BACC Futuring Workshop October 12, 2018 OBSERVATIONS in red

Scanning for Signals of Change

Note: Damian LaCroix did not participate in today's workshop.

Garry began the workshop with a recap of our first session, and asked the participants to share any questions they have and any experiences they have had discussing futuring with colleagues in the past few weeks.

OBS: Most members of the cohort group have begun discussing what they have learned and how to use Futuring in their own planning processes. There is an interest in figuring out how to share these techniques wider in the community. There are still questions about how exactly to deploy the techniques we are learning. Questions center on how to give people a frame of reference to connect Futuring with their existing worlds, how to keep foresight thinking sustained, "front and center" and impactful in real world organizations, how to incorporate foresight thought-leadership into existing business systems and processes. Participants had some success in actually deploying the warm-up techniques within organizations; have observed some new willingness in their organizations to think about possible major disruptions that might be on the horizon; have had some success getting the attention of organization leaders.

In response, Garry recommended starting with an exercise in their organizations where everyone lists the obstacles to future thinking in their organizations and then ask people to develop responses to all the obstacles. He will discuss this more with participants in their individual calls with him this week.

He then proceeded into the meat of today's session, also available in a slide deck which he will share.

SCANNING FOR SIGNALS

This section is about identifying weaker signals of change that run out from 5 to 10 years in the future, as opposed to strong signals of change that relate to the near future. We need to increase the volume and breadth of signals of change that we are observing. The most frequently overlooked characteristic of successful change is developing better knowledge, deeper knowledge, fresher information, about change signals. We will be building Framework Forecasts for our organizations that start with scanning for change.

Once we observe signals of change, we need to be able to judge their utility via: source credibility, uniqueness, degree of uncertainty that it will happen, size of impact, and momentum displayed. A signal may confirm or counter the likelihood of some of the scenarios we have developed, or call for creation of a new scenario. Garry displayed several recent news stories carrying signals of change and discussed how to judge them, demonstrating these techniques.

Futurists try to understand emerging trends, events and choices—and also emerging issues. Issues are "will we do X or Y?"—they need to be resolved; as opposed to trends, events and choices, which may simply be observed. How do we analyze emerging issues? Graham Molitor presented an S-Curve model for analysis of emerging issues: 1) initial introduction 2) appearance in leading edge media; 3) appearance in mainstream media; 4) resolution with legislation or other public policy changes. The

group explored examples of such issues emerging in the world of work: parental leave; geographic/remote distribution of employees; tracking of health-related employee behaviors; tracking of employee work performance data; development of collaboration and teamwork (soft) skills in a world where technology is pulling us apart.

Pitfalls when observing signals of change: observers are restless and want to move immediately to figure out the answer. But here, immediate resolution is not the point—we need to get more comfortable with being uncomfortable, so that we can continue to collect and develop information leading to deeper knowledge.

Garry asked the group to begin to increase **use of social media platforms** to observe conversations earlier:

- First, to find relevant **Twitter** hashtags (#futureofwork, #AI, #aging, #agingworkforce, #algobias, #automation); then to locate and follow at least 50 people who are active in discussions around the future of work; then to assign these helpful people to one or more (public or private) lists kept by topic. He discussed building these lists of people by discovering conferences and events and webinars held around a particular theme of interest, and then following their participants and hashtags.
- Second, get acquainted with **Google Alerts** help identify key words or phrases for which you want to receive alerts. Identify 5 or 10 keywords and ask to see a digest of alerts once a day which are then put in a separate labelled folder in order to avoid crowding the inbox.
- Third, **LinkedIn** can also be used for news and information, not just getting to know people. It is a good place to find people sharing early news of change.
- Fourth, Garry asked participants to organize their signals through use of "tagging" and "social bookmarks" to automate and archive the signals being observed. **Diigo** is a free service which creates a library of website signals that have been discovered and (either publicly or privately) tagged so that you can go back later, search by keyword tag and really digest the stories carrying these signals. We can search for keywords when an issue comes up we need to know about for a meeting or speech or Futuring exercise. Garry asked participants to set up a Diigo account so that we can share signals of change with each other by sending links. Diigo itself can also be searched for signals of change.

Garry asked everyone to try to do a daily 15-minute scan for signals of change, find and tag 10 to 15 signals of change each day. He will discuss the next step (what to do with signals of change), namely developing a Framework Forecasting model, with each of the participants in an individual call in the next week or so.

NEXT STEPS

The slide deck will be sent to all participants. Garry will set up a website for us where he will place all the materials for this Workshop and he will provide us the link.

Our next video session together will be November 9.