Look into the future – play foresight games

"The future is already here. It isn't evenly distributed yet"
William Gibson

The world is changing. We all embrace this idea in theory, when read business articles or notice that our children use a new, unknown to us but viral social media. But **when it comes to our work, we often behave, think, and act extremely conservatively**, as if our working routine will stay intact forever. And because of that, we sometimes **miss massive shifts** which were developing incrementally and **below the radar** for some time, and then we find ourselves in the midst of significant changes catching us off-guard.

Some companies fall into another trap – they develop **three-year plans and believe it helps them prepare for the future**. But looking three years ahead often is not enough to see considerable paradigm shifts before they become common sense. The first Bitcoin was mined in 2010, but only seven years later, in 2017, it became a hype, and the whole world learned such words as "cryptocurrency" and "blockchain." It took Facebook almost ten years to attract one billion users. Amazon sold its first book in 1995, but even ten years later, many experts were still skeptical about the future of e-commerce.

The world won't change significantly in the two or three years perspective (even Covid-19 didn't turn our world upside down), which makes us blind to any changes. Future thinking bias is a tendency to believe, sometimes subconsciously, that the future will be pretty the same as the present. Mark Twain said that only a baby with a wet diaper wants a change. **Embracing that tomorrow will be different from today makes us question our current strategies and business models**, which is always painful – especially if they are successful.

If we want to prepare for the future, we need to **look further**. Foresight practitioners prefer to create scenarios for ten years. Scenarios are not forecasts, and we don't try to predict the future because it is unpredictable by nature. Our goal is not to build an accurate picture of tomorrow's world (which is impossible) but rather awake our creativity by thinking about a distant future world that will undoubtedly be different from our current reality.

Looking ten years ahead frees a foresight game's participants from the future thinking bias and unleashes their creativity. At the same time, the future scenario is not a fantasy – we begin the game with emerging issues discussion. We try to see minor, barely noticed, today's changes that, possibly, will lead to tectonic shifts in some years. Then, using special techniques, we discuss how these changes can unfold and develop and, thus, build a plausible and consistent future scenario.

We know that the future will be, apparently, different from what we see in the present. But, as it has been mentioned before, accuracy is not a goal of a foresight game. Instead, it helps solve other tasks, such as the following:

1. Foresight game helps **free our minds, paralyzed by day-to-day tasks, and fear of change**. We start thinking about the future more openly, and we have some frames to receive valuable outcomes

2. During a game, we try to **identify and discuss almost invisible today's alterations**, and this helps us prepare for the future better than our competitors

3. The future is **not predictable, but it is creatable**. So we don't need to wait until it comes; we may build a scenario of a desirable future and take some actions to help it come true. We call these actions "strategy".

The world of business will change. Many processes and procedures are being digitalized or become redundant. Artificial intelligence learns to make its own decisions. A lot of organizations are being transformed from rigid hierarchies into distributed teams. It is obvious that the world of business analysis will change as well. Would you like to know how it will happen? Take part in our foresight game on 25th October in Ljubljana: https://slovenia.iiba.org/sl/event/look-your-industrys-future-foresight-game

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