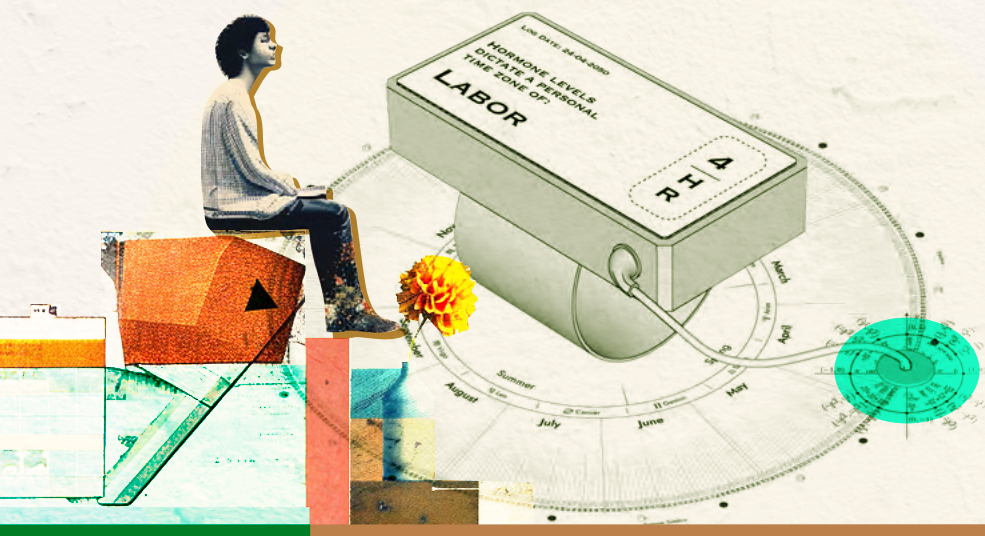




HUMAN+

FUTURES STARTER KIT

AN INTERACTIVE GUIDE TO GENERATING
FUTURES-INSPIRED STRATEGY



BIGWIDESKY



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PEOPLE DO NOT FOLLOW A PLAN. THEY FOLLOW VISION.

Those of us who have been tasked with creating strategies for our organizations or communities face ever-increasing uncertainties. On a macro scale, there are geopolitical shifts, pandemics, economic volatility, and cultural complexities. This is to say nothing of your political challenges and lack of stakeholder alignment. In this context, we are asked to build strategies, to make decisions, to make tactical processes.

Consider this Futures Starter Kit as an antidote to these paralyzing uncertainties. Even with incremental implementation, you can shape a meaningful strategy, one that will inspire your stakeholders to take urgent and prodigious action.

YOUR NEAR FUTURE:

The outcomes for you are two-fold:

A BOLD STRATEGIC CONCEPT

With exploration into possibility, you and your stakeholders will shape and contour a vision for a preferred future, one that aligns the will of the organization.

STRATEGY AS RITUAL

Rather than having a discreet and singular planning process, embracing a speculative design and foresight approach to your strategy will mean that you can remain curious about the world and embrace emergent opportunities.

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

Maybe you flip through and take only one or two ideas into a leadership session. Maybe you use this to schedule a workshop with your team. Maybe you start to develop a foresight practice within your firm. The more you can embrace the concepts as outlined in this guide, the more boldly you will be able to shape your vision and embolden your organization to realize its aspirations.

The guide is divided into three main sections, and you can go as far or as fast as you like.

If you do generate something provocative, please add it to our community board. After all, those of us who would be so bold as to infuse strategy with foresight need a community.

BRIDGE SPECULATION + STRATEGY IN 3 STEPS.

You are about to embark on a simple, yet challenging journey toward a bolder and more meaningful vision. A quick overview first:

STEP ONE ORIENT

ENGAGE IN THE BOLD CONCEPT OF POSSIBILITY

The first step in a useful foray into possibility is acknowledging the plural nature of multiple futures. If your stakeholders still view the future of your organization as a dot on a linear path, then there is some work to do to shake loose a new posture toward the future as possibility.



STEP TWO PLAY

IMMERSE YOUR STAKE- HOLDERS IN 2050 WITH SPECULATIVE ARTIFACTS

Once the space is developed for possibilities, you can develop stories and images from those possible worlds. They ought to be ones that provoke new thinking and meaningful conversation.



STEP THREE VISION

BUILD STRATEGIC INSIGHTS ABOUT THE PRESENT DAY

The process culminates in an activation that incorporates new insights into your plan. The experiences with possibility will allow for emergence of a preferred future and inspire planning as a ritual and not as a check-the-box activity.



THE BEDEVILMENTS OF INCORPORATING FORESIGHT INTO STRATEGY

For those that have gone out ahead of you to do this work of infusing strategy with foresight, there are very real challenges: real and imagined. While this list is not comprehensive, its inclusion in this guide is intended to be an encouragement. If doing the work to encourage futures thinking and speculative design is causing you some of these challenges, then you are on the right track.

IMPOSTER - ISM

You were born to do this. The example artifacts that you see in this guide were the result of virtual workshops with people just like you and were generated with minimal prompting. So the common refrain of “I am not a designer / futurist / thought leader,” does not apply here. The point is to make a beginning. Any incremental step that you can make to have conversations about possibility, generate stories or artifacts, and gather new insights is a prodigious beginning. The road is, after all, infinite. Go to this work with boldness, and your strategic planning rituals will come to life. Note: The example artifacts that you see in this guide were the result of a virtual workshop with people just like you

PRAGMATISM

There is often a sense of disconnect between speculative design and strategic thinking. This is the tension that arises when employing foresight in any business-related context. *Why would companies use creative imagination to inform strategic decisions? How is imagination, creativity, and play, relevant to future business strategies or investments?* Often you must articulate what is on the other side of this effort: even if you are faking it. If your stakeholders are willing to make a beginning at closing the gap between imagination and reality, they can position themselves as unparalleled innovators in their field, reveal new opportunities, and guard against feeling shocked when the next disruption arises.

SAFETY

Plausibility is not utility. Speculative design is a practice of creating imaginative artifacts from possible futures to better understand our present-day challenges. To engage critically with speculative design requires users to suspend disbelief and embrace the unknown. And to reap the strategic benefits of this practice, let your stakeholders know that this is an exercise in what could be and that within this exploration, more novel insights can be revealed.

PASSIVITY

This is, of course, the inverse of most of the business world. They would have you believe that you should think your way into new behaviors. A foresight-inspired strategy is the opportunity to immerse and behave your way into new thinking. This process is effective when you start with creating and making your way through it. It is generative. That is part of the design. Because the futures we seek to create cannot be passive. You and your stakeholders are active leaders in forging a preferred vision.



THE FUTURE CANNOT BE STUDIED BECAUSE THE FUTURE DOES NOT EXIST.

- JAMES DATOR, FUTURIST

WHERE TO START

REVEAL PLURALITY: ENGAGE IN A FUTURES DIALOGUE

Our default setting as humans is to believe that the future is a dot on the horizon. That it is a linear continuation of the past. Even some of the pop culture prognosticators are selling one version of perspective on the future. To be a visionary means encouraging possibility. So begin your foray into possibility by engaging in a futures dialogue conversation with the stakeholders most central to your strategy. The questions can be as simple as this:

- 01 *What do you think will have the biggest impact on our future?*
- 02 *What trends are you most concerned about when it comes to our future?*
- 03 *What are people not talking about enough when it comes to our future?*
- 04 *What are some of the ways that our organization or community has been known in the past? What do we want to take with us into the future and what needs to change?*

If you can be successful in holding space for a Futures Dialogue, you will have two main outcomes that will embolden your strategy. 1. Qualitative insights on the assumptions, beliefs, and opportunities of your organization or community. 2. An aligned cohort of people who will be willing to move to the next step in the process.

When you can engage with your stakeholders with curiosity, you overcome many of the above bedevils. They will be engaged in the process and ready to play in a possible world.

FOR A DEEPER DIVE

[Check out our virtual workshop](#), hosted in Feb. 2024, on the importance of plurality and hosting a Futures Dialogue.

STEP TWO

PLAY

FUTURES PLAY

IMMERSE YOURSELF IN A POSSIBLE FUTURE

If you have reached this stage in the development of foresight-inspired strategies, **you have accomplished a great deal.** You have your stakeholders and an outline of your assumptions about what the futures may hold for you and your organization. The temptation at this point is to jump to the planning document phase.

However, to do so would reduce the impact of bringing out the life of your vision. So far, you have stayed in an intellectual space about what you think your future may be. Now is the time to live into a particular possible reality. Speculative design and futures artifacts create a liminal experience for you to meet that possibility with your hearts, heads, and bodies.

You test of the mettle of your assumptions, beliefs, aspirations and emerge on the other side with a higher resolution strategic concept, a vision for the world that has met the test of the futures.

ABOUT THE 2050 HUMAN+ ARTIFACTS

Within this Starter Kit, you have three artifacts you can choose. These artifacts are products from people just like you — executives, leaders, designers, entrepreneurs, scientists, researchers, etc. These workshop attendees were given a framework from The Thing from the Future <link> as prompting. Within only a few minutes, they were inspired to create these compelling artifacts.

HOW TO PLAY

- 01** Select one of these artifacts that would provide an interesting provocation of your stakeholder group.
- 02** Immerse yourselves in the 2050 world in which this artifact exists. This could be as simple as reading the description. Take your time with this stage. Assume that this artifact really does exist. It is part of your everyday life.
- 03** Imagine what other assumptions you would have to make about your 2050 reality. If this thing were real, what else must be happening?
- 04** Each person can spend time in recording (informally) their interpretations.

Once you have completed the immersion, you can move to Step 3: Vision.
That is where the collective vision of the future will start to emerge.

ONLY BY LIVING
ABSURDLY IS IT
POSSIBLE TO
BREAK OUT OF
THIS INFINITE
ABSURDITY.

- JULIO CORTAZAR



BEGIN BY ENGAGING WITH A SPECULATIVE ARTIFACT
FROM THE HUMAN+ 2050 CATALOG. CHOOSE ONE OF
THE THREE ARTIFACTS TO HONE IN ON.

PROJECTUS

Our elders are prone to say “when I was your age” and extoll the grit and greatness of yesteryear. And for as much as we may want to connect on their terms, it’s impossible to truly put ourselves in their shoes.

Until now.

PROJECTUS is an immersive “parallel life journal” that uses personal recordings and contextual data to connect our lifetimes to those of our loved ones – even after their passing. Multi-sensory playback and chemical infusions inspire the very feelings they felt “when they were your age” and let you coexist as contemporaries. Experience their most important moments, together. Witness your own birth. Face aging – even your own passing – in the company of those who’ve already gone.

PROJECTUS Testimonials:

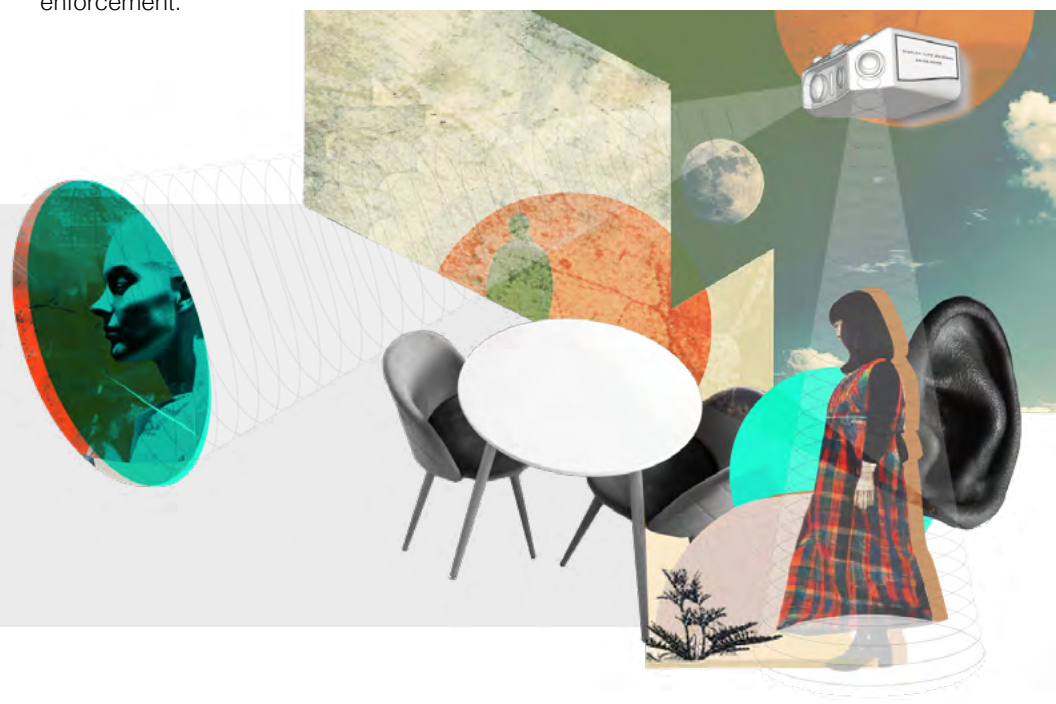
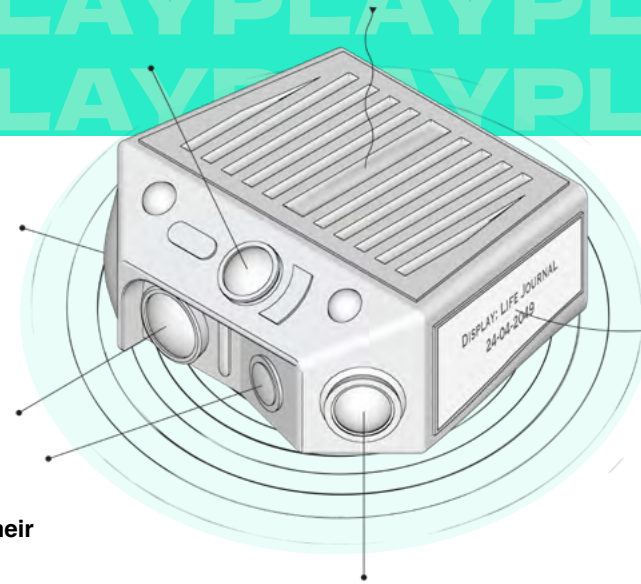
“I always thought my dad was the most stern, despicable person ever ... then I experienced his father. Dad, you did great.” - Des D.

“Certain ... ailments ... run in my family. I don’t think I’d have been able to recover as quickly if I didn’t fight the fight alongside family.” - Annelle W.

“Auntie Jill claimed to have invented Minecraft. Nope.” - Steve P.

PROJECTUS lets you see the world through their eyes, then share your own story for generations to come.

PROJECTUS subscription activation required. All life data is the exclusive property of DataVaultSpecInc and may be used or sold for research purposes, and is subject to compliance with law enforcement.



BEGIN BY ENGAGING WITH A SPECULATIVE ARTIFACT
FROM THE HUMAN+ 2050 CATALOG. CHOOSE ONE OF
THE THREE ARTIFACTS TO HONE IN ON.

INFINIFIT cannot store living, organic matter. The FAA currently prohibits INFINIFIT from all commercial air and space travel.

A complex digital collage. On the left, a diamond-shaped road sign with a black arrow pointing up and curving to the right, with a rectangular sign below it that reads "NEXT 4 MILES". In the center, a person in a dark jacket stands on a sidewalk, looking towards a large green circular graphic. To the right, a large, dark, angular shape resembling a building or a piece of machinery is visible. The background is a mix of textures, including a light blue sky, a dark, textured surface, and a red and white patterned area at the bottom right.

BEGIN BY ENGAGING WITH A SPECULATIVE ARTIFACT
FROM THE HUMAN+ 2050 CATALOG. CHOOSE ONE OF
THE THREE ARTIFACTS TO HONE IN ON.

STEP THREE

VISION

AFTER SELECTING ONE OF THE THREE SPECULATIVE ARTIFACTS ...

COMPLETE THE WORKSHEET AND SHARE YOUR INSIGHTS TO THE COMMUNITY BOARD.

You may fill out this worksheet alone or with a group. If working in groups, first answer each question independently, then share your responses with one another.

The year is 2050. You are familiar with [CHOSEN SPECULATIVE ARTIFACT] and have used it before. How is this artifact embedded into your day-to-day life? When do you use it? And do you like the product? Why or why not?

Record your response in the space below:

01

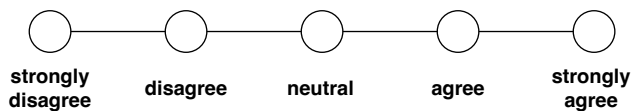
The year is still 2050. Reflect back on year 2024, what about the world has changed such that [CHOSEN SPECULATIVE ARTIFACT] can now exist?

Record your response in the space below:

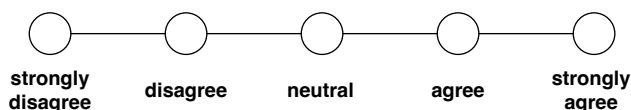
02

Rate your response to the below statements:

I enjoy the future in 2050 where
[CHOSEN SPECULATIVE ARTIFACT] exists.



I can imagine a future 2050 where
[CHOSEN SPECULATIVE ARTIFACT] exists.



03

Snap back to present day.

Whether you like it or not... imagine it or not... believe it or not... **you know with absolute certainty** that [CHOSEN SPECULATIVE ARTIFACT] will be on the market in 2050.

Knowing this, what investments or changes would you make today? (in work, in life, etc.)

Record your response in the space below:

04

**SHARE YOUR
INSIGHTS**

