Strategy Amidst Uncertainty

Using Futures Thinking to Inform Strategic Planning

RespectAbility
Webinar, 4/21/16
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Vision Foresight Strategy LLC
“Reframing the future.”

Foresight and Strategic Analysis

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Available now on Amazon
Futures Thinking and Strategic Planning

1. Seeing a Bigger Picture
2. Seeing Further Ahead
3. Making Plans and Committing to Action
Understanding and anticipating change in society

FUTURES STUDIES
Understand and anticipate change in society... and then help others reframe their expectations and preferences for the future.

Increasingly, tomorrow is not like yesterday... ...uncertainty, anxiety, and possibilities.
Two Complementary Aspects

**Analytic:** understanding and anticipating change

**Synthetic:** reframing expectations and preferences
Foresight:

*Insight into how and why the future could be different from the present.*
Elements of Our Work

- Preferred futures
- Forecasting
- Innovation & creativity
- Theories of change and stability
- Trends & emerging issues
- Images of the future
- Historical analysis
Futures Thinking is...

...critical thinking about the future, both in terms of what could happen and what we want to see happen.
What Does Futures Thinking Get Us?

- Identify critical blind spots
- Reduce uncertainty about the future
- Map new opportunities for growth and innovation
- Create shared understanding about possibilities and changes
Cone of Uncertainty / Range of Futures

**Black Swans**: low probability, high impact events from within your domain.

**Emergence**: the unpredictable patterns and outcomes that emerge from complex systems

**Wild Cards**: unpredictable, high impact events from outside your domain

**Unknown**: the inherent limits of our understanding about how the world (universe) works

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*The farther out we think, the broader the range of variables, drivers, and relationships we have to consider; the more important it is to see the world as complex systems with unpredictable emergent outcomes*

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Beginning to use systems thinking to draw the map

SEEING THE WHOLE PICTURE
Thinking in Systems

• The system is greater than the sum of its parts
• You cannot understand the whole by focusing on individual parts
• Relationships are more important than parts: it’s about connections, flow, and feedback
• Archetypes can be useful starting points
The Local Workforce Ecosystem
The Broader Environment
BEGINNING TO USE FUTURES THINKING TO MAP FARTHER HORIZONS

SEEING AHEAD
Trends and Emerging Issues

Trends

Emerging Issues
The S-Curve

- **Government and institutional reports and studies, draft legislation**
- **TV, newspapers, popular general interest sources**
- **Research reports, think tank studies, scientific and technical journals, business leader magazines**
- **Art, science fiction, fringe writings, esoteric journals**

**Maturity of the Issue**

- **Established issue/trend:** legislation, regulation
- **Rapid maturation:** mainstreaming
- **Early framing:** academic exploration
- **Nascent emerging issue:** fringe thinking

**Time**

- **Foresight Zone**
- **Innovation/Early Competition Zone**
- **Reactive Zone**
- **The New Normal**
Sample Scanning Hits

- **AI glasses** helps children with autism read facial expressions
- **Drones** vs. Robots: The Delivery War is on!
- **Chip**, Implanted in Brain, Helps Paralyzed Man Regain Control of Hand
- How **IoT** is Reshaping Building Automation
- Is **virtual reality** poised to transform higher ed?
- Your Coworkers (And Boss) Could Be **Robots**
Some Emerging Issues

- Employer/industry-based credentialing
- Adaptive Learning
- Rewriting Employment-Based Social Contracts
- Universal Basic Income
- Smart Contracts
- Distributed Autonomous Organization
## Mapping the Road Ahead

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trends</th>
<th>Emerging Issues</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Local Workforce Ecosystem</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Past</td>
<td>1 – 2 years</td>
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<td>Broader Environment</td>
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Prioritizing and Sorting Action Amidst Uncertainty

MAKING PLANS AND DECISIONS
Goals, Opportunities, and Risks

• What are your goals for 2016? 2021? 2030?
• How will the trends, emerging issues, and uncertainties alter those goals?
• How might those same things pose new opportunities and specific threats?
# Dealing with Uncertainty: A Strategic Portfolio

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Initiating Change</th>
<th>Learning &amp; Sensemaking</th>
<th>Too Early (for us)</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Commit</strong> (dive in now)</td>
<td><strong>Experiment</strong> (wade in)</td>
<td><strong>Research</strong> (toe in the water)</td>
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### For building your local workforce ecosystem

### Staying responsive to the broader environment
Bringing It Together

Seeing the Whole Picture

Local Ecosystem

Broader Env.

Seeing Further Ahead

Trends & Emerging Issues

Thinking for the Longer Term

Goals 2016
Goals by 2021
Goals for 2030

A Portfolio of Actions

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<th>Commit</th>
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<th>Monitor</th>
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“Hawaii: Global Headquarters of The Future.”

Hawaii Business Magazine

April 2016

Looking at the history of futures thinking and training in Hawai‘i. Introduces a business audience to the field of futures studies.
Mahalo.

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