Want To Think Like A Futurist?

June 2, 2021 4 min read

This story originally appeared on ValueWalk

Futurists don’t just think ahead. They foresee what’s coming up and, in doing so, anticipate what human civilization will look like in the coming years. Basing their expectations off of what’s going on in the world and what trajectory society, technology, and economics are on right now, they determine how we as a society will move forward.

Q1 2021 hedge fund letters, conferences and more

Key Principles To Think Like A Futurist

If you want to start thinking like a futurist, you can – it doesn’t have to be difficult. In fact, to get a sense of the new world before anyone else does, there are just a few key principles you’ll have to keep in mind.

1. Get savvy at spotting trends

Thinking about and preparing yourself for the future is, in many ways, about the trends we’re seeing in the here and now. However, while trends are important, they aren’t always that easy to distinguish from passing crazes. As a futurist, you’ll need to start looking at the context surrounding the emergence of new trends to see which ones really look set to make waves.

Take, for example, the electric car trend, and specifically the Tesla. These revolutionary vehicles are only going to keep rising in popularity and will do so because they came about in response to significant trends. Namely, these are the trends towards environmentalism and the desire for new, more high-tech cars.

2. But don’t attempt to predict

While it’s important to spot trends and (as Tesla CEO Elon Musk did) capitalise on them, you shouldn’t attempt to predict what’s actually going to happen further down the line. Nobody can predict how the future will actually look.

Instead, the role of a futurist is to take what’s going on in the modern day and think about what overarching transformations are likely to emerge as a result. To do so, it will be necessary to look at everything from the model of any given society to its economics and leading organisations, as well as emerging trends.

3. Keep an eye out for current signals

It can be tempting to focus exclusively on the bigger things. But, actually, the most significant developments very often happen on a much smaller scale. These smaller changes are called “signals,” and signal spotting is a key part of thinking like a futurist.

Just take a look at the growing use of AI in all areas of our everyday lives. This new technological development can be considered a signal that will transform how entire industries function because it is likely to change the jobs that humans do.

4. And one eye on the past

Humanity is, in many ways, more predictable than people think. As such, it's always worth looking back at what's happened in the past to get an idea of what might develop in the future. Again, this isn't about trying to guess what the world will really look like, but rather to help anticipate upcoming developments and their responses.

If you take a look at the concerns that some have now about the Covid-19 vaccine, you will see that they're similar to those people had about, say, the MMR vaccine earlier in the 21st Century, and smallpox, measles, and more before that. As such, futurists will likely have seen the current anti-vaxxer movement coming.

5. Look for emerging patterns

Now that you've thought about trends, signals, and historical contexts, you might be wondering what the point really is. Well, the answer is that taken together, they allow us to see patterns that will help to paint a bigger picture.

Just remember that patterns are always subject to change. Just think about the recent shift to remote working. This sudden and unexpected change will have obliterated the expected patterns that some futurists had about the working culture and wider society.

6. Build a community

To be successful as a futurist, you have to have a lot of information at your fingertips, as well as the capacity to analyse a wide range of different contexts and developments. However, no one person can do it all, even those who are

futurists by trade.

As such, it is recommended that you communicate and collaborate. You are far more likely to develop an accurate viewpoint with diverse contributions and a wider range of data to work with.

https://www.entrepreneur.com/article/373554