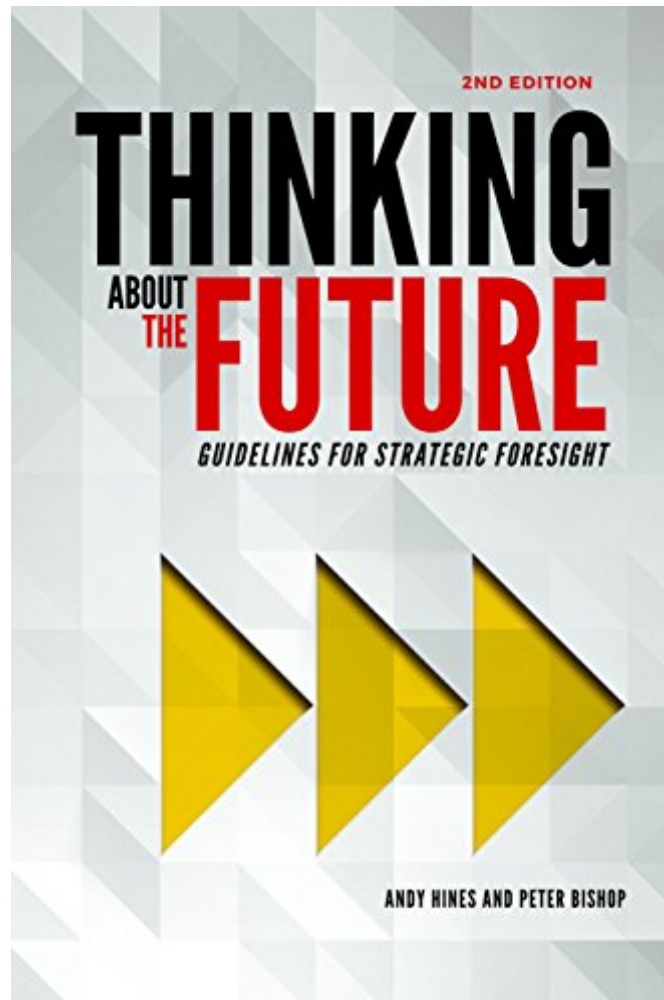




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Thinking About The Future: Guidelines For Strategic Foresight



Synopsis

Thinking about the Future, by Andy Hines and Peter Bishop, distills the expertise of three dozen senior foresight professionals into a set of essential guidelines for carrying out successful strategic foresight. Presented in a highly scannable yet personable style, each guideline includes an explanation and rationale, key steps, a case example, and resources for further study. The 115 guidelines are organized into six sequential categories that mirror the phases of a strategic foresight activity: Framing, Scanning, Forecasting, Visioning, Planning, and Acting. This second edition provided an opportunity to update the examples for the guidelines where they seemed dated. Otherwise, the original guidelines are intact, in the same place and order. The more significant change is the addition of a new section that provides specific “how-to” process advice to supplement the guidelines. We have been working on our approach to doing and teaching how to do foresight projects for the University of Houston Foresight Program since the book was published in 2007. The resulting “framework foresight” process is described in Section 7.0 Applying the Framework. Executives will find both the guidelines and the framework invaluable for understanding what it takes to successfully explore the future, while analysts who actively carry out strategic foresight projects will find the book an indispensable reference that they turn to again and again.

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Customer Reviews

Many professions practice some level of gazing into an unknowable future, assessing risks and rewards, and choosing a course of action: insurance underwriters, business investors and sports bookies appear to be relatively accomplished at hedging uncertainty, given the consequences of being wrong; unaccountable meteorologists, political pollsters and Malthusians who prophesize Armageddon triggered by overpopulation, resource depletion and climate change have been less successful. The professional discipline that defines the formal art and science of contemplating the future has various monikers, including: Futures Studies, Futurology, Futuristics, Futurism, Futuring, Visionary Management, Strategic Foresight, etc. (Z. Sardar, *Futures* 42 (2010) pg.

177-184). Similarly, the Futures discipline appears to have several competing schools of thought on methodological approaches, as detailed in two recently published books on studying the Future: *Thinking About the Future: Guidelines for Strategic Foresight* (2015, 2nd Edition) by Professors Andy Hines and Peter Bishop emphasizes the Positivist/Empirical Futurists' approach who apply an array of quantitative methods, many that originated with the American dominated military-industrial complex (RAND Corporation, Royal Dutch/Shell, Global Business Network). *The Future: A Very Short Introduction* (VSI) by Dr. Jennifer Gidley (2017) offers insight into the approach of Critical Futurists who are "unashamedly normative" and who promote the European-oriented, post-positivist, critical social theory concepts of "deconstruction, emancipation, cultural artifacts, hermeneutics, empowerment, complex bricolage, global justice" (Gidley pg. 65). In *Thinking About the Future*, Professors Hines/Bishop maintain that the future is indeed unknowable, and that thoughtful analysts can arrive at divergent conclusions and prescribe conflicting responses; at best, the practice of strategic foresight offers a structure for identifying drivers, recognizing trends, formalizing assumptions and examining the potential impacts of alternative responses. "The ultimate purpose of strategic foresight is to make better, more informed decisions in the present." (Hines/Bishop pg. 221) Professors Hines/Bishop compiled descriptions of 115 principles and guidelines (contributed by thirty-six

recognized futurists -- many of whom are members of the Association of Professional Futurists - APF), and organized these practices into a logical progression of six cohesive functions: Framing, Scanning, Forecasting, Visioning, Planning and Acting. The result is a comprehensive, state-of-the-art, strategic foresight reference handbook. It is not a cookie-cutter recipe or checklist for conducting an applied futures study, but rather an accessible “distillation of best-practices” in a framework for scouting, assessing and prioritizing possible, plausible and probable opportunities and challenges beyond today’s horizon. As President of the academically-oriented and UN-affiliated World Futures Studies Federation (WFSF), Dr. Gidley represents the Critical Futurists. In her new book, *The Future: VSI*, Dr. Gidley’s introductory sentence claims: “The future we face today is one that threatens our very existence as a species. The impact of climate crisis alone is pointing to frightening futures of rising seas, drowning cities, mass migration of climate refugees, drastic food shortages due to loss of arable land to drought, floods and salination, and the mass extinction of species. And this is just the beginning.” (pg. 1). She then concludes with “the science is clear but the politics is not.” (pg. 132). Her (predictable) solution to the alleged crisis is the imposition of UN protocols to achieve global climate justice (pg. 134). Apparently, since the future has been scientifically established and settled, the role of the Critical Futurist has been reduced to the sponsorship and promotion of a predetermined agenda to influence and manipulate the politics of a world spiraling into an impending dystopia. Are critical futurists, then, merely clever lobbyists, disguised as experts with fancy academic credentials? Dr. Gidley acknowledges that postmodern approaches featuring “critical/postmodern, cultural/interpretive, participatory/prospective and integral/holistic” concepts are vulnerable to criticisms of “perceived subjectivity | excessive relativism | lack [of] feasibility ... lack [of] legitimacy in scientific circles | lack of depth.” (pg.68-73). Yet, regarding the credibility of Futures Studies, she laments that “misconceptions abound in academic, professional and policy circles | the media frequently trivializes the field.” (pg. 82-83). “a self-inflicted and well-deserved criticism, in my opinion.

Required text for futures course at University of Houston. The book is intuitive and full of captivating examples to demonstrate the importance of each concept or step. A must read for anyone

interested in the future of anything.

Needed as a school text and it was informative and easy to read.

Good concepts, easy read.

Lays out a strong pattern for directing your thought patterns and applying mental rigor to the future.

Excellent!

Good book, opens your thinking ability

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