



Practical Foresight Guide

Chapter 9 - Your Future

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9. Your Future

Regardless of whether your organization embraces strategic foresight don't stop applying the principles in your home and work life. In fact, applying these principles to projects and programs can get you and your good ideas noticed thus changing the culture of any organization you are associated with and simultaneously increasing your prestige.

'Big oaks began life as small acorns!' So it is with growing your own strategic foresight competencies. You won't become a renowned futurist overnight but a little practice each day will soon make you competent and confident to use the future for your own advantage and that of your family.

9.1 Becoming a futurist

Becoming a professional futurist takes a lot of time and effort upfront because there is so much to explore and know but people also specialize in their interest spaces or even dabble in futuring because it's such a fascinating discipline.

Some futurists take degrees in Strategic Foresight and Future Studies while others are introduced to the field through their work. Some people discover futuring on their own, learn foresight methods and set up shop as general futurists, concentrate on future studies in their own area of expertise or simply apply it to their everyday lives.

Finding out more

Futuring is a very broad and complex subject with many ways of seeing and creating the futures we want to achieve. So, visit the "Further References" when you see them on individual pages here because they will increase your breadth and depth of view. Similarly, the 'Recommended reading' section (10.1) at the end of this handbook includes more inspiring texts from some of the world's greatest futurists.

Then browse "More Foresight Resources" at <http://www.shapingtomorrow.com/content.cfm?webtext=318>, where you will find comprehensive links to the best introductions on futures studies, events, futuring organizations, and educational courses, etc.

Join Shaping Tomorrow's Foresight Network at <http://shapingtomorrowmain.ning.com/> to see the types of people already practicing as futurists. Their biographies will help you see how they found futuring and how their careers have progressed. They may also be willing to give you free advice and suggestions if you ask them nicely.

In a few hours you will have gained a rapid appreciation of the field of futuring and where to find help. Use it wisely by writing down what attracts and detracts you from being a futurist and ideas and places that you want to revisit. Then, use these lists to see what areas of futuring you would like to explore, and begin asking around or join one of the several foresight teaching programs.

9.2 Futures conferences

Go to some of the key conferences such as the World Futures Society in North America. Find futurists at World Future Society, Poptech, TED, SXSW, or other events that attract forward thinking people such as the Association of Professional Futurist events.

Upcoming events are advertised at [Shaping Tomorrow's Foresight Network](#) above.

9.3 Foresight courses

There are an increasing number of foresight courses available some offering degrees and certificates.

Among them are:

Universities and colleges

- Swinburne University, Australia
- Corvinus University, Hungary
- Lisbon University, Portugal
- University of Stellenbosch, South Africa
- Graduate Institute of Futures Studies, Tamkang University, Taiwan
- St Augustine University, Tanzania
- Singularity University, USA
- Regent University, USA
- University of Houston, USA
- University of Hawaii, Manoa, USA
- Ontario College of Art & Design, Canada
- IKIU, Iran

International Masterclasses

- Shaping Tomorrow, UK
- Infinite Futures, UK
- Thinking Futures, Australia

For a full listing visit [Shaping Tomorrow](#)

Further reference

[An Audit For Organizational Futurists: Ten Questions Every Organizational Futurist Should Be Able to Answer](#), Andy Hines, University of Houston 2003, Emerald

9.4 Personal futures

What is a personal future?

'As we look at personal futures, they are explorations of the future of one individual, you, and only the futures that directly involve you and your family.

The approach consists of three steps:

- (1) Build a framework of information about your life.
- (2) From the information in the framework, explore your plausible futures with scenarios.
- (3) From the scenarios, develop a vision of your future, devise strategies to achieve your vision, and make action plans for your future.

In exploring your future, you will use the same methods that have been practiced by futurists for decades, all over the world. At the end of this process, you should have an overview and a vision of your life, specific plans for the next stage of life, and contingency plans to deal with changes.

Personal Futures Network

Visit the free Personal Futures Network to follow a more detailed outline of these three steps in learning about your future.'

Source: With grateful thanks to Verne Wheelwright, Ph.D, for his permission to use his words and a thank you for the pioneering work he is doing in this area.

Two more methods of using the future to help strategize your career involve:

1. Asking yourself | Which skills be needed in the future? | Which skills will not be required in the future? | What do I want to achieve in my life? | Which industries might I want to succeed in? | What do I want to achieve? | What obstacles might stand in my way? | Which new or improved skills do I need to succeed? | How do I resolve these? | What could change my mind? | How will I know I'm heading in the right direction? |
2. Asking yourself 'If I were a [insert job] what would excite me?' and then writing down how a scientist, politician, environmentalist, economist, technologist or educationalist would see their future.
3. Taking these different perspectives will reveal fresh Insights and allow the creation of more robust conclusions.

9.5 LifeMaps

Results of an internal survey at a global life insurer showed their people wanted

- Help to provide the service that their customers wanted and needed
- Support in supporting customers
- Belief in them and their potential
- Investment in their personal future development
- To feel valued
- Recognition and reward

The company responded by

- Aligning Business and Personal Life Maps¹ (**M**oney, **A**chievement, **P**ower, **S**ociety)
- Creating a unified set of future business competencies
- Introducing SMART consistent performance management and development processes linked to the Business and Life Maps
- Building a learning organization through innovative initiatives and development activities that recognised and rewarded great performances.
- Money: | Achievement: I want to make something happen | Power: I want the ability to influence others | Society: I want the ability to affiliate with a cause

These LifeMaps are essentially a future contract between the organization and its people to deliver their personal aspirations in exchange for their delivery of agreed, beyond expected, performance; for example, early retirement or a sabbatical for delivering a dramatic improvement in company performance. Aggregated Life Maps can help an organization spot opportunities for increasing people's loyalty and performance and better identify previously unseen workforce risks.

If you are an HR Director or CEO wanting to use Personal Futures to create systematized, organization-wide LifeMaps, contact Verne at the Personal Futures Network.

Further reference

- [Personal Futures Network](#)

9.6 Finding time for the future

A personal experience from the Chairman of Shaping Tomorrow

"Back in the 90's when I was CEO of a large and very successful financial services business we had determined our strategy and decided to sell the business before the market changed, as it now has. But we had bought twenty businesses and knew just how much work it would take to go through a full buyer search and subsequent transfer of engagements process. The team knew it had to continue to run a marathon but now have a heart transplant at the same time.

So, we hired a consultant to help us, and after observing us for a while he suggested we do a Short Interval Scheduling exercise. The Executive team, including myself, were asked to take a reading of what we were doing every five minutes of the day for one month and to capture the info on our mobile phones for uploading to a spread-sheet; a simple but highly effective process.

A waste of time

The results were staggering. We found that 70% of our time was wasted; yes wasted!

- Time was leaking on micro managing the business we had rescued from oblivion.

- We had not altered our success criteria to recognize that we should have given up lots of control to gain control as the business grew.
- We stayed in our comfort zones and didn't delegate as much as we could have.
- We attended meetings because we always had.
- We worked on things that had medium, not long-term strategic value.
- Consideration of the future beyond the next two years was every five years and our efforts puny, useless, and generally too late.
- We didn't use computers as well as we might.
- We were control freaks.
- And so on and so on.

I have always been seen as an executive who is ruthless! Ruthless with time that is, not people. So imagine my shock when my results, even though the best of the team still showed I could get 63% back by being smarter.

Making good use of time

It was a true tipping point for the team. We determined to set up the company with a shadow executive team to run the day-to-day as though they were us. We defined our expectations and left them very much to get on with it apart from monthly formal reviews ahead of the Board meeting. Otherwise all executive controls were ceded to them.

That left us as coaches and mentors to the shadow team and strategists on our sale.

We not only grew the next level down dramatically in the course of the next few months but proved that our sell by date as an Executive Team had come. Once the sale had been achieved, the team knew it would get bigger jobs with the purchaser and that the shadow team would take over.

The 60-70% productivity improvement produced such great primary and secondary benefits that when we were hostilely attacked during the sale we had the time and resources to defend, while the shadow team ran the business as usual.

So the message here is to challenge people who say they are too busy. How do they know? Where is their time going? What are they doing that they could drop in favour of becoming better strategic leaders? For in that switch is the key to the next promotion and further personal, organizational, and stakeholder success.

How about you? How could you manage your time more effectively for the benefit of all and spend more time in your future?

Feel free to quote me."

9.7 Echoes from our future

'Not so long ago, when environments were relatively stable, organizations kept their eyes on internal operations.

The definition of managerial work was decision-taking.

Today, as environments become more and more volatile, organizations are turning their gaze to the horizon, watching and struggling with a confusion of signals.

The core of managerial work now is to know what is going on in order to be able to decide what is to be done.

Sensing and making sense of the environment is the new competency for organizational growth and survival.'

Source: [Scanning the Environment, Chun Wei Choo, University of Toronto](#)

In conclusion

"What we do in life - echoes in all eternity", said Russell Crowe as Marcus Aurelius in the film "Gladiator". What will be the echo of your life; what will people say about you when you're gone? Will it be an empty pair of shoes or a positive legacy for future society? We hope you make a difference through your own strategic foresight.