"The Futures of Futures"
Scenario Salon

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February 28-March 2006Austin,
TX Workshop Report

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INTRODUCTION

Forty futurists gathered in Austin, Texas from February 28th-March 1st, 2003 to explore the "Futures of Futures." The meeting was organized by the year-old Association of Professional Futurists (APF), which was formed to give structure and form to the growing informal efforts by many futurists to become more organized. Years of hallway chatter at various conferences and meetings, characterized by frustration at the low esteem of the field and the difficulty in making a living as a practicing futurist, finally reached the point where the number of people involved and their level of frustration hit critical mass. It became time to put up or shut up.

An early experiment along these lines took place in Seattle about a year ago under the moniker of the "Applied Futures Summit." This open-space meeting centered drew 25 futurists around a variety of topics, largely centered on methodological innovation. Here the issue was raised as to whether the informal, ad hoc nature of the Seattle gathering would be sufficient to address the big issues confronting the field and the futurist. What we found over the course of the next year was that most agreed that having a formal organization was both practical and necessary. The vast majority of the Seattle participants have become APF members.

"Do something different"

The APF was busy in 2002 doing the things one does to set up a professional association: defining membership qualifications, a governance structure, recruiting members, and putting together a benefits package. There was an extensive debate about the nature of the first conference, which was to become the Austin scenario salon. While opinions varied about the topic and specific format, the planning team agreed that it would be important to "do something different." A key factor behind the success of the Seattle meeting was using an open space format in which the participants set the agenda and made the meeting happen themselves -- a pleasant departure from the ubiquitous expert, talking-head format. The planning team wanted to keep the ethos of a participant-centered format. This led to the choice of the scenario format.

THE PARTICIPANTS

First let's look at the "credits," that is, who organized, who helped, and who participated. All participants were APF members. Amazingly, almost 50% of the membership attended (40 of 87). There were 12 women and 29 men from the US, Canada, Europe, and Asia in positions ranging from small to bigger consulting firms, organizational futurists inside corporations and government, and future educators and students.

Exhibit 1. "Credits"

Organizers: Michele Bowman & Andy Hines

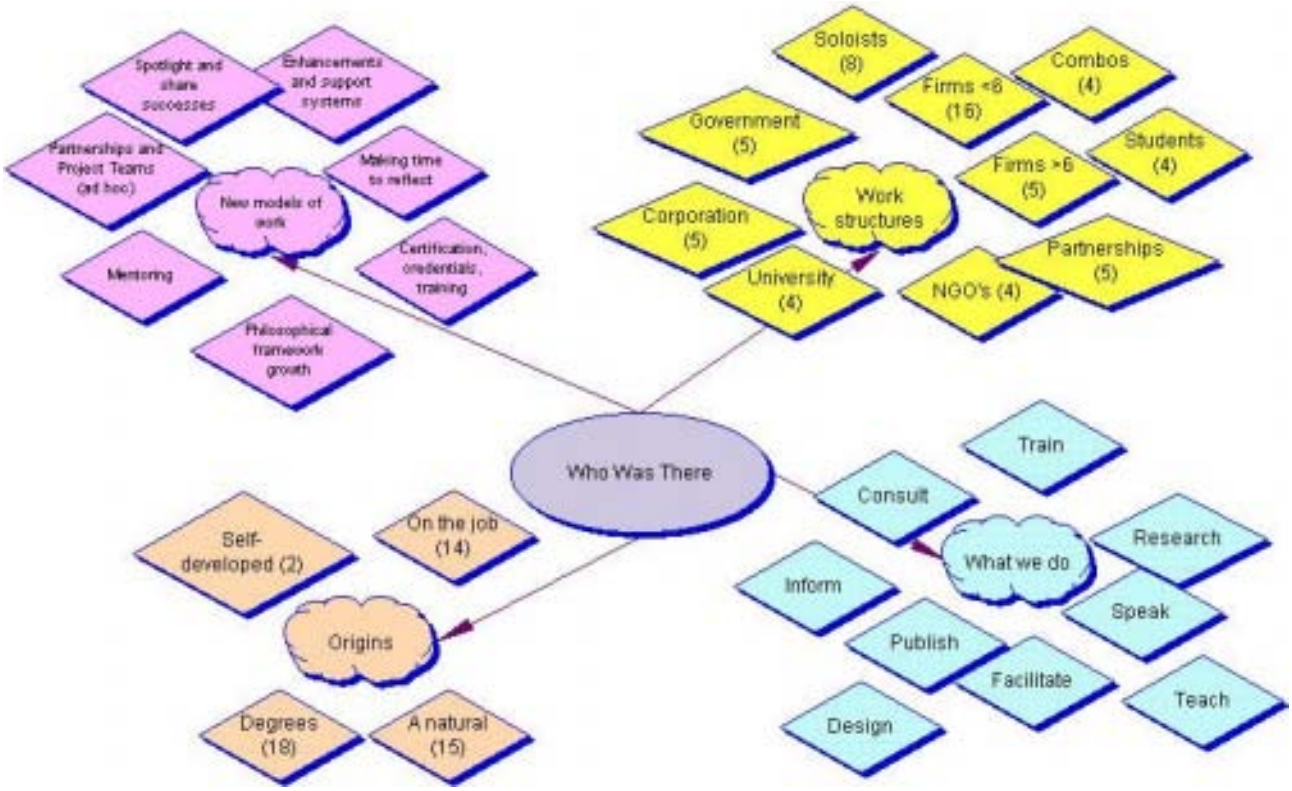
Administrator: Randy Scheel

Interviewers and/or facilitators: Peter Bishop, Michele Bowman, Sandy Burchsted, Denise Chiavetta, Tom Conger, Kate Delaney, Andy Hines, Jennifer Jarratt, John Mahaffie, Mary Jane Naquin, Lee Shupp, Derek Woodgate

Participants: Jan Amkreutz, Peter Bishop, Michele Bowman, Sandra Burchsted, Josh Calder, Anand Chhaptar, Denise Chiavetta, Tom Conger, Christian Crews, Mike Dailey, Kate Delaney, Jay Forrest, Stuart Forsyth, Alex Frase, Joyce Goia, Robert Hahn, Roger Herman, Donna Heivilin, Andy Hines, Jennifer Jarratt, David Jarvis, Mark Justman, Chris Lang, Mats Lindgren, John Mahaffie, Jim Mathews, Mike Mitchell, Mary Jane Naquin, Peter Padbury, John Petersen, Wayne Pethrik, Randy Scheel, Natalie Schoch, Lee Shupp, Lisa Sullivan, Kevin Tubb, Gio Van Remortel, Lloyd Walker, Carly Wobig, Derek Woodgate

From the pre-workshop interviews and discussions during the meeting, we gleaned the following information about the participants: how they became futurists, the types of work they do, the work structures they use, and some of the newer models of work they are experimenting with.

Exhibit 2. Who Was There



FOCAL ISSUE

What will the field of futures and the role of the futurist look like in 20 years?"

More problematic than agreeing on the scenario format was the "futures of futures" topic. Some felt the topic too "altruistic" and not directly enough a benefit. Three main challenges were raised:

- Why would people travel across the country or an ocean to explore the future of the field?
- Hasn't this topic been handled before?
- Why not a sexier topic for our first meeting?

These were indeed valid concerns! Our hope was that the focus on the field would be balanced by a focus on the futurists themselves. After all, isn't in a professional's interest to explore how they fit into the future of their profession? After some investigation, we concluded that while many essays had been written around the topic of the futures of futures, there had never been a large group of futurists gathered together to specifically address the topic in a scenario setting. Lastly, we decided that it was okay to pick a non-sexy topic as long as we managed expectations, and followed this meeting with a topic likely to have broader appeal.

So we kept a rather low profile, set a modest goal for the number of participants (15-20), and emphasized to all those interested just what they were getting into -- namely, they were going to pay their money and be put to work! You can imagine our surprise when the number of sign-ups began to approach thirty. Truth be told, in the beginning the more pessimistic of our bunch felt that the only people who would come would be the half-dozen on the planning team. We had set thirty as an upper limit - never expecting to reach it - to keep the meeting intimate. And we chose a room that reflected that. After weighing the pros and cons, we adjusted the space and decided we could handle forty. We finally held the line at forty, though this had the unpleasant consequence of not being able to accommodate everyone. In retrospect, however, this was a wise choice, as the four groups of ten that forty participants enabled proved to be a very workable number that kept a small-group intimate feel to the meeting.

Thus we settled on a focal issue of "What will the field of futures and the role of the futurist look like in 20 years?" This issue reflects the two central concerns of the APF:

- How do we improve the image and performance of the futures field?
- How do we improve the prospects for the futurists working in it?

"Credible profession, thriving professionals."

We believe professionalizing the field and the working futurists in it is a means to achieve the above. Our sound-bite goal for the association is "credible profession, thriving professionals." Four specific objectives for the meeting were outlined:

- Build the foundation for shaping the futures of the field
- Imagine, explore and identify our professional future
- Identify activities for future APF events benefiting both members and the field as a whole
- Network and enjoy the company of our colleagues from a variety of organizations

THE INTERVIEWS

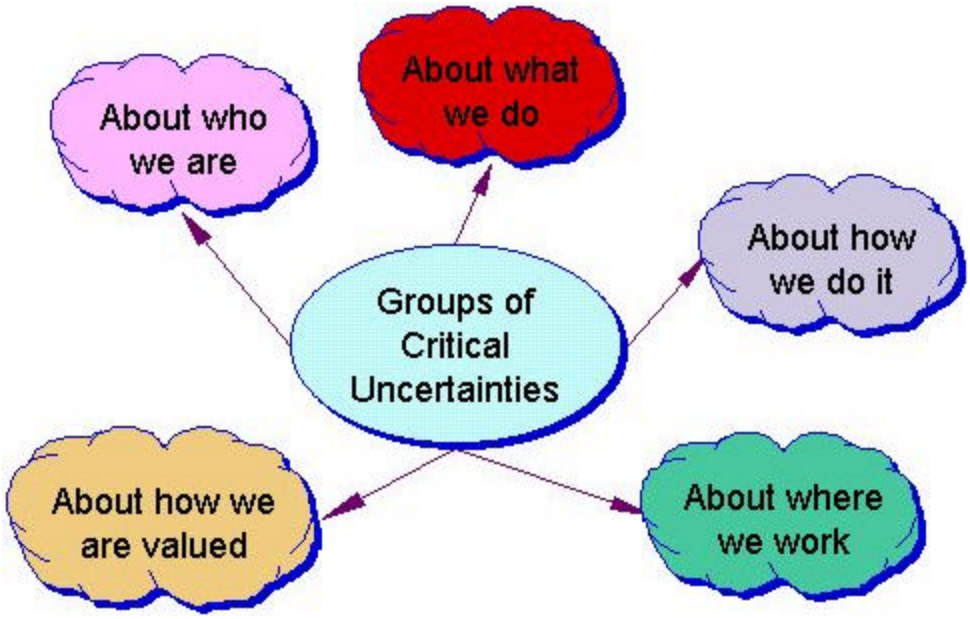
A dozen members helped with the interviewing (see Exhibit 1 above). It turned out to be a good thing, as practically all participants ended up being interviewed. In most of the author's experiences a greater than 50% response rate to pre-workshop interviews is doing pretty well. The 80+% we had was great from a participation perspective, but sure created a bunch of work for the interviewers and the subsequent interpretation. We asked the following questions:

Exhibit 3. Interview Questions

(1) Please describe your futures work? What do you do, for whom, and to what end?
(2) If I could answer any question for you regarding the futures of futures and/or futurists, what would it be?
(3) If you looked back from 20 years hence, and told the triumph of futures and/or futurists, what would it be?
(4) If you looked back from 20 years hence, and told the failure futures and/or futurists, what would it be?
(5) What do futures and/or futurists need to forget? Or to remember?
(6) What are one or two critical strategic decisions regarding futures and/or futurists on the horizon? Who will make these decisions?
(7) What are the top 2 or 3 trends driving the future of futures and/or futurists?
(8) What are the obstacles or leverage points here? How could they be managed best?
(9) How would you like futures and/or futurists to be remembered?
(10) How do you define a successful outcome for this scenario salon?
(11) What should I have asked that I didn't?

These questions produced over forty pages of data. The primary task of the analysis was to extract the critical uncertainties around the focal issue. A small team then sorted this raw data into several buckets that later was narrowed to the five we used as shown in Exhibit 4.

Exhibit 4. Groups of Critical Uncertainties



The preliminary sort lead to 72 potential critical uncertainties into these five buckets. Further analysis boiled this down to the 32 that we used in the meeting. The number of times someone mentioned an uncertainty -- typically in different words -- is in parentheses.

Exhibit 5. Candidate Critical Uncertainties

About who we are

1. Will futurists work together more closely, effectively, and globally? (22)
2. Has futures bottomed-out after a two-decade decline, or is the "bottom" yet to come? (16)
3. Will the field attract a new and diverse group of professionals? (12)
4. Will futurists continue to talk among ourselves or more effectively reach out to other organizations? (6)
5. Will we find the right balance between professionalism and making everybody a futurist? (6)
6. Will we describe ourselves as futurists? (4)

About what we do

7. Will futures move beyond just outlining possibilities and empower people to make better decisions and take action? (31)
8. Will futurists work together to build new approaches and methodologies? (19)
9. Will we have the courage to look out far, to even appear ridiculous? (8)
10. Will we take advantage of new technology to improve futures practice? (6)
11. Will futurists provide images, ideas, and visions that people can to hold onto? (6)
12. Will "depth futures" emerge as a complement to empirical futures? (5)
13. Will futurists have anything new to tell people about? (4)
14. Will the world become so complex that it makes useful futures work impossible? (4)
15. Will futures learn to blend pop and more substantive approaches? (3)
16. Will futurists miss something big because they didn't see what they didn't want to see?
17. Will futures embrace content and move beyond just facilitation?
18. Will there be money to fund futures research?

About how we are valued

19. Will government, business, and educational leaders ever believe they can't effectively function without futurists? (39)
20. Will our offerings be seen as unique? (18)
21. Will the field of futures be a respected one in society in 20 years? (16)
22. Will futurists get better at communicating their message, such as via the media? (10)
23. What percentage of people will know what a futurist is twenty years out? (9)

About how we do things

24. Will there be workable and respected standards for professional futurists? (14)
25. Will futurists report successes that have had impact on an organization? (7)
26. Will we find a way to get credit for the wins of our clients? (6)
27. Will we build or validate a formal body of knowledge that we expect practitioners to know and understand?
28. Will the field become more introspective and self-critical instead of blaming others for our problems?

About where we work

29. Will futurists bring more clarity to the human endeavor and make a difference regarding global problems? (22)
30. Will futurists cultivate an appetite for change? (9)
31. Will we discover what products or services that futurists offer will be most in demand? (8)
32. Will futurists fill the need for futures thinking or will it fall to mainstream consultants? (8)

We also used the interviews to create conceptual framework for the meeting. They told us some things about the nature of the participants, their work, their clients, competitors, the approaches and tools they used, and their concerns about the field and their futures practice.

Finally, we extracted some of the more provocative quotes and compiled them into a three-page pre-read that we sent to participants a week before the meeting. We deliberately chose the more provocative quotes -- hoping that people would challenge them. They did. Some participants commented on the seeming negative slant of the interviews. Our response was that we deliberately highlighted these, and that we quite struck by how respondents that were negative about the field were often highly positive about their personal prospects as futurists. Pessimism about the field and optimism about their individual futures practice seemed to be a fairly common characteristic among participants.

Exhibit 6. Selected Quotes from Interviews

About who we are

- We need the field to have an image -- could add something to those in the futures business?
- Is this going to be a legitimate discipline in the future or not? Will we have a title in the Dept. of Labor Handbook of Occupational Statistics?
- We have an opportunity -- if we speak with one voice -- to create a strong branding message for the field that will be accepted in the popular media.
- We are living in critical times for our profession … its ours to envision the future of the profession.

- Public perception of futurism is shaped by the most prominent futurists, who tend not to need any kind of professional grouping.
- The big question will be how we organize the futures field.
- Futurists seem to want to remain independent, not get it all together. But our weak performance is evidence that we're missing a big opportunity.
- A lot of the baggage will retire and create an opportunity to re-boot. Young people will make or break the field. New tools involved, such as computer gaming. It will be a different toolbox.
- Will the major established futures consulting firms find it in their interest to actively pursue development of the field?
- [We need to forget] the animosity between the often false dichotomy of – take your pick -- academic/research/epistemological/critical futurists and the –take your pick – corporate/applied/empirical futurists.
- I believe the rate of change and complexity is so great that the practitioners trying to make sense of it will be extraordinary different people than today. Could become a real genuine profession due rate and importance of implications
- Branding will become a key strategy, to the extent that almost every serious futurist will want to be associated with the professional organization in the field.
- Have we bottomed-out after a two-decade decline, or is the "bottom" yet to come? If the "bottom" is yet to come, where is the safe haven from which Futures will reemerge (academia, etc.)?
- Many individuals who used to call themselves "futurists" survived and remained successful by doing basically what they'd always done, but calling it whatever the whims of the business climate dictated.
- Forget about trying to get rid of the so-called charlatans. With the proliferation of information, we will not win that battle.
- Field reached its nadir in the late 1970s and became far less in demand; instead of asking "what happened" we shouted louder and didn't become self-critical. The field has not been self-critical. We have not been introspective. We blamed others and not ourselves. It became irrelevant with a lot of angry people.
- How do we frame ourselves? How do we present ourselves to the public? How do we deal with the past images of futurists? What do you call it? The words matter! A lot of bias built into thirty years of history. Think about re-framing, grammar, word choices.

<u>About what we do</u>

- We helped transform mindsets so people wake up to their own creative potential.
- We need to forget the old methodologies of the 50s and 60s developed under a mechanical, top-down paradigm and are no longer relevant to a networked, systems view of the world. Solutions for the past aren't necessarily solutions for the future.
- [We need] a real breakthrough in theory and methodology.
- [We need to] develop technical skills that are hard to learn and to do (i.e., beyond common sense) and produce value-added
- We've relied for so long on existing tools and methodologies that we feel no real impetus to develop new ones.
- Where are the new tools and methodologies going to emerge from?

- [A failure could be that] the world is simply too complex for futurists
- We don't seem to have anything new to tell people about. Nanotechnology is actually old news.
- Conceptually, growing interest in "depth futures" as a complement to an over-emphasis on empirical futures
- We have to help clients do something different on Monday morning
- Putting things on the radar screen that aren't normally there
- We need to define what we do better – we do so many things, give speeches, do change management, etc. etc. Our offering as futurists is diluted by the many different kinds of offerings
- One of the most important and neglected activities for futurists is to develop a range of credible visions of the future of the policy issue to inform the public dialogue.

About how we do things

- We missed something really big -- a big wildcard happens that we missed, perhaps because we don't see what we don't want to see
- To be professional enough and be perceived as people who can really contribute and not just interesting opinions?
- Nobody is paid full-time to do this research.
- We have an inability in tying futures work to an item on the budget. The value of the work is not easily tied to a dollar sign.
- [It's] very important to have colleagues in the field to learn from.
- We need real courage to look out far, to even appear ridiculous.
- We must continually reflect on our practices, innovate, and then disseminate. We don't do so now because we don't take the time to publish and because there is not a good channel or "retail point" for that kind of knowledge.
- Will futurists will adopt and enforce standards for membership in the profession?
- Too many of us talk the future; few really live it. The field needs both.
- I have heard futurists (some fairly well known) pan the work of others – not saying you can not disagree – but there are ways of disagreeing without – debate should be about options not factions
- The profession ain't gonna get there without some very advanced technology that allows one to make sense of the nature and dynamic complexity; using post it notes on the wall won't cut it
- Most professions rely heavily on their academics to provide new and better tools.
- People realize that it was stupid to fight for small pieces of the [futures] pie, and that by letting go of business "territories" and being protective, the field was able to grow and flourish.
- Another failure would be that professional standards are never developed, due to infighting, or perceptions about standards being so narrow as to be exclusive or so broad as to be insignificant.
- Be mindful of how destructive it can be to get stuck on a particular issue of debate within the field and endlessly pound it into the ground.

About where we work

- The President and his advisers are meeting. The President stops the discussion by raising his hand. "Okay, let's stop and take some time to think about the long-term consequences for us all

of this plan." Pointing to the futurist in the room she says, "you take over this discussion and let's be sure we have some alternative outcomes to present to the nation."

- There's more information available about the future in the mainstream media than ever before.
- Futurists were a decisive influence in getting the world to deal with the problems of the 21st century.
- A triumph would be that studying the future is as common as studying economics or history. There would be A Department of the Future -- at the Cabinet level in the government… at a very high level…
- Connecting closer to other professions
- Futures thinking has a wonderful role to play in the expanding number of organizations trying to become learning organizations
- The work will be there, but under what kind of aegis?
- What will the other players in this area be doing? For example the strategic consultants and ad agencies who increasingly do similar work?
- [A leverage point is that] everybody is thinking about the future.
- ["Futurists] help the world find a way to find way to healthy future.
- Futurists cultivated an appetite for change
- Younger people, ages 12 to 24 year, accept the perception that they are already living in the future, so why study it?
- Many of us in the profession are trying to put ourselves within knowledge networks and then to mobilize the expertise in those networks to think about the future. On the edges of these networks, there are lots of other people biting off chunks of futures work—the risk management crowd, public relation issues managers, scanners. Increasingly our job is to have an overview, to understand what tools are useful, to help manage and integrate the process so it produces a relevant and strategic product.

<u>About how we are valued</u>

- [The field could be] completely irrelevant; not exist anymore.
- What products or services that futurists offer will be most in demand?
- [An obstacle is] the publics' inability to tell the difference between quality futures work and trash
- Will the field be distinct or special or an ordinary technique of leadership and management?
- What good success stories will we have to increase credibility?
- Futures thinking was shown to be a fad of the late 20th Century and early 21st Century. It was largely discredited as a business and organizational tool by the development of more efficient computer-based decision-making and analysis, and by the failure of the field to maintain relevancy to the serious business of the day.
- The media routinely calls on futurists to provide context and commentary to explain world events
- We've got to highlight good futures work
- As professionals they are recognized (Nobel Prize perhaps?) for having addressed many world problems.
- Will the profession be so valued that people will pay the big bucks for our services?
- People are leaving money for funding future research because it makes a difference in people's lives
- [We need to] communicate our value and successes

?? Do we know what the world wants from us?"
?? Futurists are accepted (not freaky, as today), get no strange looks, don't have to explain what the "F" word means.
?? Futurists are looking for a home run—being the ones to change the course of an industry. But we won't get the credit, and probably shouldn't. Our work is a means to an end, not the end itself. We should not get caught in the trap of trying for this kind of win.
?? What percentage of people will know what a futurist is twenty years out?
?? Will futurists or their skills be needed as specialized and independent endeavors, or will the practices of anticipating change and the use of systems thinking be integrated into general decision making process.

WORKSHOP DESIGN

In keeping with our desire to keep the onus on participants, we decided to take a team approach to facilitating the meeting. We risked the possibility of lack of continuity for the benefit of getting more people involved. Fortunately we maintained a satisfactory degree of coherence with eight people facilitating the meeting. In retrospect, it provided a nice balance of fresh faces and different approaches.

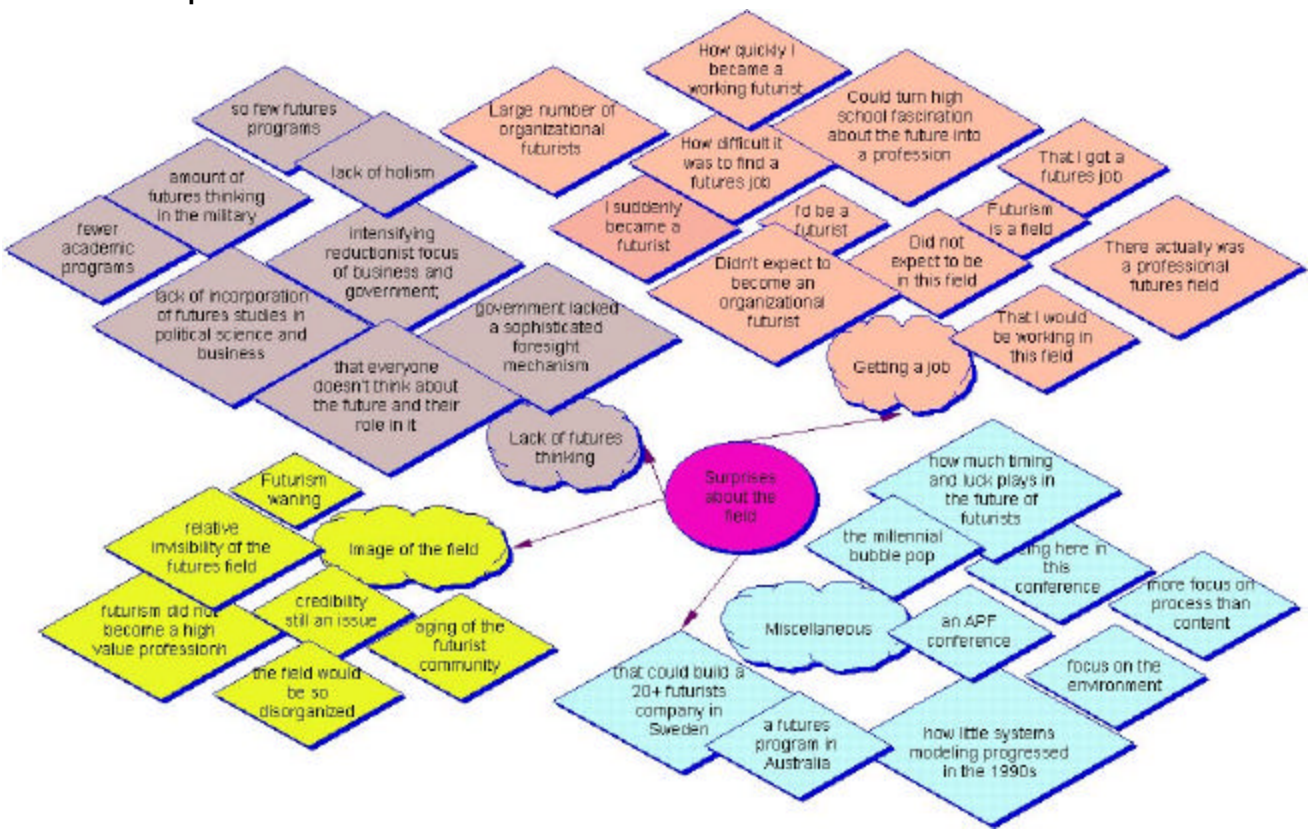
We used what could be called the "standard" Global Business Network (GBN) approach to scenario planning. (See Appendix 9 for the Agenda) Many of us were familiar with it and it has proven to work well with large groups. Interestingly, almost all involved in facilitating the meeting claim to use a variation of this standard approach. And having worked with GBN, it's fair to say that even they rarely use their own standard approach, but customize according to the situation. Nonetheless, we felt it would be important not to get into a debate about process during the workshop, so Hines was given "veto" power as the master of ceremonies. Each facilitator was given a "deliverable" for their module and a suggested set of slides. They could modify as they saw fit, but once they went into the master presentation, they were set. This worked well, but it's worth noting that we couldn't help ourselves and ended up modifying a few modules on the fly during the meeting.

A reception the evening before helped break the ice. A mini-buzz was created around the purpose of different color dots on each participant's badge. Trying to solve this mystery got the creative juices flowing (margaritas may have helped as well). The actual purpose was to enable an effective table rotation scheme. As mentioned earlier, the facilitating team was concerned about the relatively large size of the group, and wanted to create an intimate conversational atmosphere. We also knew that networking was a key reason people were coming. We biased the format to lots of small group interaction, and came up with a scheme to rotate the tables frequently. The scheme worked well from the networking perspective, but did involve a trade-off with continuity. While only half the tables shifted at a time, there was some loss of table knowledge and some time required to bring new table members up to speed.

WORKSHOP RESULTS

We opened with an exercise that asked participants to identify something that had surprised them about the futures field in the past. The responses fell into four groups -- about getting a job, lack of futures thinking, the image of the field, and miscellaneous -- as summarized in the exhibit below.

Exhibit 7. Surprises about the Field



Critical uncertainties

We then got down to business by diving into the critical uncertainties. We worked from the list of 32 critical uncertainties (see Exhibit 5). After clarifications, additions, and discussion, we got the list down to the dozen below.

Exhibit 8. First Sort of Critical Uncertainties

What we do

1. Will we will work together to build a coherent, profession/field?
2. Will the field be able to leverage technological breakthroughs or will we be subsumed?
3. Will we be entering a new era (serious crisis)?

How we do things

4. Will there be an established tool set/field of practice?
5. Will there be new methods of practice (more thorough methodological approach)?
6. Will a credible philosophy of futures and change emerge? Will the world come in our direction?

Where we work

7. Will the world want help re: futures (the “searing customer pain”)?
8. Will futures thinking be more valued?

How we are valued

9. Will the market perceive us as unique or will the tools be subsumed in other professions (brand)?
10. Will the world care what we think?
11. Will there be an ethical, legal, and social underpinning to futures work?
12. Will we successfully communicate the value we bring?

Interestingly, there was a balanced mix from 4 of the 5 buckets, with the exception of "who we are" that concerned the identity of the field and futurists. This likely reflects the fact that the "who we are" uncertainties were perhaps closer to outcomes than drivers, that is, the image of the field and the professional will largely depend on what we do, how we do it, where we do it, and how it's valued by others.

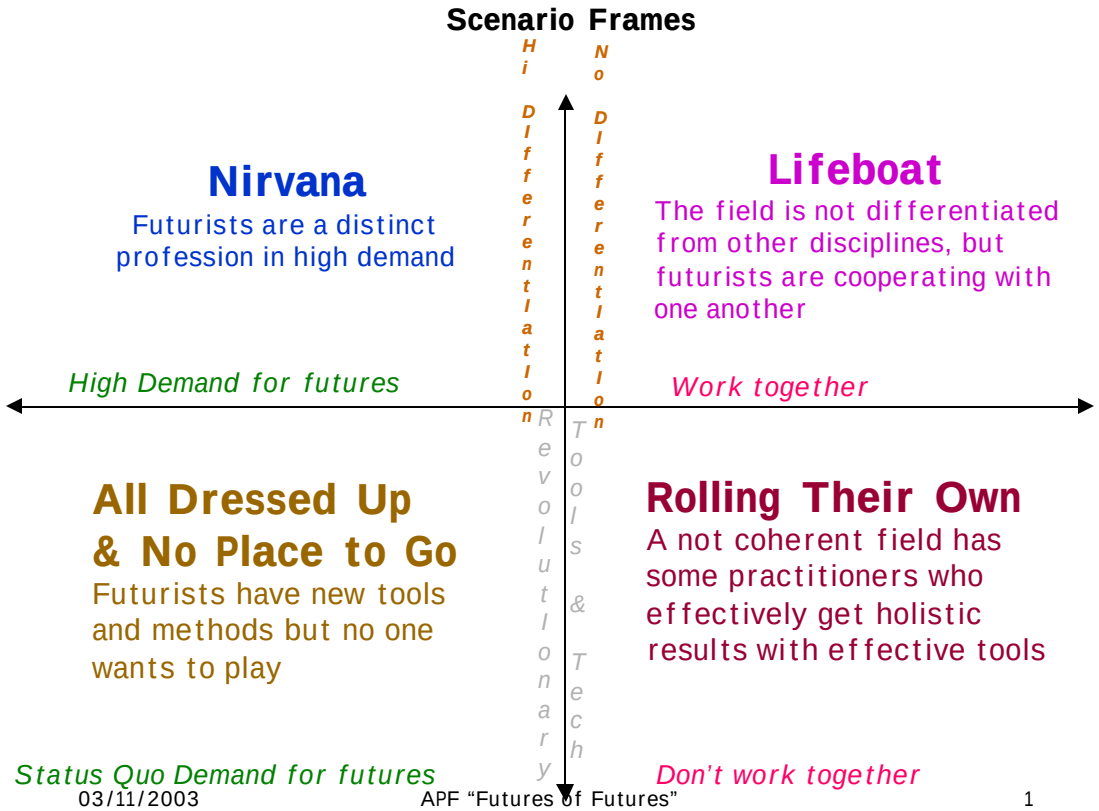
We then had further discussions and prioritized this down to the four we used to set the framework of our scenarios. Again, interestingly, we had one from each of the four remaining buckets. The facilitator did not steer the group in this or any direction. Upon reflection, the fact that the group saw critical uncertainties coming from a range of areas lent some useful balance to the scenarios. The four we settled on were:

Exhibit 9. Four prioritized uncertainties

We then used these four uncertainties to build potential scenarios. We were in four small teams. Each was given a different set of two uncertainties to work with. This led to sixteen potential scenarios. We asked each team to pick the two that they felt were the most interesting. During a break, the facilitation team reviewed the first and second choices, and sought to pick four that best balanced the uncertainties and gave a range of positive and negative futures. We didn't want to have all four teams pick wildly positive futures or wildly negative futures so we chose a range of positive, negative and mixed scenarios. Happily, by giving two teams their first choice, and two teams their second, we achieved the balance we sought. The sixteen possibilities are appended. The four that we selected are below in Exhibit 10.

Note that this is not a classic 2x2 matrix that crosses two uncertainties. We've highlighted the uncertainties that frame each of the four scenarios, with the "extremes" of the axes noted. For example, the "Nirvana" story is framed by an axis of highly differentiated futures offerings and high market place demand for futures work. Next to it is "Lifeboat," which is framed by a lack of differentiation of futures offerings but a futures field that works together well. And so on. This approach gives you a wider range of possibilities, but trades off some of the coherence that you get in using a classic 2x2.

Exhibit 10. Scenario Frames



Predeterminеds

After using the uncertainties to frame the four scenarios, we brainstormed the "predeterminеds" using the criteria of:

- You know it's going to happen
- It's important to the focal issue
- It's not being prepared for properly
- Needs to be almost unanimous

The eight predeterminеds we agreed upon were:

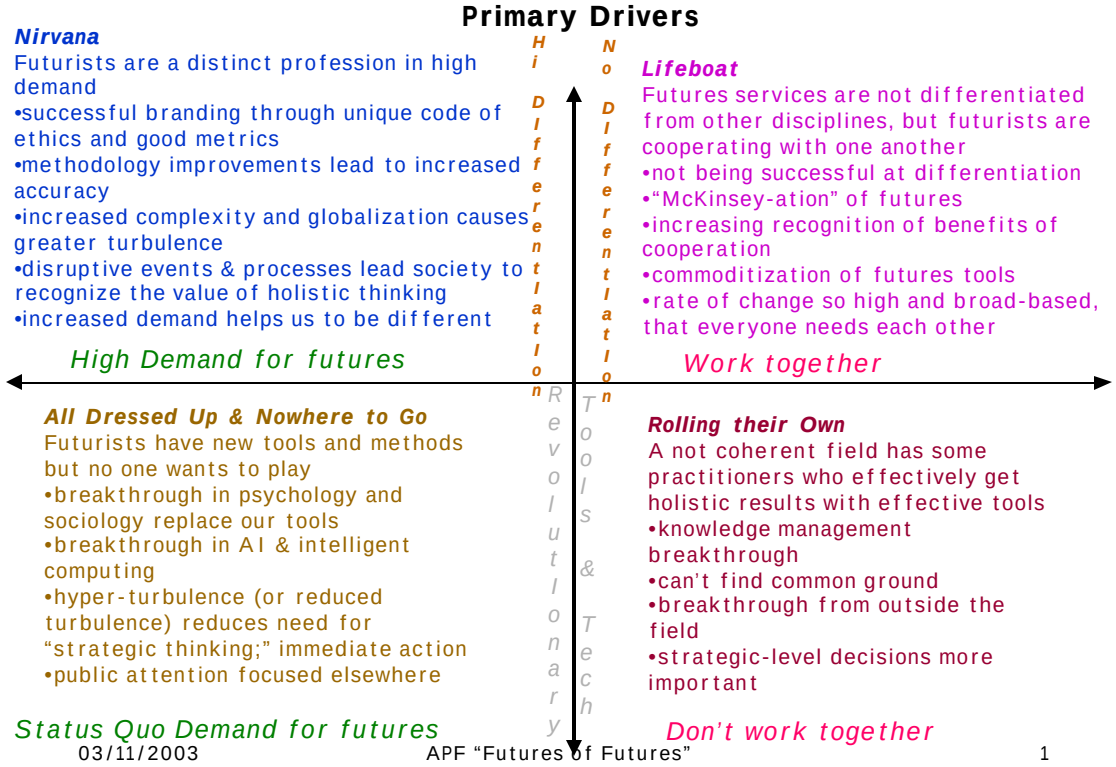
- There will be more interdependence and connectivity -- western view influenced and modified by non-western views
- Futurist celebrities will still have substantial influence on the perception of the field and the economics of it
- Continuing and increasingly disruptive technology
- Globalization of companies
- Leadership changes in futures field
- Diversity of perspectives, approaches, etc.
- There will be a human interest in the future
- There will be increasing complexity in spite of technological advances

These predeterminedes were part of the raw material used to construct the driving forces behind the scenarios and the scenario stories themselves.

Primary Drivers

Next we explored the drivers that might lead us to each of the four broad scenarios we framed. We focused on the top half-dozen or so reasons why the world might go in the direction the scenarios suggested.

Exhibit 11. Primary Drivers



Scenario headlines

Armed with scenario frameworks, uncertainties, predeterminedes, and driving forces, we were ready to generate some content. Given our time constraints, we focused on generating sound-bite-like news headlines to capture the essence of the trend, events, and characteristic activities in each scenario. We asked participants to generate headlines using the framework below.

Exhibit 12. Scenario Headlines Framework

External World			
Transaction Space			
Futures Profession			
	Beginning 2005	**Middle 2010**	**End 2020**

The external world focuses on externalities to futures. The transaction space is the intersection between the futures profession and the external world -- where futures meets its market. And lastly we focused on the profession itself. While we asked participants to stretch to 2020, one participant noted, after seeing what the teams had generated, that "we behaved just like our clients - we didn't really stretch ourselves." This observation produced the laughter one hears when an observation has hit the mark. Upon reflection, while the scenario headlines indeed could have stretched further, the major themes upon which they were built have a robustness that suggests they are challenges that will still be with us in 2020. Below are some highlights from a larger list of headlines generated. Given our focus, we drew upon the transaction space and futures profession. The full set of ideas generated for each scenario are appended.

The most positive scenario, Nirvana, is a world in which futurists are a distinct profession in high demand. It 's something of an aspirational scenario. The other three are a mixed bag of positive and challenging aspects -- favorable developments are offset by to some extent by unfavorable ones. Something of a surprise was that two of the scenarios envisioned tools and methodological breakthroughs -- perhaps this reflected some offline conversations worrying about the current "aging" tool kit.

We didn't have an overwhelmingly negative scenario. Although most agreed this was plausible, there wasn't seen to be a great role for a professional association if the profession and the professionals faded out of existence. To some extent, trends are pointing in that direction today (we included a recent Newsweek story on the decline of futures in the pre-read packet), hence our reason for being and our desire to explore the future and see how we can address and redress the situation.

Exhibit 13. Scenario Headlines

IMPLICATIONS

We then explored the implications of each of the scenarios, using the following questions:

?? What is this world like?

?? How does the futures profession evolve and adapt?

?? What does this mean for individual futurists?

?? How does impact APF?

We wanted to capture how the different scenarios would imply different strategic responses for APF. In the Nirvana scenario, a ready market for futures and respect for futurists enables a professional association to help define methods and tools that will be incorporated into mainstream decision-making processes, such as the "5th pillar of management" example cited in Exhibit 15 below. The Lifeboat scenario depicts a world in which futures products are commodities. A tactical implication is to band together and promote a brand or certification approach to help differentiate futurists' offerings from mainstream consultants. A more strategic approach would be bring futurists together to develop the new offerings that helped differentiate the work of futurists.

In both Rolling Their Own and All Dressed Up, the field has exciting new tools, but struggles in taking advantage of them. In Rolling their Own, futurists fail to come together as a group to take advantage of the new tools. Instead they focus on protecting their own piece of the pie. Unfortunately, non-futurists begin to take bites out of the pie. In All Dressed Up, the tools are perceived as so good and user-friendly that futurists aren't needed. Their expertise in interpretation and qualititative distinctions loses out to more quantitative forecasting tools. In both scenarios, something of a "star system" prevails -- a few big names do well and the rest toil in anonymity. Here a professional association helps consumers differentiate amongst the star and non-star offerings, and provides the training to help make future stars -- similar to a minor leagues or farm team. Below are key implications we generated:

Exhibit 14. Implications

APF VALUE PROPOSITION

The final module of the workshop centered on the value proposition for APF. The goal here was to create some ideas for follow-on strategy development. We did this by charging each team with assuming that their scenario had happened and describing how the APF should respond or "create value." We did this using an "Elevator Speech" tool that asked teams to quickly summarize their strategy, assuming they were caught in an elevator with the UN Secretary General who asked about

what the APF was doing. This session segwayed into a longer open discussion about the overall meaning of the previous day-and-a-half's workshop.

The categories we used were:

- *Who* are our customers
- *What* are the benefits of our offering and how is it differentiated?
- *How* do we deliver the benefits to our customers?

In Nirvana, the APF should be focused on building the credibility of the field and its professionals in order to take advantage of the boom market for futures. This includes a focus on best practice development and helping the development of a proprietary tool kit that enables futurists to have a unique and valued position in the marketplace.

In Lifeboat, the APF focuses on building a community of practice and bringing futurists together. The longer-term challenge here would be to develop specialized and customized products to combat the commodity nature of most of the offerings in the field.

In Rolling their Own, a key offering is the APF's ability to provide a kind of Consumer Reports referral service that helped consumers make informed choices among a disparate and confusing array of offerings.

In All Dressed Up, the APF would need to raise the public profile of futures and emphasize that there is a need for the unique skill set that futures brings to the table. It would be noted how futurists were expert at interpretation using the same tools as others, as well as the alternative, qualitative and depth tools that have fallen into neglect.

Exhibit 15. Value Propositions

Nirvana	***Lifeboat***	**Rolling Their Own**	All Dressed Up
Who: For APF those who assist others to anticipate and /or influence the long-term future **What:** Promoting the practice of foresight • special development • training • definition of proprietary methods and tools • best practices vs. proprietary • thought leaders for development, renewal of tools-- >standards>certification **How:** Are we capable of cohering the field? • Definition of field & role • Standards • Can we leverage the hard and soft technologies? • Methods • Do we have credibility? • Can we maintain it? • How do we create and prove our credibility? • Do we have unique value that we bring and can we communicate it? • A start-up view • an identified and growing market • a great, experienced team • a solution that provides unfair advantage • Solution and plan is derived from validated customer pain • Investor would challenge the belief/certainty That futures will be more used in future business Or that longer term view will be adopted	**Who**: • Clients who want extreme specialization and Customization; heavy hand-holding • Those clients looking for fringe applications and Novel approaches to strategy • Neo-Luddites who refuse to use technology • Those industries where the application and Interpretation of foresight regulation is unclear, ambiguous, capricious and always under revision **What:** Unique services for unique clients • Publishing • Matching companies and consultants • online collaboration • play space **How:** • Providing a forum(community) • extreme niche-crafting • providing unique knowledge for unique clients • high-profile pro bono projects • marketing	**Who**: • Individual futurists • APF members • tool developers • potential clients • corporate members **What:** • Develop and bring together advanced capabilities for reducing uncertainty • Tool assessment • tool access (developers) • inside track • input into development • tool training/certification • benefits - insurance, retirement, job stuff • competitive intelligence • networking • trade show • limited branding • collaboration/pool of folks **How:** • Alliances • Sponsors • fee-for-service • sponsoring conferences • "seal-of-approval" for tools • full-time employee(s) • develop tool evaluation and assessment process (tool database • volunteer assess/research institute	**Who**: • Backstage futurists - up and coming drivers of society, working for icon futurists • Certified foresight professionals Fresh icons (larger, more skilled) **What:** • Level of debate about the future • training, certification, technical excellence (international) • input to iconic futurists (Dr. Phil tomorrow) • broader view of long term thinking in rapidly changing society (public) • high quality product **How:** • TV, publishing, electronic media • ask Dr. Phil • meme war • software for government, business, education, corp., social organizations training and continuing education alliances of the willing

Moving Forward

The primary aim of this report is to communicate the experience of participating in the scenario salon and to provide a data dump of findings with some very preliminary analysis. While APF is firmly committed to delivering benefits to its members right away, we also realize that building the long-term image of the field, and improving the long-term prospects of its professional members, is probably a "generational" task, hence our choice of scenarios looking out to 2020.

As you've likely concluded by this point, we have a rich body of material to build some long-term planning around. At the same time, it merely scratches the surface of key issues we'll likely be dealing with over the next generation.

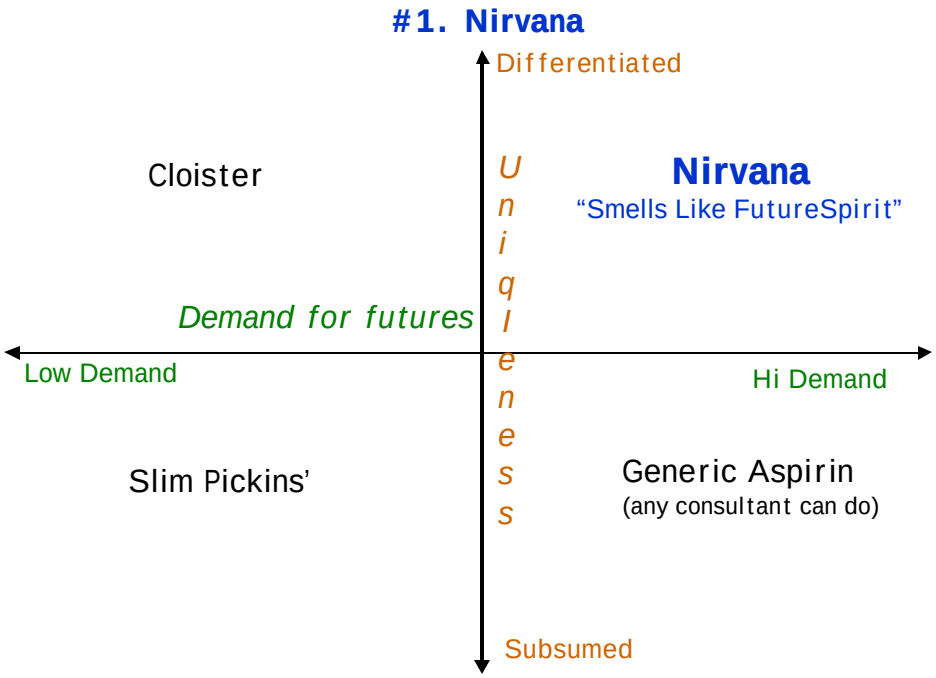
Our immediate plans for moving forward are identifying strategic issues that we can manage as issues. Issues management, after all, is a futures tool. We will also be looking to form teams around key issues, or the responses that the key issues suggest. For instance, one of the key uncertainties we identified was whether the field would cohere or fragment. A response now getting underway is to form communities of practice within APF, in which a small team is getting organized to lay out plans. The meeting raised the profile of tool development on most participant's radar screens and suggests an opportunity for APF in helping facilitate this.

We also see the input giving us strong guidance to the types of benefits we should be providing. Again, networking comes out as a response to the coherence/fragmentation issue, but also came through as a key theme before the meeting, during the meeting, and after-hours.

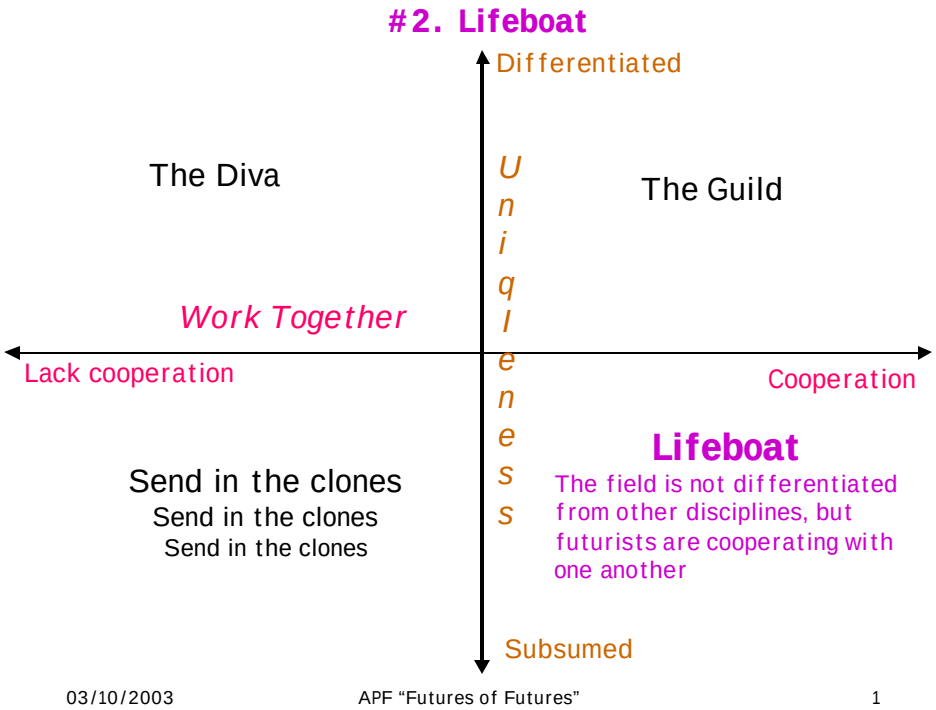
The morning after the meeting concluded, several participants were reflecting on the pros and cons. Perhaps in time we'll see the main benefit of the meeting being enlisting participants in a common cause and building a sense of community and shared responsibility, and a desire to expand both in the years ahead.

APPENDICES

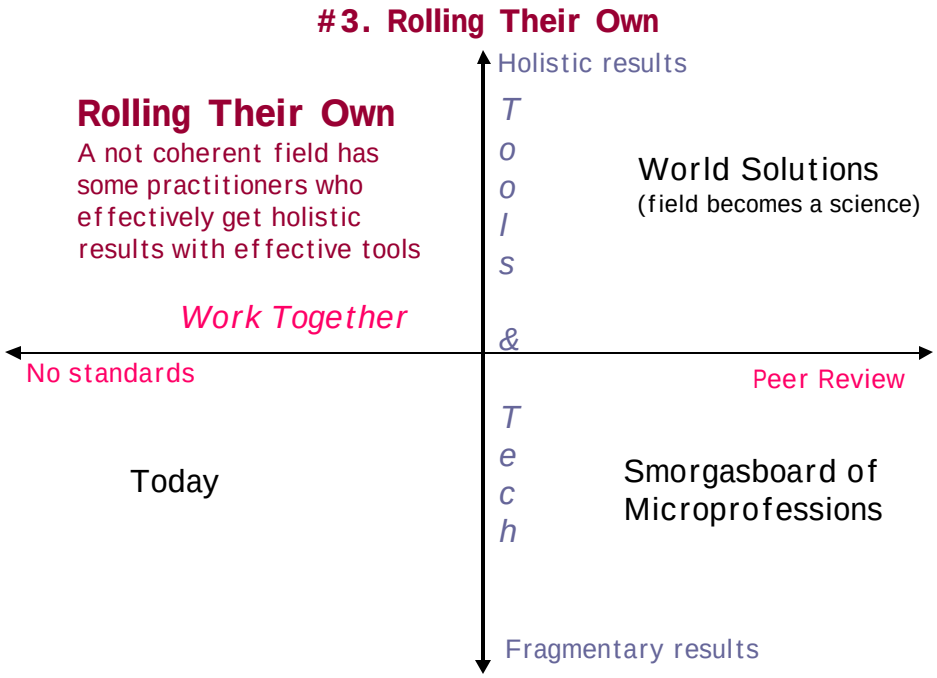
Appendix 1. Team 1 Scenarios



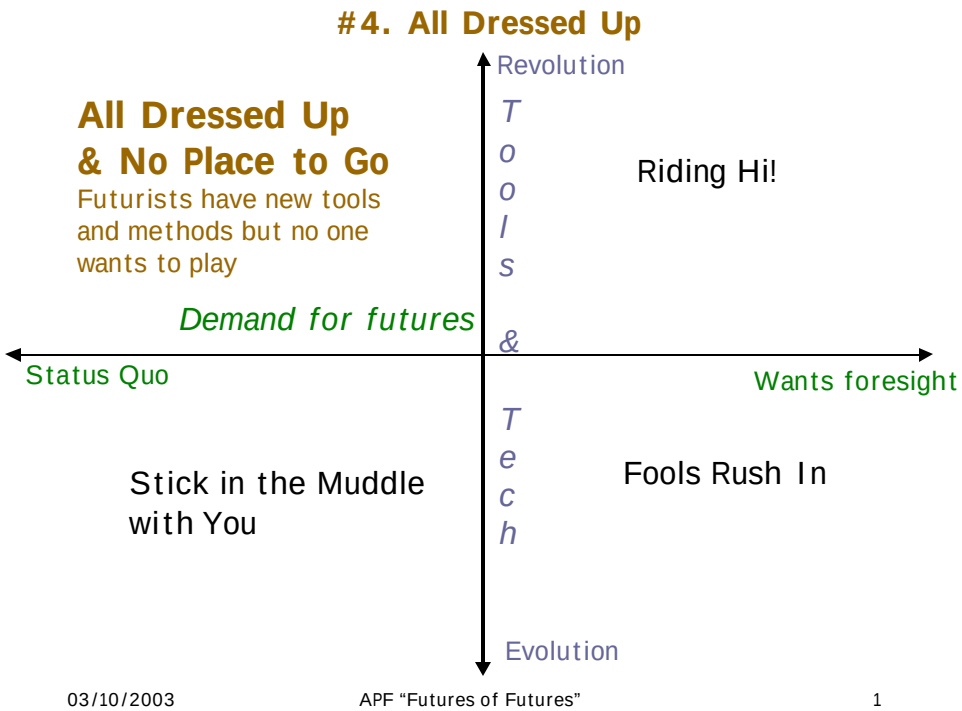
Appendix 2. Team 2. Scenarios



Appendix 3. Team 3 Scenarios



Appendix 4. Team 4 Scenarios



Appendix 5. Nirvana Scenario Details

1. Nirvana (details)

External World	? White population declining faster than expected ? Bush remembered for landslide to the left and widening global challenges ?	? nations competing for citizens ? men looking for new identity - "mental sex" is in ? massive fisheries failure grabs the worlds attention ? women ceos look for mentees among management staffs ? Millennials rising -- feeling their oats ? Digital twin included in human rights ? US announces 2nd official language	? Women now majority of CEOs ? Asia considered the new home of breakthrough thinking ? Christian religious accept evolution - soul remains mysterious ? Native white males now a minority in US corporate environments
Transaction Space	? new focus on long-term thinking ? US president is a provisional APF member ? Establishment of viable 3rd party in US ? New TV program - Can you survive your future? ? NY Times bestseller "futures for dummies" ? global ad agencies launches futures divisions ? mckinsey spins off an independent futures company worldwide; futurist society not capable to respond ? DARPA grant to MIT funds most futures tools development ? 5 futures programs in US ? 1st futures doctoral program	? Futurists work valuable to corporate bottom lines ? 1st five Fortune 100 firms hire chief futures officers ? "futurists no longer out there in the blue", says economist editor ? 137 school districts offer AP course in Futures Studies ? Harvard futures forum draws all fortune 500 CEOs ? Futures-driven strategy making (innovation, marketing, etc) is standard component in MBAs ? Futurist and strategic planning professional associations merge ? UN forms global futures think thank to solve big issues ? Futures management systems in 80% of Fortune 500 ? 1st futurist in space ? California adds futures studies to mandatory high school curriculum ? Futures courses taught in most mba programs ? 10 doctoral programs conduct futurist methodology research	? Gates establishes a Chair for Futures Studies at Stanford ? 20,000 futurists worldwide attend APF conference ? Microsoft credits futures foresight for decades of dividends ? Most business schools contain futures depts. ? Former futures professor elected president in Finland ?
Futures Profession	? Apf releases code of ethics ? Field changes its name to strategic foresight ? 70% of AOF members are non-Americans	? apf disciplines first member for ethics code violations ? new age gurus embrace the promise of futurism ? Apf reaches 872 members ? APF announces requirements for certification ? Marriage of IT & futures births new metric tools ? Hispanic futures conference draws 5,000 community leaders ? Global futurists consultancy formed in response to mckinsey action	? APF acquires nation status ? Certification program fails - no one needed it ? Foresight impact statement now required for all developments
	Beginning 2005	Middle 2010	End 2020

Appendix 6. Lifeboat Scenario Details

2. Lifeboat (details)

External World	? In turbulent world, companies want forethought ? Microsoft releases futures planning 1.01 ? Role of societal/tech/etc change continues to increase exponentially	? Bain acquires think tools ? Microsoft acquires think tools ? Few disruptions since 9-11 ? Microsoft futures software reaches 30% market penetration ? Big 5 consultants adopt think tools or develop proprietary versions ? Foresight a growing requirement re: regulation, bottom line ? Government requires buy-in - public education now required to legislate	? Scientists give up on new decision tools ? California legislature supports foresight bill for publicly-owned corps ?
Transaction Space	? futurists consulting firms continue to be acquired by big 4 ? big 4 consultants develop futurists job title ? mckinsey offers futures modules ? mckinsey challenges Apf ? APF acquires thinktools	? APF certification recognized as mark of excellence in business environment ? Futures tools now built into business school curriculum ? Strategy added to MBA ? Here a future, there a future everywhere a future future ? Big 4 tracks and exposes poor track record of predictive futurists ? Professional associations provide futures training to their members without consulting futurists ? All GE managers are futurists, GE CEO at Crotonville ? Large firms split futures facilitation and content and use ad hoc foresight teams ? Complex, long-term thinking becomes less possible/relevant...shift to shorter-term techniques ? Basic futures tools become standard job requirements (like powerpoint) ? Other big consulting companies offer futures ? Basic futures taught in K-12 ? CMC acquires APF ? Apf certification brings in business ? Professional futurists create new association model ? Apf offers keynote address at Association Conference, "from fragmentation to cohesion" ? Accenture mckinsey sends employees to apf certification courses	? Software gaming co.'s develop scenario and futures simulation software ? APF represented at WTO annual conference ? Microsoft futures software integrated into Microsoft Office ? Common tools developed to address short-term planning - everyone becomes a futurist ? Futures essential to world governance - UN 2015 ? Futures thinking part of daily management discussion ? Everyone and their brother offers futures
Futures Profession	? CMC becomes interested in futures tools ? APF develops certification program to industry accolades ? Encroachment of other fields on futures work ? APF outrages that McKinsey markets futures ?	? futurists complete year-long development process ? Futurists bring order out of chaos ? Apf adopts standards ? APF invents and owns futures magic bullet process/deliverable ? Snowballing of futurists groups who support each other ? CEOs admit rate of change most challenging force suppressing earnings ? APF follows lead of Big 5 - adapting their methods ? APF-certified futurists top 1000 in US, 5,000 globally ? Futurists crying in their beer but together ? Last futures program closes ? APF membership grows ? Stand by my side; all in, non out, bended bonded ? Leading futures association offers certification program ? APF develops a futures certification program/test ? Jarratt wins customer service award	? Apf works with 10 major universities to develop futures programs ? Broad, steadfast network of note-sharing etc. ? APF licenses futures in five domains, STEEP ? Anybody remember Apf? ? Unemployed futurists hand out in bars & plot reinvention of field ? Everybody uses some version of thinktools ? APF-certified futures top 10,000 in US, 50,000 globally
	Beginning 2005	Middle 2010	End 2020

Appendix 7. Rolling Their Own Scenario Details

3. Rolling Their Own (details)

External World	? Biological models displace existing theories ? First lie detector checks government policy assumptions ? Scandals expand to major consulting firms ? HP DJ beats human- 90% of London club prefers computer to human artists	? AI lends predictability to difficult yet quantifiable phenomena ? DHS approves major contract to build TIA system	? Moravec Partially reaches his dream - computers managers outsource human strategists ? Maxis software releases SimFutur
Transaction Space	? CNN hires 5 new futurists - disagree on everything ? Futures field disenfranchised from tool makers ? McKinsey purchases MIT AI, helps consumer companies with product development ? Risk managers hiring more futurists ? Complexity theory provides new models of change ? Cognitive science shows foresight center exists ? Generalized theory of evolution; santa fe institute discovers the secrets of business forecasting ? Government outsources purchasing decision to Bill Gates AI software	? "Prediction markets" - are they key to business success ? terrorist attack prediction software gets business application ? big futures firm gets contract to rethink health policy	? Business employs IT professionals who manage/create computer simulations rather than futurists ? Noted futurist continues to insist that war with Iraq will be short
Futures Profession	? Open source model for futures developed ? Young Republications organize march against the APF - we'd rather have no futurists than have them unified under a single party ? *The Futurist* changes its name to *Uncertainty Monthly* ? 5 new stars make APF conference a great success ? star futurists reach individual nirvana ? APF dissolved - lacks critical mass ? Retiring futurist says he make not difference, but lots of money ? Futurists who focus on deliverables via tools flourish (rather than just tools) ? APF splits over dispute on standards	? Big 5 futures firms now the big 2 - IP rights resolved ? Large futurist firms veto APF standard s -- "we have a track record," says large firm president ? Approach to singularity brings more facilitation, less content ? Church of futurists reaches 1 million members	? Wfs retirement home files for bankruptcy ? Biologist picked to lead wfs ? Consulting firms thriving businesses offer training in new futures tools ? Futures tools taught in most professional schools ? Last futures academic program folds
	Beginning 2005	Middle 2010	End 2020

Appendix 8. All Dressed Up Scenario Details

4. All Dressed Up (details) p 1. Of 2

External World	? Blue death reduces global population by 30% ? Street design - incredible speed-to-market once an opportunity is identified ? Fuel cell breakthrough spells doom for internal combustion engines	? evolutionary theory of design - products compete in arketplace replaces research - cheaper ? US signs Kyoto; cuts CO2 emissions immediately ? England inaugurate 3rd prime minister in 4 years ? Global economy in chaos ? Sociologist wins nobel prize for cyclic theory ? Consumer & companies completely focused on short-term contribution to bottom-line ? Prof. Pinker explains long-term social behavior breakthrough ? Economists adopt social cyclic theory ? "be here now" management guru preaches effective acting in the present ? Green candidate elected US president ? Fast 'D" not R&D ? Financial metrics prove that rapid iterative development (extreme development) more efficient than planning	? China dominates global economy causing companies to totally concentrate on short-term competitive advantages ? Terrorist attacks combined with destruction of stock market due to continuous enron-style failures - short-term planning ? Total breakdown in US eonomy leads to 15% unemployment - short-term focus
Transaction Space	? Human guides for AI tools ? Near perfect forecasting tools highly distributed/cheap ? Futurists viewed as an extension of new age crystal ball gazers ? Sense and respond approach predominates after years of an economic roller coaster ride	? Hard technologies preferred over more effective people/soft technologies ? Accelerated pace of change makes futures seem irrelevant to clients ? Last academic futures program closes doors ? Virtual consumer offer insights into social change ? Open source decision tool finds few takers; vcs not interested ? Enrollment low in MBA program focused on futures studies ? Blur ? Cheap prediction possible? Highly distributed XML web services-based futures IT tool set creates rapid, accessible and accurate forecasting methods ? Despite increasingly accurate forecasting techniques, companies prefer to follow experimentation as basis for futures ? Online futures consulting: great help or great hype? ? Futurists organized, hold conferences, but still get little attention from outside ? Doctorate program in futures studies announced at UHCL	? People centered forecasting deemed only relevant focus ? Psychographic futures only acceptable ? Futures thinking and planning has no relevance as things happen too fast to plan or forecast ? "Future perfect" supercomputer not affordable, says President ? Turnout low for APF technologies exhibit ? The tight herd: accessible forecasting tools rapid development and risk aversion have caused companies and governments to act in lock-step fashion; few failures, little diversity, efficient markets ? Minimal recognition of value of futures work ? Human consultants guide MECA projects
	Beginning 2005	Middle 2010	End 2020

Appendix 9. The Agenda

Day 1

8:00 Why We're Here, What We're Going to Do, And How We're Going to Do It **Andy**

8:15 Timeline -- One thing you know is going to happen **Michele**

9:15 Framework for Trends and Issues -- Organizing framework for interview responses **Mary Jane**

9:45 Identifying & Prioritizing Critical Uncertainties -- Identify which issues are most important & uncertain & prioritize them **Kate**

10:30 Break

11:00 Identifying & Prioritizing the Critical Uncertainties (cont'd) **Kate**

12:00 Lunch

12:45 Framing the Matrix with Critical Uncertainties -- Test combinations of critical uncertainties to frame compelling stories **Peter**

2:00 Identifying Predeterminеds -- Identify which trends and issues are important and virtually certain to occur **Denise**

2:45 Break

3:15 Identifying Driving Forces -- Identify forces driving the world toward each of the 4 poles of the matrix **Derek**

4:00 Prioritizing Driving Forces for Each Scenario -- Sort through and prioritize the forces driving toward the two poles for each quadrant of the matrix **Derek**

5:00 Adjourn

Day 2

Bullshit Test! -- Does work from Day One pass the bullshit test? **Andy**

8:00 Headline Writing -- Create story of key developments out to 2020 **Michele**

9:30 Exploring our Futures – What do these scenarios mean for various stakeholders **Lee**

10:30 Value Proposition for APF – What should APF do in each scenario **Andy**

12:00 Open Discussion **Mary Jane**

1:30 Lunch/Scenario Salon Adjourns

3:00 APF Member Meeting

5:00 Meeting Adjourns