

# LEARNING THROUGH FUTURES

"It's been incredibly powerful as an educational tool, a tool to create awareness internally as well as gain a better understanding how sustainability is critical for the long-term strategy of the company"



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# LEARNING THROUGH FUTURES

**By testing assumptions and questioning world-views, futures can help to create an individual and organizational mind-set that is different from business as usual.** Moreover, exploring futures can be an educational instrument that builds organizational capabilities in decision-making and dealing with uncertainty. It can aid an organization in being more flexible, better able to cope with change – both essential in searching out transformation. Engaging employees across the organization in the process can spread lessons and experiences more widely and enable them to apply these skills to everyday tasks.

## IMPROVE STRATEGIC CONVERSATIONS

Deutsche Post DHL, which provides continual discussion and communication of futures topics via its [Delivering Tomorrow blog](#), believes a key benefit to using futures is to widen the perspectives of

decision-makers beyond the immediate bounds of the company, improving knowledge and awareness. In their experience, this enhances the quality of internal and external conversations, leading to enriched decisions and action.

Furthermore scenario narratives provide a ‘language’ that works across different levels of a company. This framework of common language and understanding is a foundation on which to base discussion, collaboration, and co-operation. Such narratives and storylines can make difficult, boundless and intangible topics, such as sustainability challenges, more accessible – crucial if we want to be able to discuss the currently ‘non-existent’. They offer people a frame of reference to talk about the issues in relation to something else. Shell highlighted this, emphasizing the importance of creating identities for scenarios and names that aptly encapsulate the essence of each different story. When events start to unfold in a recognized way, colleagues are able to make easily understood references to particular scenarios.

### ABOUT THE VIDEO:

**What if...** we question the status quo from a multitude of perspectives? This workshop uses different activities to get people exploring the future in an interdisciplinary way and uses different mediums to help communicate the currently non-existent.

VIDEO FROM: <https://youtu.be/JvTx7Aft4Tc>

The best way to predict the future is to invent it.

- THEODORE HOOK -



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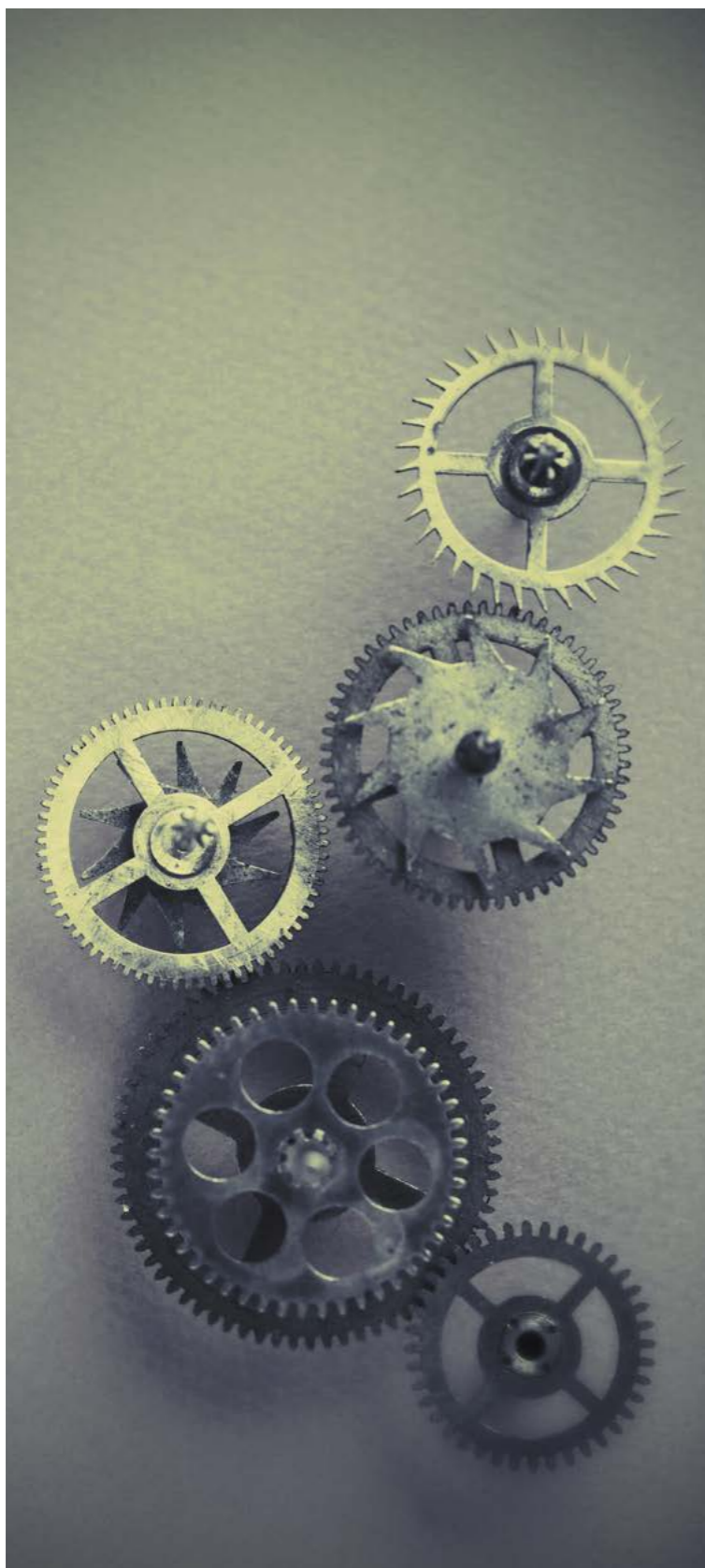
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## ENHANCE DECISION-MAKING CAPABILITIES

Engaging employees and wider stakeholders in the process of futures can improve and provide opportunities to practice decision-making, particularly under conditions of uncertainty. Immersing into [scenario storylines](#) in particular can help to develop this competence by obliging participants to practice or try out operations and decisions in imaginary situations. This also cultivates their ability to see or rehearse the implications of actions in advance. Working through ‘what if’ situations in scenarios can stimulate imagination and explore the implications of different outcomes, enabling employees to consider various options and think in alternatives.

Nike developed a gamification tool called NIKE INC202 to immerse employees in a scenario, enabling them to ‘live’ in a 2021 future world. During the interactive experience, employees and senior leaders

were fed information about external events that might happen, which they had to react, making decisions based on the information they were given. They then experienced the outcomes of these decisions and investments... It proved itself to be a particularly useful tool, as it enabled them to see the increasing impact of sustainability challenges and demonstrated how they were directly relevant to each employee’s role in the company. Senior leaders reported greater commitment to integrating sustainability into their strategies as a result.

Gamification enabled by technology will continue to offer opportunities. Could companies use increasingly accessible virtual reality (VR) technology as a training tool, immersing employees in hypothetical future situations in order to improve decision-making capabilities? See [Fast Company’s analysis of VR opportunities beyond gaming](#).



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