

Adaptable Paths forging strategic synergy in development of local knowledge economy ^[1]

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By LAWSON D. THURSTON *Caribbean Business* ^[2] Adaptable Paths, a company that focuses on investment and resource development strategies, has found a unique niche and important role in helping to maximize the development of the knowledge economy in Puerto Rico. The company, which currently manages approximately 50 projects worth an estimated \$250 million, is aligned with and working to facilitate early communication, collaboration and interaction among key multidiscipline players in the development of both physical and intellectual infrastructures. “This is an important moment in terms of the opportunity to transform the economy of Puerto Rico. In order to fully maximize the development of the new knowledge economy, we have clearly identified the necessity for multidisciplinary collaboration early on between those involved in the development of physical infrastructure (architects, developers) and intellectual property (scientists, universities), which historically has been fragmented,” said Javier de Jesús Martínez, principal of Adaptable Paths. He added, “It’s like looking at this from the point of view between hardware and software: both can be developed separately to eventually be used together. But there always exists a risk that if both are developed independently from each other, opportunities could be lost along the way, or the two could even end up being incompatible.” “To develop a knowledge economy in Puerto Rico, there needs to be a synergy of development in parallel between both the physical and the intellectual infrastructures. Usually, these two areas are disciplines that are very distinct and developed separately from each other. Physical infrastructure is developed on one end and intellectual infrastructure on the other end, and eventually the two converge resulting in many lost opportunities along the way. In Puerto Rico, there is a unique opportunity to develop both physical and intellectual infrastructure from the beginning,” said Daniel A. Colón-Ramos, a professor at Stanford University and collaborator with Adaptable Paths. In addition to his work at Stanford, Colón, an expert in human brain development, helped create, along with a group of fellow Puerto Ricans, a nonprofit organization a few years ago called El Consejo para el Avance en Puerto Rico de la Investigación y la Innovación Científica (Capri by its Spanish acronym). “This group has a series of initiatives including the largest database of scientists in Latin America called CienciaPR, which currently has more than 10,000 members and

has had more than five million website visits (www.cienciapr.org [3]) over the last year and a half,” said Colón. According to De Jesús Martínez, Puerto Rico needs to create the gravity that will not only draw investment here, but also intellectual capital. “Our hope is to facilitate the development of the necessary infrastructure in Puerto Rico that will allow for investment to position itself here. The government and the public sector have to create public policy that facilitates this, but the private sector also needs to create a working group, which will make a difference. You can’t look in a telephone book and find a group that works on this, which is what makes our efforts unique and new. We are serving as the intermediary for the first time between two sectors that typically do not collaborate with each other, and now we are bringing them together from the beginning to provoke investment and intellectual capital to come to Puerto Rico,” said De Jesús Martínez. “The most important in all of this is to see that there exists a tremendous opportunity not only to establish physical infrastructure but also intellectual infrastructure that is on the cutting edge. The two areas can and should be developed in parallel, which will help to develop a lot of other economic areas in Puerto Rico, not just the knowledge economy industry. Puerto Rico is anxious to see this change, this renovation, which is part of the new economic development generation,” said Liz Meléndez González, architect & principal of Adaptable Paths. According to De Jesús Martínez, a professor of architecture at the University of Puerto Rico (UPR) and past adviser to La Fortaleza on infrastructure development, one of the key elements toward maximizing the development of the knowledge economy in Puerto Rico will hinge on tools that are incorporated into the new tax incentives law. “The new incentives law must consider elements that will help to facilitate the development of the knowledge economy such as intellectual property protection and new ways to capitalize these projects in Puerto Rico. This is precisely what relates directly to what we are trying to accomplish. What are the instruments that will attract top scientists to Puerto Rico? Up to now, I have not seen one bullet point or footnote regarding this area, and it is very important,” added De Jesús Martínez.

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