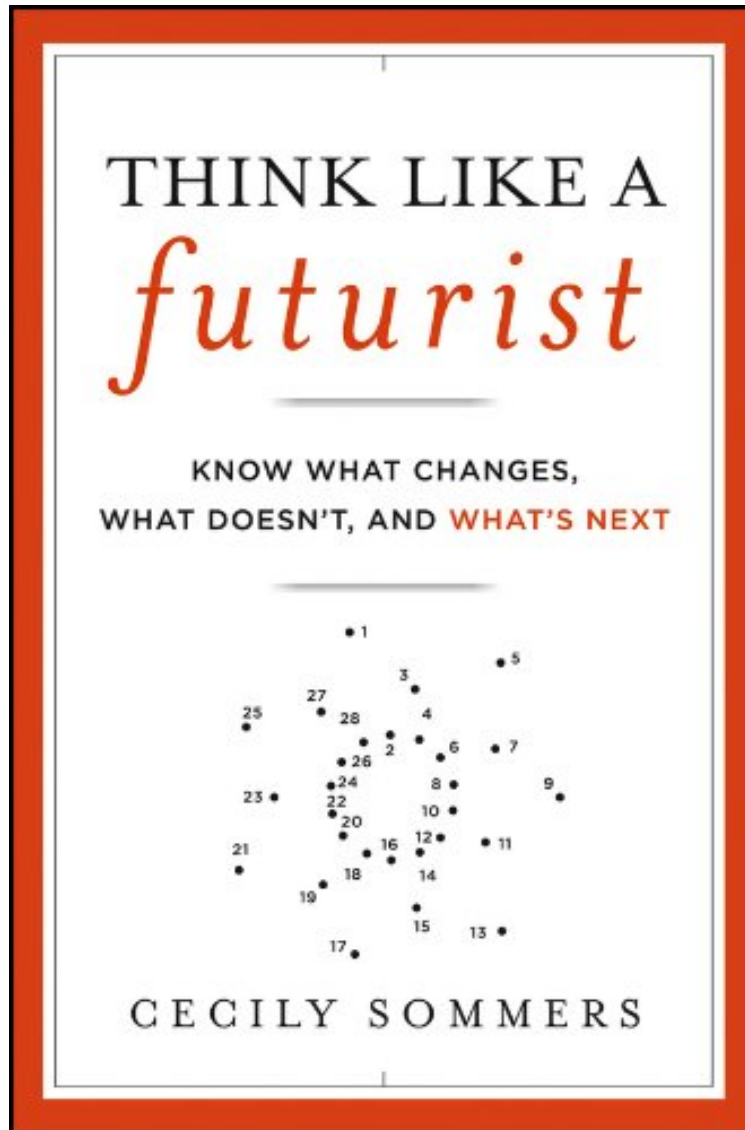


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# Think Like a Futurist: Know What Changes, What Doesn't, and What's Next

*Cecily Sommers*

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**Cecily Sommers : Think Like a Futurist: Know What Changes, What Doesn't, and What's Next** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Think Like a Futurist: Know What Changes, What Doesn't, and What's Next:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. "The best time to plant a tree was twenty years ago" By Ian Mann Cecily Sommers's book opens with the Chinese proverb, "The best time to plant a tree was twenty years ago." We did not know how badly we would need the tree twenty years later, so we did not plant

it. Futurists contribute to the solution to this problem. The Association of Professional Futurists describes a "futurist" as one who "studies the future in order to help people understand, anticipate, prepare for and gain advantage from coming changes." Futurists do not predict what will happen; rather they describe what could happen. The problem with thinking in this way, Sommers explains, is that our brains' structure frustrates this effort. The neural networks that we use to foresee the future are the same used to recall the past. The result is that we are inclined to see the future only as a continuation of the past, not as a departure from it. The consequence for both people and organizations is a predilection for what Sommers calls "the Permanent Present." Many futurists reduce the factors that affect change to the most elemental components. This method provides a manageable foundation for futurist thinking. One popular approach uses the acronym STEEP - Society, Technology, Economic, Environmental, and Politics for the forces. Sommers uses Resources, Technology, Demographics, and Governance. These, she asserts, produce changes "in a fairly predictable manner." RESOURCES - Our Neanderthal predecessors were engaged in hunting, gathering food, and collecting materials to make fire, and shelter. They lived off what was close by and when then was consumed, they moved to a new area. When they discovered a new energy resource, the quality of their lives improved. During some periods, we made such significant increases in our capacity to harness energy that these periods are referred to as revolutions. Progress is propelled by "one simple formula" Sommers asserts: "advances in science and technology + new energy sources + imagination." This formula has enabled us to cross oceans using wind, and cross the world using fossil fuels, and cross the universe using liquid oxygen and liquid hydrogen. Our future will, undoubtedly, be affected by the sources of and use we are able to make of various types of energy. Currently, fossil fuels are part of almost every item we use, and are used to move the food we eat. Just as it has not always been this way, it is unlikely to continue. TECHNOLOGY - Technology has always enhanced our limited human capabilities and given us power beyond our bodies' capacities. "Something as simple as magnification in a microscope or telescope opened up an entirely new way of understanding life that shifted beliefs and morality, affected medicine and science, and allowed us to dream about worlds beyond our own." DEMOGRAPHICS - Sommers identifies demographics as the third category that needs to be taken into account when thinking about the future. Who makes up your community or country is a decisive factor in how successful it can be. The community's ability to produce more children and so provide more labour will affect its capacity to enhance the health and wealth of the group, positively or negatively. The effect of demographics is most easily seen in Neanderthal clans because they were rarely comprised of more than forty people. Having the right mix of age, gender, and genetic diversity would determine the ability of the group and its chances of survival. There needs to be enough working-age people to support the young and the old, and there has to be a balanced ratio of men to women to produce the next generation. Our communities and countries differ from the Neanderthal clan only in the enormity of scale, not in concept. The impact of demographics on our future will be no less significant than it was on the Neanderthal clan. GOVERNANCE - Governance is the last of the four factors as it forces them all in one or other direction. Primarily, governance is concerned with the distribution and management of the group's assets - resources, technology, and people. This is as true for a small group, the townhouse complex committee as it is for a whole country. Governance is guided by two factors, the rule of law, and the rule of markets. These create constraints that determine what may or may not be done, and what can or cannot be done. In the Neanderthal clan, it was necessary to decide who did the hunting, who looked after the children, and how the meat was distributed. China's mandates for its 1.3 billion citizens on the distribution of resources, information, and even children, is little different. The drivers of these changes are resources, technology, and demographics. The problem with Sommers' book is that this model comprises only a quarter of the text. The balance is a description of what sounds much like a creativity workshop organized by HR more as a treat than to solve a serious business problem. That said, the model is a useful tool for thinking about the future. It is comprehensive enough and simple enough to make a solid start, and it can be used to think about possibilities in many business contexts. Readability Light - Serious Insights High - Practical High - Low. Ian Mann of Gateways consults internationally on leadership and strategy. 2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Very good read - threading it all together a little challenging. By christy frank Overall a very good read. The author does a nice job of breaking down a complex theme into bite sized pieces. The examples used were interesting and insightful. I feel the structure of the book, let it down. With 4 parts, 13 chapters, 3 phases plus numerous techniques, processes and methods; it makes it difficult to see the clear line and thread it all together. Still, I would recommend this book to anyone who is looking to bring strategy and certainty into their future. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Not bad. By Photographer There is some decent actionable information in this book about how to establish a futurism practice and what to watch for when trying to prognose the future.

Push past resistance to discover and own new business territories Think Like a Futurist shows how to track changes, explore questions, and engage in new thinking that connects today's pressures with tomorrow's realities. Cecily Sommers shows how to apply long-term focus and strategies to needs as diverse as industry forecasts, innovation challenges, leadership development, or future-proofing a brand. By understanding intersecting potentials that one day

may impact your organization, you can readily spot emerging trends and market shifts, uncovering opportunities on the horizon. Think Like a Futurist explores such questions as: Where will new markets emerge over the next 5-10-25 years? What will be the big issues of the day? How will lifestyle, social mores, and policy adapt? And what role do we play in that future? Offers a clear framework for thinking like a futurist, and direction for how to integrate it in high-pressure corporate environments Explains how the social, economic, and environmental crises of our time spring from just four constant and predictable forces Reveals the three dramatic disruptions on the horizon that should be a part of every strategic conversation Written by Cecily Sommers the Founder and President of The Push Institute, a non-profit think tank that tracks significant global trends and their implications for business, government, and non-profit. Filled with tools and models for a new world, this book should be required reading for strategists and innovators across disciplines. "Refreshing. A book that does not follow today's push to be 'innovative' just to snag attention because of the current hot trending keyword. Matter of fact, Cecily Sommers' book works to get us away from simply identifying and going for a ride on the latest trend(s) in our respective industries. Quite the contrary, rather than avoid a scientific or tactical discussion of trend identification, she works to give us the ability to go beyond trends and into the future. Cecily has drafted a book providing a nice blend of practical reality, philosophy, and practical execution. It speaks well to current discussions about how to drive 'innovation' or, better, creativity within your businesses—however large or small. All in, this is a book 254 pages long, including index, that is written at a practical level that, after closer study following an initial read-through, provides a methodology for anticipating the future and taking action to meet it. Provides a methodology for anticipating the future and taking action to meet it. Think Like a Futurist is a good read for anyone struggling with how to move their organization forward. Business leaders, product and program managers, service providers will all find the concepts Cecily introduces to be well laid-out with a reasonable amount of supporting content."—The source is a blog: <http://jtpedersen.net/2012/11/15/what-ive-read-lately-think-like-a-futurist/>

.com Q A with Cecily Sommers, Author of Think Like a Futurist Cecily Sommers