponsor the April 2016 Engineering Public Policy Symposium in Washington, D.C. This annual event, which TMS traditionally cosponsors, brings together the presidents, executive directors, and other VIPs from nearly 50 U.S.-based engineering societies to hear presentations and engage in Q&A with elected officials and staffers. There will also be discussion of policy and budgeting priorities. When the symposium ends at lunch, the TMS president and I will engage in Congressional visits in the afternoon. Last year, we carried the message of the importance of conference travel for scientists and engineers.

Then, a third message arrived. This one provided an impact study and report, *Restrictive Travel Policy: Projected Impacts to Mission-Critical Goals*. Developed at government request, the study examines the role of governmental science and engineering, the evolution of restrictive travel policy, and the costs associated with such policy. The report developers, PMIC Inc., considered a variety of data and leveraged expertise from the government, industry, professional societies, academia, and others. To quote the extremely concise Executive Summary, “PMIC’s findings indicate that the restrictive conference and travel policy threatens to undermine the nation’s international scientific, technical, and economic leadership status. The absence of U.S. government scientists creates a void in global innovation and collaboration that will likely be filled by our competitors unless we act swiftly and decisively to remediate damage and mitigate inevitable further risks to government [science and technology] mission-critical goals attributable to restrictive travel policy.” This disturbing thesis comes with a recommendation that government science and technology be exempt from restrictive travel policy. This is not inconsistent with the message that we at TMS have been sharing with elected leaders for several years and will continue to do so.

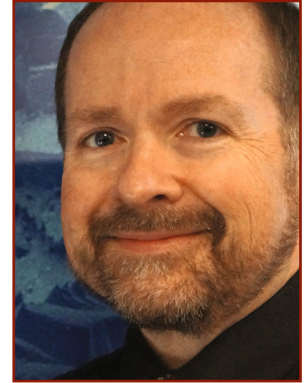
Couple the rapid succession of receiving these messages with my need to write an editorial and something tells me not only do I have a new In the Final Analysis but that TMS leadership should continue to tell elected officials about the importance of conference travel and carry this message when we visit D.C. in April, referencing the *Restricted Travel* study for talking points. I don’t know if this all adds up to a synchronistic moment, but I’d call it at least a serendipitous one (i.e., synchronicity without portentousness).

# JOM

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