22. APPENDIX: Benefits and Limitations of Inline XBRL

Another approach to using XBRL is Inline XBRL (ixBRL). There are advantages to iXBRL. Here is a summary of the advantages of iXBRL:

- **Decouples presentation and data model.** Using Inline XBRL allows for the "decoupling" of two things which, when dealt with together, cause problems. Inline XBRL allows the HTML aspect to deal with presentation, and therefore the creator of the data model is free to create a good data model and not try and get the presentation they are seeking by using the XBRL taxonomy. For example, SEC XBRL filers seek a certain presentation and to get that they leverage the only thing they think they have at their disposal with is the XBRL taxonomy. Using Inline XBRL for the presentation gives one precise control of the presentation. Not having to worry about the differences in presentation and presentation nuances allows for more "freedom" in creating a sound data model.

- **Document of record.** Inline XBRL offers the possibility of having a "document of record" which is readable by both humans (i.e. the HTML aspect of Inline XBRL) and computers (i.e. the XBRL aspect of Inline XBRL). One does need to be careful to ensure that the information communicated and viewed as HTML is identical to the information a computer application reads, both should be in sync. But that does not seem that challenging and it is certainly easier than what SEC XBRL filers have to do which is keep separate HTML and XBRL documents in sync.

- **Evolutionary path.** Inline XBRL seems to offer a nice evolutionary path which a lot of people seem to need. Personally, I am very confident that most people will eventually never use that HTML rendering in favor of the dynamic or "interactive" aspects of XBRL. For example, consider what I call the "hypercube jumping" (really has more to do with dimensions) and discuss in this blog post. But Inline XBRL does not take away the possibility of these dynamic features, they are still there to use, even if the XBRL is buried in an HTML document.

- **Zero difference between XBRL and Inline XBRL.** To a computer application trying to read the information, there is zero difference between a plain ole XBRL instance and an Inline XBRL document (instance, not sure what to call it). From the computer's perspective, they are 100% interchangeable. Now, I am sure that there are probably interoperability issues and bugs which might need working through, but that is all part of the process of getting things to work on a global scale.

Because of these advantages, there is enough of a probability that the SEC could move to Inline XBRL at some point in the future. This is worth keeping in the back of one's mind.