



TRAINING

NAVIGATING A POST-COVID LANDSCAPE WITH FORESIGHT

by Steve Wells





The world is increasingly subject to significant change driven by megatrends such as an increasingly complex and multi-faceted world; individuals shaping their own futures; emerging consumers with new expectations; exponential technology development; data as the key to unlocking a new world of possibility; and sustainability as a licence to operate.

So what are the underlying characteristics of these megatrends?

Our increasingly complex and multi-faceted world is characterised in part by the tension between localism and globalisation that manifests itself in politics, the economy, and trade; regional tensions between non-state actors and sovereign states, and between states; and the development and deployment of pervasive technologies challenging perceived freedoms.

Individuals are increasingly shaping their own futures through building their digital literacy; having tools that enable them to exercise their curiosity including in support of their lifelong learning, and increasingly people are open to new ideas and experimentation.

Emerging consumers, from boomers to Generation Z, have new and different expectations. Key factors are driven by social and demographic shifts, family structures, diversity and inclusion, and perspectives on value.



Exponential technology development including 3D printing, nanotechnology and atomically precise manufacturing, quantum computing, immersive technologies (virtual reality, augmented reality, haptics, and holograms), blockchain, synthetic biology, human enhancement, robotics, and artificial intelligence (AI) are driving new solutions for government, enterprise, and citizens. Some of these technologies represent a risk in their potential to automate many millions of jobs, while others represent the opportunity of new industry sectors.

Two worlds are colliding as our traditional older analogue world with a focus on objects, products, and physical assets are increasingly challenged by digital natives who understand that data is the key to unlocking a new world of possibility. This transition is already impacting how we design and deliver private and public services and plays into how investors value digital enterprises.

Sustainability as a licence to operate could see the UN Sustainability Goals that focus on enabling a more human and equitable future drive rapid improvement in expectations of government and enterprise performance across environmental, climate, societal, and economic domains.



The Covid-19 pandemic has thrown additional complications into the mix. In many respects, it has accelerated a number of critical trends in the adoption of automation technologies such as AI, remote working practices, on-line retail, and distant learning, for example. But other critical issues have emerged as well including the tension between restoring the old order and seeking a total system reboot; a need for transparency, clarity, and factfulness to generate trust across society; scrutiny of Government crisis response mechanisms; how to build resilience into international supply chains; and how the social distancing provisions together with enabling collaborative technologies provide insight to the next futures of organisations, work, and the workplace.

So how do these factors impact how we develop policy and strategy?

In the past, we have been confident in our predictions about how the external environment is evolving and have been able to come to a consensus about the way ahead for our organisations. Increasingly we are far from certain about how the outside world is evolving and are less able to reach consensus about how to proceed. It's this situation that calls for a new focus to leading change in organisations, and that's not easy. There's a temptation to always do what we've always done. But then we always get what we've always got; except the reality is that the world moves on and we risk being left behind.

A new mindset is required to initially challenge what we have always done and explore and experiment with ideas for the future. This mindset shift sets up a new leadership challenge, one component of which is understanding potential futures and gaining confidence in working with uncertainty. Foresight generally, and scenario thinking specifically, are increasingly critical skills for decision-makers and leaders everywhere. Future leaders will be expected to enable the members of our organisations to collaborate and experiment our way to a more sustainable and more human post-pandemic landscape.

What is your role in shaping the journey to a more sustainable and more human post-pandemic landscape?



Steve Wells is an experienced international speaker, futurist, strategist, facilitator, and founder of [Informing Choices Ltd](#), an insights business specialising in futures and foresight. He creates thought-provoking keynote speeches and presentations, executive education events, and horizon scanning studies.



**Contact the Dods Training
team for more information**

Alice McDavid
Head of UK Training

+44 (0)20 7593 5714
alice.mcdavid@dodsgroup.com

