

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 24

## A golden moment for smart grids?

### **GridWise Global Forum Day 3 round-up: Leaders call for innovation, collaboration and audacity**

Innovation, collaboration and audacity were the dominant themes on the final day of the GridWise Global Forum. Innovation, both to bring the costs of breakthrough technologies down and to preserve national competitiveness; collaboration on an international scale to facilitate knowledge sharing; and audacity to take risks and pursue a more ambitious vision for the future energy system.

A wide-ranging conversation between Pulitzer Prize-winning author Thomas Friedman and GE CEO Jeffrey Immelt offered delegates insights into that company's self-image in the context of the clean energy revolution. On GE's role as an incubator of innovation and new technologies, Immelt spoke of its willingness to "put a bet on every chip." On public policy, Immelt explained that a price on carbon, and a recognition of clean energy as a job creator, could be the key drivers to bring clean energy and the smart grid to scale. "To do something, you have to do something," he said. That sentiment was echoed by Saul Griffith of Other Lab, who said that "the best way to predict the future is to invent it".

Secretary Steven Chu of the Department of Energy discussed his agency's efforts to accelerate smart grid deployments while also funding exploration into new, unproven technologies through initiatives such as the Advanced Research Projects Agency – Energy (ARPA-E). Chu described a time of "explosive growth and possibility for the grid", and returned to the theme of innovation, saying that the most dramatic technological progress is often made during "golden moments of time and space". The buoyant mood among Forum delegates suggested a belief we could be entering such a moment today.

In the afternoon, thought leaders including Laura Ipsen of Cisco and Anne Pramaggiore of ComEd agreed that smart grid technologies could revolutionize the traditional utility business model, but a clear vision of a new model remained elusive, and will likely remain an area for debate for some time.

The last day of the Forum closed with a call for deeper international collaboration on both standards and knowledge sharing from US Department of Energy Assistant Secretary for Policy and International Affairs, David Sandalow. His call may be answered sooner than expected. The industry will be hoping that the Global Smart Grid Federation - launched earlier in the week by the convergence of smart grid alliances in Australia, Canada, India, Ireland, Japan, Korea and the US and presented in the final session of the Forum - will make significant progress over the next 12 months.

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