

## How we can predict the future



A futurist is someone who studies trends and factors that impact the future. By studying society and observing the trends, it helps to paint a trajectory to the future.

Futurists have a lot in common with historians, because they both look at how times have changed. They look both back and forward, to gain a better perspective of where things are going. Futurists study human nature and behaviour. They understand the seasonality of things, and how history can repeat itself.

By looking at the context and the trends, it helps to navigate the way forward. The future is not an inevitable destination. It's not something that we just happen to head towards. Rather, it is something that can be shaped, created and influenced, when the right tools are used.

## **How perspective, evidence and tools help to paint a picture of the future**

Having perspective is an important aspect of looking to the future. It is very common to be focused on the current state, when responding to current issues and dealing with current processes. But we do need to glance to the horizon and look at what's next. 2030 will one day be today. 2050 will one day be today. The future has a habit of moving towards us, and so having a perspective of what the next three, five or ten years might bring is essential for any leader, so that they can prepare for that inevitable reality.

Gathering evidence is also essential. Rather than just dream, hope or have unrealistic goals for the future, great leaders build their perspective and direction on evidence. Futurists are not crystal ball gazers. We don't just have some wild predictions of what the future might be. Rather, it is based on the current evidence.

In addition to having perspective and gathering evidence, a futurist also needs the right tools. A good perspective of where we're going, evidence on which it is based and the tools to understand the future is how a futurist can become a master of their craft.

## **Five factors to help us be prepared for the future**

It's almost impossible to predict actual events that will take place in the future. For example, who could have predicted that a global pandemic would be a reality? Or the rise of electric vehicles, cryptocurrencies or working-from-home would eventuate? Some of these trends seemed to come from nowhere.

While these events or trends were not predicted, a lot of the factors that got us there were. That is what a futurist focuses their attention on. Not on the specific events, but the solid foundations from which to get a trajectory towards the future, which provides the context in which to operate.

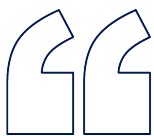
Here are five trends to keep your eye on, when thinking about the future.

- 1. Asymmetrical trends.** We are in an era now where change comes about, not from nation states or those that hold political power, but through trending hashtags and individuals who share their story. The #metoo movement is one example, which came from social media, and transformed industries and led to social change.
- 2. Generational transitions.** The study of generations today provides a sense of where things will be in 15 years, as the next generation takes over and moves to the fore.

3. **Catalytic changes.** This is where a catalyst and a trend combine to create societal change. Take the trend of working-from-home. We've had the technology for a long time, but it took the catalyst of lockdowns, in a global pandemic, to force us to pick up the technology to see work-from-home to become a new, common way of working.

4. **Human centrality.** While technology is a factor driving the future, it is important to understand that the human psyche which will always play an important part in shaping the future as well.

5. **Counter trends.** Whenever there is a mainstream trend, there will be a counter trend. For example: as things become more digital, there will be a trend back to the analogue. There is always going to be a counter trend to every mainstream trend, and that's a key area for people to look at to find future realities.

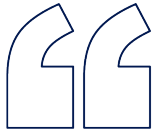


Five factors to keep your eye on when thinking like a futurist: asymmetrical trends, generational transitions, catalytic changes, human centrality and counter trends.

## Why leaders need to be futurists

In a world of increasing volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity, leaders that gain an understanding of the trends at play will be better equipped for the future. While no futurist can predict what Black Swan events (like COVID-19) will occur or when, we can predict with 100% certainty that there will be more to come.

The very definition of the word 'leader' refers to someone who leads people in a direction. The only reason a leader can lead is that they have looked down the road, to where they're headed. That gives them the responsibility, knowledge, astuteness and insight to not only be an expert in their area, but to understand their context and observe what's happening outside their organisation.



The key characteristic of a leader is foresight. The reason that they can lead others is that they have the foresight, ability and the discipline to look at the horizon, and take others with them.

The key characteristic of a leader is foresight. The reason that they can lead others is that they have the foresight, ability and discipline to look at the horizon, and take others with them. By looking at what is currently taking place, they can use perspective, evidence and tools to understand their context and be prepared for what's to come. That is how leaders will be able to lead their people and organisation well into the future.

**Australia towards 2031**  
The demographic, consumer and behavioural trends shaping the nation

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The report cover features the title "Australia towards 2031" and the subtitle "The demographic, consumer and behavioural trends shaping the nation". The preview pages show various statistics: "60% Size of the regions", "47% Returns to local", "83% The wellbeing era", "76%", and "62% The future of work is hybrid".

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