

# A Practical Approach to Strategic Foresight and Scenarios

by Christian Crews, Ted Farrington and Laura Schlehuber

*Note – this post is part of a series on using strategic foresight to influence longer-range innovation investments. The full Innovation Leader's Guide to Strategic Foresight is [available for download](#).*

Strategic foresight enables organizations to build a proprietary view of the future to drive breakthrough innovation. But not all foresight approaches are created equal. Here are our recommendations for an effective three-phase process customized for innovation.

## Phase 1: Discover

Understand what elements of the external environment impact value creation and surface forces of change in those areas. Map the gaps in assumptions about the future among the current leadership.

Key outputs from Discover should include:

- A clear focus question for the initiative
- The organization's official future; the one its leaders currently use to make decisions
- An environmental scan documenting trends and weak signals not included in the organization's official view of the future

## Phase 2: Anticipate

Extrapolate trends and weak signals of emerging trends out several years (the exact number is determined during Discover). Combine these future impacts into holistic scenarios of the world in which the company, consumers and customers may find themselves. Identify the values driving each scenario and the major strategic implications on the business and for innovation. In some cases, conduct a participatory futures study, or MOOG (Massively Open Online Game) to augment the scenarios results.

Key outputs from Anticipate include:

- Three to four future scenarios based on the focus question of interest
- High level values and strategic implications for each scenario
- MOOG results if applicable

## Phase 3: Plan

Conduct design thinking workshops to understand the needs of consumers and customers in these futures and develop new products, services and business model platforms to meet those needs. This includes Incasting - projecting into scenarios using key personas of customers or consumers. Backcast from each future to identify mileposts that should be seen along the way.

Key results of the Plan phase include:

- New product, service and business model platforms
- Mileposts to watch as the real future unveils itself
- Point of View report that summarizes the results

Unlike many foresight projects that simply extrapolate observable trends into the future, this approach **forces a collision** between what an organization believes about the future and trends or events that are not on their radar. It creates thought-provoking unexpected scenarios of the future, and gives innovators proprietary views not shared by their competitors.

## Learn More

Strategic foresight enables organizations to build a unique perspective of the future, driving market entry at the right time with differentiated products and services. But not all foresight approaches are created equal.

The Innovation  
Leader's  
Practical Guide to  
**STRATEGIC  
FORESIGHT**

By Christian Crews,

[Download the Innovation Leader's Guide to Strategic Foresight to learn more](#)

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