Influencing the Future
The past cannot be changed; the future is yet in your power!

~ Mary Pickford
Objectives

• Identify how to better align your team, program, or organization with its future operating environment
  – Describe the term “futures thinking”
  – Discuss how to gain a perspective on what the future holds
  – Explain how to use a tool to recognize what you can start doing now to achieve your preferred future
Thinking About the Future

Present
Thinking About the Future

Past --→ Present
Thinking About the Future

Past → Present

Trends
Thinking About the Future

Drivers

Past → Present

Trends
Thinking About the Future

Drivers

Past → Present → Expected Future

Trends
Thinking About the Future

Drivers

Past \rightarrow Present

Trends

Expected Future

Reasonable Scenarios

A \rightarrow B \rightarrow C \rightarrow D
Thinking About the Future

Trends

Drivers

Past → Present

Expected Future

Reasonable Scenarios

A, B, C, D
Thinking About the Future

Drivers

Past

Present

Decisions?

Expected Future

Reasonable Scenarios

Trends

POSSIBLE FUTURES
Thinking About the Future

Drivers

Past → Present → Decisions

Trends

Preferred Future
Expected Future
Reasonable Scenarios

A → B → D
Futures thinking is a mindset and a method to help you “see” into the future and decide how to act!
Gaining Strategic Foresight
Foresight is:

“The thoughtful regard or provision for the future”

~ Webster’s Dictionary
What Is Strategic Foresight?

Foresight is:

“The thoughtful regard or provision for the future!”
~ Webster’s Dictionary

• **Strategic foresight looks 5, 10, or more years into the future and asks, “What will our future stakeholders value? What kinds of products and services will <they> need and how can we best serve them?”**

Dealing with a VUCA world

• Strategic planning is best suited for a stable environment
• Strategic foresight is better for a VUCA world
  – Volatile
  – Uncertain
  – Complex
  – Ambiguous
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Strategic Foresight is essential when you are dealing with a VUCA world!
Steps to Developing Strategic Foresight

- Six critical steps for developing foresight

Steps to Developing Strategic Foresight

• Six critical steps for developing foresight

• Benefits include:
  – Fewer surprises
  – Rethink assumptions
  – If/then analysis
  – Acting now becomes possible
  – Better prepared to deal with the future

How Can You Use the Method?

- Futures projects can be large or small
- Those with an interest in the issue should be involved
- Face-to-face or with online collaboration
- Insights can be available within hours, more-specific plans take more time.
Step 1: Framing

• Identifying the focus...the issue for which strategic foresight is needed
  – There are many potential issues a team, program, or organization might be concerned about
  – Which are the most important?

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• Scaling the time horizon to explore

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  - Which are the most important?
- Scaling the time horizon to explore

Taking time to clarify what is most important to your mission will help avoid focusing on too many issues or the wrong issues!

Using the Strategic Foresight Method

What futures thinking topic interests you?
What’s your time horizon?
Today’s Example--Step 1: Framing

• For the purpose of our discussion today…let’s consider the challenge of creating an environment that fosters innovation at work
• Our time horizon is 2030
• Solution built along three lines of effort:
Solution built along three lines of effort:

Line of Effort 1
Build a More Lethal Force
National Defense Strategy

• Solution built along three lines of effort:

Line of Effort 1
Build a More Lethal Force

Line of Effort 2
Strengthen Alliances and Attract New Partners
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Line of Effort 3
Reform DoD’s Business Practices
Solution built along three lines of effort:

- **Line of Effort 1**
  Build a More Lethal Force

- **Line of Effort 2**
  Strengthen Alliances and Attract New Partners

- **Line of Effort 3**
  Reform DoD’s Business Practices

*Develop a culture of rapid and meaningful innovation!*
How Can We Help Innovation Happen?

• Innovation has been the buzzword of the last decade
  – With so much noise and buzz about innovation, why does it happen?
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  – With so much noise and buzz about innovation, why does it happen?
• Innovation occurs when someone is motivated by an idea for doing something differently
Successful innovation has to be nurtured; the healthier the environment, the greater the results!

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How Can We Help Innovation Happen?
Step 2: Scanning

- Looking externally to identify the forces that have an impact on the decision
  - What trends are driving change?

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Scanning is a way to identify the forces that drive the issue with which you are concerned, while they are still on the horizon!

PEST Analysis

• A simple, four-point framework to look at the surrounding environment outside the organization
  – Political
  – Economic
  – Social
  – Technological

Source: Aguilar, F.J. (1967) Scanning the Business Environment Macmillan
PEST Analysis

• A simple, four-point framework to look at the surrounding environment outside the organization
  – Political
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  – Social
  – Technological

When you can anticipate how these factors might impact you in the future, you'll find it easier to identify and seize new opportunities, and avoid potential threats!

Source: Aguilar, F.J. (1967) Scanning the Business Environment Macmillan
Step 2: Scanning--Innovation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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Uncertain security environment calls for ingenuity and agility
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Uncertain security environment calls for ingenuity and agility.
Step 3: Forecasting

• Forecast realistic scenarios
• The goal is to:
  – Explore alternative ways things might develop
  – Consider how key actors might behave
  – Identify key needs under different conditions

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  3. Challenging

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Once we have a set of scenarios, we can start to “see” the future!

Alternative Futures

Thinking About the Future

- Expected
- Better
- Worse
- Weird
Step 3: Forecasting---Innovation

Alternative Futures

<table>
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<th>Expected (Business as Usual)</th>
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**Smart Innovation**
Step 3: Forecasting--Innovation
Alternative Futures

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<td>Smart Innovation</td>
<td>Innovation Stifled</td>
<td>All the Time</td>
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<td>Innovation is encouraged but not rewarded</td>
<td>Wise risk taking</td>
<td>Inability to see ROI up front</td>
<td>Only innovative solutions allowed</td>
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<td>Focus on training not culture change</td>
<td>Education and tools provided</td>
<td>Risk-averse culture prevails</td>
<td>Traditional approaches denied</td>
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Step 3: Forecasting—Transformational Factors

• Identify transformational factors:
  – Lay the scenarios side by side
  – Consider the following:
    • What issues or factors show up in more than one scenario?
    • Which of these are within your control or sphere of influence?
    • Which of these, if handled well, would mitigate risk, or help gain an advantage?
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*Transformational factors are the levers we can pull to start to shape the future!*
Step 3: Forecasting--Innovation

Transformational Factors

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<th>Methods</th>
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<tr>
<td>“Leadership” supports wise risk taking</td>
<td>Improved methods and tools are developed</td>
<td>Resources are provided (e.g., people, time, funding, facilities)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Diversity and inclusion is embraced</td>
<td>Individuals at all levels are educated about approaches and benefits</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Innovation is incentivized and rewarded</td>
<td>Workforce puts methods and tools into practice</td>
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Step 3: Forecasting—Preferred Future

• Choose your “preferred” future:
  – What is best for you, your team, program, or organization?
  – What ought to happen?
Step 3: Forecasting—Preferred Future

• Choose your “preferred” future:
  – What is best for your team, program, or organization?
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Choosing a preferred future is a way of saying, “Here is where we are now, and here is where we want to be in the future!”
Step 3: Forecasting--Innovation

Preferred Future--Smart Innovation

- Leaders and managers inspire wise risk taking
- Failing fast is accepted as a way to avoid spending too much time or money
- Diversity and inclusion are embraced
- Innovation is incentivized and rewarded
- New methods and tools are available and put into practice
- Defense spending is more efficient
- Resources are dedicated (e.g., people, time, facilities, funds)
- Cooperation with industry to promote innovative thinking, products, services
- Tangible contributions to US Defense capability are evident
Step 4: Visioning

• Visioning is used to describe what the future will be like if the preferred future materializes
  – In foresight, you’re not working towards a single “vision”
  – You are working to identify one vision for each transformational factor

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What would outrageous success for this factor look like in <insert the selected year>?

Step 4: Visioning--Innovation

• Culture in 2030:
  – People see and talk about innovation as part of their daily jobs
  – People are comfortable with taking risks and leaders accept wise risk taking
  – Mutual trust abounds
  – Successes that contribute to learning, as well as failures, are celebrated
  – People are eager to work on diverse teams
  – Stakeholders are delighted because we consistently deliver what we promise, quality products and services, on time and budget
Step 5: Planning

- Work backwards from the future to today using a technique called “backcasting”
  - Starting with the vision statement for each factor, work backwards to today by creating a list of milestones you will have to reach to achieve each vision
  - Continue to work your way backwards from the future into the present
## Milestones--Culture

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>2030</td>
<td>Vision achieved—People see and talk about innovation as part of their daily jobs. People are comfortable with taking risks and leaders accept wise risk taking. Mutual trust abounds. Successes are celebrated as well as failures that contribute to learning. People are eager to work on diverse teams. Stakeholders are delighted because we consistently deliver what we promise, quality products and services, on time and budget.</td>
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<td>2025</td>
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<td>1 year (2021)</td>
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## Step 5: Planning--Innovation

### Milestones--Culture

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<th>Year</th>
<th>Milestone</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2030</td>
<td>Vision achieved</td>
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<td>2025</td>
<td>Climate survey confirms that 75% of employees are comfortable with risk and feel incentivized to pursue initiatives</td>
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<tr>
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<td>75% of teams and groups are run by culturally diverse leadership teams</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Investments in innovation initiatives yield 150% ROI as measured in cost savings</td>
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<td></td>
<td>External stakeholders and/or customers confirm that products and services better meet their needs (add value)</td>
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<tr>
<td>2022</td>
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<td>25% of teams and groups are run by culturally diverse leadership teams</td>
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<td>Lessons learned program established to celebrate failures that contribute to learning how to do things better</td>
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<td>Organizations start to involve all stakeholders in the design and implementation of the project/related parts of the project</td>
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## Step 5: Planning--Innovation

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<td>Vision communicated and participants enlisted</td>
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<td>Organizational awards for innovation established and funded</td>
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<td>Hiring practices changed to better evaluate innovation mindset and culture fit</td>
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<td>Education on the value of diversity and inclusion expanded</td>
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<td>Work policies changed to allow time for innovation projects</td>
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<td>Stakeholders who will benefit from innovation identified</td>
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Step 6: Acting

• Take steps now to achieve the preferred future
• Continue scanning to detect changes in the environment and new trends
• Be flexible and willing to learn
• Balance the tyranny of the urgent with future preparedness
• Six critical steps for developing foresight

Closing Thoughts

• How could you apply futures thinking in your team, program, or organization?

• Please reach out if you have questions or could use assistance glenn.lamartin@dau.edu