

The Futures Wheel



The future can sometimes seem completely unknowable. And one way that it can remain that way is to attempt to see it from only one point of view.

As a leader, your understanding of what is possible can be expanded by engaging with key stakeholders. Opening your possibility space of your vision reduces your likelihood of being blindsided by unseen realities. This simple game generates deep insights that can help change the contours of your preferred vision.

Here is how to begin your trip around the wheel:

- Recruit your team.** This could be your managers or leadership or whomever you think would be most insightful in helping you to craft your vision. It could include people from outside your organization. The point is that they should know they are venturing through time and space with you.
- Solicit the team for trends or changes.** Make a list of potential threats or disruptions to your company. Maybe you recently performed a SWOT Analysis. If the change or insight comes from your team, all the better.
- Create language for the center of the wheel.** Craft the wording of the trend you found in future language. The trend or change can be internal (we create a new product) or external (a competitor emerges with a superior product). Example: U.S. housing starts decline by 10 percent.
- Determine your time horizon.** Tell your team that the change or decision that you have placed in the center is present day. And now we have been transported ten years in the future.
- Ask for the first order of implications that could occur.** Ask the simple question: "And then what?" Stakeholders identify their first order implications or visions.
- Repeat for the next order of implications.** Have the stakeholders draw the connection from the first order to the second order implications. Repeat the same process for third order implications.
- BONUS:** Rank your insights:
1. Most important. **2.** Most likely. You can ask for a scale or just a simple dot-vote procedure.



Follow-Up questions for the team:

Which of these consequences are the most compelling? What kinds of futures ought we want to prevent? Which of these future consequences do we want to make sure we create?



Send your results to our futurists, email futures@bigwidesky.com