

ISSUE #1, 21 APRIL 2022

FUTURES OF WORK

HORIZON SCANNING DOCUMENT



NINE SIGNALS FROM THE FUTURE

What should you keep an eye on? What's the likelihood – and the likability of the effect?

THE DOCUMENT IS A TOOL TOO

Read the signals, use the tool, and have dialogues around your possible and preferable futures.

Good
Morning
April

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TOGETHER WE SHAPE THE FUTURES OF WORK

Hope, ideas, and options.
That's what we intend to give you.

The group of people that we surround ourselves with is a diverse bunch of leaders, employees, politicians, entrepreneurs, board members, scientists, students, futurists, and generally people of this planet.

They approach the topics of 'the Future of Work' and 'New Ways of Working' with a mixed bag of emotions. A few are anchored in the past. Most are in the present, and some are purely future-oriented.

However, we can all agree that the current way of working needs new solutions, that changes keep coming, and that we need to embrace new things with a high-frequent pace in our organizations.

In the past two decades it has been increasingly harder to look up and find well-documented answers to the challenges of an ever-changing business world, as we have been used to. In a previously more predictable world, we could focus on optimization and efficiency, rather than



what is needed now: Adaptability, local and episodic solutions, and a dynamic sampling approach to the developments in technology and society. This need for fast adaption makes it sometimes difficult to find a proven best practice for your industry and your context.

This is where futures thinking comes in.

Futures thinking – note the plural S in futures – helps us in exploring and evaluating the signals of change. Futures thinking is an approach to imagining multiple pathways forward simultaneously, not looking for a unique textbook practice, but keeping the doors open. Futures thinking makes us shape possible visions for the future and juggle ideas and options.

In this document you will not find the existing trends that affect the workplace, like organizational democracy, freedom at work, agility, flatter hierarchy, self-leadership, psychological safety, trust, and disruption. We fully acknowledge these megatrends, and we love helping you embrace them in your workplace.

But this document is about the next things, the next signals, the next organizational designs.

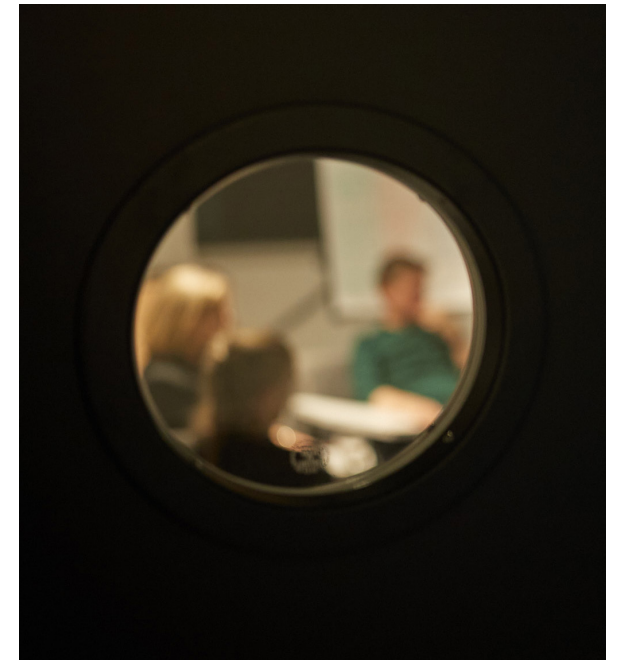
The world is changing. Technology and society are developing fast and substantially, constantly. And, we have a climate crisis, a pandemic, and wars.

We are not blind to this. We are not blue-eyed, naïve optimists, that do not see these challenges or the friction in change.

But we have hope. Hope that together we can be activists and shape a better, brighter tomorrow for organizations and people of the world, today.

If we can make just a tiny push in the right direction with this document, then our dreams have come true.

This is our invitation to you. Wanna join?





THE CONTENT OF THIS DOCUMENT

In part one of this Futures of Work Horizon Scanning Document 2022 you will find explanations of the content and how you can use the knowledge and inspiration you get from it. This will help you navigate the document and hopefully set you off to a good start.

Part two of the document holds all the signals. The signals are gathered and curated by us in Good Morning April and are our take on what might happen within the possible futures of work.

The third part is where we reflect and imagine scenarios putting together the signals in what is called a scenario cross. You will be able to find and read all articles and the content on goodmorningapril.com

The last part of the document will summarize what this means in the context of our organizations and which mechanisms we should keep an eye on or simply try to impact to create a preferred future.

We hope you will enjoy reading this document and that it will give you inspiration and ideas on how you can impact and create the possible futures that are important in your context.



APPROACHING THE POSSIBLE FUTURES OF WORK

Our vantage point is the Futures of Work

In Good Morning April we are a group of futurists. Some of us like to look far into the futures to curate and sort the signals – while others like to work with the signals, contextualize the concrete impact, and spread the word of New Ways of Working inside the organizations, making it stick.

What we all have in common is our shared vantage point where we all stand and look out to the horizon, scanning for signals and interpreting them. Our vantage point in Good Morning April evolves around the Futures of Work. Our reasoning for this is reflected in our manifesto.



These are the things we know to be true:

- To create a better, brighter tomorrow for every human being on the planet we must all contribute to the global movement
- Treating people as whole human beings releases the full human potential
- Creating a safe space for reflection, choice, and self-awareness enables new ideas
- Technology plays a vital role in how we shape our New Ways of Working
- A conscious, sustainable approach to how we make money is necessary. Money is fuel, not a goal
- The world is too complex to navigate by merely following a plan. We can only embrace it as it unfolds
- We work with you, not for you
- We know that these statements will change over time.

OUR MANIFESTO

We dare to explore and evaluate possible futures so that we together can create a better, brighter tomorrow for organizations and people of the world, today.

We bring likeminded people together to share and improve ideas and thoughts.

Together we explore the challenges.

Together we imagine possible futures.

Together we co-create solutions.

Together we make it work.

Together we apply and combine Futures Thinking, Futures of Work, progressive leadership, and change management to create New Ways of Working.

HOW THIS DOCUMENT CAME TO LIFE

A Horizon Scanning Document is one of the absolute cornerstones in a Futures Thinking process. Such a document contains signals, anomalies, trends, and reflections related to a specific domain, for example the Future of Food, the Future of Play, the Future of Urban Living ... or (as for this document), the Future of Work.

Constantly we prioritize time to look for signals. The sources are many. Online media, like LinkedIn, Twitter, and Reddit. The media. Newsletters from peers. Books and scientific articles. Podcasts and YouTube videos. Courses and key notes. And numerous discussions and conversations with likeminded people – and people we disagree with.

Over the past six months we have been scanning, observing, sampling, sorting, and probing signals that we were able to see, hear and feel. We have looked at patterns and discussed and reflected on each of the signals you'll find in this document. All with the purpose of providing you with signals and trends to look for, mechanisms to experiment with, and giving you a foundation that might spark your imagination to create your own scenarios.

The Horizon Scanning Document is used both as inspiration for your work, and as a

concrete tool for the signal sorting during the Futures Thinking process.

You might be standing in a different vantage point than us. You will probably see something different in the signals too or interpret them differently from us. And that is okay. That is the purpose of all this. Without the translation of the signals within the Futures of Work to fit your context, you won't be able to explore and evaluate your own futures; those that impact your organization.

OUR HOPE

This Horizon Scanning Document is our way of sharing signals and visions for the futures of work with you.

We hope to equip you to explore and evaluate your own futures with this document in hand. It applies futures thinking to put light on the futures of work. What follows is your own exploration and evaluation of the signals, leading to shaping your organization, your culture, and your leadership.

We do not have all the answers, but we hope to inspire you.

HOW TO USE THIS IN YOUR OWN ORGANIZATION

Do you know what your futures looks like?
Do you like it?
What is the likelihood of different trends affecting you?
How do you get to the future that you like?
And most of all, how do you create better conversations around your possible and preferable futures?

Questions like these are the reasons for working with Futures Thinking as part of your business strategy and organizational development – and this is what this approach enables you do to.

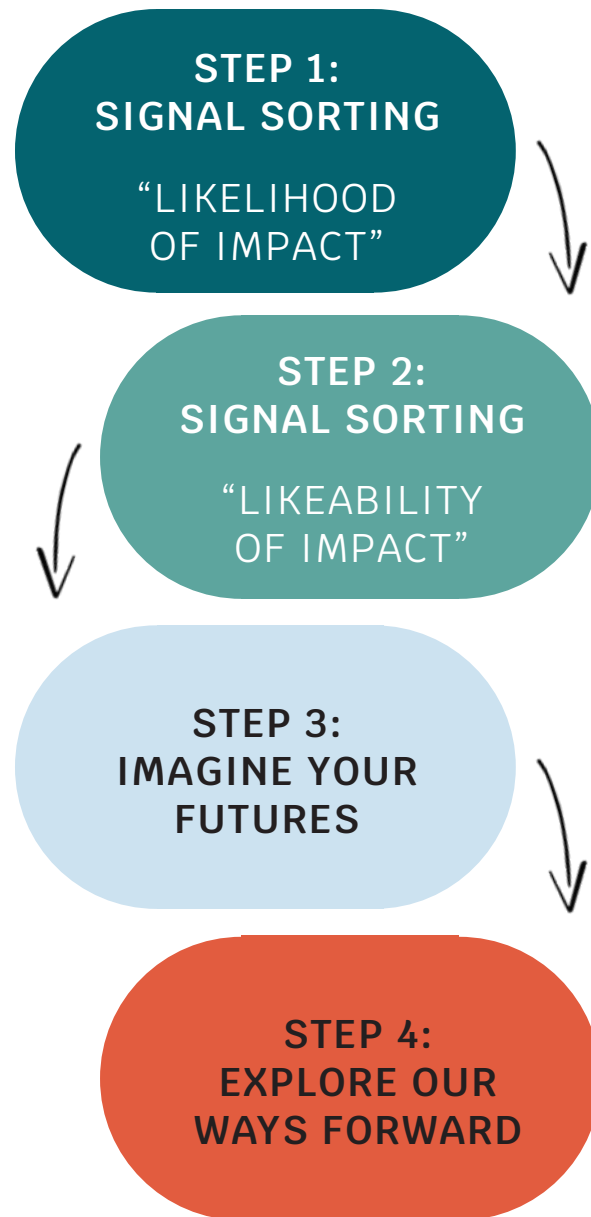
“The best way to predict the future is to create it” is a quote with many poetic variations over the years, and rightfully so. Management Guru Peter Drucker is one of those people that this quote is ascribed to. The intention with this Horizon Scanning Document is to equip you and your organization to explore and evaluate your own futures – to create the future you want.

The signals you'll meet in this document can form the baseline for the next steps of this exploration and evaluation in your

organization, and here's one such approach to start the process.

It's inspired by a lot of cool people, organizations and books: Copenhagen Institute for Futures Studies and their “The Copenhagen Method”, Institute For The Future, UNESCO Futures Literacy, Riel Miller, Oxford Future of Humanity Institute, Oxford University, Joseph Voros, The Emerald Podcast Series, and Patricia Lustig's book “Strategic Foresight”, to list a few.

We have picked the parts that we like and find fruitful, but we highly recommend diving into the sources. And remember, exploring and evaluating your possible futures is a team sport.



STEP 1: SIGNAL SORTING - LIKELIHOOD OF IMPACT

The first question is: **What is the likelihood of each of the signals affecting your business, your organization, your technology, your culture, and such?**

Print and cut the few pages with the nine signals from the document. In your team, sort the signals into three groups

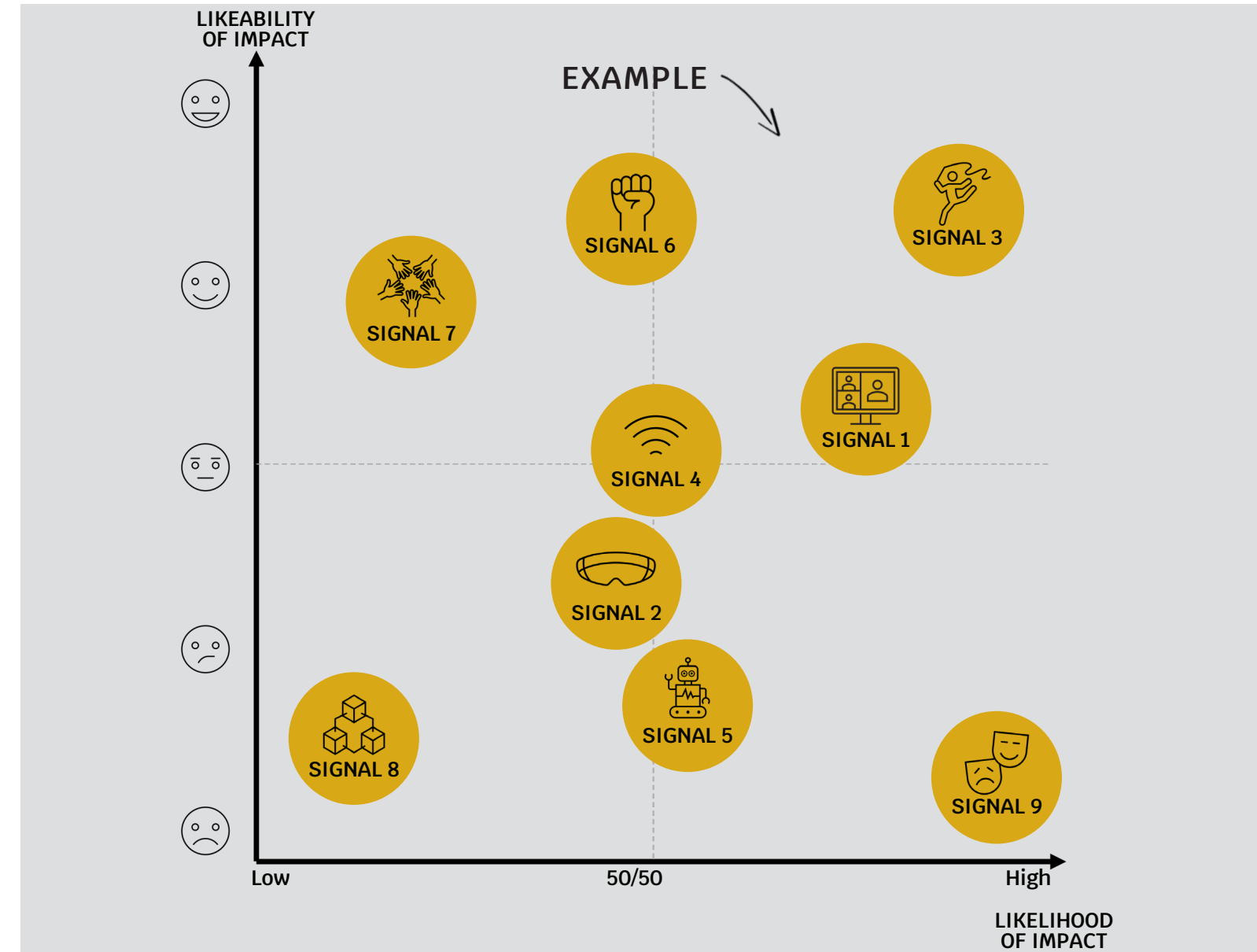
- High likelihood of affecting you
- 50/50 ... Could happen to affect you
- Low likelihood of affecting you (maybe even unlikely)

Spend enough time to understand each other's thoughts about the placement and background of it. You should seek insight into each other's assumptions, expectations, ideas, concerns, and so on.

STEP 2: SIGNAL SORTING - LIKEABILITY OF IMPACT

The second question is: **Do we like the signal and what effect it has? Do we want this to happen, or do we want to avoid it?**

For each of the signals in the previous groups, arrange them in order from “We hate this. We want to prevent this development” to “We love this. We want to nurture this development”.



MODEL 1: SIGNAL SORTING

STEP 3: IMAGINE YOUR FUTURES

Now you need to use your imagination to visualize some of the possible futures. Here are three possible ways to do this – but there naturally are many more options.

Pick those two to three signals, that you have given the strongest likability, not looking at the likelihood. These are things that you would like to see happen.

- Imagine your organization in ten years (no less), when these signals have had an effect. Describe the workplace, the tools, the products, the customers, the office, the coffee, the canteen, the collaboration, the business models, the cashflow etc. Be as descriptive and detailed as you can. Give the future a catchy and memorable title.
- Now combine that with your likelihood mapping of said signals. How challenging is the adaption going to be, based on your likelihood-rating? How will you nurture the adaption? Who do you need to interact with and involve? And, what experiments do to need to initiate, to learn more?

Or, look at the signals with high likelihood, and low likability, that is, things that you think will affect you, but you do not like the effect of.

- Imagine that this signal has affected you in ten years. How have those signals manifested themselves? Describe that future in detail, as above.
- What will you do to prevent them from affecting you?

Or, pick two signals from the 50/50 stack, that is, things that can swing both ways.

- Discuss the possible polarities of the development of the signals in your context. Fast or slow? Local or widespread? Marked-led or regulated? Growing or declining? Private or public? Individualized or shared?
- Insert the two signals into a scenario cross; one signal on the horizontal axis; the other signal on the vertical axis. The polarities of the signals are thus at opposite ends of the respective axes. This creates four scenarios, A, B, C, and D, which are combinations of the polarities of the two signals. Take time to discuss each of the four scenarios. For each scenario: Give the scenario a catchy title. Describe it in detail. Debate who is affected by the scenario, and what the technological and societal correlations are.
- Which of the scenarios do you prefer? Why?

As a special case, maybe the signal has two sets of polarities that can shape a scenario cross by itself. Explore the four scenarios in the same way as above.

Note: You can see examples of such scenario crosses in the third part of this document.

STEP 4: EXPLORE YOUR WAYS FORWARD

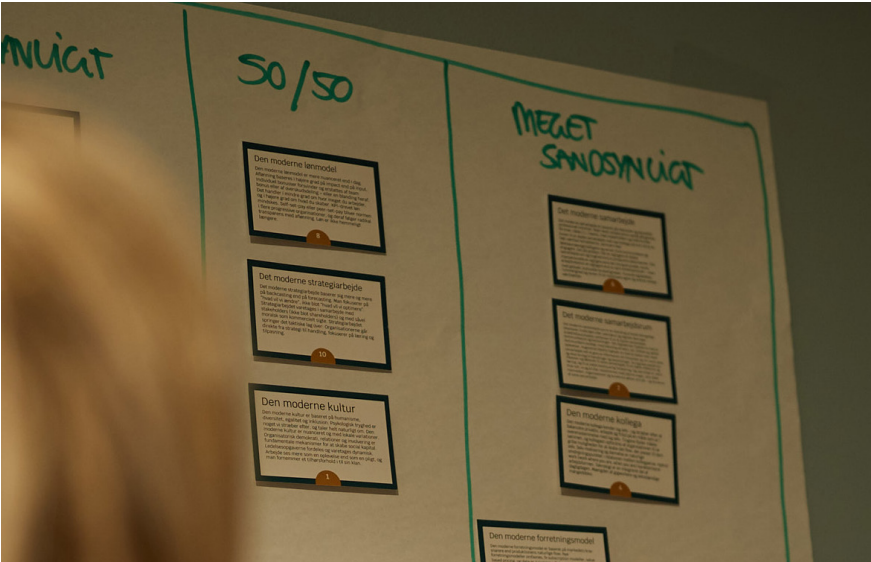
The last step is to initiate the concrete exploration in your context.

Pick a signal or scenario that you need to explore and evaluate. Establish a small experiment with the involved technology, mechanism, thinking, or stakeholders. Establish hypotheses, that you want to falsify or verify. Setup observation mechanisms.

Or, make a backcasting exercise. Imagine your organization ten years from now, as you just described in step 3. Now, make a list of things that need to be in place right before that 10-year future. And again, two years before that. And two more years before THAT. This will give you a backcasted timeline of elements and mechanisms to establish and enable, in order to make that imaginable future real.

Make a clear note on who in your organization might be affected by the changes. Get in touch with them, involve them early and often, and adapt as you learn. In the back of the document, you will find an overview of how we see the effects in the organization, as an inspiration.

That's the way to explore and evaluate your possible and preferable futures.

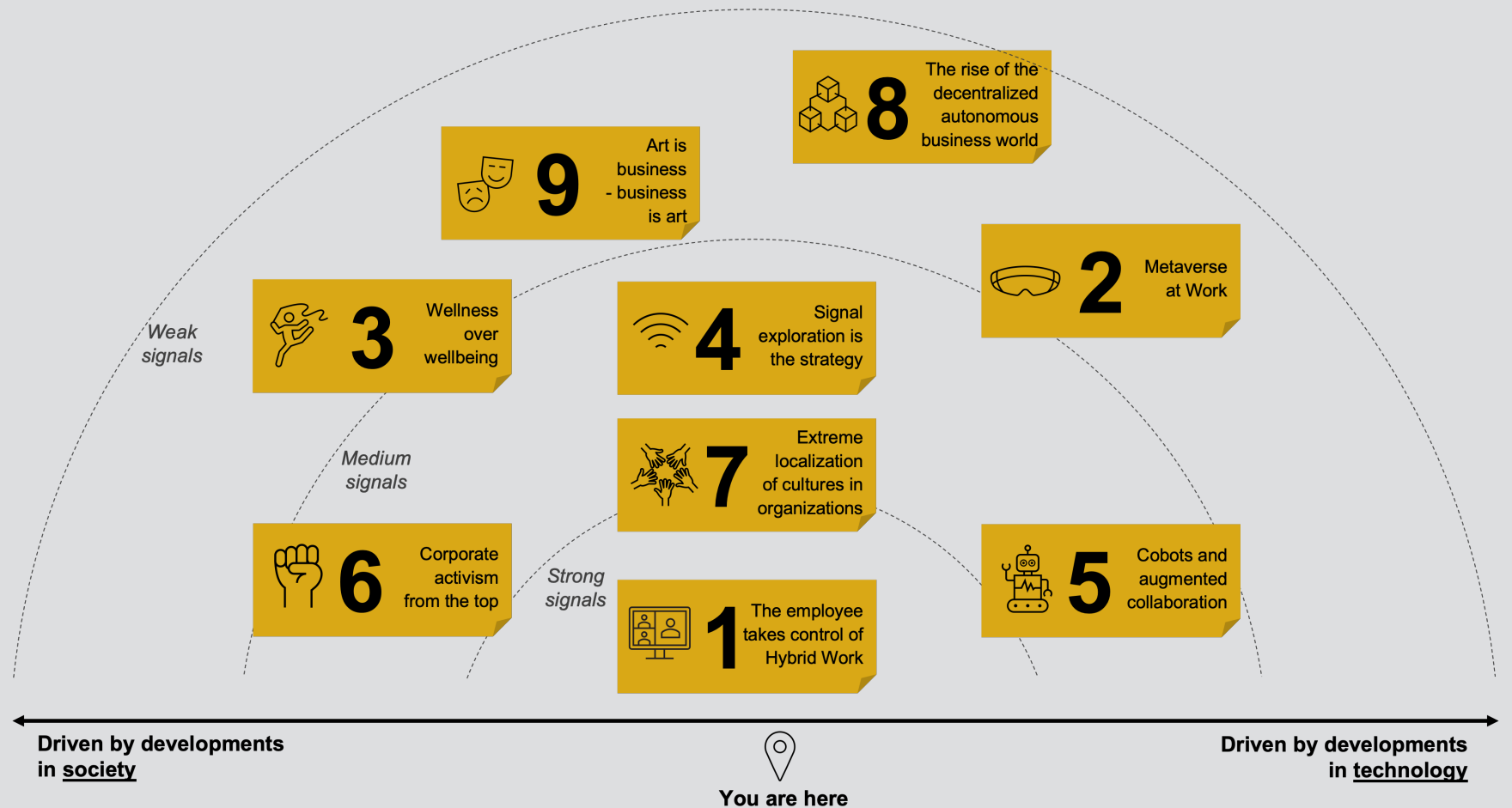


PLAY. LEARN. REFLECT.
THROW AWAY, OR
SCALEUP

SIGNALS - AND THEIR IMPACT ON THE ORGANIZATION

This part presents the signals that we have spotted in the horizon. The signals are gathered and curated by us and are our take on what might affect the futures of work. How likely is it that they affect you? And do you like it?

- A signal is a specific example of a trend, where the trend is the bigger force behind the example.
- A signal can be a concrete practice, a tool, a product, a technology, or even an experience. It is often a disruption or an anomaly in its surroundings.
- A signal stands out and makes you stop and ponder.
- A signal has the potential to grow and snowball into a trend.



MODEL 2: OVERVIEW OF SIGNALS



1. THE EMPLOYEE TAKES CONTROL OF HYBRID WORK

From the increasingly common model of ‘working from home’ a couple of days a week, to full-scale living freely as a digital nomad who travels the world while working, our work life is becoming less and less anchored around the physical location of the office.

The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated this shift and exposed many of us to this way of working – and we’re grasping the opportunity to redefine our work and our life.

With fewer constraints of the physical space we call “the office”, our understanding of where and when we work changes. This affects how we organize, collaborate, and relate to each other as human beings; and on what makes sense to us, on what is meaningful.

Increasingly we are rethinking and redesigning our life. What do we want to spend our time on, both professionally and personally? Where do we want to live, and with whom? Shared homes are popping up, where several generations live together. People move to the countryside in “Zoom towns”. Employees resign and make U-turns in their life.

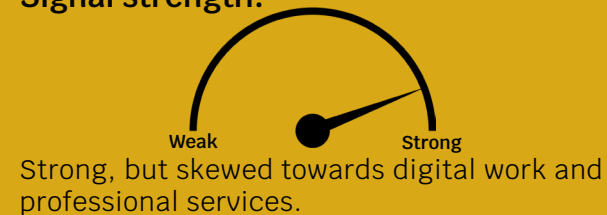
This impacts our organizations, as they need to embrace a multitude of engagement types, contract structures, and collaboration mechanisms.

Previously, Hybrid work was orchestrated by the organizations. Now, the employees take control.

Mechanisms, that are affected:

- Collaboration practices
- New range of contracts and engagements
- HR practices

Signal strength:



2. METAVERSE AT WORK

The Metaverse itself is not new. Just look at Minecraft as an example.

However, the term “Metaverse at Work” is new.

Several articles and cases hint that Metaverse is coming to the workplace, as an augmentation of the collaborative space and a tool in the pool for Hybrid Work.

Several companies have invested heavily in both hardware and software for this. JP Morgan has a bank in Metaverse. Microsoft has several patents for technology to support Metaverse in meetings and collaboration situations.

The technology enables virtual meetings where you walk around in rooms and

buildings to meet people, augmented reality in collaboration and operations with added data and metadata to your physical world (think: head-up displays in meetings, popup information on equipment, and a virtual assistant that guides and supports your collaboration), and fully virtual organizations, where all idea generation, product development, solution delivery, and fiscal activities are online – and detached from traditional legal and governmental regulations.

It spurs immediate reactions and creates polarizations. Who drives this? The customers? The organizations? The employees? Or the governments?

The question is whether you want to shape this development – or just want to sit on the fence and wait.

Mechanisms, that are affected:

- Business models
- Legal, financial, and IT practices
- Collaboration and communication practices

Signal strength:





3. WELLNESS OVER WELLBEING

For decades, organizations have embraced wellbeing and mental health in parts of their HR, leadership, and cultural engagements. With varying intensity and varying results, we know, but it has been on the agenda for a long time.

Now, wellness enters the scene to augment and support wellbeing.

According to Harvard Business Review “Wellness will become the newest metric that companies use to understand their employees”. In 2022, organizations will add new measures that assess their mental, physical, and financial health.

Knowledge workers are at risk of remaining physically passive most of a working day. Homo sapiens are not designed to be inactive and if we do not incorporate

movement during a workday, it will have major health consequences. We have all the options and the necessary knowledge, to adapt in the future and take better care of our physical health when we are at work. And now, the organizations take control of this, as an augmentation of the efforts towards wellbeing.

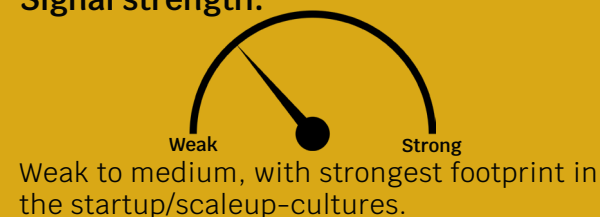
Those organizations who not already have exercise clubs and communities will initiate them. Some will go even further and provide personal coaches and individually AI supported training. And some will take the full step and make it mandatory for employees to take care of their physical health.

Where do you stand on this? Who manages your wellbeing – and your wellness?

Mechanisms, that are affected:

- Roles of first line management
- HR practices
- Employee contracts
- Wellbeing/wellness monitoring practices

Signal strength:



4. SIGNAL EXPLORATION IS THE STRATEGY

Traditionally, strategies have been characterized by trying to model, predict, and control the future based on data about the past. These strategies often end on a 0 or a 5 (“Strategy 2025” or “Strategy 2030”) and represent a linear timeline from the present to a desired future state of the organization.

A small number of pioneering organizations are embracing a different way of dealing with complexity as their strategy. Their strategy is to listen for new signals that can impact them in the future.

These listen-and-adapt strategies has no timeline or year attached to it. The strategies have multiple scenarios built-in, with mechanisms for listening for signals, experimenting with the effect, and adjusting accordingly.

There are no bold predictions regarding growth, profitability in the strategy. Instead, there are dreams and aspirations.

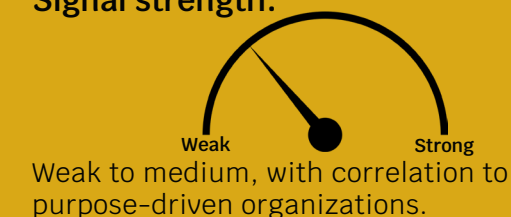
As they make tactical decisions to hire new people, launch new products, invest in new infrastructure, lease manufacturing equipment, seek out new partnerships, and so on, they will spend the extra time to evaluate how these decisions impact the possible long-term futures of the organization.

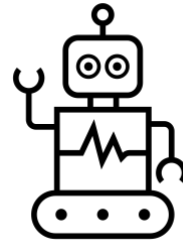
Is this a way to maneuver the complexity and the BANI (brittle, anxious, nonlinear and incomprehensible) world? Can this make you relevant to the market and to the employees? Will the Board of Directors support you?

Mechanisms, that are affected:

- Strategy processes
- Impact accounting
- Futures Thinking as a skill
- PR/Marketing processes

Signal strength:





5. COBOTS AND AUGMENTED COLLABORATION

Up until now, robots have been used for automating repeatable, high-risk, and/or boring tasks, typically in the blue-collar domain. With the introduction of digital technology, automation has also entered the white-collar domain, and so far with the same intention: To automate repeatable, high-risk, and/or boring tasks.

Now, robots (rather cobots) are entering the collaboration space, augmenting our capabilities, and supporting us in our dialogue, decision-making, production, and relationship-building as colleagues.

We see them already in Microsoft Office or Google Docs, finishing our sentences. They are present in chat programs, like on LinkedIn, coming with suggestions to pre-made responses. They scan our emails and spot messages about decisions and follow-

up actions. They provide hints on how to improve our work habits. And they can be part of our online meetings, augmenting our visual presence with emojis and reactions, based on our facial responses or gestures.

There is a growing signal on three dimensions: A shift in application, from automation to augmentation. A shift in domains, from blue-collar to white-collar. A shift in roles, from subordinate robot to peer-level cobot.

Software, IoT, AR, and VR are part of this soon-to-be omnipresent cobot trend, and there are several critical elements to monitor. What are the possibilities? What are the business needs? What are the ethical implications?

Mechanisms, that are affected:

- Collaboration and communication practices
- Evaluation and reflection practices
- Monitoring bias in artificial intelligence

Signal strength:



Medium to strong, and already in focus for ethical committees.



6. CORPORATE ACTIVISM FROM THE TOP

The signal was unavoidable to overlook in the wake of the geopolitical crisis in Europe in the Spring of 2022. As a reaction to the armed conflict in Ukraine, several corporate organizations have imposed sanctions on Russia, and some of these sanctions were even bolder and stricter than those installed from the governments.

This is an example of ethical or political action taken by top-leadership and leaning forward in a debate. Often, organizations avoid taking a political or moral standpoint, fearing repercussions from the market, from business partners, or from their employees. This is however changing.

Increasingly, there is a request and even a demand from employees and customers to have an opinion and act on the big problems in the world: The climate crisis,

extreme financial polarization, LGBTQ+, and MeToo are examples of such cases where activism from the corporate bodies has been demanded.

Some do it maybe to protect their reputation and might even get caught faking it. But there is a growing movement to lean forward, take a standpoint, and invest in it.

Corporate Activism historically evolved as an employee-driven reaction to unfairness. Now, it's ignited and led from the top.

Mechanisms, that are affected:

- Strategy processes
- Communication practices
- Ethical boards

Signal strength:



Medium to strong, very visible in Spring 2022. Will it stick?



7. EXTREME LOCALIZATION OF CULTURES IN ORGANIZATIONS

In the 00's and 10's, many organizations had cultural activities with slogans like "ONE COMPANY". The point was to streamline and optimize the internal collaboration and ensure a more homogeneous way of collaborating. And, at that time it was often a good idea, as it was needed due to the globalization.

There is however a signal of this being replaced with a growing interest in ensuring the opposite: Heterogeneous, local cultures, with their own cultural dialect, their own traditions and jokes, their interpretation of the cultural values, and their own Way of Working.

The effect is multidimensional. You get small pockets in the organization, where people feel acknowledged, belonging, and involved. Also, this multitude of nuances

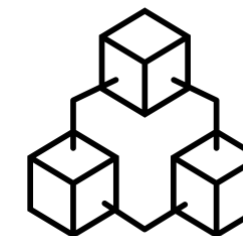
in the organizations might make it harder to collaborate and understand each other. Identifying decision-makers and influencers might be hard. And friction between teams with fundamentally different approaches to polarities like predictability vs. adaptability, control vs. empowerment, and privacy vs. transparency will be a challenge.

Gone are the corporate-wide rollouts of protocol-heavy methodologies like Scrum, centrally designed blueprint for internal micro-enterprises, and Sociocracy/Holacracy. Instead, we see organizational development programs that are principle-based and encourages the local teams and business units to translate the principals to their own needs.

Mechanisms, that are affected:

- Practices for local translation
- Cultural brokage and ambassadorship
- Practices for identifying friction and removing tensions

Signal strength:



8. THE RISE OF THE DECENTRALIZED AUTONOMOUS BUSINESS WORLD

The rebellious drive to establish a legal and fiscal system that was self-governed and detached from the existing regulations and at the same time took a stab at capitalism is seen as one of the reasons for all the blockchain based technology and its applications.

Web3, NFTs, DAOs, blockchains, and crypto-based currencies will affect our businesses. Either directly, for example via the way they pave the way for transparency in ledgers and audit trail on transactions, or indirectly for example via the way they affect the financial market and the traditional gold-based currencies.

Already now, some American top managers are being partly renumerated in crypto. NFT's can be used on Twitter as authentication, and the transaction prices

for NFT-based artwork is huge. Blockchain is being used internally in selected corporate organizations to capture their transactions and agreements. And IBM and Maersk launched a massive research/software program to establish a global, open platform to support transparency in container transport.

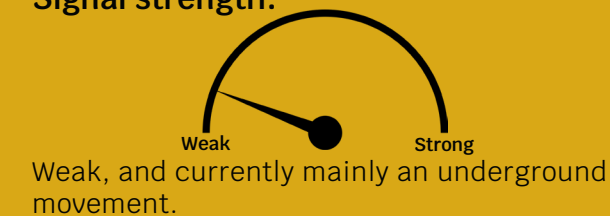
Tim Berners Lee, being praised for inventing the internet, is leaning forward in the movement for taking back the personal data by establishing so-called personal data pots. The drive for decentralizing data and ownership is a reaction to how businesses like Meta, Google, Alibaba, Tencent, and Amazon capture and use our personal data.

Is this going to affect your work? Your business? Do you lean forward and take part in shaping it?

Mechanisms, that are affected:

- Financial services
- IP rights
- Taxation principles

Signal strength:





9. ART IS BUSINESS – BUSINESS IS ART

For generations, art and business have been said to be immiscible. Art is touchy-feely and “the business of business is business”. Making and listening to music, dancing, painting, sculpting, poetry, and other art forms have traditionally merely been welcomed in the business world as entertainment on Fridays or as teambuilding exercises.

Now, the functions of art are being embraced as a medium for exploring and expressing emotions, reflecting on history, and imagining the possible.

Improv theater is used for practicing innovation, strengthening a learning culture, honing storytelling skills – and for building psychological safety. Painting, sound-scaping, and short-form videos are used to describe and shape the ideas of to-

be scenarios. The scientifically documented benefit of taking breaks from work and instead exercising your imaginative skills have been embraced in daily life as routines and traditions, thus boosting both the creativity, productivity, and quality of the business production.

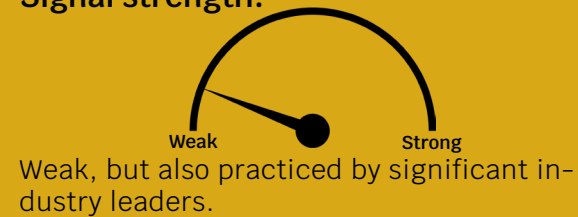
Art is not only seen as a business booster. Additionally, art is integral in the company culture and a way to stand out, be wholesome, and elevate the organization to be more than a money-making machine.

The business of business is way more than business. Art makes us stop, reflect, and act. Art is a channel for expressing emotions and grow our understanding of what it is to be a human being and take part in shaping the society.

Mechanisms, that are affected:

- Collaboration and innovation practices
- Relationship building
- Communication and storytelling practices

Signal strength:





POSSIBLE SCENARIOS OF THE FUTURES OF WORK

Imagining the effects from the impact of the signals is part craft, part art. In the next section we share our visions with you. We present four scenarios as we imagine the signals and trends unfold in different ways. How do you see the signals unfold?



POSSIBLE SCENARIOS
BY ERIK KORSVIK ØSTERGAARD

COBOTS, COBOTS EVERYWHERE

Cobots will be a tremendous support in coaching and leadership, seeing blind spots, asking the right questions, and being a trusted and intimate conversation partner as a personal coach.

“A cobot, or collaborative robot, is a robot intended for direct human robot interaction within a shared space, or where humans and robots are in close proximity. Cobot applications contrast with traditional industrial robot applications in which robots are isolated from human contact.”
(Wikipedia)

Over the past decades, robots have increasingly been used for automating repeatable, high-risk, and/or boring tasks, typically in the blue-collar domain. With the pervasive introduction of IT, automation also entered the white-collar domain with the same intention: To automate repeatable, high-risk, and/or boring tasks.

Now, there is a strong indication that cobots are additionally entering the collaboration

and communication space, thereby augmenting our capabilities, and supporting us in our dialogue, decision making, production, and relationship-building as colleagues.

Software, IoT, AR, and VR are the fundamental building blocks of this soon-to-be omnipresent cobot trend.

The development in short:

- Application shift: From automation to augmentation
- Domain shift: From blue-collar to white-collar
- Role shift: From subordinate robot to peer-level cobot



THE BOTS ARE ALREADY HERE

The past two years have sparked a stronger interest in tech-augmented collaboration mechanisms. Work From Home with its whole new blueprint for communication, collaboration, and human interactions has catapulted the usage of such tools. However, these solutions have been met with broad skepticism in adaption. Some find them great and truly helpful, and some find them annoying, scary, bigbrother-y, and downright wrong.

Already now we see Microsoft O365 being capable of finishing our sentences. It scans our mails for action points and suggestions for meetings and has an eye on our work/

life balance. MS Viva is a real-life example of a cobot, albeit simple and only with a rudimentary if-this-then-that kind of intelligence. Several hundred products exist that can provide input to managers on how to become better leaders, create better cultures, and support the development of their employees.

We also have the term “Metaverse at Work”, augmenting our way of meeting. Several companies have invested heavily in both hardware and software for this. An example is Oculus Rift, later bought by Facebook, who themselves took a giant leap into this thinking by changing its name to Meta in October 2021.

Here is a quote from a Microsoft article on the Metaverse: “As Nadella [Satya Nadella, CEO for Microsoft] describes it: ‘You and I will be sitting on a conference room table soon with either our avatars or our holograms or even 2D surfaces with surround audio. Guess what? The place where we have been doing that forever... is gaming.’ This is a thing, that people have been discussing for +40 years. Is it coming now?”

There is a strong indication that cobots absolutely will be an integrated part of the futures of work, in selected domain areas, and for selected mechanisms. As strong as the signal is for adaption, just as strong is the opposing force and the rejection of such non-human integration.

IT’S EASY TO IMAGINE A FUTURE WITH AUGMENTED COLLABORATION

Cobots will help us write emails and messages, with no mistakes or grammar issues, with no room for misunderstanding, with focus on readability and actions. The cobot will take the receivers personal cognitive profile into account, help us focus on facts or feelings, on imaginative poetry or action-oriented commands, or on closed or open dialogue, all depending on the context and the receiver.

Cobots will be part of our meetings, creating the agenda, the action items, and the notes. It will setup the next meeting and create reminders for tasks to be done. And it will listen in to the conversation, directing the energy, help us take breaks, move us forward if we’re in a rabbit hole, make sure that all people are involved, and that the conversation is relevant and engaging.

Cobots will help us in decision-making, not only by having the overview of data and patterns, but also by providing statistically solid and risk-balanced suggestions for decisions and actions.

Cobots will be a tremendous support in coaching and leadership, seeing blind spots, asking the right questions, and being a trusted and intimate conversation partner as a personal coach.

Cobots will be inversive. They will be inside MS O365, inside Zoom and virtual meetings, inside our iPhones, inside our emails, and in our glasses and heading aid.



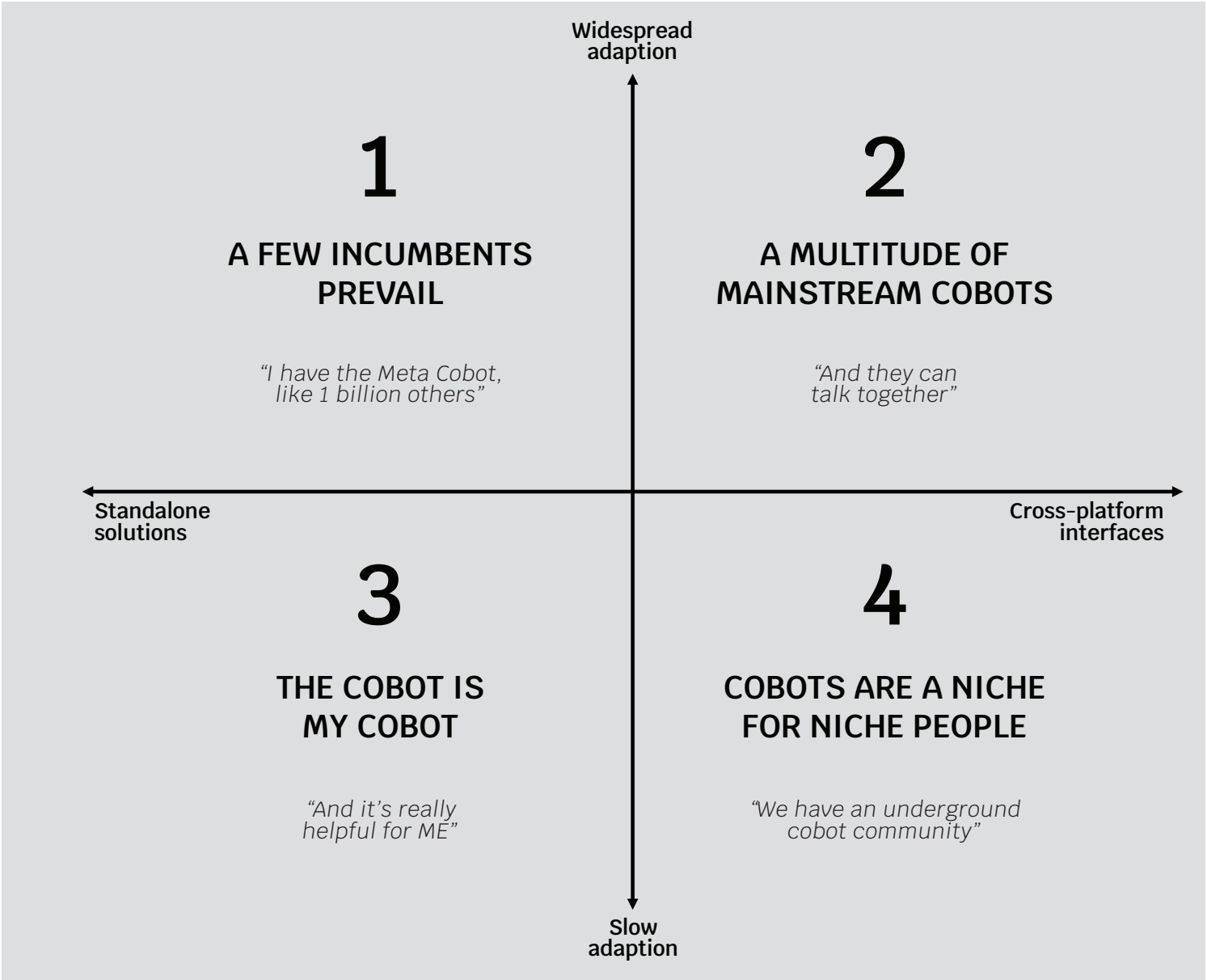
FOUR SCENARIOS

Here are a two possible development patterns to explore:

A: Will the cobots be few-and-far-apart? Or with widespread adaption?

B: Will Alibaba, Amazon, Baidu, Google, Meta, Microsoft, and Tencent be the siloed, massive, “we own the data and algorithms and do not share with each other”-incumbents in this area? Or will there be cross-platform data sharing and a transparent approach to the algorithms, where a plethora of cobots can live?

The following four imaginative scenarios describe combinations of these plausible developments, ten years from now.



MODEL 3: SCENARIO OVERVIEW

1: A FEW
INCUMBENTS PREVAIL

STANDALONE SOLUTIONS AND
WIDESPREAD ADAPTION

“I HAVE THE META
COBOT, LIKE 1 BILLION
OTHERS”

Just like Facebook and WeChat back in the 2010's and 2020's dominated the public market for social media, messaging, and mobile payment, the Meta Cobot is now dominating the market for peer-level augmented software robots. Also, Tencent and Elon Musk have crossed the 1 billion-mark for installed cobots in workplaces, but none of them talk together nor share their data with each other.

There have been several lawsuits where the advice from the cobot have led to major mistakes and loss of business. In each case the software provider has won, pointing to the End User License Agreement stating that “the user must always challenge the robot”. With an increased, thorough, and hard-to-reject invasion of these software systems, the users take them for granted, rely on them, and rarely stop and ponder why they do what they do.

True, they do make life easier for many white-collar workers in many situations, they increase productivity and make it frictionless to collaborate across borders and nationalities with no cultural misunderstandings ... but the counter-reaction movement is growing stronger. They challenge both the monopoly-like situation and the lack of transparency and insight into the algorithms; something that the big tech giants themselves admit that even they don't have.

2: A MULTITUDE OF
MAINSTREAM COBOTS

WIDESPREAD ADAPTION AND
CROSS-PLATFORM INTERFACES

“AND THEY CAN
TALK TOGETHER”

In the late 2020's, the tech giants, the governments, the infrastructure players, and even NATO and United Nations Security Council got together to set some ground rules and establish a nationwide tech platform for cobotting. They saw that actively providing a transparent and

blockchain-based platform (which at the same time infused some long-wanted regulation) was the best way to nurture a secure rollout of cobots, globally.

Now, almost every piece of software or hardware in the workplace has a bit of cobot in it, helping, nudging, and supporting the workers. Thousands of startup companies have seen business opportunities in the CobotTech area. The obvious competition between these software providers has created a so-called Red Ocean of competitors, making it hard to stand out. Employees are embracing them like sugar and candy, much to the headache of the IT and Legal departments.

Having a multitude of cobots to choose from has helped the employees, as they get support where they need it, when they need it, personalized to them. It works! It is even in a style and with a tone-of-voice, fully augmenting or nearly copying their owners. There have even been cases where cobot suites have been talking and collaborating without human interaction, without anybody spotting it.

A few organizations have started to promote themselves in job ads being a “no cobot company”. Are they willing to sacrifice the regained IT security and the convenience of cobots for that?

3: THE COBOT IS MY COBOT

STANDALONE SOLUTION
AND SLOW ADAPTION

“AND IT'S REALLY
HELPFUL FOR ME”

Cobots never did get the big breakthrough as was proclaimed. The rollout was slow, the employee resistance was massive, the technology hard to wrangle for the end users and IT departments, and only a few tech companies managed to elevate the artificial intelligence to mere than “if this, then that”-algorithms.

Cobots now belong to the few. Tech nerds, bohemians, and startup-gurus use them for giggles, as a piece of art, or for extreme productivity. However, they are absurdly expensive.

It did start promising, both for the vendors and the users. Adaption was rising and results was clear, but so was the opposition force. Most of the employees still remembered the profound thinking they did in the years around the two pandemics in the 2020's. They wanted a better balance between work and life, between the urban and countryside, between tech and no-tech



– and this was the tipping point of the cobot adaption.

It never reached massive rollout. Instead, people rediscovered new ways of collaborating.

4: COBOT ARE A NICHE FOR NICHE PEOPLE

CROSS-PLATFORM INTERFACES
AND SLOW ADAPTION

“WE HAVE AN UNDERGROUND COBOT COMMUNITY”

It started in the Discord communities. First as a lifehack, and then it caught on.

One guy in Germany coded his own cobot to be able to answer his emails, chat with his boss, clarify requirements with his customers, and in all possible ways automating the interactions with his colleagues and stakeholders.

He shared the – still buggy – opensource code on the Discord channel, and then it took off. Soon there was a community that started to develop, build, and patch the

code. In the beginning they competed on what kind of communication they could hack and simulate, as pranks. That’s when the memes started to flourish.

Some did find it helpful, branched the code and bootstrapped a fully functional cobot suite with a few but efficient elements: Answering emails and requests on Slack (yes, these are still a thing in 2032), and using a plugin from Meta to simulate online team meetings and even taking part in discussions on behalf of the user.

The tool still lives but is no longer being maintained.

WHAT’S THE LIKELIHOOD – AND THE LIKABILITY?

Do you find these scenarios likely? Do you like them?

What will it mean to us as employees, to have a cobot as a peer-level partner? And does our answer depend on the vendor of said cobot?

The question is if we already have reached a point-of-no-return. Just as other technology elements support us in production, cobots can seamlessly and silently crawl inside our existing collaboration tools.

I can see the upside of this. And some things that I’m skeptical about too.



POSSIBLE SCENARIOS
BY MARTIN ELLEMANN OLESEN

A FUTURES PROOF STRATEGY

The purpose is their northern star. The signals help them adjust course. THAT is the strategy.

Whether we trace the origin of modern business strategies back to the ancient Greeks battle at Thermopylae, to the famed Chinese warrior-strategist Sun-Tzu, or to the Italian renaissance in the 15th century, strategy is a hallmark of modern management.

For decades, strategizing has been characterized by modeling and predicting the future, to plan for the next tactical steps. Typically, this prediction has been based on data about the past. Many CEO's hates surprises, and thus great care, resources, and faith are invested in eliminating uncertainty. The idea that chance, luck, or happenstance may have strategic relevance is often discarded as unserious or unplannable.

However, this approach to strategy is

about to change with the accelerated developments in technology and society. To deal with this, the existing way of doing strategic planning is developing from the predictive schools of design, planning, and positioning to the more descriptive schools of entrepreneurship, learning, and configuration (Mintzberg et al. (1998)).

Organizations attempt in creative ways to future-proof their strategies.

Some rely on outside consultancy, use focus-groups, involve customers, employees, and other stakeholders to narrow the endless number of options down to the right strategy. The titles of these strategies often end on 0 or 5 ("Strategy 2025" or "Strategy 2030") and represent a linear timeline from the present to a desired future state of the organization. In

an unpredictable and turbulent world, it is comforting to know where you are going.

And some take a completely different road.

A FUTURISTIC WAY OF THINKING ABOUT STRATEGY

In an HBR article on strategy from 2019, Amy Webb encourages leaders to think about time differently. Instead of arbitrarily assigning goals to a quarterly or yearly timeline, Webb suggest using the mental image of an uncertainty cone instead.

The cone correlates time with (un)certainty: As you take a longer perspective, the amount of data, evidence, and certainty decreases. This makes intuitive sense. The longer time-horizon, the less we know, and the more possible futures there are. Joseph Voros calls this "The Futures Cone" (2015).

When futurists think about the futures, they consider the entire cone simultaneously, both the short-term and the long-term.

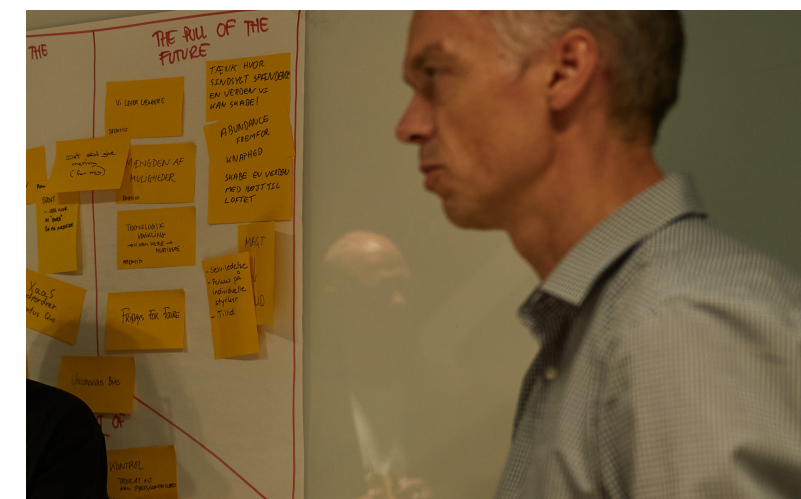
The futuristic leaders that embrace this way of thinking will increase their long-term flexibility while working in the present, the front of the cone. As they make tactical decisions to hire new people, launch new products, invest in new infrastructure, lease manufacturing equipment, seek

out new partnerships, and so on, they simultaneously invest time in evaluating how these decisions impact the possible long-term futures of the organization.

In a recent Forbes article (2021), scenario planning is highlighted as one way to build upon the possible to understand the changing system that impacts our unknown futures. Working with several scenarios (for example a utopian, status quo, and dystopian) helps us broaden our perspectives, but might be too traditional.

How do we do this? And do we then have to pick only one scenario? According to Forbes, rather than picking one scenario it is far better to find an approach that is robust across the range of scenarios.

This is where the signals enter the picture.



LISTENING FOR SIGNALS AS THE STRATEGY

A small number of pioneering organizations are embracing a different way of dealing with complexity as their strategy. They make listening for new signals that can impact them in the future BECOME the strategy.

One such organization is the Danish financial infrastructure development company, e-nettet ApS. Their recent strategy released in January 2021 differs from most traditional strategies in three interesting ways.

- There is no timeline or year attached to the strategy – no 0’s or 5’s
- Listening to signals that potentially impact how e-nettet does business is a core element of the strategy
- There are no bold predictions regarding growth, profitability etc. in the strategy

To navigate the strategic cone, these organizations have a direction and aspiration, and incorporate horizon scanning and signals in their operational maneuvers. They continuously scan their industry domain for anomalies, for new developments, and for ideas, so that they can evaluate and possibly incorporate them in their work.

The purpose is their northern star. The

signals help them adjust course. THAT is the strategy.

FOUR APPROACHES TO STRATEGY IN A COMPLEX WORLD

Several parameters can influence how organizations will benefit from making continuously listening to signals their strategy. In the following I will explore two of them in a signal cross, giving four scenarios to explore.

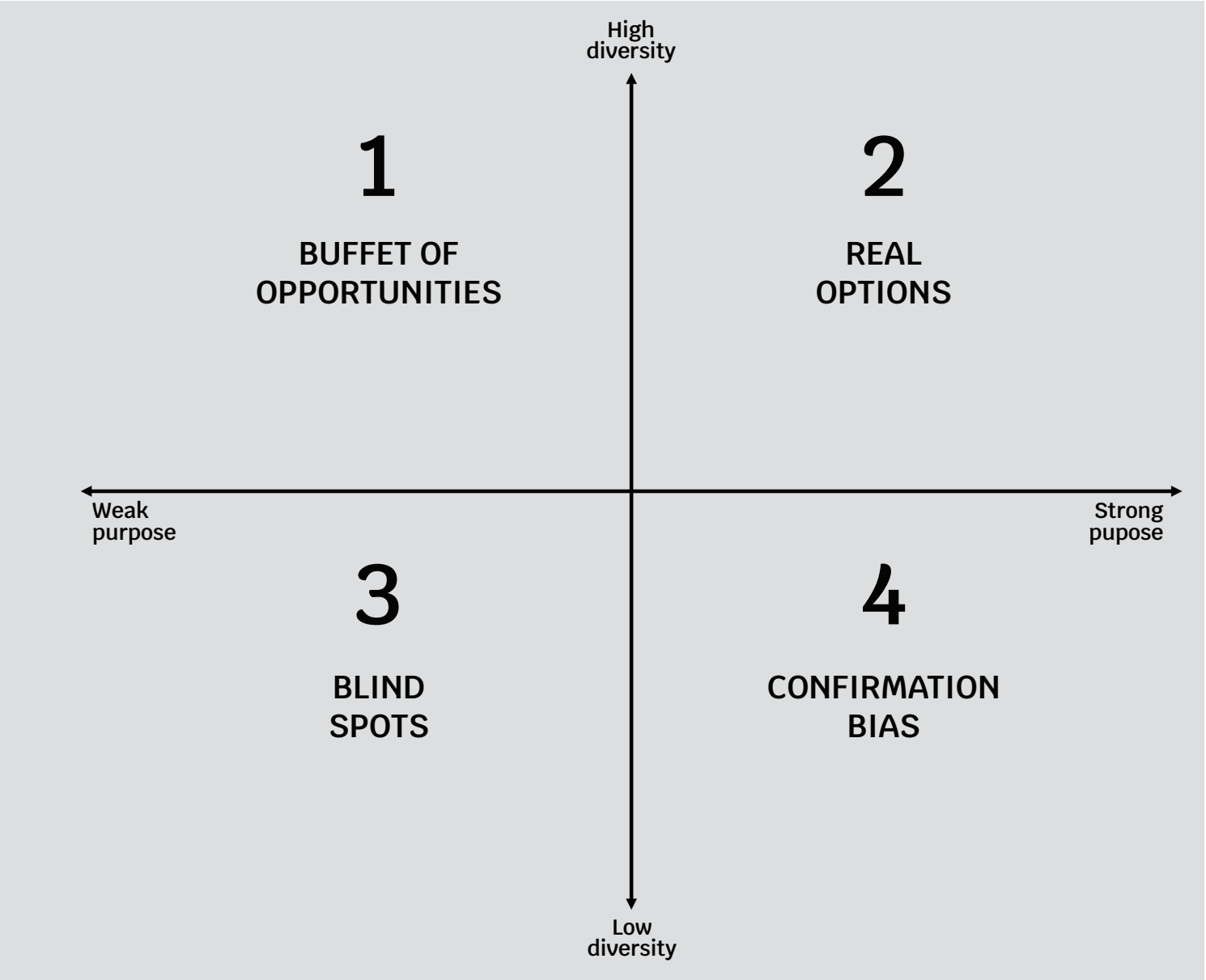
A: The first parameter is ‘diversity in input’. This relates to the variety in signals explored, with polarities as ‘high diversity’ and ‘low diversity’.

B: The second parameter is the ‘strength of the organization’s purpose’. An organization with a strong purpose tends to evaluate everything they do through the lens of their purpose. Organizations with a weak purpose tends to be less clear on their direction.

1: BUFFET OF OPPORTUNITIES

WEAK PURPOSE AND HIGH DIVERSITY

High diversity in signal listening equals more options. Diversity can come from engaging clients, competitors, employees, and other stakeholders in listening to signals relevant to the organization.



MODEL 4: SCENARIO OVERVIEW

The many options are both an opportunity and a threat for an organization with a weak purpose. Without a strong purpose to guide you in selecting between the many options, the organization risks zigzagging between contradictory initiatives. It can resemble standing in front of a buffet and overfilling your plate, liking everything you see, and overestimating how hungry you are.

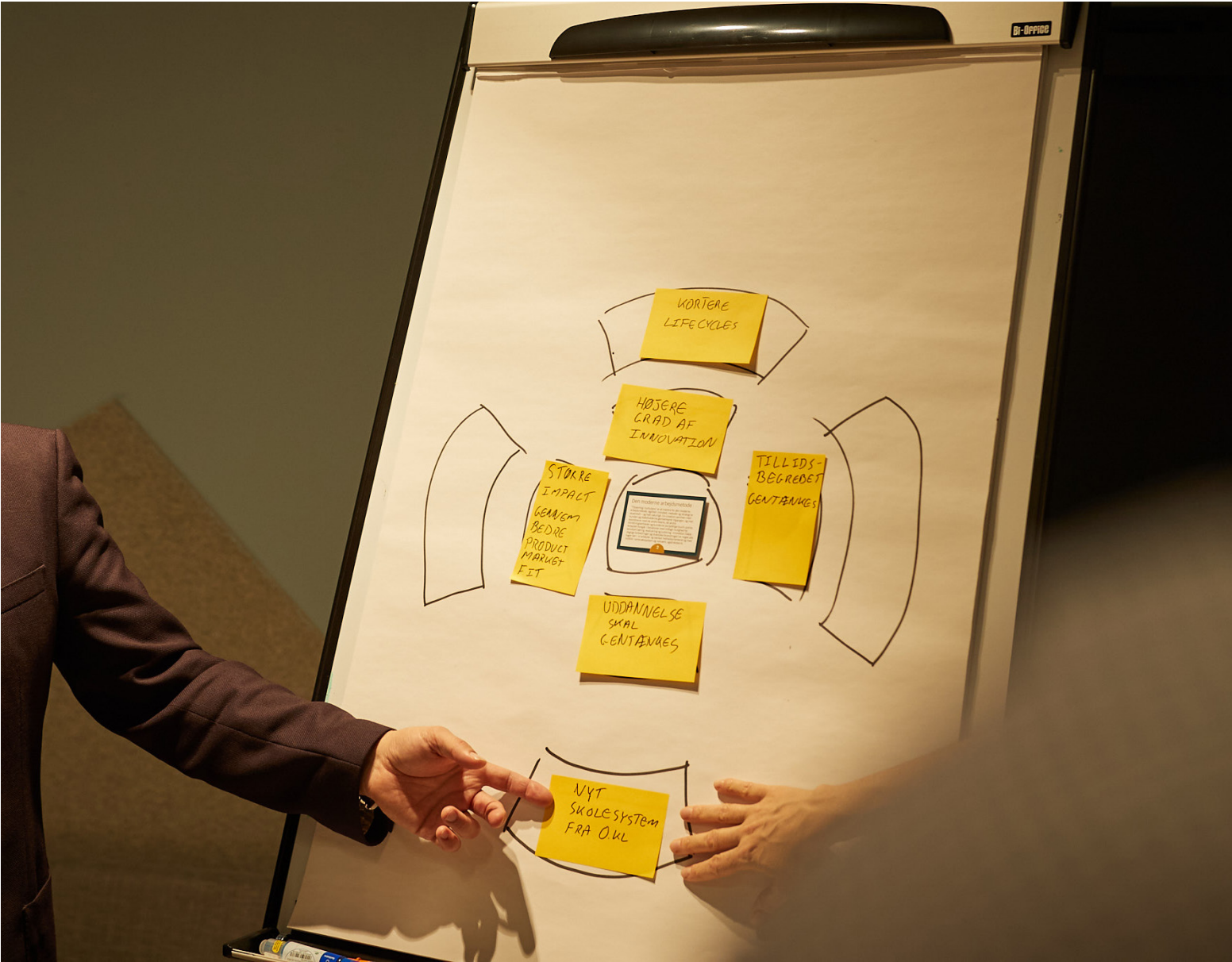
In the positive scenario, an organization without a strong purpose, will need to be good at quickly qualifying signals. In this scenario they are likely to explore a wide range of signals. Some of these might turn out to be the next breakthrough and enable the organization to pivot into more profitable product and markets.

In the negative scenario, the organization can get overwhelmed by all the options and end up exploring none, spending too much energy on the wrong signals, or shifting focus too often to realize the potential value of specific signals.

2: REAL OPTIONS

HIGH DIVERSITY AND STRONG PURPOSE

Compared to the previous scenario, organizations in this quadrant are guided by a strong purpose. This gives the organization a pre-qualifier for signals and helps the organization continuously and quickly evaluate the relevance of the signals.



The potential risk of a strong purpose is that it can lead to complacency. High diversity in signals and across the involved stakeholders is important, but only if it is used to challenge the self-beliefs of the organization.

You need to be willing to discuss fundamental questions like “How will the purpose, products, and services of the organization need to evolve, as new technologies, behaviors, demographics, and virtues emerge?”

Having the bravery and humbleness to be wrong and change course is paramount to long term success.

3: BLIND SPOTS

WEAK PURPOSE AND LOW DIVERSITY

Having fewer options to choose from combined with a weak purpose to evaluate which options are relevant, is like watching an Animal Planet show in black and white. Important details are left out and you will probably also get bored.

In this scenario there is a great risk of settling for the-first-the-best signals you discover. If we have two options, we feel we have a real choice. While that is technically true, we might miss the benefits of exploring option three, four, etc.

The positive aspect of this scenario is the speed of which we can explore signals,

4: CONFIRMATION BIAS

STRONG PURPOSE AND LOW DIVERSITY

The upside of this scenario is that the purpose is continuously reinforced by the signals that are explored. It sets a clear direction for members of the organization and as long as the purpose is viable it can reduce some of the potential noise from exploring a wider variety of signals.

variety of signals.

WHAT'S THE LIKELIHOOD - AND THE LIKABILITY

In this light, I really like making continuously listening to signals a central part of the strategy. This will not guarantee that you always will be prepared for what is coming, but if you train listening to and evaluating signals, you increase your likelihood of dealing constructively with what comes your way. “Luck is not distributed equally and tends to favor the prepared minds” (Merton and Barber, 2004).

Currently, only progressive organizations are embracing this approach to strategy. There is still a long tradition of predictive five-year strategies ending on 5's and 0's. Hopefully, more executives will realize that we need a different approach to strategy in the future.



POSSIBLE SCENARIOS
BY MARTIN N. VINTHER

FUTURES FOR PHYSICAL HEALTH

**Wellness will become the newest metric at work,
but who embraces and drives the movement?**

For decades, organizations have embraced wellbeing and mental health in parts of their HR, leadership, and cultural engagements. With varying intensity and varying results, we know, but it has been on the agenda for a long time.

Now, wellness enters the scene to augment and support wellbeing.

A growing part of our work can be done sitting at a desk, or perhaps even lying on the couch. Knowledge workers are at risk of remaining physically passive most of a working day. Homo sapiens are not designed to be inactive and if we do not incorporate movement during a workday, it will have major health consequences.

What are the possible scenarios for exercise and health related to work?

And, most of all: Who drives the development, and for what reason?



“LET’S ACTIVELY AVOID THE RISKS OF SITTING”

“Sitting for long periods increases the risk of diabetes, heart disease and death, researchers suggest,” according to BBC News (study, published in Diabetologia). The statement is based on the results of several observational studies that looked at the association between the time spent sitting or lying down whilst awake (sedentary behavior) and the risk of diabetes, cardiovascular diseases, and death due to cardiovascular diseases such as heart attack. These findings are not new. The link between worsening health outcomes and time spent sitting already became apparent in the 1950s when the Scottish medical doctor and researcher Jerry Morris found that London bus drivers were twice as likely to have heart attacks as their bus conductor colleagues.

Now, organizations are beginning to tackle this situation. According to Harvard Business Review “Wellness will become the newest metric that companies use to understand their employees.” (HBR Jan. 13. 2022 Brian Kropp and Emily Rose McRae.)

When you are physically active your overall energy levels and endurance improve, and your bones maintain strength. Our ancestors did not have to worry about going to the gym when they might have spent 12 hours a day

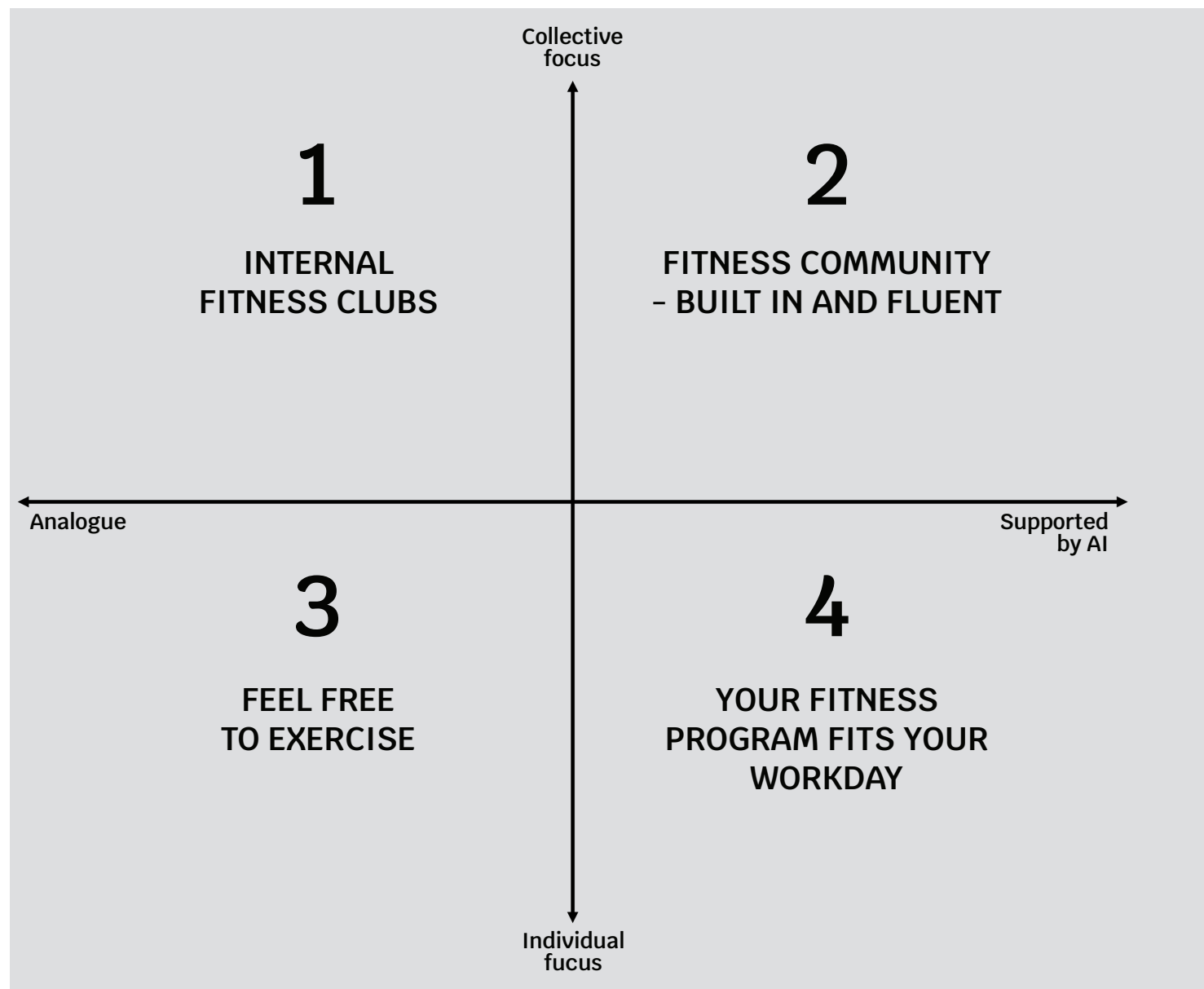
being physical active picking turnips. These days however, for most of us the working day provides very little opportunity for exercise and so we need to compensate for that fact.

Too much inactivity can also be bad for your mental health. An increasing amount of job functions can be solved without any movement involved. The many “Work From Home”-employees can potentially lead to even less movement. “Sitting is the new smoking” is a popular phrase coined by Dr. James Levine.

Leaders around the world have an opportunity to implement structures to encourage more physical movement for their employees to avoid the health risk of static (non-movement) job functions. For years, executives have experimented with different metrics such as employee satisfaction or engagement to understand their employee’s wellbeing at work in general. In 2022, organizations will add new measures that assess their wellness: Mental, physical, and even financial health.

Let’s look at four scenarios that describes possible futures for how organizations might react to this challenge – and why. The scenarios are based on these two parameters:

- A:** Human support vs. AI support
- B:** Individual vs. Collective



MODEL 5: SCENARIO OVERVIEW

1: INTERNAL FITNESS CLUB

ANALOGUE AND COLLECTIVE FOCUS

In The Internal Fitness Clubs scenario, the organization will bring a much more collective approach to help everybody in the organization to join an anti-physical-inactivity initiative.

The programs, offerings and initiatives will be tailored to different segments of the employees, allowing for the individual to choose what fits them the most. The organization will require everyone to join one or more programs, and a minimum amount of time spend on these will be agreed with the individual.

The activities will be assisted by professionals, who on an ongoing basis will help employees select and adjust the approach to physical activity when at work. The professionals will have a holistic view and make tailored plans that includes physical abilities, general health, preferences, and sports activities not related to work.

The organizations will benefit from the collective approach, where employees and managers build relations across silos, departments, groups etc.

Both leaders and employees have a role to play. The shift to focusing on employee wellbeing encompasses both physical and

mental health. It is a far-reaching cultural transformation that must consider where and how work gets done, how people are measured and rewarded, and how firms create sustainable work that drives long-term company and individual growth.

2: FITNESS COMMUNITY - BUILT IN AND FLUENT

COLLECTIVE FOCUS AND SUPPORTED BY AI

In this scenario, organizations are welcoming technology-based solutions to assist the practical part of plan and follow-up on the various health initiatives. Top management are approaching the organizations as one or more communities with a collective responsibility and interest in physical health at work. Everybody in the organizations is an important member and we take care of each other in the community.

As an example, AI technology will assist in matchmaking of walk'n'talks across the organization, taking fitness-level, relations building, personal calendars etc. into account. The AI will also match employees for their preferred activities, such as Paddle Tennis, running or weightlifting. Business leaders might use the fitness activities to let employees discuss relevant topics, such as strategic initiatives and critical business issues, and in that way get small feed-back loops build into the daily work.

AI matches the right people to attend that exact activity on a level where all important parties can participate and have a relevant and valuable discussion on the same court. The algorithms will actively look for matches where people that otherwise wouldn't meet, will be joined in common activities. Health Trackers like Fitbit will be a common way of following up on progress and evaluate initiatives. Everybody will be assigned a digital personal fitness coach/trainer.

Activity-based workspace design models together with the concept of Office Neighborhoods, are already implemented in several organizations. This will become a standard for organizations with most knowledge workers.

Activity-based workspace design are particularly well suited for hybrid offices and the future of work. But whatever model an organization chooses, from fixed team-islands to flexible workspaces and everything in between, activity-based workspace design offers fresh and exciting opportunities. Offices will be designed with physical activity in mind. Meeting rooms will be without chairs, lounge areas will be with high tables to encourage employees to take the coffee meeting standing up.

Our AI friend will help the meeting room booking system to preselect rooms that require the participants to walk a distance. Office designs will be assisted with data about known moving patterns of employees in the organization.

3: FEEL FREE TO EXERCISE

ANALOGUE AND INDIVIDUAL FOCUS

Up until now we have seen many well-meaning initiatives to encourage and nudge employees and managers to exercise doing work hours. Studies shows that such initiatives are very effectful and welcomed by people that are already used to exercise. For those people the initiatives are seen as a great employee benefit. But for a large amount of people, inactivity is an easier choose, for many reasons.

Though it's obvious that most of us will benefit from a mandatory personal tailored fitness program and an expectation to follow the program, organizations are most likely to have their health initiatives and facilities offered as something the individual can volunteer to use.

The volunteer approach is an easier path and organizations avoid the conflicts that might come with a more intervention/mandatory based approach. It will also fit into the movement towards more self-management and individual approaches to the work.

An example of a successful physical and mental health initiative is the "Summer of Walks" at Huffington Post. One summer at The Huffington Post, an initiative changed the habits of their employees. During that summer many employees were not sitting at their desks in the middle of the day. They

were out walking with coworkers they'd never met before. And their phones and digital devices was left behind at the office. Arianna Huffington announced the Summer Challenge like this: "Employees were encouraged to get out of the office to go for lunch or out on a walk with a colleague they hadn't yet met.". The initiative at Huffington is a perfect example of a simple initiative that will build relations, get employees healthier and most likely also foster extra innovation and creativity.



4: YOUR FITNESS PROGRAM FITS YOUR WORKDAY

INDIVIDUAL FOCUS AND SUPPORTED BY AI

Not two humans are the same, and organizations will benefit from offering individual and tailored fitness/health packaged for employees, assisted by AI.

The fitness programs will be continuously optimized and adjusted based on available data and an AI supported dialog with the employee. One person might prefer easy exercise like walks or mobility training. Another person might prefer high intensity training in a period.

The AI Personal Trainer engine will be configured with boundaries for the offered exercises, this could be budget, hours, and available equipment etc. In this scenario personal health data collected by health trackers will be included in the suggested training programs.

The human/AI dialog is used to follow-up and adjust the individual program. A personal health dashboard will give the employee an overview of status and progress on various parameters. The dashboard is personal and not shared with anyone else. The privacy is important to avoid comparison between colleagues, unless both parties agree.

IS THE FUTURE ACTIVE?

WHAT'S THE LIKELIHOOD - AND THE LIKEABILITY?

How likely is this signal to affect you and your organization??

We recognize that need to include exercise and movement as a critical element of living a healthy life – also at work. We understand that both business owners, managers, and employees should be engaged in exploring the futures for physical health at work. But is it likely to happen in your organization?

Currently, science does not exactly understand the links between inactivity and mental health as well as we do the links between inactivity and physical health, but we do know that the risk of both anxiety and depression is higher in people that sit more. It's broadly agreed that getting up

and moving will have plenty of mental and physical health benefits.

Those organizations who not already have exercise clubs and communities will initiate them. Some will go even further and provide personal coaches and individually AI supported training. And some will take the full step and make it mandatory for employees to take care of their physical health.

If used correctly, AI supported health programs could be a great supplement for many organizations.

Where do you stand on this? Who manages your wellbeing – and your wellness?





POSSIBLE SCENARIOS
BY TORE NIELSEN

WHERE AND WHEN WILL WE WORK IN THE FUTURE?

With limitations dissolving in both the physical and temporal space, this has profound effects on how we organize, collaborate, and relate to each other as human beings.

There was a time when going to the office at the same fixed hours every day was the only way to do work. Today, the development of technology has changed the nature of work to a degree where it is possible to work from anywhere.

Work takes place in many forms. From the increasingly common model of “Working From Home” a couple of days a week, to the full scale living freely as a digital nomad who travels the world while working, our work life is becoming less and less anchored around the physical location of the office. COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated this shift and exposed many of us to this way of working.

As digitization of work has liberated us from

the constraints of the physical space, it has also had some profound effects on another dimension of our existence that used to confine our work – namely when we work. As more work are being performed in the digital space in front of a computer, it is possible for people to work asynchronously on shared tasks. It is possible to design products, write code, or author an article at any time you’d like, and still be in close collaboration with your colleagues, on a global scale.

With limitations dissolving in both the physical and temporal space, this has profound effects on how we organize, collaborate, and relate to each other as human beings.



FOUR SCENARIOS

In the following I will examine four scenarios of what the future might bring, based on the polarities of space and time:

A: Working in near or distant proximity

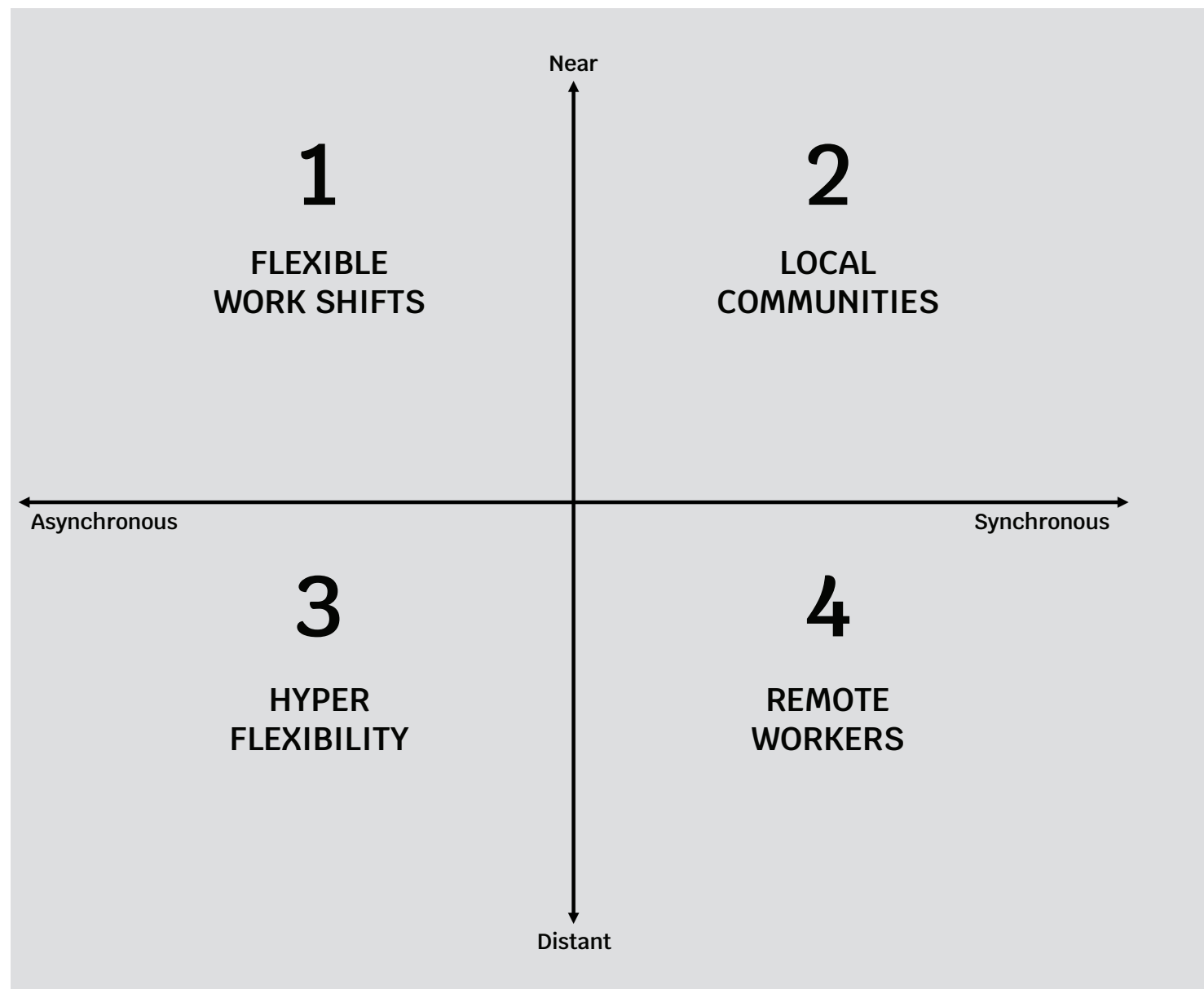
B: Working synchronous or asynchronous in time

1: FLEXIBLE WORK SHIFTS

ASYNCHRONOUS AND NEAR

When the work centers around a physical place, workers will gain flexibility in being able to choose when they put in the hours, as long as the work can be handled with somewhat autonomy.

The gig economy has already plenty of examples of how freelancers using an app can put in food delivery orders at a time of their choosing. This principle will spread to storage facilities, supermarkets, and shops, where freelance service workers will tap into a digital scheduling system and do well-defined tasks, like filling up the item shelves, and then have the freedom to stop working or continue with another assignment. Smart technology will ensure that workers are incentivized through higher compensation to do the important task that are nearing deadline.



MODEL 6: SCENARIO OVERVIEW

Knowledge workers will also experience the benefits of flexible hours in the form of shared offices they'll have access to during the whole week, enabling them to work in weekends, evenings, and nights when it is suitable for them.

Some organizations will utilize their office space around the clock, having teams working early mornings, afternoons, and nights, or rent temporarily empty meeting rooms and workspace to startups at odd hours. We will also see a continuation of the use of workers from around the globe, where time zones will naturally introduce asynchronous work hours.

2: LOCAL COMMUNITIES

NEAR AND SYNCHRONOUS

Organizations will begin to consider the problems of proximity bias, asynchronous working hours, and social disconnectedness, and will shift to a more local, synchronous way of organizing.

Some firms will simply conclude that the benefits of flexibility will not outweigh the costs and move to a more communal and localized way of working. There will be a central place where people go and work together during the same hours, either at an office or several smaller hubs where people meet around the work.

Workers will live near their place of work, and therefore also near their colleagues, with whom they will have same daily rhythms. This will lead to people having more synchronous lives with the people in their neighborhood and increase the likelihood that their social lives will be interconnected.

To some, the flexibility of remote and asynchronous work and will be a differentiator in terms of attracting talent, but many workers will prioritize a more localized way of life, where it is easier to establish and maintain social relations with their fellow human beings and there is less strain on the climate.

3: HYPER FLEXIBILITY

ASYNCHRONOUS AND DISTANT

In this scenario the dial of flexibility is turned up to the max. People will be emancipated from the anchored life of rhythms and routines, and they will have full individual sovereignty over where they need to be and when they will work.

This will be a world of the hyper flexible work-life where everything is possible. Travelling, spending time with family, or doing multiple side-projects is fully compatible with having a fulltime job, because you'll have the flexibility to do the work where and when you prefer.

To accommodate this, organizations will be increasingly distributed and digitized, so it is easy for the individual worker to tap into the work, when it suits them, and not due to some expectation of work having to be done at some pre-fixed hours.

At the global engineering and design firm Arup, they’ve introduced a 7-day work week, where workers can choose to put in their hours at any time during the week, in combination with working from home, calling it Work Unbound.

This individual hyper flexibility will result in everyone having their own schedule of where and when they will be working. This asynchronous work-life could also have some downsides. Oliver Burkeman shows in his book “Four Thousand weeks” how it is probably not accurate to regard time as a pure individual good, but rather a network good – meaning that time is more valuable if you can use it together with others.

It might also lead to massive coordination overhead, poorer alignment, and the general feeling of being “out-of-sync”. Many can probably recognize the difficulty of trying to schedule meetings and getting things done when everyone has their own individual rhythms.

4: REMOTE WORKERS

DISTANT AND SYNCHRONOUS

Remote work will be the default way of working as a large portion of an organization’s workforce will be working from home, from cafés, or from local office hubs.

Similar minded remote workers will band together in smaller rural areas, as currently seen in the form of Zoom towns, and having access to clean air and beautiful nature without having to pay an exorbitant amount for living near the office or having to spend several hours a day on transportation. Some organizations will be fully remote and eliminate the need of having offices at all.

This will make it more attractive for people to consider living further away from larger cities and in turn enable companies to attract talent no matter where their central office is located. One of the bigger benefits of this will be less transportation and a much smaller footprint on the climate.

But the remote work-life also has some drawbacks. As humans we naturally disposed to paying more notice to the things in our proximity, which will lead us to engage more and build relations with the colleague next to us, than the one far away.

Synchrony Financial (as US based consumer financial services company) have begun

noticing the phenomenon of proximity bias where workers who are physically present at the office will subconsciously be perceived more favorably by their (physical present) manager, than their remote co-workers. Ultimately this leads to favoritism regarding who gets chosen for important project assignments, promotions or pay raises.



WHAT’S THE LIKELIHOOD – AND THE LIKEABILITY?

How do you feel about the futures in the above scenarios? How likely is it? How likable is it?

Having experienced both the blessings and the shortcomings of flexibility in where and when we work, I would prefer a future of

“flexibility with constraints”.

The flexibility of working remote and at odd hours enable us to live freer and more fulfilling lives, where it is easier to be present for our families and friends and do things that are not directly related to work. The benefits of not having to spend hours in polluting, time-wasting traffic and being able live in areas of the world that are not tied to your place of work, are worth preserving.

But asynchronicity of space and time also introduces some severe limitations in how connected we are to our colleagues and how well we can collaborate. Some work is so complex that we must be present, at the same time, to reach a shared understanding. Even more dire, an asynchronous work-life will also lead to a society with no shared rhythms, and the risk of being further detached from our fellow human beings could be high.

We need to combine the flexible work-life with some minimum, shared level of synchronicity. At Good Morning April we meet every Friday, often physically, to ensure that we maintain and develop our relations, and because it is simply easier collaborate and get work done in this way.

I believe organizations should consider finding a level of their common synchronicity, and I hope that we as societies will keep some shared standards, such as weekends and holidays.



AFFECTED AREAS IN THE ORGANIZATION

Who does the signals and trend affect in your organization? This last part summarizes what all of this means in the context of our organizations and which mechanisms we should keep an eye on.

AFFECTED AREAS IN THE ORGANIZATION

How will these nine signals affect the organization?

We've identified five areas that we believe are affected the most; five areas where the effect and thus the change is most noticeable. This also means that the people involved in these areas are the ones that are the most obvious ones to drive the development, to explore the futures, and to evaluate the ways forward.

Clearly, other areas might be affected, but here's a place to start.

TOP LEADERSHIP AND THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The nine signals will have strongest and broadest impact on the top leadership and the Board of Directors.

Paying attention to the technological and societal developments are critical in C-suite and in the Board room, and Futures Thinking and Futures Literacy as skillsets are valuable and attractive assets as a top leader or board member.

Doing business in the future does

increasingly rely on partnership-building, both B2B and B2C. The strategy process will be a co-creation and will focus more on impact and exploration than on hard targets and execution. This also means that risk management (or risk mitigation) through an active and experimental approach to multiple scenarios and multiple futures is vital.

Finally, leading an organization in the future requires you to lean forward in the ethical and societal challenges, and be visible and vocal in public about it. You might even have to take a stand in the political landscape. This affects your public communication practices, your PR/marketing processes and messages, and how you monitor and publicize your impact in the world. If you can create a movement internally in your organization, you're on the right path.

Top leadership and board membership in the future starts with imagination and curiosity, with involvement in the ecosystem, and with a moral obligation to solve the big problems in the world.

LINE OF BUSINESS LEADERS AND HR

Several of the signals will have direct effect on the role and responsibilities of the line of business leaders and especially on the first line leaders – and on the collaboration with the HR partners.

More focus needs to be on cultural nuances and local differences in the teams and in their collaboration. The first line leaders need to understand and cater to the needs of the individual employees as they increasingly get more differentiated in their needs and wants. The saying that “you treat people alike by treating them differently” is true. The leaders need to upskill their cultural and anthropological understanding, and their coaching and mentoring ability. They need to integrate nontraditional skills in their leadership such as social sciences, imagination and ideation, and mental and physical care and attention.

The role of HR changes to be catalysts for this development. As technology enters the scene for coaching, collaboration, and communication, your role as HR partner might at first seem challenged and partly outmaneuvered. This cannot be more wrong. The need for a close partnership with HR as enablers for the organizational development is strong as ever. Just as the employees and leaders should, you need to explore how you can support and guide the organization in your



joint effort and mutual evaluation of the possible futures.

Finally, the leaders and HR partners must cater to employees, teams, stakeholders, and collaboration approaches that changes

their minds and context regarding the organizational structure and culture more frequently than today. In some weeks, they need freedom. And in some weeks, they need tighter guardrails and alignment. You need to figure this out, together.

FOR THE SUPPORT SERVICES

- Legal and financial practices are changing, for example regarding IP rights, terms and conditions, contracts, payment terms, taxation principles.
- IT is changing, for example regarding supporting cobot solutions, and monitoring bias in artificial intelligence
- Collaborate with your business partners and your colleagues.

IN COLLABORATION UNITS

- Experiment with translating the principles to local practices
- Differences create friction, that needs 'lubrication'
- Investigate technology for collaboration and communication practices
- Explore cultural brokerage and ambassadorship
- Update your evaluation and reflection practices

FOR THE EMPLOYEE

- Take control of hybrid work
- Develop self-awareness
- Be vocal of your current needs in this episode of your life
- New range of contracts and engagements

FOR LEADERSHIP AND HR

- Cultural nuances
- Treat people alike by treating them differently
- HR is catalyst and guide for the development
- Constantly changing requirements from employees and teams

FOR THE TOP LEADERSHIP AND BOARD OF DIRECTORS

- Futures thinking as a skill
- Partnership building
- Business models with direct customers (B2B or B2C)
- Strategy processes
- Risk-management
- Ethical boards and taking a stand
- Impact accounting
- Communication practices
- PR/Marketing processes



THE EMPLOYEE

The nine signals paint a picture of a granular labor market with significant differences in engagement types, time horizon, and collaboration dynamics.

The employee of the future is taking the driver’s seat. Increasingly we are rethinking and redesigning our surroundings and our engagements with business partners, to let our approach to work and life fit OUR wishes and visions of what we want to spend our time on. Previously, Hybrid Work was

orchestrated by the organizations. Now, the employees take control.

The possibilities for how to design your work is expanding and it is becoming increasingly impossible to get the full overview of your options. To navigate these possible futures, two things are vital: Developing your self-awareness, and being vocal about your current needs in this specific episode of your life.

Spend time on getting to know your virtues and what’s important to you. Use technology to shape the kind of work that you like and want. Experiment with how you structure your day and your week. Explore the possible types of work engagements that might fit your situation. And seek out business partners, organizations, and collaborators that are willing to listen to your proposals and want to co-create your (contractual) agreements and arrangements to your mutual benefit.

IN COLLABORATION UNITS

The signal of extreme localization of cultures connects to almost all the other signals, when it comes to how collaboration units are affected. (And here we use ‘collaboration units’ as a catch-all term for people that work together to deliver something.)

Experimenting with the signals and their

effect has consequences.

New possibilities in technology play a significant role in how communication and collaboration changes, both inside and between the units, and with customers, business partners, and governmental bodies.

Similar, existing collaboration and cultural methodologies like the various approaches to organizational democracy and iterative execution will have a vast number of local dialects. Translating the principles of the futures of work into practices in the collaboration unit will result in local adaptations that are unique to said unit.

These differences create friction that requires ‘lubrication’ between the units. You need new practices for identifying and removing tensions. You need cultural brokerage and ambassadorship between the collaboration units. You need new methods for communication, evaluation, and reflection.

FOR THE SUPPORT SERVICES

As the ‘inner workings’ of the organization changes, the services from the organizational support should follow suit.

Legal and financial practices are changing, as these signals approach us. You might need to update your approach to elements

like Intellectual Property rights, payment terms, and taxation principles. This comes from new and more muddled collaboration practices and with the introduction of blockchain-based technology, enabling fully virtual organizations to emerge. You also might need to investigate possible updated contractual agreements and collaboration setups, considering both the needs from the employees and the local governmental differences when it comes to vacation, workhours, work-from-home regulations, unemployment packages, perks, training, and education.

IT is changing too. The new possibilities with AI, IoT, VR, and blockchain requires the IT departments to get in the front seat along with the employees and their collaboration units. The signals especially points towards a need for scouting and supporting new cobot solutions (in collaboration with both the employees, Legal and HR), and for monitoring bias in artificial intelligence (in collaboration with the top management; remember that they need to take an ethical stand, which also applies to how you approach artificial intelligence and cobots.)

The strongest recommendation to the support services is to make sure that this is a genuine collaboration with your business partners and your colleagues. Explore together, evaluate together.

NOW WHAT?

This is all about initiating dialogue around the futures that might happen. The possible, plausible, and preferable futures.

Did we succeed?

Did we give you hope, ideas, and options?

One thing that has been a guide in the past decades is the term 'VUCA': Volatile, Uncertain, Complex, and Ambiguous. We have been navigating the everchanging world with these descriptors since the American army coined the term in the late '80s. And now some people find VUCA to be a cliché. What's going on, then?

If you ask Jamais Cascio, Institute for the Future, the world is now BANI: Brittle, Anxious, Non-linear, and Incomprehensible. According to Cascio, the BANI framework provides us with a new language to describe and grasp what is going on in the world.

It helps us make sense of the world anew, understand links between causes and effects, and to find a stable structure to determine what is going on in the world.

AND it gives us pointers on how to meet, ease, and lubricate the challenges:

"At least at a surface level, the components of the acronym might even hint at opportunities for response: brittleness could be met by resilience and slack; anxiety can be eased by empathy and mindfulness; nonlinearity would need context and flexibility; incomprehensibility asks for transparency and intuition. These may well be more reactions than solutions, but they suggest the possibility that responses can be found." (Jamais Cascio, Institute for the Future)

Herein are hope, ideas, and options! There are opportunities, there are emotions and humanity, there are reactions and responses. But there are no descriptive or prescriptive solutions. We need to explore and evaluate them ourselves.

This is all about initiating dialogue around

the futures that what might happen. The possible, plausible, and preferable futures.

The capability we are talking about is called Futures Literacy. And the method we are using is called Futures Thinking. The good news is that both can be practiced. In fact, you are already using the capability and method when trying to figure out what to eat for dinner on Saturday, planning your vacation, or imagining your upcoming birthday.



People can become more skilled at 'using-the-future', more 'futures literate', because of two facts.

One is that the future does not yet exist, it can only be imagined.

Two is that humans have the ability to imagine.

As a result, humans are able to learn to imagine the future for different reasons and in different ways. Thereby becoming more 'futures literate'.

WHAT TO DO NOW?

You are part of the movement to shape the future. You can initiate and drive the development.

Acknowledge the present. Be honest with your situation and your challenges.

Look at the signals around you, Will they affect you? Do you like the image of the future that they paint?

Start experimenting. Establish a way to sample and collect learning and anecdotes that can enhance and refine your basis for change. It can be data driven – or straight out based on your intuition and gut feeling.

Embrace the hints of new solutions with a “good enough for now, safe enough to try”-attitude, and then adjust it as you learn.

WE STILL HAVE HOPE

We dare to explore and evaluate possible futures so that we together can create a better, brighter tomorrow for organizations and people of the world, today.

We bring likeminded people together to share and improve ideas and thoughts.

Are you with us?



EVIDENCE AND FURTHER READING

How to use this in your own organization

Copenhagen Institute for Futures Studies
<https://cifs.dk/>

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Riel Miller <https://www.linkedin.com/in/rielmiller/>

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“Futures Literacy And Developing A Futures-Thinking Mindset”, by Jonathan H. Westover, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbescoachescouncil/2021/10/07/futures-literacy-and-developing-a-futures-thinking-mindset/?sh=4ea021ba479f>

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CREATION OF CONTENT

The content of this documented is created by the Good Morning April team.

Pictures of us and our yearly Hacktober event is credited to Thomas Rønn, TR Media.

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FUTURES OF WORK

HORIZON SCANNING DOCUMENT

GOOD MORNING APRIL

We dare to explore and evaluate possible futures so that we together can create a better, brighter tomorrow for organizations and people of the world, today.