

Good habits for success with foresight and strategymaking

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1. OPEN UP TO NEW IDEAS AND INFORMATION

- **Talk to people**—learn from people you might not normally interact with
- **Find the “anti-you”**—imagine, or get to know someone who is totally different from you, and try to think about the world and the future from their point of view
- **Read outside the box**—read things that you aren’t drawn to: try to drop some of the filters you put on the information you consume and let in new ideas
- **Switch on a second radar screen**—as you do your work, open up your thinking and what you monitor to include the wider world and context your work is a part of, beyond the business of your sector or profession
- **Globalize all questions**—no one’s business is solely local—the world is a force acting on everything we do. Consider the global forces acting on everything

2. THINK DIFFERENTLY:

- **See the world with different eyes**—try to understand the perspectives of others as you learn and explore
- **Assume you are not normal**—your experiences and values are probably not totally the mainstream, so you need to know what others are thinking, wanting, believing
- **Get out from behind the mouse**—go places, see things, travel—the world is changing, and you can’t know enough about that from behind your desk
- **Listen to the dissidents and lone voices**—the oddball is sometimes the wise one, and listening to those people is a powerful way to broaden and deepen insights on the future
- **Go visual**—use and share images that help you understand the world around you and how it’s changing
- **Don’t just analyze, speculate**—Since there is so little to go on in looking at the future, the data at hand will only get you so far. You need creative speculation, beyond the bounds of what we can know for sure
- **It’s ok to be wrong**—being wrong means you are working hard at exploring the future, and getting beyond conventional thinking and narrow ideas
- **Look at the story**—in understanding and especially in communicating to others about change, stories are especially powerful. Don’t be too analytical

3. ADVOCATE FOR THE FUTURE

- **Play the futurist in your organization**—consider expanding that responsibility to playing a visible role as the “futurist in residence”
- **Keep the future on the agenda**—take a responsibility in the things you do for keeping the future in focus and discussed
- **Help people be at play in the future**—the future is scary to most people, but you can help them play with interesting, even thrilling ideas about what’s possible

- **Learn to communicate about the future**—find ways you can get through to people about change and about future possibilities, different people have different thinking styles, so your approach may include stories, data, images, and so on
- **Bring along a friend**—don't try to explore the future alone, work with colleagues with different ideas and thinking styles. If you mean to lead change, you need people on your side who know how you got to new thinking, and who feel a part of it

4. TAKE ACTION

- **Decide what it means**—don't just consume information, put meaning on it: for you, your organization, your community
- **Pay it forward**—share what you discover with others
- **Make the last step in foresight, a first step in taking action**—Exploring the future is the beginning of a process—it should lead directly to new initiatives and action
- **Never stop**—exploring the future is a permanent job—there's always a future ahead of us, and we can't afford to ever let up in our pursuit of it

For more insights on foresight, please visit John Mahaffie's blog, www.foresightculture.com

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