

Futures Programme

Predicting The Future - Focusing On Success

Our Futures Programme is aimed at helping you predict the future up to 25 years from now so that you can create the appropriate strategies, harness resources and make the correct investment decisions for your innovation and growth programmes.



The Futures Programme:

- Assists you in predicting the future for your organization
- Allows you to focus on creating efficient strategies
- Identify and gain control of the resources you require
- Allows you to make better investments decisions
- Works for both public and private sector organizations

The best way to ensure that your organisation not only survives, but thrives, is to know what the future holds. Creating a plan for the future based on the present or the past is clearly inaccurate and risky. To create a strategy for the future we need a view of what the future actually looks like. Many people profess to do this already but what is it exactly that they are doing? From existing management information you might be able to predict the amount of resources required (both human and material) as well as the features of your competitive environment. How far in the future can you do this without resorting to sticking a wetted finger into the air? The answer is probably less than 12 months in the current economic climate.

Most people are familiar with the passage of a ship on the ocean that leaves a wake behind. By examining the wake and knowing how much time has passed, one or more experts could tell you something about the ship, its speed and course. Now imagine that you are at the tail end of the wake but you are in the present, the ship is in the future and not visible to you. If you could pick up all of the bits of information that are present, look at the patterns, and have access to experts then it is possible to gain sufficient information to predict the future for your company.

This is very similar to a **Futures** programme. Futures uses a degree of imagination, stories (or scenarios) and a whole lot of questions to rigorously examine the future and it can look decades ahead.

Businesses might wish to use futures to quantify risks and opportunities, craft strategies, inform investment decisions and fuel their innovation programmes.

Government and other public sector bodies have broadly similar aims – creating policies, identifying areas for intervention, investment and education needs.

The first stage of a Future's programme is a huge information gathering exercise (remember the analogy of a ship's wake, we need all of this information). At the same time there needs to be some degree of focus. We cannot just generate the answer to the question 'What does the future look like?' A more reasonable question might be 'What does the market for personal computers look like in 2020?' or 'What will the requirements for transport infrastructure in Beijing be in 2025?'

Once these areas have been identified we then begin to look at the drivers that affect these areas and existing trends that are already apparent. We also look a little further afield and scan the time horizon as far ahead as we can. All the time we gather information, taking care not to filter it too much as the 'signals' that we are looking for easily get lost in the 'noise' and we never know at the start how much weight (or credibility) to attribute to the information we are gathering.

At this point we have an idea of what we wish to look at and the various factors that might affect it. Now we add the questions, what if oil prices trebled or the population halved, working through a number of scenarios and seeing how this changes the future. Then we throw in the wildcards, who predicted 9/11 in the USA or the bombings in London? Who foresaw the so called credit crunch?

And how can we make this tangible at the end of the exercise? There are two main ways of examining strategy, observing the future from the present and working out how to get there and the most powerful version which is to look back towards the present from the future and describing how we got here. This is where our storytelling skills come into their own and we generate buy in.

We can predict the future up to 30 years ahead in order to inform strategy making and investment decisions for public and private sector bodies by using:

- Information from expert groups
- Widely available information
- A number of carefully chosen scenarios
- Both existing knowledge and by introducing wildcards
- Storytelling and other creative techniques to facilitate information gathering and generating buy in.

Success depends on how these activities are facilitated and the time that you can devote to them. To find out how a Futures Programme can benefit your organization please **get in touch now**.