

Why Foresight: Making Sense of Change

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Nobody likes to be caught by surprise. Most of us would rather not be in reactive mode either. And some of us really like to be ahead of the game. Foresight and futurists can help with all three.

Defining Foresight

Foresight as the study of change that uses a systematic methodology to explore the future in order to make better decisions today by helping us move us toward the futures we want and avoid those we don't, and to ultimately build confidence in the future by building our capacity to avoid surprise!

Future Change – Three Horizons

We know that many people come to us confused by what seems to be a non-stop avalanche of change. One thing we can help with immediately is sorting out the timing of the change. We use a Three

Horizons framework that organizes change into those influencing today's world (Horizon 1), the emerging future (Horizon 2), and the long-term future (H3). This helps you be more discerning about change. We also believe that when you do your foresight homework, you learn that change is actually slower than is commonly believed. By identifying change earlier, we see it coming while everyone else is surprised. We are not only ready to respond to future however it unfolds, we are also proactively working towards the future we want.

We believe project work is at the core of foresight. We see ourselves as explorers ... of the future. Any good exploration begins with a map, so we start projects with a visual or domain map. We that map to help us find signals of change, which we collect and analyze. At the end of our research phase, which often includes interviews as well, we identify roughly a dozen key drivers of change. Circling back to our early point about the seeming blizzard of change, futurists help you navigate through the blizzard and focus on the big drivers of change that really matter. We use those drivers as the key ingredients to building scenarios, which are simply structured stories about the future. We all understand stories!

Create Change – Limit Surprises

It's one thing to understand how the future might turn out, but we need to address the "so what" question? What are we going to do with this knowledge? How might we influence the future? Futurists have tools to understand the implications or impacts of change. Not only what might happen right away, but what might happen down the road. Not just the obvious stuff, but the impacts that most people will miss. While we consider lots and lot of change, we typically select a smaller number of the most important one to develop options for – think of options as action we can take. Finally, we help you monitor or keep track of the changes you identify that are important to you. Keeping our eyes on changes helps ensure that we will not be surprised.

Practice Change – Project Work in Action

So, what do you get by using foresight? Confidence about the future. In doing your foresight work, you are preparing – essentially rehearsing – for the future. You are taking charge of change and the future rather being in reactive model playing the whack-a-mole game. Our approach is a rigorous one that develop a the chain-of-custody from recommendation emerging from foresight work, working backward from options to implications to scenarios to drivers to inputs to scanning and the initial framing of the domain. Stop fearing and avoiding the future and start making your future happen!

Conclusion:

- Foresight and Futurists can help people anticipate and prepare for

the future, developing a systematic methodology to explore the possibilities.

- Framework Foresight is based on core competencies of the Association of Professional Futurists and has various techniques which can be plugged in when needed.
 - A Three Horizons Framework sorts change into Horizons 1 (influencing today's world), Horizon 2 (emerging future) and Horizon 3 (long-term future), enabling discernment of change.
 - Visual or domain maps help identify signals of change which are collected, analyzed, and used to develop scenarios or stories about potential futures.
 - Implication analyses explain down-the-road impacts which may have been otherwise overlooked, while monitoring helps to ensure no surprises occur.
 - Using foresight allows for confidence about the future with an option to take charge rather than playing a reactive whack-a-mole game.
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Upcoming Foresight Boot Camps

The University of Houston Foresight program offers two kind of boot camps for those who want to get up-to-speed quickly on change and the future:

- In-person: Aug 14-18, 2023 Houston TX
- Virtual: Oct 4 – Nov 1, 2023, Wednesdays 9:00 AM – 12:30 PM CST

[Register Here](#)

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