Futures Research Program

Bringing structure to the way we think about the future

Melanie Swan, Futurist
MS Futures Group
Phone: 650-681-9482
Fax: 504-910-3803
http://www.melanieswan.com
m@melanieswan.com
Agenda

- What is Futures Research?
- Why a Futures Research program?
- Worldwide Futures Studies in Academia
- Futures Research Techniques
- Futures Research Topical Coverage
What is Futures Research?

- An approach, structure and philosophy for thinking about the future
  - Formal quantitative and qualitative techniques

- How does Futures Research fit with other organizational planning techniques?
  - Most organizational planning is limited to forecasting, short-term (months, quarters) linear predictions with many data elements present
  - Futures Research uses a variety of quantitative and qualitative techniques to think more abstractly about the longer-term future (5-20+ years out), identify potential discontinuities and compose strategies for responding to whatever future scenarios occur

- Futures Research is not explicitly about making predictions
  - Too easy to be wrong, hard to add value
  - Incidental predictions arise such as the likelihood of certain trends
Why a Futures Research program?

- The future is important and many institutions have Futures Groups
  - Most branches of the US government (FBI, Army, Navy, DHS, DARPA)
  - Many non-profit organizations (AARP, American Cancer Society)
  - A growing # of corporations (British Telecom, IBM, Hallmark, Nortel)

- Futures Studies is a discipline, there are formal ways to think about the future
  - University of Hawaii and University of Houston offer undergraduate and advanced degrees
  - A futures studies course is compulsory for all undergraduates in Taiwan

- Useful offerings flow from the Futures Studies discipline; cutting edge Futures Research is valuable to a number of audiences
  - People must be quickly and effectively informed of new technologies and ideas from a trusted source
  - Pace of technology creation and adoption continues to accelerate
  - New concepts are applying across industries (e.g.; open source, long tail, tagging, globalization, interactive entertainment)
Futures Studies is an important global academic imperative

- Degree programs and/or research centers
  - University of Hawaii
    - http://www.futures.hawaii.edu/
  - University of Houston
    - http://b3308-adm.cl.uh.edu/futureweb/
  - Finland Futures Research Centre
  - Tamkang University, Taiwan
  - Stellenbosch
  - Charles University, Prague
Formal Techniques: Quantitative and Qualitative

**Forecasting:** Short-term linear extrapolation from the present state

**Systems Thinking:** How system complexity influences outputs

**Ecosystem Collaboration:** web-based interaction between customers, vendors, end-users, financial community

**Scenario Planning:** Unlikely but possible future states of the world and accompanying action plans

**Business Intelligence and Trend Prediction:** How are competitive dynamics and other forces changing

**Simulation:** Multi-party role play and experience of impact of decision-making through successive steps
Futures Research: Topical Coverage as of October 2005

- **New World Phenomena**
  - The world is flat (globalization, localization); outsourcing, insourcing, rightsourcing
  - New business models: open source, flat tail, collaboration, wikis, folksonomy
  - News and entertainment trends, interactivity, gaming, metaverse-worlds, PVRs, flat panel, HDTV, IPTV, storage is free, blogging, podcasting, vlogging
  - Communications: Skype; worldwide wireless broadband, mobile devices, wearable computing, heads-up display

- **Institution evolution**
  - Corporate citizenship, resource sustainability, poverty eradication, social entrepreneurship, meaningful work; post-money transcendence culture
  - Rethinking institutions; government, law enforcement, patents, healthcare, insurance, universities

- **Long-term state of the world trends**
  - Demographics: global graying, young adults living at home
  - Energy: worldwide rate of energy consumption declining, hybrids, alternative fuel
  - Decline of US and Western productivity; declining numbers of immigrants, PhDs and patents awarded, papers published, corporate scandals, Sarbanes Oxley
  - Rise of the creative class, services economy, informal learning
Thank You!

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http://www.melaneswan.com
m@melaneswan.com

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