




A Futurist's Guide to Complexity

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Co-Founder,
The Futures School

A woman with long dark hair, wearing a dark blue cardigan over a patterned top, is standing and speaking to a group of people in a meeting room. She is holding a small black device in her left hand and gesturing with her right hand. The background shows several other people, some looking towards her, and a whiteboard with diagrams.

I am a business owner, wife, and mother of two who is driven by the desire to help organizations and individuals discover their innate ability to create the future.

I understand that while leaders continually tout the need for futures thinking on their teams, they fail to structure their business processes in a way which values and rewards long term thinking.

This fundamental disconnect is what causes firms to miss opportunities and ultimately fail, and it's this disconnect I help them address and eliminate.

KEDGE

 **The Futures School**
pioneered by Kedge

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ON A MISSION TO... DEMOCRATIZE FORESIGHT.



A FUTURIST'S GUIDE TO COMPLEXITY

Friday, October 2, 2020 2:00pm - 3:00pm EDT

During this webcast, you will learn how to:

- Lead with resilience, adaptation, and transformation.
- Add the futurist trait of complex problem-solving to your toolkit immediately.
- Reframe your relationship with complexity as friend not foe.



Association for
Talent Development

well in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats, or significant sources of stress." In previous times, that translated into a risk-management charter that sought to build up our protective walls in hopes of preventing the effects from real or perceived threats.

Not only will those walls prove to be inadequate, but they result in weaker, more fragile organizations and leaders. It seems counterintuitive, but exposing ourselves to more risk will strengthen our ability to deal with the challenges on the horizon.

Scientists have discovered a similar phenomenon in playground designs. To avoid injury, the spaces have been made so "safe" that children are being robbed of the opportunity to fall and recover.

Adaptation is the ability to learn from the context of a situation and evolve business practices in real time that are better suited for responding to internal or external change. During the COVID-19 pandemic, we've seen governments' and organizations' lack of adaptability.

Attempting to cope with a complex, ever-evolving threat

giants, born in and for the digital age, are struggling. For example, Lyft and Airbnb have both gone public with their inability to weather the current disruption.

The pandemic provides a wake-up call to our C-suites: Our teams and processes must be agile, which means our leaders must be adaptive.

An increasingly complex world also demands that we move beyond incremental development into transformational thinking to deliver sustainable value. Leaders must embrace the unknown, developing an ability to go beyond their comfort zones and explore ideas outside the scope of their everyday activities.

This is often called creative destruction on steroids. This mindset is about much more than being controversial or provocative for controversy's sake; it's about moving away from short-term thinking to a long-term vision.

Cultivating resilient, adaptive, and transformative organizations is not easy, but it's not rocket science either. That's where strategic foresight comes into play.

Strategic foresight provides a framework to:

- Thrive in complexity by discovering personal and organizational biases.
- Explore the external environment.
- Map multiple divergent scenarios.
- Create resilient, adaptive, and transformative organizational cultures.

Through its tools, methods, and frameworks, we develop to navigate an ever-changing future and drive innovation in several ways: strategic foresight, disruptive innovation, and personal growth. By combining both qualitative and quantitative data, strategic foresight updates our thinking processes and minimizes risk to become adaptive, resilient, and transformative in these uncertain times.

Although no one can predict the future, foresight enables us to mine the external environment for trends and leverage those insights to create maps of the emerging landscape. These well-informed maps of the future enable us to test current assumptions, develop breakthrough ideas, and create transformative change.

You can't regret

our guiding narrative's hidden biases and assumptions will overpower any change or innovation we desire, and new ideas or initiatives will be met with frustration and failure.

But with the right tools to think about the future in an immersive, transformative, and provocative fashion, we are able to break through the walls of the past built up through our present-day perceptions. And that's exactly what foresight does.

Foresight, through unconscious futures modeling, gives us the personal and reflective tools to transport thinking beyond the barriers of today and open new vistas of discovery and opportunity. It's about embracing change for alternative futures. Think far beyond obstacles and personal limitations.

By identifying signals through environmental scanning—that is, scanning the world around us for trends and emerging signals that will shape our future—we avoid information overload and gain a laser focus on appropriate areas of opportunity.

Environmental scanning provides an opportunity to



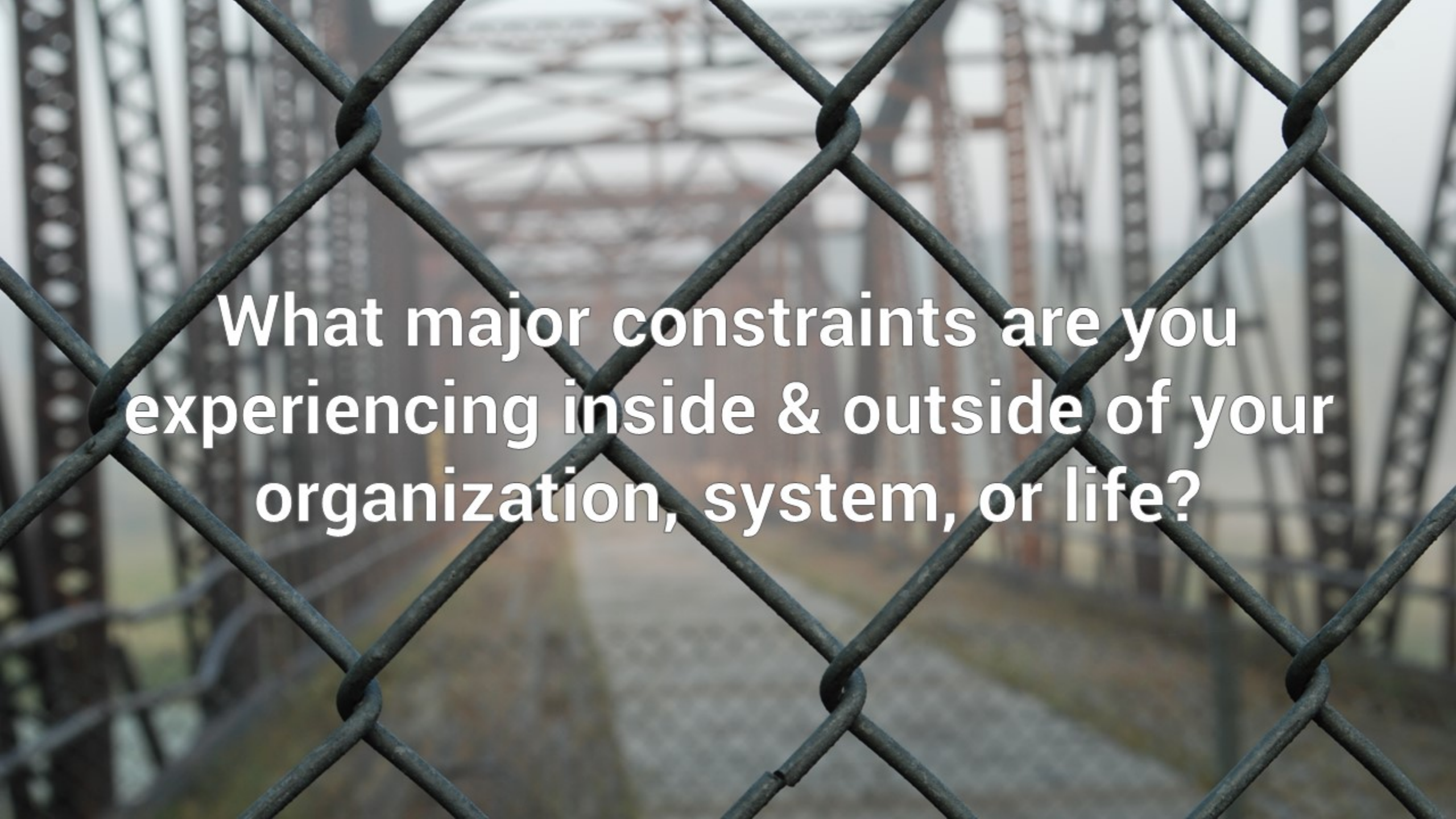
Update Your Mental Map to Thrive

Navigating the complexities of life requires a revised way of thinking.

By Yvette Montero Salvatico

In fact, increased complexity is far from our enemy; on the contrary, we should recognize it as a critical ally.

It isn't the rapidly changing landscape that is the nemesis of aspirational futures, but rather it's our mental maps that are tuned to a way of



What major constraints are you experiencing inside & outside of your organization, system, or life?

**If all constraints were removed,
and you could direct what is done, what
would you do?**

ARE YOU **OPTIMISTIC ABOUT THE FUTURE?**

How we **think** about the future directly impacts the decisions we make **today**.



How to join

Web



- 1 Go to **PollEv.com**
- 2 Enter **KEDGELLC141**

Text



- 1 Text **KEDGELLC141** to **22333**

When we hear the words "change" or "disruption," it makes our leadership feel excited.

Never

Sometimes

Often

Always



Our present-day
tools, models, and
processes are
quickly becoming
Industrial Age
relics...

Something
fundamental has
changed!



We have
entered the ...
**Postnormal
Society**

A great **shift** in
human and
organizational
development...what
we once considered
"normal" is not
coming back.



VOLATILITY

Progress is exponentially increasing in ever-shorter intervals of time.



UNCERTAINTY

The variables in a particular situation are defined, but the values are unknown.



COMPLEXITY

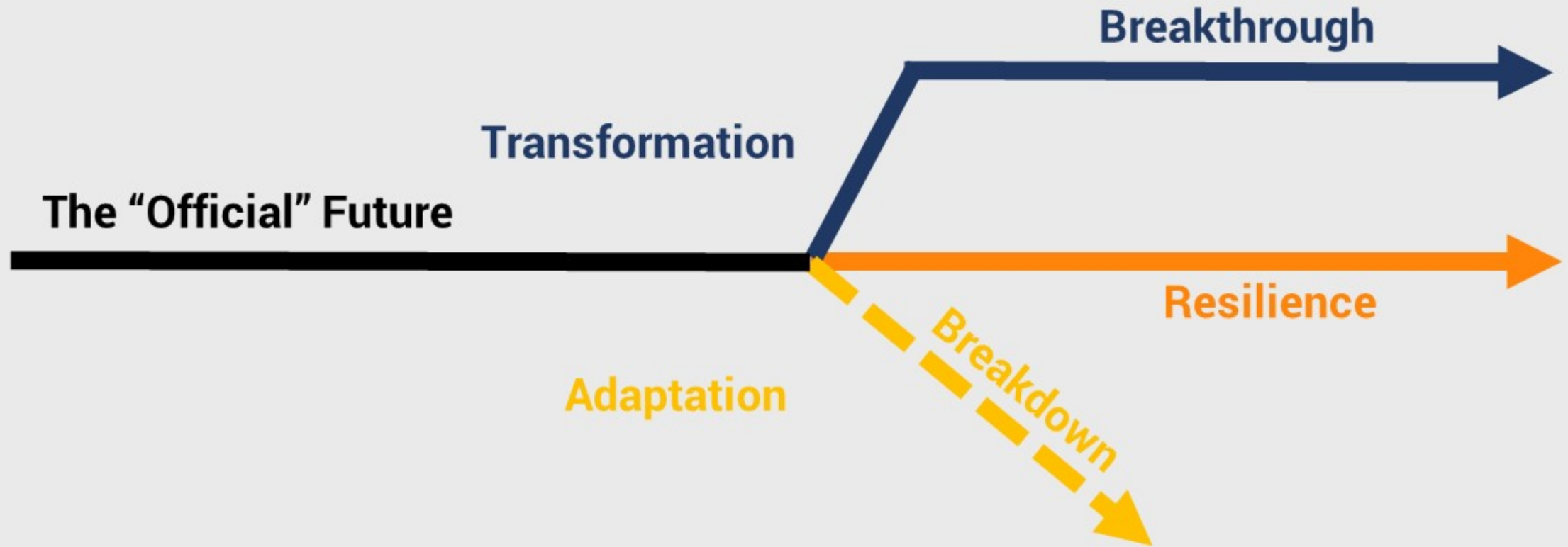
Multiple drivers of change colliding to create new challenges and new opportunities.



AMBIGUITY

The variables here are not defined: the unknown unknowns.

With volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity taking center stage, we must lead with Resilience, Adaptation and Transformation.



Only then will we be able to avoid threats while simultaneously capitalizing on opportunities.

Strategic Foresight is a practice that allows us to create functional views of **alternative futures and possibilities**, supporting the development of **adaptive, resilient and transformative** leaders and organizations.

While no one can predict the future, foresight allows us to **mine the external environment** for trends and leverage those insights to create maps of the emerging landscape.

These well-informed maps of the future allow us to **test our current strategy, develop breakthrough innovations** and **create transformative change**.



Most organizations focus solely on the **Push of the Future**, forced into a perpetual state of reacting to **trends and emerging issues**. Conversely, the **Pull of the Future** provides the framework to intentionally act upon our **preferred futures**.



Push
of the
Future

Pull
of the
Future

Strategic Foresight allows us to **leverage both ends** of the **futures spectrum** in order to **discover the future and create it – today**.



RESILIENCE



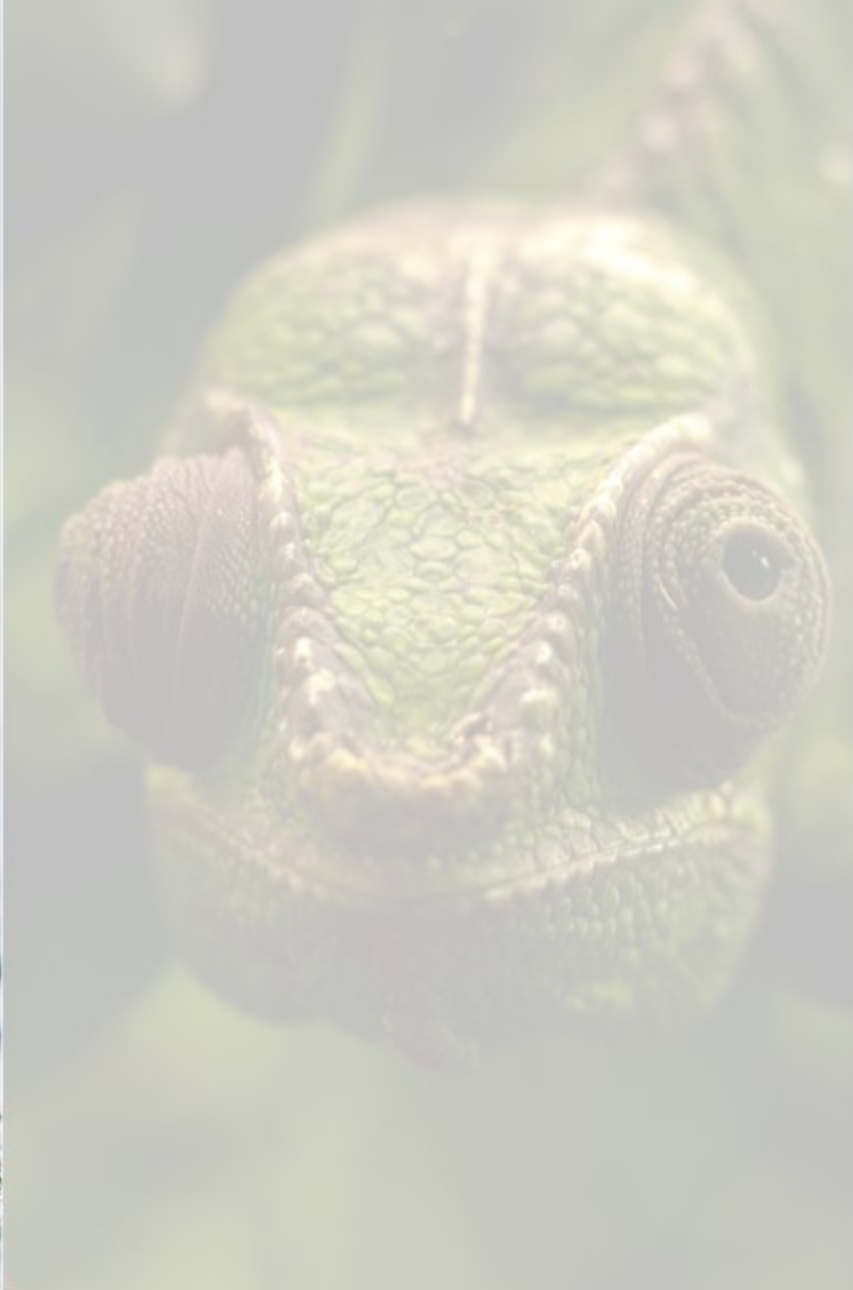
ADAPTATION



TRANSFORMATION



RESILIENCE



ADAPTATION



TRANSFORMATION

Are we threatened by ideas that challenge our company's position on issues or actions?

Never

Sometimes

Often

Always



CAUTION

Focusing solely on
Risk Management
results in brittle organizations.

Risk and Resiliency



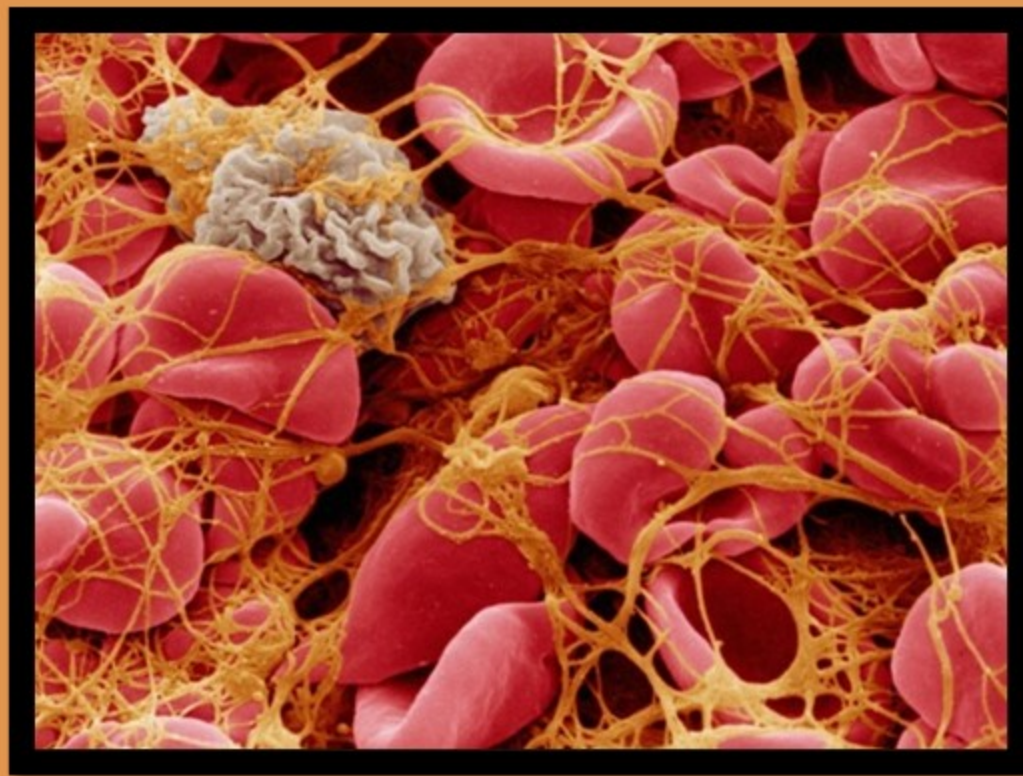
The only way to grow stronger, wealthier, and more **resilient** in the long run is to **expose ourselves** to more risk and volatility today.

Dealing only with today's problems leaves us weakened.
Strategic Foresight acts as an **Immune System...**

Identify potential
threats and emerging
opportunities

See new
perspectives

Provide context
for present-day
decisions



Illuminate
unexpected
implications

Test possible
outcomes

Ensure we are not
vulnerable & unaware
of challenges

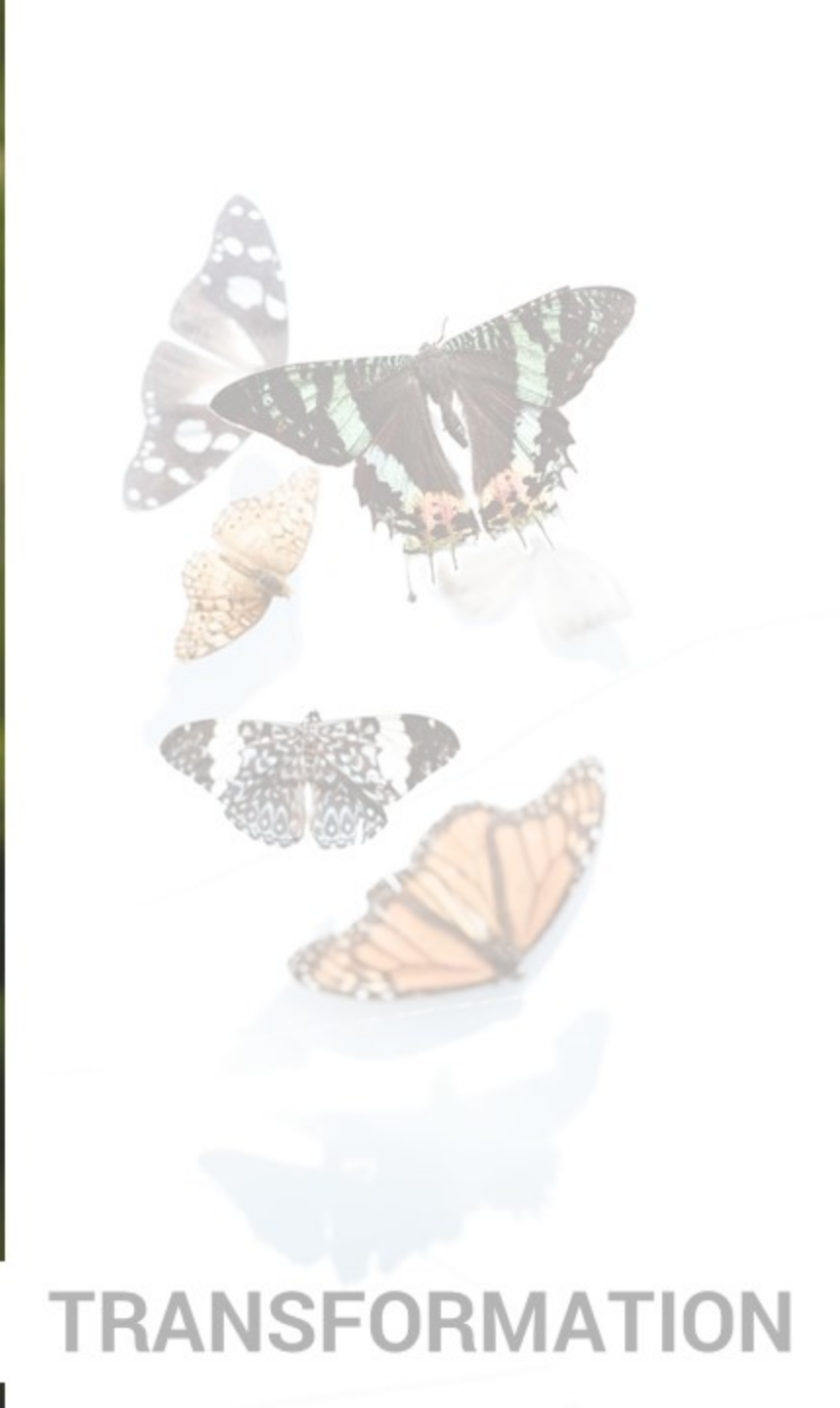
Strengthening our **collective capacity** to deal
with what actually happens.



RESILIENCE



ADAPTATION



TRANSFORMATION

We seek out opportunities to broaden our strategic horizons through diverse training, conferences and networks.

Never

Sometimes

Often

Always

Ken Olson, President and Founder of Digital Equipment Corporation, speaking at a 1977 meeting of the World Future Society in Boston:

“There is no reason for any individual to have a computer in his home.”

digital EQUIPMENT
CORPORATION

Educated Incapacity is knowing so much about what you know that you are the last to know that things are changing.

We receive **11 million**
bits of information
every moment.

We can only
consciously process
40 bits.

Unconscious Bias @ Work | Google Ventures

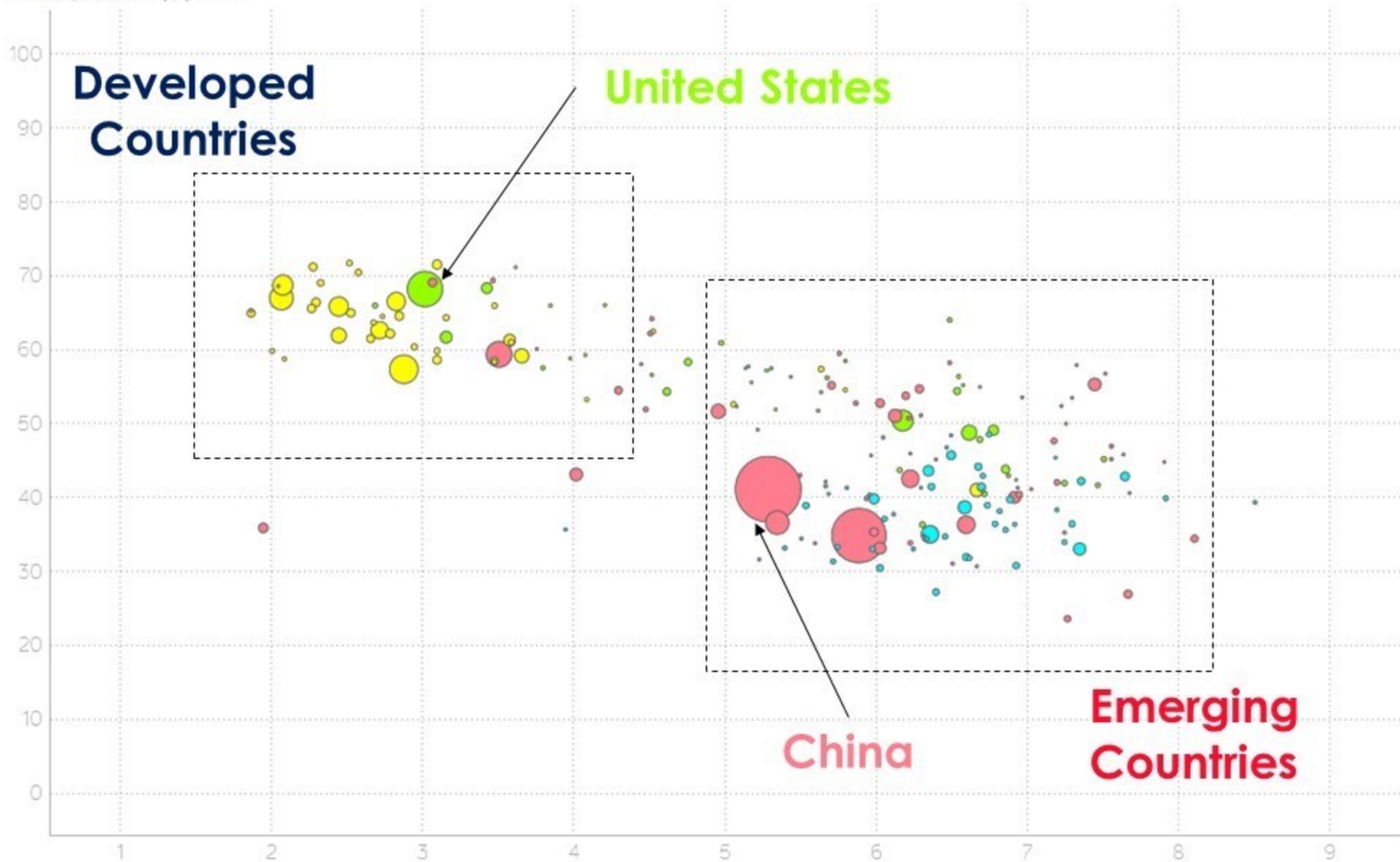




99.999996%
Unconscious

World Health: Disparity Between Nations

Life expectancy, years



Babies per woman,

Color World Regions



Select Search...

- Afghanistan
- Albania
- Algeria
- Angola
- Antigua and Barbuda
- Argentina
- Armenia
- Aruba
- Australia
- Austria
- Azerbaijan
- Bahamas
- Bahrain

Size Population

Zoom 100%

Help us cross the river of myths

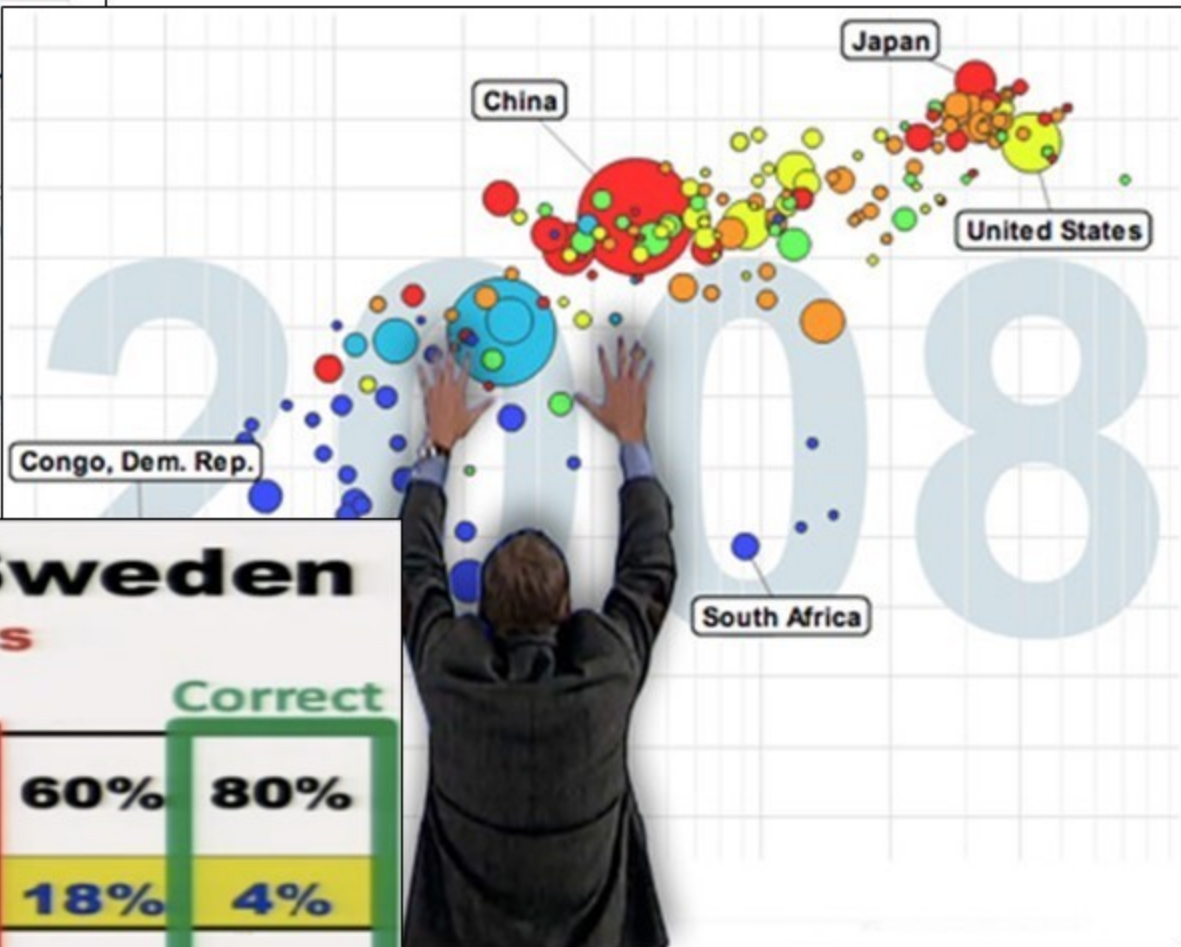
Please read Hans Rosling's personal appeal

Read



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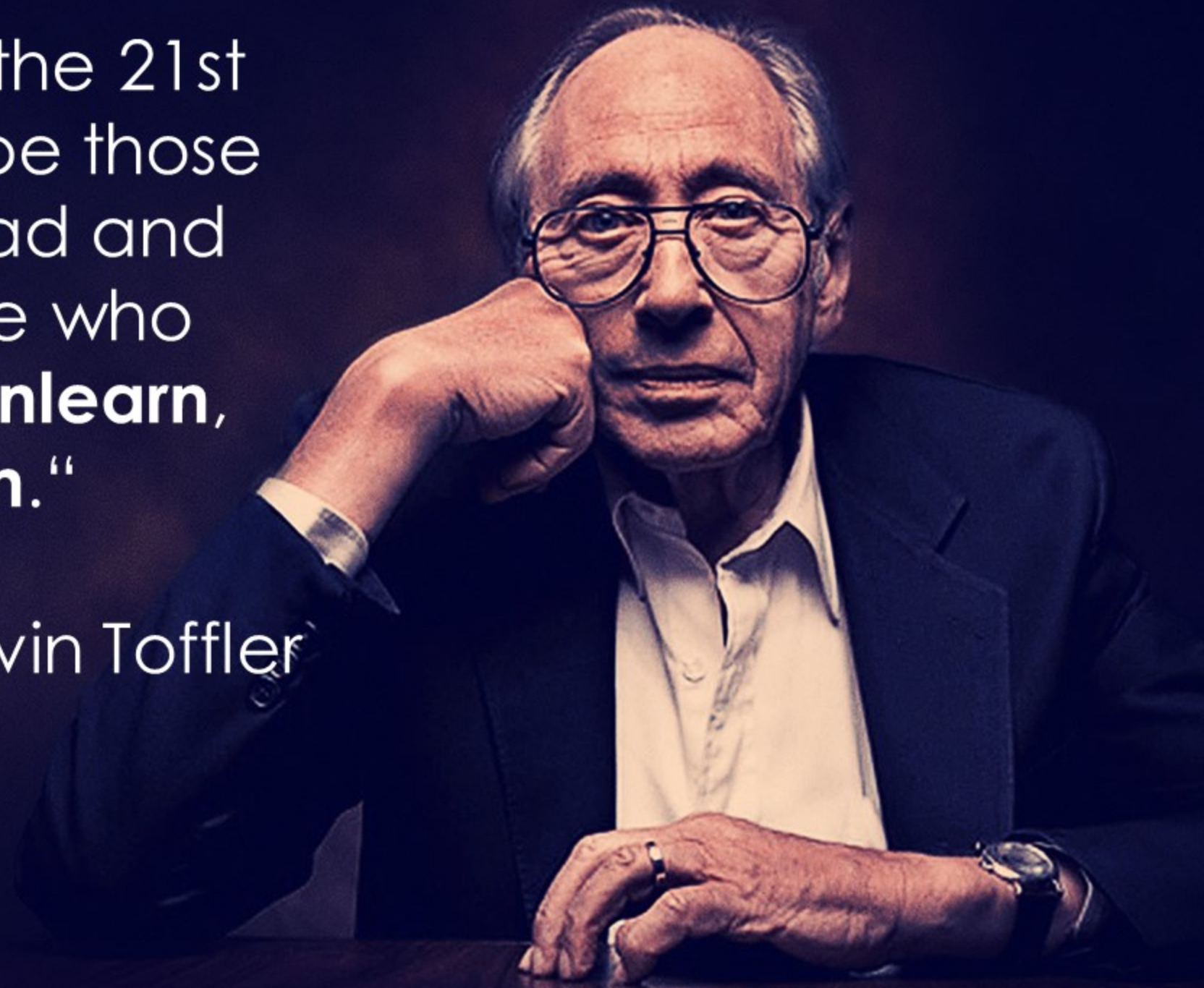
25 years ago

Correct

Literacy among the 20 years old in Tanzania?	20%	40%	60%	80%
% Swedish guesses	33%	45%	18%	4%
Babies per woman in Bangladesh?	5.5	4.5	3.5	2.5
% Swedish guesses	26%	43%	26%	5%

"The illiterate of the 21st century will not be those who cannot read and write, but those who cannot **learn, unlearn, and relearn.**"

Alvin Toffler





RESILIENCE



ADAPTATION



TRANSFORMATION

How often do we consider the long-range implications of our actions?

Never

Sometimes

Often

Always

The goal of a single acorn is not...



... a million acorns.

The goal of a
single **acorn** is
to become a
mighty oak.



What's in your DNA?

Google

Google Search

I'm Feeling Lucky

G
is for Google

Biggest Tech Company Ever
Alphabet Inc.



NIKE



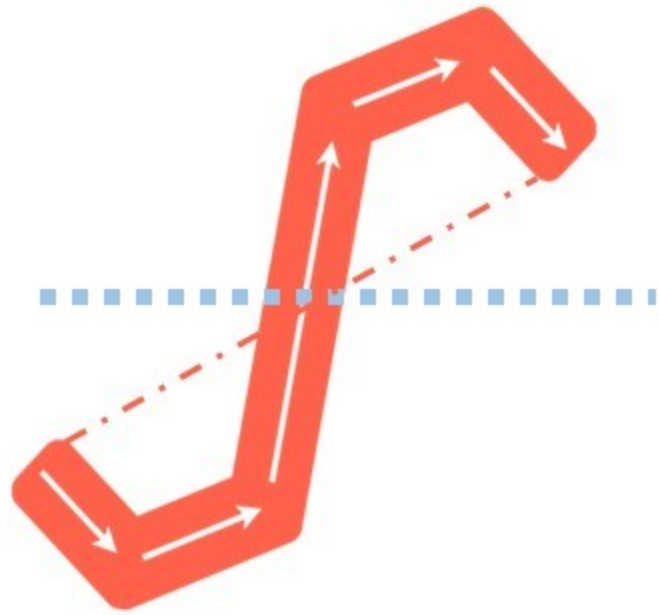
FUJIFILM



- A** Expansion of regenerative medicine product line
In combination with Fujifilm's extracellular matrix (recombinant peptide [RCP]), somatic and stem cells can form 3D cell structures, expanding the potential of regenerative medicine.
- B** R&D of Organ regeneration
Development of organ regeneration via iPSCs
- C** Expansion of drug discovery support
In combination with Fujifilm's extracellular matrix (recombinant peptide [RCP]), iPSCs can facilitate drug discovery.

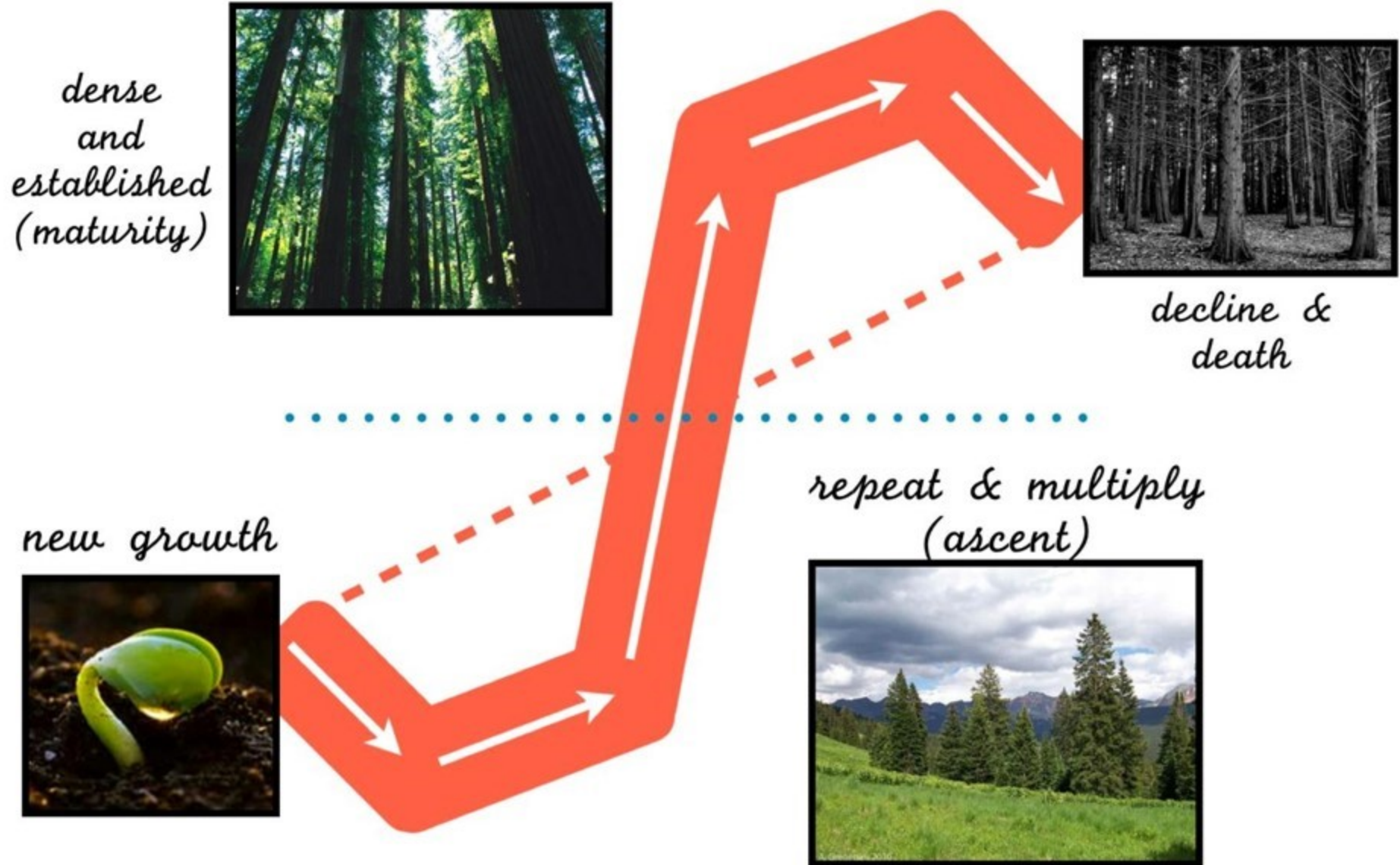
Transformative Growth Through Breakpoint Mapping

This new environment demands that we move beyond simple iterative processes to leveraging **“breakpoints”** in growth that lead to true transformation of ideas, strategy, products, and experiences.

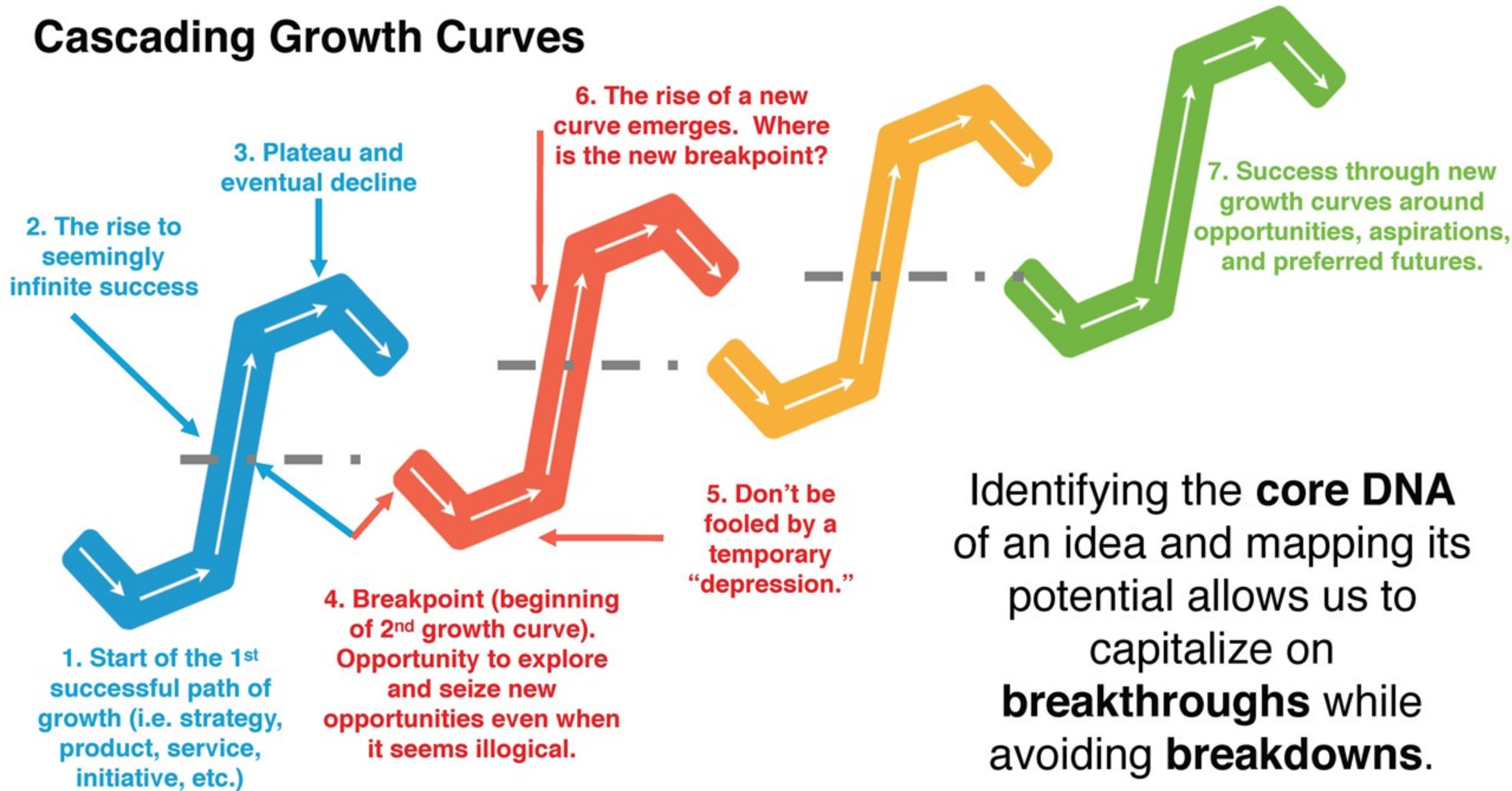


Understanding **Natural Growth Cycles (S-Curves)** in Business, Organizations, Product Development, and Social Initiatives is the key to identifying these **critical breakpoints**.

What is the **Natural Growth Curve**?



Cascading Growth Curves





RESILIENCE



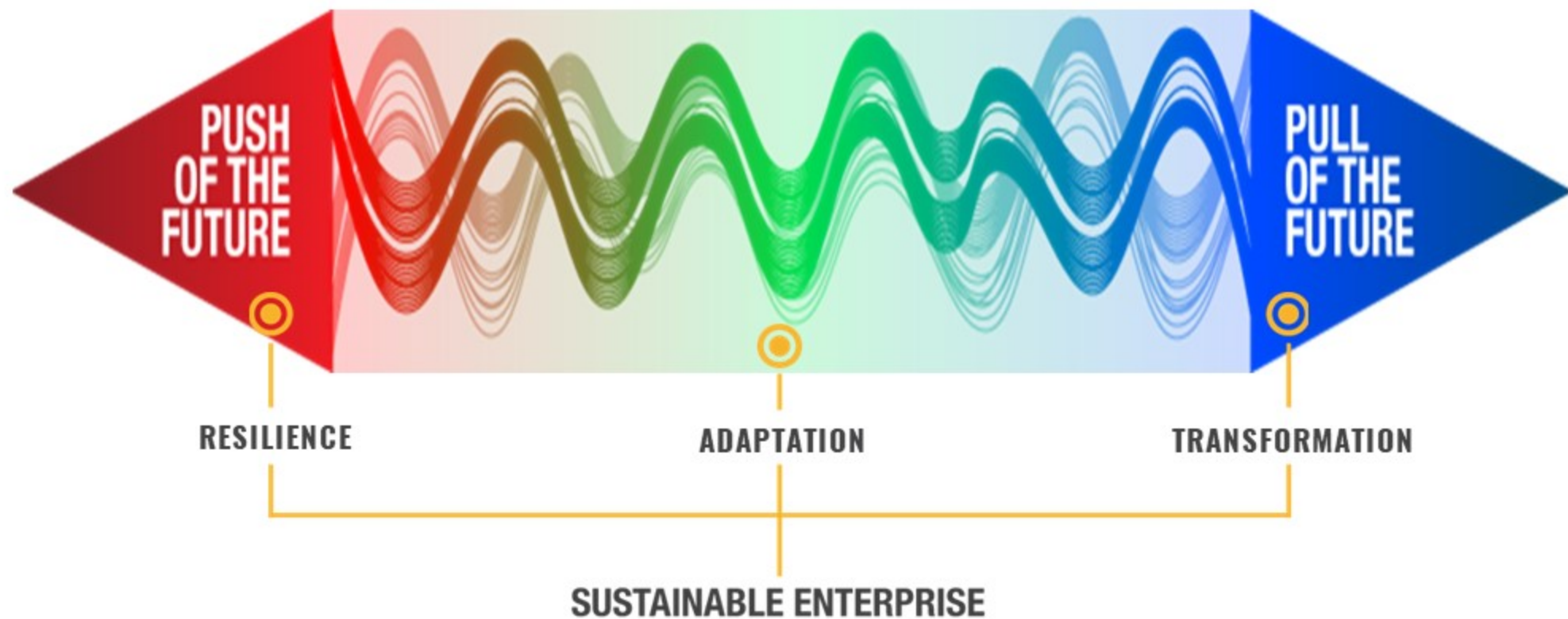
ADAPTATION



TRANSFORMATION

PUSH & PULL OF THE FUTURE

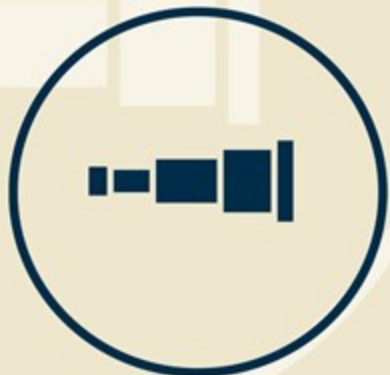
Resilience, Adaptation and Transformation leverage the full spectrum of the future – from push to pull.



Strategic Foresight is a discipline, but is actually best served as an **integrated philosophy**.



It should run in the background like the **operating system of the organization** – driving **leadership development, innovation and organizational transformation**.



DISCOVER

Context and Background

Uncover personal and organizational assumptions around a focal issue with tools like:

- Unconscious Bias Modeling
- Ladder of Inference
- Causal Layered Analysis



EXPLORE

Futures Intelligence

Identify and interpret emerging trends, patterns, and clusters with tools like:

- Environmental Scanning
- Qualitative Predictive Analysis
- Probability/Impact Matrix
- Pattern and Sense-making



MAP

World Building

Design sets of divergent, provocative maps using creativity, data, intuition, and research with tools like:

- Scenario Fields
- Futures Wheels
- Scenario Planning

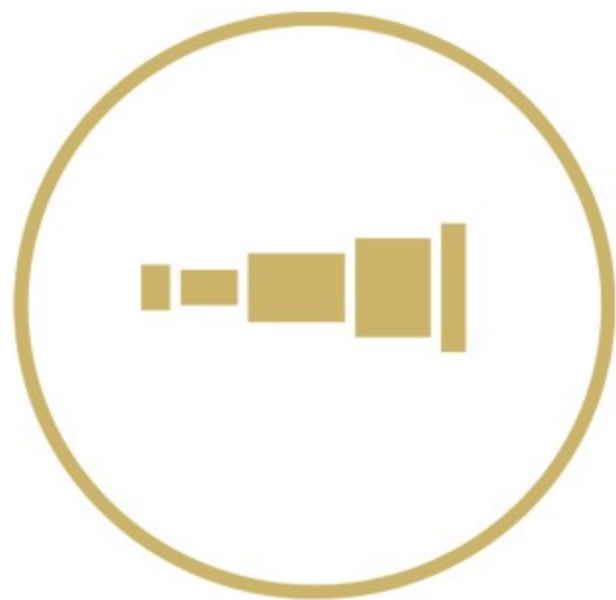


CREATE

Action and Outcomes

Define, design, refine, and reframe strategy, outcomes, and actions with integration into:

- Strategic Planning Processes
- R&D Efforts
- Change Management Initiatives

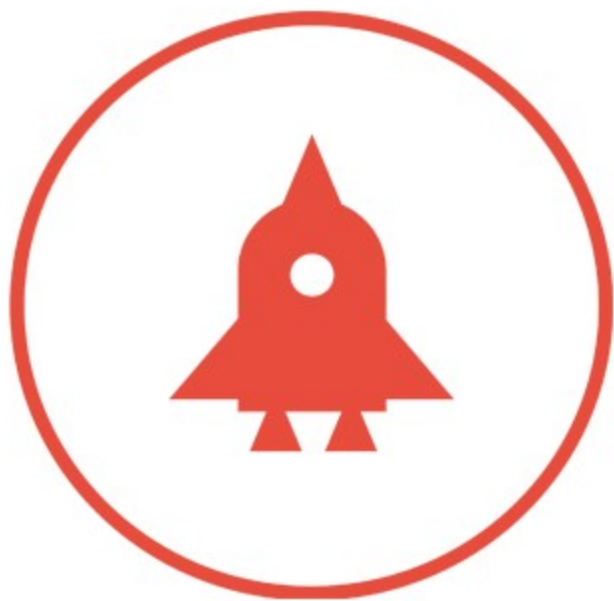


DISCOVER

Learn, Unlearn, Relearn!

We receive 11 million bits of information every moment, but we can only consciously process 40 bits. That means that 99.99996% of the information we process is unconscious.

If you think a new idea seems ridiculous, ask yourself “why?”



EXPLORE

Scan, Scan, Scan!

In today's VUCA environment, our biggest opportunities and most significant disruptions will come from **OUTSIDE** our industry/field.

Overcome your *educated incapacity* - each week, read articles across social, technological, economic, environmental, and political categories.



MAP

Forget the Official Future!

Assuming a baseline future leaves us vulnerable to disruption and unable to capitalize on opportunities.

Rather than linear forecasts, think in simultaneous multiples, sketching out several possible scenarios for each major decision you are facing.



CREATE

Identify Your Aspirations!

Most organizations focus on only the Push of the Future, ignoring their higher order purpose. By identifying our aspirations, we can pull ourselves to our preferred future.

Answer this question for yourself and your organization: “If all obstacles were removed, and you could direct what is done, what would do?”



IMPLEMENTING NATURAL FORESIGHT®



CONCLUSION

Today's super-accelerated, volatile environment demands that we approach everything with a new lens, and leadership development is no exception. Rather than relying on our antiquated, quantitative-based approaches, what if we consciously developed a futures thinking competency within our organizations? Equipped with this 21st-century mindset, our leaders - and, as a result, our organizations - would be more flexible and resilient, and able to embrace change and adapt to new conditions.

- Discover the personal and organizational biases that become blinders to new ideas and potential disruptors.
- Explore the environment for emerging issues in society, technology, the environment, economics, and politics.
- Map the probable, provocative, and preferred futures of our most pressing issues so that we can be prepared for what future emerges.

WHAT MAKES A GOOD FUTURIST?

In our VUCA environment, everyone in your organization must be a futurist, continually challenging biases and scanning the environment for hidden opportunities. Here is a list of attributes a good futurist should embody.

- A good futurist should:
- **Crave curiosity.** As a futurist, it is more important to ask "why?" than "what?" so that we can dive into the root issue and understand the value shifts driving today's trends. It is not uncommon for good futurists to explore a trend that they forget where their journey began. In other words, if you feel like you have been down the rabbit examining trends, you are probably doing it right!
 - **Act courageously.** Thinking and acting on our futures intelligence takes courage. As humans we are wired to change, and the future is synonymous with change. A good futurist must recognize that the insights we share with others feel uncomfortable, but it is in that discomfort that growth occurs.
 - **Welcome diversity.** Foresight is a team sport. We all have biases and assumptions driven by our worldviews and maps. Exploring the future alongside a diverse set of peers ensures that we challenge our information filters.
 - **Think outrageously.** The ability to think provocatively is paramount to being a good futurist. In order to expand (and that of our leadership and stakeholders), we must stretch our minds beyond our comfort zone.
 - **Connect the dots.** It is not enough to collect the dots (or trends). A good futurist must also connect them to our patterns. Nothing in our current landscape exists in isolation and trends are no exception. To understand what must analyze the intersection of trends and make sense of the patterns they form.
 - **Think in multiples.** A core principle of strategic foresight is that there is not one but unlimited futures before us. As futurists, we must be able to think in simultaneous, multiple futures rather than the traditional, single, linear for able to consider paths beyond the official future allows us to create robust and resilient strategies that will be most matter which future emerges.

CASE STUDY: SCENARIOS FOR STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT

Situation
A North American Fortune 500 retail chain was launching its first effort to integrate talent management strategies across the enterprise. A team of more than 50 executives was tasked to create a holistic approach to development, recruitment, retention, and compensation. In the process, they quickly realized that they also needed a way to ensure that their solutions would be adaptive, resilient, and future-fit.

Solution
The team began by learning about the trends shaping the future of talent. Partnering with a foresight firm that conducted the horizon scanning, the executives were exposed to the social, technological, economic, environmental, and political trends affecting how people will live and work in the future. Armed with these new insights, the team took part in an immersive and experiential scenario planning session, leveraging three diverse, possible narratives that transported the project team 15 years into the future. Incorporating video, social media, and physical artifacts from the scenarios, the organization envisioned

Results
Prior to the scenario planning session, the project team had struggled to develop strategies and a system to successfully integrate talent management across the enterprise. Not only were its final strategic solutions and recommendations largely driven by the strategic foresight tools, but a similar session with the learning and development (L&D) team led to the organization's first ever enterprise-wide L&D strategy.

- Some of the outcomes from the integrated talent management project included the following:
- New strategies and opportunities were derived from trends, implications, and maps of the future that the team had previously not explored due to its narrow area of focus.
 - A more holistic system was created that allowed the organization to be resilient and transformational in the face of accelerating volatility and exponential change.
 - The establishment of a common language across the organization created increased synergy among workers, a more dynamic culture of innovation, and a

JOB AID

A FUTURES THINKING EXERCISE

Before beginning your foresight journey, it is helpful to first uncover how you personally think about the future. Complete this exercise from an individual or a professional perspective; if your foresight efforts are team-based, use this questionnaire to initiate a discussion about the future.

1. If you could pose three questions to a clairvoyant, what would you ask?

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