

An Owner's Guide to the Future

Past, Present & Future

Obsession with the future is just as unhealthy as being fixed on the past. Spread out your thinking - think in *panoramic time* — past, present and future. Leaving the past out of your thinking is like ignoring half your tools. Too much focus on the future is to live in fantasy without the respect due to those in the present.

Implications of Implications

The easiest way to be a futurist is to build this question into your thinking: *What are the implications of the implications of the implications . . . ?* Not that you can know, but just setting your mind towards implications takes you beyond just solutions thinking into the possibility of wisdom in your choices. The law of unintended consequences still holds.



Beware the Prophet motive!

Whenever you hear a forecast about the future be sure to ask: *Is there's a profit motive behind the prophet motive?* If we do what they say, do they get rich, do they gain power? If the answer is yes, then you should be very cautious. *Follow the money* is wise advice, no matter how selfless the forecasts (and forecasters) may seem to be.

Never trust pessimistic forecasts from people who make a living selling more government.
Dick Armev

I've gone into hundreds of fortune tellers' parlors and have been told thousands of things, but nobody ever told me that I was a police woman getting ready to arrest them.
New York City Detective 1963



1. Think possible futures, probable futures, preferable futures and plausible futures. Don't think in terms of singular forecasts that are absolute. Don't be constrained by what's realistic. If we stuck to that, we'd still be in the caves and bushes wondering whether that newfangled thing called fire is really plausible. Better do a study and hire consultants . . .

2. Think of multiple futures. There's not just one future, because there are billions of people in lots of different situations. Your actual mileage may differ. This brings in the value of scenarios — crafting a variety of stories of how things might turn out, based upon any variety of possibilities and impossibilities. In the words of cyberpunk author William Gibson, *"The future's already here. It's just not evenly distributed."*

3. We overestimate what we can do in one year and underestimate what we can do in five years. Lots of times there are early forecasts of what the future is going to be like and when that falls short, people will discount the entire notion. Meanwhile, others who were closely watching the first efforts learned from the mistakes and are trying again. Early pessimists are not long-term thinkers.

4. What's missing? In all your searching for what's happening next, you're going to miss something. So, what are you not seeing? Look for the hole. What's not here? Who's not here? How have you been fooling yourself?

5. Watch for monkeywrenches. These are the sort of thing that get tossed into the mix that can completely disrupt the path the future was on. Say, 9/11 for example. Or microchips. Or immigration.



From the talks and ideas
of David Zach, futurist