Get There Early
Sensing the Future to Compete in the Present
Using Foresight to Provoke Strategy and Innovation

BOB JOHANSEN
INSTITUTE FOR THE FUTURE
PERSONAL EMPOWERMENT
From Consumption to Customization
Consumers are no longer content to receive mass messaging and employees won’t conform to traditional top–down norms. Now, amplified by new interactive media and conscious of their economic and social power, individuals will expect to be part of the decision-making process. The engaged citizen is a force to be reckoned with at work and at home.

GRASS ROOTS ECONOMICS
From Economies of Scale to Economies of Organization
Economic and social ecologies, in which self-empowered individuals cooperate for mutual benefit, will challenge centralized industries. Expect a blurring of the boundaries between buyers, sellers, producers, consumers, companies, and individuals. Think amplified Ebay.

SMART NETWORKING
From Individual to Social Network
Pervasive computing connects self-organizing aggregations of people, whose network flexibility and collective power can alter markets, politics, and societies—or anything else that draws them together.

POLARIZING EXTREMES
From Fringe to Front-and-Center
Strong opinions meet strong social networks to create intense feedback loops. You can already find, connect with, and collaborate with anyone who shares your beliefs—no matter how extreme you are. Dark innovation will thrive—but so will dynamic new forms of cooperation that attempt to bridge the extremes.

HEALTH INSECURITY
From Health Care to Health Economy
As the world grows more connected, challenges like pandemics will get close and personal. Anxieties about health, hunger, and longevity will grow, and the intersection between environment, health, and lifestyle will receive increasing attention.
Even as megachurches grow, religious sects and beliefs proliferate; and the creation of religious content grows.

**Personal Religions**

- Group participation
- Referral behavior
- Online lifestyle
- Personal mobile computing
- Locative activity
- Computer connectivity

In 2012:

- Infertility
- Obesity
- Chronic disease

**Extreme Climate Variability**

- Warming 10X faster than estimated
- Ice sheet dropping at 10 meters per year

**Lightweight Infrastructures**

Rethinking the movement of goods & services:

- With lower coordination costs and smaller, lighter, smarter components, infrastructures will begin to lighten up at all levels—from public services to institutions and households.

**Teams**

- Organized crime
- Political thugs
- Terrorists
- Online pornography

**Dark Mobs**

- Emmauses
- Ilodex to list
- Hip and on challenges

**Immersion Experiences as Pedagogy**

- Merger of art, gaming, and social networking—across physical and digital spaces
- More complex media build dilemma sensing skills.

**Signs of Bio-Disease**

- Increases in:
  - Infertility
  - Obesity
  - Chronic disease

**Personal Networking IQ**

- Careers vs. free agency
- Personal-knowledge management
- New forms of peer review and knowledge exchange

**OPE PRACTICES**

**The Engaged Employee**

- Jobs + hobbies = self-expression at work

**JOBBIES**

- Teams
- Lightening up
- More complex media build dilemma sensing skills

**Health**

- Wellness
- Fashion
- People are searching for more intense experiences, while others seek out refuge.

**Amplified Everything**

- Jobs + hobbies = self-expression at work

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Aging body as the new frontier
Creation of health-focused communities
“Project manage” aging

Urban populations are growing fastest in:
- Bangladesh
- Congo
- Ethiopia
- India
- Indonesia
- Nigeria
- Pakistan
- Vietnam

Megacities will grow in both economic value and urban destitution

Community computing grids
Peer production networks
Social mobile computing
Social software
Social accounting
Knowledge collectives

Access to oil, water, and other resources shapes policy and business decisions:
- Regional and global tensions arise in securing resources
- Just-in-time processes highlight vulnerabilities
- Premium placed on substitute materials and processes

People expect more health benefits from more products

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Local communities become the focus of experiments in sharing economies, sustainable environments, and new civil processes.

NEW LOCALISM

DIGITAL PHYSICAL BLEND

From physical vs. digital to seamlessly physical and digital

NEW LOCALISM

EWISE LEARNING

- Anytime, anyplace
- Pervasive gaming
- Virtual worlds

AN THAN RURAL

rural populations

Digital physical blend

BASED HEALTH TOOLS

Reputation Statement of Account

Body Hackers

Everyday people are measuring and improving their own bodies, why they do it.
“Get There Early is a completely transformative learning experience . . . an indispensable guide to success in the world of work today and tomorrow.”
—ELLEN GALINSKY, President, Families and Work Institute

“Johansen does a great job of showing us how getting there early gives organizations the chance to manage the dilemmas of the future.”
—TIM BROWN, President, IDEO

“Johansen is a masterful storyteller. . . . A must-read for the leader facing the dilemma of what to do today to position for the future.”
—VERN D. HIGBERG, Vice President, UPS Corporate Strategy Group

“As the CEO of a large faith-based healthcare system, I can tell you that the dilemmas we face and the challenges that present themselves grow more significant by the day. Get There Early provides a unique blueprint for leaders in healthcare, non-profits, or literally any other industry to achieve success for their organizations in our VUCA world.”
—WAYNE A. SENSOR, Chief Executive Officer, Alegent Health

“Johansen has hit a Grand Slam with Get There Early. This stimulating volume helps leaders make sense out of the maze of dilemmas like those we constantly face in Major League Baseball, where we strive to improve the ballpark experience, while also dealing with the growing and ever-changing mix of electronic media delivering our product to our fans.”
—CHUCK ARMSTRONG, President, Seattle Mariners

“Anticipating the future and effectively addressing it early is becoming an increasingly critical leadership skill in today’s dilemma-filled world. In Get There Early, Johansen provides powerful, practical guidance for recognizing and acting on leadership moments at the optimal time.”
—M. CARL JOHNSON, III, Senior Vice President & Chief Strategy Officer, Campbell Soup Company

“Johansen sets out a strategic framework which leaders in any organization can use to make sense of our volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA) world. Most importantly, he explains how foresight can provide the insight that permits confident action in the VUCA World.”
—TOM GLOCER, CEO, Reuters Group PLC

“Using foresight to drive strategy helps non-profits to become proactive and innovative. The tools and insights in Get There Early are well-honed methods that nonprofits can use to spot entrepreneurial opportunities and enhance their effectiveness.”
—CHAD P. WICK, President & CEO, KnowledgeWorks Foundation
“Essential reading for entrepreneurs. Johansen helps us make sense of chaotic inputs in our business lives and provides a helpful framework to think about alternative futures. After reading this book, I am excited about framing the dilemmas my young company is facing today. Entrepreneurs are all about ‘getting there early.’”

—CORA TELLEZ, CEO, Sterling HSA

“In our dilemma-laden world, Johansen challenges leaders to be sense-makers, not just problem-solvers. Get There Early is must reading for anyone committed to leading and winning in a context of uncertainty.”

—JEAN MCCLUNG HALLORAN, Senior Vice President, Human Resources, Agilent Technologies

“Johansen addresses the key leadership challenge of our times—how to create a clear strategic vision for our organizations in an environment of bewildering change and complexity . . . I love his definition of strategic leadership as ‘what happens in the space between judging too soon and deciding too late.’”

—WILLIE PIETERSEN, Professor, The Practice of Management, Columbia Business School

“Get There Early gives education, business, and government leaders an urgently needed handbook to gain foresight to lead to insights and action to leverage our most important natural resource: our students’ minds.”

—MILTON CHEN, PHD, Executive Director, The George Lucas Educational Foundation

“It was the poet Rilke who once wrote that ‘the future enters into us, in order to transform itself in us, long before it happens.’ Johansen teaches us to recognize that future in our businesses and manage towards it long before it happens.”

—LISA M. QUIROZ, Senior Vice President, Corporate Responsibility & Inclusion, Time Warner

“The Get There Early principles can be applied in nearly every aspect of life. For me, music is a dilemma to be enjoyed, with lots of hidden structure but great freedom to improvise. A great song doesn’t need to be a solution to be a success: it’s a dilemma that keeps on flowing. In creating this book, Johansen has created a way for leaders to engage with their challenges, much like I compose music.”

—CHIP DAVIS, Composer/President, Mannheim Steamroller, American Gramophone
GET THERE EARLY
GET THERE EARLY
Sensing the Future to Compete in the Present

Bob Johansen

INSTITUTE FOR THE FUTURE
To the Institute for the Future community

... past, present, and future
Please look inside the book jacket to find the visual forecast map that summarizes the dilemmas described in this book.

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Foreword W. Stanton Smith xiii
Stan Smith, a senior partner at Deloitte & Touche, frames the book with a practical futures perspective: how can the study of the future lead to better decisions in the present? He has already employed the ideas in this book in a variety of settings.

Preface xvii

INTRODUCTION Foresight to Insight to Action 1
The Introduction explains what it means to get there early and how doing so can yield advantages—particularly in uncertain times. This book is organized around the Foresight to Insight to Action Cycle.

PART 1
FORESIGHT Sensing Provocative Futures 13
Foresight stimulates leaders to develop their own visions and get there early. Part 1 begins to unfold the Foresight to Insight to Action Cycle with a focus on the foresight zone.
1 Thinking Ten Years Ahead to Benefit Today
Getting there early requires foresight and vision. Chapter 1 gives the context and rationale for ten-year forecasting, as well as a quick overview of how forecasts are done. If you want to go straight to the forecast, skip this chapter.

2 Institute for the Future’s Ten-Year Forecast
Chapter 2 discusses IFTF’s forecast for the next decade, which is visualized in the Forecast Map inside the book jacket. This forecast is the content base for the remainder if the book. It is a specific chunk of foresight that leaders can use to stimulate their visions.

3 The VUCA World: Both Danger and Opportunity
The Ten-Year Forecast is loaded with Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity, and Ambiguity (VUCA). Chapter 3 explores examples of VUCA dangers and opportunities in military, health, education, and business settings.

4 What’s Different about Dilemmas?
The Ten-Year Forecast is laced with dilemmas, many of which look like problems at first, except that they cannot be solved and they don’t go away. Chapter 4 introduces the key differences between problems and dilemmas; it lays the groundwork to win with dilemmas and avoid the temptations of certainty.

PART 2

INSIGHT Sensemaking to Inspire Strategy
How can leaders use foresight—whether or not they agree with it—to gain insight and inspire it in others? Part 2 shows how leaders can use the provocation of foresight, with the help of stories, immersion experiences, and workshops, to create a clear, compelling, and productive strategy.

5 It Takes a Story to Understand a Dilemma
Stories are necessary to make sense of the future. Although problems can be described with data and solved with analytics, these methods are not enough to reveal the truths and opportunities embedded in dilemmas. Chapter 5 discusses how stories help leaders figure out what’s going on and what’s possible as well as giving them a way to communicate their strategies with clarity.
6 Immersion: The Best Way to Learn in the VUCA World

The more leaders can immerse themselves in provocative environments, the more they are likely to understand their future options for innovation. Chapter 6 introduces a range of immersion experiences, including simulation and alternate reality gaming, for first-person low-risk learning that is ideally suited to a world of great uncertainty.

7 Sensing and Sensemaking

To get there early in the emerging future world, leaders need to tune their own skills in sensing and sensemaking. Chapter 7 shows how small-group workshops can provide powerful input, building on participants’ ideas and using foresight to provoke strategic insight.

PART 3

ACTION To Get There Early

How can leaders create strategy—drawing from foresight and insight—and bring it into action? Part 3 helps leaders create action plans that have both clear direction and flexibility regarding how to get there.

8 From Insight to Action

Chapter 8 gives examples of organizations that have used foresight to inspire new strategies and new actions—in the face of dilemmas—and how they made the link between foresight and insight.

9 Flexing and Flexibility

In the world of the near future, winning organizations will be flexibly firm. Chapter 9 discusses how to create an agile organization that knows how to sustain a connective web of shared interests to bridge traditional boundaries.

10 Flexible Firms

Chapter 10 gives case examples, as well as a near-future vignette, that illustrate how organizations can be simultaneously flexible and firm, to create a culture of readiness and agility.
11 Foresight from Hindsight

The best leaders and the best organizations are able to learn from their experiences, especially their failures. Chapter 11 explores ways to derive insight from action, as well as to use action to suggest future explorations.

CONCLUSION Making Your Peace with the VUCA World

The Conclusion makes use of stories of personal leadership in the VUCA world, as well as hints and hows, to help leaders put the ideas in this book to work.

Notes

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Foreword

You may be standing in an airport bookstore or perhaps you see this book sitting on a colleague’s desk. You pick it up and thumb through it. You may wonder: “Should I buy this book and read it . . . or not?”

My answer is resoundingly YES, . . . you should!

So why is this book important to read? Because it’s a guidebook for what’s going to be, for the future that is really not optional—the VUCA world of Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity, and Ambiguity. Because it will give you an entirely new angle on how to approach your job as a business leader in this VUCA world. Bob Johansen has created a book that is exceptional in its originality and clarity of expression as well as in its effective blending of theory and practical examples.

But you may well ask: “Can I really do the things described in this book and make a difference in my business?” From personal experience, I can again say resoundingly, YES. We all need a better way to engage with the dilemmas that are increasingly apparent all around us. This book provides that better way.

At Deloitte & Touche, we have used the ideas in this book, including the Foresight to Insight to Action Cycle, to stimulate new approaches to reaching young workers just entering the workforce. The outputs of our research, study, and analysis are initiatives within our organization that are designed to (1) leverage the strengths of all the generations in our workplace, (2) raise the quality of communication