



FutureScape Issue 10 – February 3rd 2010 – Routes to Flexibility / Anatomy of a Crisis

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Welcome to the latest issue of FutureScape for 2010. I hope you enjoy it. If this is not your copy and would like to subscribe, please sign up [here](#)

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1. Convention 2020 – Contribute to Our Trend Wiki

Convention 2020 is a strategic foresight study looking at the future of conventions, meetings and trade shows. We have launched a dedicated TrendWiki for the project – which is kindly hosted by Data Rangers. Using the Wiki you can enter your own thoughts on future trends and challenges. To share your thoughts go to our newly

launched project website at www.convention-2020.com – where you can also sign up for the dedicated project newsletter and social media forums.

We are adding new sponsors and expert contributors all the time. The founding sponsors are The International Congress and Convention Association, IMEX and Fast Future Research. The current platinum sponsors are Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre, Qatar National Convention Centre, The Queen Elizabeth II (QEII) Conference Centre London, Visit London, Seoul Tourism Organization and BestCities Global Alliance (Cape Town, Copenhagen, Dubai, Edinburgh, Melbourne, San Juan, Singapore and Vancouver). Kenes are the first gold sponsor. If you want to know more about becoming a sponsor, expert contributor or association thought partner please contact Rohit@fastfuture.com.

2. Routes to Flexibility

I've just returned from a client event in Asia where the focus was on driving flexibility and adaptability to respond to a range of possible future shocks, opportunities and 'inevitable surprises'. Firstly it was nice to see how wholeheartedly they were embracing the need for foresight. I was also struck by one of the strategies they unveiled to help drive flexibility.

Like many large organisations, the client wants to free up the time of front line staff in their business units around the world. The aim is to free them of routine processes and back office administration and allow them to focus on the marketplace and on responding to fast changing customer needs. The solution they have chosen is to consolidate all back office operations under a single centralised 'global operations model' in a multi-million pound, multi-year change process.

On the one hand, the idea of standardised processes, systems, reporting and procedures has great attractions. Equally, the idea of freeing up time to focus on customers is incredibly sensible. However I'm left with a few nagging concerns. The first is that one of the main reasons for the back offices in diverse locations to get complex and out of synch is that the front office tends to want things done to suit their local needs – not the needs of a global model (look at the nightmare challenges and budget creep the UK Health Service has faced trying to standardise IT systems in hospitals, surgeries and other healthcare centres across the country).

The front office will have valid reasons for wanting ensure they and their customers get the desired level of service. They will also find it hard to let go of 'their back office' and so will seek to get very involved in the design and decision making around the global model. This will add time, cost, complexity and frustration to the design process. It will also divert attention from front line service delivery. However, if they don't get involved, the fear will be that they have imposed on them a central solution that doesn't work well for any end market.

Another concern would be that such solutions take a long time to develop and implement – 3 years or more in this case. In that time the world, our customers, our staff and technology will have moved on – possibly a long way. A solution designed around today's needs may be out of date long before it's delivered. In a fast changing environment the key lies in being close to your customers and highly

responsive. This in turn implies having redundant capacity in the system to be able to address new requirements quickly and often means keeping key processes close to the end market.

A big risk is that the central system doesn't quite fit the needs of the end-markets and the desired changes can't be accommodated. Workarounds will start to emerge as localised systems and processes are developed to suit the needs of end-markets under pressure to deliver on tough objectives in an uncertain economic environment. Another concern is that in the current climate, the project may itself be postponed or cancelled completely if we do experience a double-dip downturn and the firm decides to focus its efforts and resources on the marketplace rather than internal matters. Indeed we've seen a number of system upgrades, laptop replacement initiatives and other similar projects cancelled in order to keep staff focused on the marketplace and minimise additional distractions.

Many large organisations are or will soon be going through this trade off debate between centralised, standardized and efficient solutions versus a more distributed possibly less efficient but hopefully more responsive model. Inevitably considerations such as outsourcing, use of 'cloud based Software as a Service' models, security, flexibility and cost will loom large in the reckoning. There is no easy answer. The key consideration in a fast changing marketplace is to examine how best to deliver the desired service to customers in a responsive and secure manner and not to be swayed by solutions that look good on paper but don't take account of real world behaviours.

3. Anatomy of a Crisis – Anticipating Future Shocks

One of our readers Darryl Howard recently responded to our article on four possible scenarios for the global economy. He told us about a fascinating book from 1997 called *The Fourth Turning* by William Strauss and Neil Howe (www.fourthturning.com) that describes how a crisis typically unfolds. This is fascinating stuff in relation to the current economic situation and I thought I'd share Darryl's email and his synopsis of the book. I'd welcome your thoughts on the article.

*"I work on contract to Grizzly Adams Productions movie production company. www.grizzlyadams.com With over 600 films and TV shows in their library they have one of the largest libraries outside the major studios like Disney and Sony etc. I work with the CEO to help predict emotions. We studied where they lay out 6 former crisis periods (every 80-100 years) and applied it to film. Because films take several years to produce, we have used this work to predict the emotions of the audience in the future. It has been successful for us. With your work I sure see the emerging markets differently. Thank you very much. Their work is from a different perspective. As an FYI, if you have not seen how *The Fourth Turning* lays out how they see the overall crisis period unfolding till about 2025. Below is the Anatomy of a Crisis from the book *The Fourth Turning*.*

*FYI-from an additional perspective, the U.S. seems to be in the position of the UK during pre-WWII and Obama playing the role of Neville Chamberlin. Along that line, if you read *The Memoirs of Herbert Hoover*, the problems came in ten waves. Five*

while Hoover was in office and 5 while Roosevelt was in office. (If you want more info on this the link is [here](#). If you see us paralleling The Great Depression it may be worth the read.)”

Darryl Howard darrylhoward@comcast.net

Anatomy of a Crisis – Summarised by Darryl Howard

(Taken from the book, The Fourth Turning, By William Strauss and Neil Howe)

A Fourth Turning (crisis period) has 4 parts - Catalyst, Regeneracy, Climax and Resolution. From this perspective – we are clearly in the Regeneracy Phase of the Fourth Turning.

Catalyst - Event or series of events that start to change the mood of the Nation.

Regeneracy - An action plan that unifies and energizes civic life.

Climax - An event that confirms the death of the old and acceptance of the new way.

Resolution - Determines the winners and loser, solidifies the new system.

During Every Fourth Turning there is a...Catalyst

- An event that terminates the mood of the Unravelling and unleashes one of Crisis.
- Triggered by a spark, or series of sparks. Some burn briefly, some leave problems unresolved.
- How we react to them is different
- Triggers a fierce new dynamic public synergy.
- Society feels poorly protected...because they were foreseeable.
- A new sense of urgency about institutional dysfunction and civic vulnerability.

During Every Fourth Turning there is a...Regeneracy

- A drawing together into whatever definition of community is available at the time.
- People stop tolerating the weakening of institutions, the splintering of the culture, and the individualizing of daily behaviour.
- Spiritual curiosity abates, manners traditionalize, and the culture is harnessed as propaganda for the purpose of overtly reinforcing good conduct.
- One to three years after the initial catalyst, people begin deputizing government to enforce it.
- Collective action is seen as vital to solving society’s most fundamental problems.
- With the civic ethos now capable of producing civic deeds, a new dynamic of threat and response takes hold.
- Instead of downplaying problems, leaders start exaggerating them.
- Instead of deferring solutions, they accelerate them. Instead of tolerating diversity, they demand consensus.
- Instead of coaxing people with promises of minimal sacrifice, they summon them with warnings of maximal sacrifice.

- Leaders energize every available institution and direct them toward community survival.
- Society propels itself on a trajectory that nobody had foreseen.
- Societal problems that, in the Unravelling, posed insuperable dilemmas now appear to have simple if demanding solutions.
- A new resolve about urgent public goals crowds out qualms about questionable public means.
- Crisis eras are studded with faulty leadership and inept management. Surprisingly, the public often follows even when mistakes are made.
- Individuals are expected to comply with new standards of virtue.
- Family order strengthens, and personal violence and substance abuse decline.
- Those who persist in free-wheeling self-orientated behaviour now face implacable public stigma, even punishment.
- Winner-take-all arrangements give way to new mechanisms of social sharing.
- Questions about who does what are settled on grounds of survival, not fairness.
- A renewed social division of labour by age / sex.
- Elders are expected to step aside for the young, women for men. When danger looms, children are expected to be protected before parents, mothers before fathers.
- All Social arrangements are evaluated anew; pre-Crisis promises and expectations count for little.
- In the crisis, the pace of daily life will seem to slow down just as political and social change accelerates. (this vs. a past time of fast-paced personal lives against a background of public gridlock)

During Every Fourth Turning there is a...Climax

- Approaching the climax, society reaches a point of maximum civic power...and it justifies public fury. Wars become more likely and are fought with efficacy and finality.
- The risk of revolution is high—as is the risk of civil war, since the community that commands the greatest loyalty does not necessarily coincide with political (or geographic) boundaries.
- Leaders become more inclined to define enemies in moral terms, to enforce virtue militarily, to refuse all compromise...commit large forces...impose heavy sacrifices (at home and abroad) and deploy weapons for victory.
- It is the equivalent to nature's raging typhoon, the kind that sucks all surrounding matter into a single swirl of ferocious energy.
- Anything not lashed down goes flying.
- Anything standing in the way gets flattened.
- It accumulates energy of unmet needs, unpaid bills and unresolved problems.
- It then spends that energy on an upheaval whose direction and dimension were beyond comprehension during the prior Unravelling.
- It shakes society to its roots, transforms institutions, redirects its purposes, and marks its people for life.

During Every Fourth Turning there is a...Resolution

- In triumph or tragedy, or some combination of both, it ends.
- Society passes through a gateway of history, fundamentally altering the course of civilization.
- Victors are rewarded...Nations are forged or destroyed, treaties signed, boundaries redrawn.
- And we start the 80 to 100 year cycle with a new First Turning...A High.

4. Future of Aviation – Free Open Seminar in London – Tuesday February 9th 2010

Rohit will be giving his first open seminar of the year in London on February 9th. **There is no charge for this event.** The seminar is being hosted by Berwin Leighton Paisner. Although the focus is on aviation, the topics could be of interest to a broader audience. Do please forward the details to any contacts in the London area who may want to attend. The topics to be covered will include:

Flying into the Unknown - Surviving and Thriving in a Decade of Turbulence

- *Dancing in the dark* – key global transformations, trends and drivers shaping the future global context for aviation
- *The new normal* – the outlook for travel in the next decade
- *Inevitable surprises* – emerging technologies and their transformational impact on consumer behaviour, travel and aviation
- *Hope is not a strategy* – critical challenges for airports and airlines
- *Free or Fantastic* – rethinking aviation business models and revenue streams
- *Permission to think* – opening up the aviation innovation process
- *Won't get fooled again* – developing a foresight culture.

Registration and breakfast 8.00, seminar 8.30am to 10.00am

Location: St Magnus House, 3 Lower Thames Street, London EC3R 6HE

To book a place please email your name, title, organisation and telephone number to Laura Duffin – laura.duffin@blplaw.com

5. Rohit on the Road

In the coming weeks, Rohit will be delivering keynote speeches on foresight driven innovation, the future of aviation, the future of events, winning in a downturn, the future of the global economy, drivers of change, outlook 2020 and a number of industry focused themes. He is currently scheduled to be in London, Florida, Coventry, Daventry, Exeter, Chepstow, Seoul, Singapore, Brussels, Qatar, Melbourne, Frankfurt, Prague, Barcelona, and Oslo, Stavanger and Alaesund (Norway). If you would like to meet with him or organise a speech for your organisation while he is in your city, please contact rohit@fastfuture.com

6. About Fast Future

Fast Future is a research and consulting firm which focuses on helping clients anticipate and develop innovative responses to the forces, patterns of change and

ideas shaping the future. To discuss your needs for research, consulting, a speech or workshop, contact rohit@fastfuture.com or call +44 (0)20 8830 0766

7. Forthcoming Dates for your Diary

Feb 9th - Flying into the Unknown - Surviving and Thriving in a Decade of Turbulence Breakfast Seminar 8.30am -10am Berwin Leighton Paisner London – email Laura Duffin – laura.duffin@blplaw.com

May 5th-7th What can the Future do for You? Lift Conference Geneva, <http://www.liftconference.com/lift10>

June 9th-10th InnoTown Innovation Conference 2010, Aalesund, Norway www.innotown.com

8. Republishing FutureQuest Content

A number of people have asked to re-publish our content in their magazines, blogs, websites and newsletters. We are happy for you to do this – if you want to republish any articles, please acknowledge the source, provide a link back to our website and let us know you've done it.

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