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TALKING POINTS for the Public Interest Summit

We are all indebted to the Vice President and his team for their role in supporting the President's program to reinvent government and the American Workplace. The National Information Infrastructure (NII) provides the vital element of connectivity--including civic networking--without which no program to improve our national competitiveness could succeed.

There is a larger vision, a larger program, where Executive leadership must play a vital role: we as a people require a **NATIONAL INFORMATION STRATEGY**. Our national competitiveness, and indeed our national security in the information age, require a depth and breadth of commitment to information as a commodity; to information as a substitute for time, space, capital, and labor. Information--applied information--is vital to both our defense and our prosperity.

*Connectivity is but one of the four major elements of what must soon become a NATIONAL INFORMATION STRATEGY.* For those counseling the incremental approach, "connectivity today, content tomorrow", I would say: it will be too late. The fragility of our position in the world, in terms of "brain drain", budget deficit, and electronic security, all require that we establish a four point integrated program immediately, outlined below.

**CONNECTIVITY.** Such a strategy should build upon the NII as its technical foundation, but provide for three additional elements:

**CONTENT.** Existing government programs, under the auspices of a National Information Board within The White House, should provide incentives for all elements of the information continuum (K-12, universities, libraries, businesses, information brokers, media, government, defense, and intelligence) to put content online; only in this way can we establish a robust national "information commons" and give Robert Reich's symbolic analysts something other than a starvation diet. It is vital that we establish means of nurturing distributed centers of excellence throughout our Nation, in all topical areas, providing all sectors with incentives to place encyclopedic information into the "information commons" and thus stimulate productivity.

**COORDINATION.** Using a body similar to those now orchestrating NII technical issues, focus on resource management across government and private sector boundaries in both technical and non-technical (content) arenas. There is no good reason why hundreds of major organizations should be wasting approximately \$2 billion a year creating hundreds of variations of a basic multi-media analysis workstations. There is no good reason why hundreds of corporations and other organizations should be wasting enormous sums collecting and processing the same encyclopedic information about foreign countries, companies, and capabilities. Presidential leadership will make a difference and save the Nation billions of dollars annually, not only within government, but across the private sector.

**COMMUNICATIONS & COMPUTER SECURITY.** We have a house built over a sinkhole! The vulnerabilities of our national telecommunications infrastructure to interruption of services as well as destruction, degradation, and theft of data are such that I feel comfortable in predicting that--unless we are able to establish a major Presidential program in this arena--we will see a series of enormously costly electronic attacks on our major financial and industrial organizations, generally undertaken by individuals who stand to benefit financially from degraded or interrupted performance. The current generation of systems engineers was not raised in an environment where security was a necessary element of design. At every level, through every node, we are wide open--and in a networked environment, one open house contaminates the next.

Such an integrated program could be established using existing resources. The cost savings from the elimination of redundant and counterproductive investments in information collection and information technology across government departments and into the private sector can also make a substantive difference against the deficit.

Presidential and Vice Presidential leadership could serve as the essential catalyst for a bi-partisan Congressional effort to produce the National Information Strategy Act of 1994. I stand ready to support such a program in any capacity.

Sincerely yours,



Robert D. Steele  
President

NOTE: Inter-nauts can find pertinent papers at <oss.net>, reachable via wais, gopher, and ftp. Hard copies are available for the cost of production from OSS, Inc.

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