

Movin' On Summit 2019 Part Three: Surpetition: Moving beyond competition

By Skid Crease

My final interview at the Movin' On 2019 Summit in Montreal was with Nicolas Beaumont, the senior vice-president of Sustainable Development and Mobility for Michelin. It was the last morning of the event and the North American Director of External Communications, Eric Bruner, was moderating the interview.

My first question was quite simple: "M. Beaumont, Michelin has brought together over 200 international journalists to cover this Summit. You have made a significant investment in us. Our job is now to tell the story of what we experienced here. What is the story you would most like the world to know?"

M. Beaumont did not hesitate in enthusiastically outlining the Michelin vision to put the traveller and sustainable mobility at the centre of urban planning.

As he gave a brief overview of Michelin's background in this Summit, the corporation's presence at the conference began to make perfect sense.

When we think of Michelin, we think of tires. But the role of Michelin is so much more than that in the history of transportation. As Europe was making the transition from horse and buggy, and auto combustion engine transport was emerging, vehicles needed tires. Michelin became a leader in manufacturing high quality tires. But the new cars broke down very easily, and unlike a horse, you couldn't eat them when they died, so Michelin produce their first "Guides" on how to repair your car.

As people travelled farther and farther with greater confidence in their newly repaired cars, they got lost. So Michelin produced the first road maps, in fact most of the first road maps of Europe. Naturally, people who were travelling wanted to know where to stay and eat, so Michelin began to identify and rate inns, and hotels and restaurants along the way. Thus were born the Michelin Guides. Now when we think of a Michelin Star rating, we think of fine cuisine instead of tires. Here was a corporation that was looking into the entire mobility experience " and now Sustainable Mobility.

As a result, Beaumont explained, they quickly realized that in making this transition to a decarbonized, autonomous transportation future, Michelin could not do it alone. It could only be accomplished through an ecosystem of like-minded companies sharing the same vision.

To quote another speaker: "It is like moving from thinking you are the only cherry on the cake, so understanding that we are all the yeast in the dough."

Beaumont was faced with questions from one other person present " a U.S. journalist who entered the interview with a doom and gloom attitude about the future. He outlined the litany of melting ice-caps and violent storms, and rising insurance costs, and displaced environmental refugees and asked if Beaumont truly believed in Michelin's vision.

Beaumont's answer was a sincere "Yes." That there was no question that the circle of innovation would spread from local customers to communities, to countries, to nations. He said, It is in our DNA to innovate change." This change would be backed by strong scientifically based policies from regulatory bodies, and from cooperation with competitors. The key would be to honour the diversity and creativity of all stakeholders.

By the time Beaumont was finished, the American journalist confessed he now had hope for the future.

At this point in the interview I commented that Michelin had moved beyond competition to surpetition. M. Beaumont's eyebrows went up " he had never heard that term before and was intrigued. I explained that it came from the writings of Edward de Bono, who had suggested that for corporations to succeed in the future they would have to move beyond mere competition to surpetition " being the best both in product, in ethics, and in corporate conduct.

That explained Michelin's presence at this Global Summit. They brought together the best in the business, with a combined vision of sustainable mobility that moved from the local context to a global reality with a commitment to gathering hard data that would enable them to measure the success of their actions. It also explained why I could not find Bibendum anywhere at the Summit.

At the final Media banquet, the CEO of Michelin, M. Florent Menegaux gave a humorous and heartfelt thanks to the international press corp. When he finished, I went up to thank him for the respect and access the media had been given during the Summit. I went on to add that I my only disappointed that Bibendum had not been there to give me my hug. He smiled and said, "I will make sure that a little Bibendum is here in 2020 for you. But we didn't want this Summit to be about Michelin, we wanted it," and he opened

his arms to gesture to the whole crowd, ?we wanted it to be about us.?

To quote Michelin's R&D inventor Francois Bataille: ? Because we care, I care.?

That summarizes the ethic of Michelin and the vision of the Global Summit for Sustainable Mobility perfectly, That is surpetition in action. It really is all about us.