

FUTURE THINKING



YOUR FUTURE DEPENDS
ON WHAT YOU DO TODAY

While history may have seen periods of more intense and far-reaching change, most of the planet have not lived through the scale of disruption, reinvention, and creation that the decade ahead is likely to bring. So, as we embrace the spirit of Future Day, here are ten questions which we could be asking ourselves as we seek to map a future for ourselves, our families, our organisations, our communities and our nations.

1. Human purpose

We stand on the brink of an era where technological developments such as artificial intelligence could bring about an end to the societal organisational notions of work and jobs that have been the dominant paradigms for many centuries. We are also seeing the increasing blurring of the boundary between humans and machines with many arguing that transhumanism is the next stage in evolution and that dramatic increases in life expectancy could mean death becomes a choice not an inevitable outcome. At the same time, conflicts around the globe are driving people from their homelands and rendering them little more than reported statistics. Hence, this is an ideal time to stand back and ask ourselves what we believe the purpose and status of humanity should be in a fast-changing world and what our own individual contributions might be to that higher goal?

2. Value perception

Different versions of capitalism remain the governing economic system for most people on the planet. The emergence of exponentially improving innovations such as artificial intelligence, driverless vehicles, 3D printing, laboratory grown meat, vertical farming, and hyperloop transportation could drive the shift from scarcity to abundance thinking and take us closer to the 'Star Trek' economy. In such a world, would the power of money as a governing indicator be diminished, would its acquisition and accumulation be less of a driving pursuit and status guide, and what might we start to place greater attention on as true measures on human progress, contribution, and sustainability?

3. The art of education

Education systems around the world are being criticised for failing to prepare people of all ages to survive and thrive in the emerging world. Many suggest the solution lies in technology and internet delivery. However, does this miss the vital social roles of schooling and how can we reconceive the nature of education and its delivery models to truly equip and update children and adults alike for a world where capacities such as collaboration, negotiation, empathy, communication, innovation, problem solving, and scenario thinking will be increasingly critical for each citizen?

4. Crafting community

Many see our world increasingly defined more by what divides us than unites us. Differences in wealth, income, technology, social media, ethnicity, educational attainment, religion, gender, and political persuasion are all cited as factors reducing the power of community. In a world where we could soon be facing an enforced increase in leisure time and a growing number of tension points, what workable models of community building should we be adopting to provide both the fabric and the glue to hold and support society through an era of massive upheaval?

5. Choice

How can we extend true notions of access to choose and the capacity to compare options and make appropriate decisions beyond the 1-2 billion in the global middle class for whom it is a reality today?

6. Femininity

As many organisations adapt more machine-like personas and hand greater agency and decision making authority to technology, how can we retain the key feminine traits that define and differentiate us? How can we ensure that crucial feminine factors such as culture, connection, serendipity, empathy, and compassion don't get downplayed or lost completely in the pursuit of machine like efficiency?

7. The Political Multiworse

Around the world, from Britain and the USA to Russia, Poland, and North Korea, populations seem intent on pursuing a more nationalistic, inwardly prioritized development path. How can we ensure that these less globally focused, less internationally compassionate, more self-interested models do not lead to a worse overall global outcome for the planet and its citizens and to higher levels of political, economic and physical conflict?

8. Wreckonomics

Global analysis suggests that our ruling economic, financial and monetary control systems have become overly complex and unworkable and have been extended way beyond their useful life to the point where they represent a series of potential accidents waiting to happen. With as estimated US\$4 quadrillion of derivative contracts (the global economy is about US\$78 trillion), pension systems that would require over 30 uninterrupted years of stock markets growing at over eight per cent annually in order to be viable, and personal, corporate and government debt obligations running at many times global GDP, these systems no longer serve the purpose for which they were devised. How can we start to unravel the old and experiment with new economic paradigms, how much pain will we need to endure on the journey to more sustainable and equitable models and how long might that transition take?

9. Digital dystopias

Many so called 'legacy thinkers' in business and government are coming late to the digital party and only now beginning to understand the all-pervasive impact of information technology in its many forms from artificial intelligence and robotics to the internet of things and cloud computing. In an attempt to catch up, several are pouring hundreds of millions - and in some cases billions - of dollars into digital transformation projects. However, many such initiatives are already floundering because these entities lack a digital mindset and seem blindly locked on a path of automation that is making their activities easier to copy and commoditise, eliminating key human differentiating factors and actually reducing their capacity to innovate and respond to change. How can we evolve rapidly to the next level of digital insight that sees strategies based on technology augmenting smart people rather than replacing them?

10. Penalty culture

Across a range of industries, fines for regulatory non-compliance are increasingly seen as simply another tax and a cost of doing business. For example, over the last five years, the global financial services industry is estimated to have incurred fines of over US\$375 billion due to compliance breaches. Other high profile regulatory breaches have been seen in sectors such as oil, automotive, aviation, food, and construction. Is breaking the rules simply an accepted and necessary norm for competitive success? If not, then what would it take to create truly meaningful regulatory frameworks, workable enforcement mechanisms and a business culture that sees compliance as mandatory rather than a choice?

Reference; Rohit Talwar