

A man wearing a VR headset is shown in a futuristic, neon-lit environment. He is wearing a black and red checkered shirt and has his hands raised as if interacting with a virtual world. The background is filled with glowing green and red lines and patterns, creating a sense of depth and immersion. The overall atmosphere is high-tech and innovative.

# Strategic Future Planning

5 ways to use  
Strategic Foresight  
to think ahead for  
your business

**Kelton**

# BE RELEVANT STAY AHEAD



## \* About Kelton Global

Kelton Global is an insights and strategy consultancy. Our 360-degree approach – from data science to creative intuition – clears the way for brands and businesses to answer the essential question: **What comes next?**

To stay relevant in the future, businesses must **anticipate change** and move quickly to implement changes. Easier said than done, right?

At Kelton, we're often asked questions like, "How do I see around the corner for my industry?" "How can we develop future-facing strategies?" or "How can we fill our **Innovation Pipeline** in the 2-5-10 year horizon?"

While we can't know exactly what the future holds, we've spent the better part of a decade honing our approach to **Strategic Foresight** to help clients identify possible futures in a systematic and creative way.

**>> Read on to learn 5 ways you can start to think about the future of YOUR business.**

# Strategic Foresight 101

## Strategic Foresight

(similar to Corporate Foresight or Future Studies) is a powerful discipline used to systematically gather intelligence on the present, imagining a range of possible futures for your business and community, and generating ideas for action-steps today.



Strategic Foresight can uncover answers to these questions:

- Given what we know today and are trying to accomplish, **what are the range of potential Futures?**
- Given what we know about consumers and businesses, **what are implications for our Industry?**
- Based on our objectives as a business, **what are the opportunities for us in the short-term?**

A young child with curly brown hair, wearing a dark blue hoodie, is sitting on someone's shoulders. The child is covering their eyes with their hands, looking slightly to the side with a curious expression. The background is a soft, out-of-focus green and brown, suggesting an outdoor setting. The text '5 ways' is overlaid on the left side of the image in a white, outlined font.

5 ways

**to strategically think ahead  
for your business...**

# THINK ACTION, NOT PREDICTION

Strategic foresight is about thinking creatively around what **could** happen tomorrow to take smarter steps today, not trying to predict the future. The goal is not to be correct about the future and predictions for what's likely to happen – but to stretch your thinking on ways things might go.



# 01

## HOW TO DO IT

Successful brands think ahead not only in terms of what's *probably* going to happen, but what might happen if certain macrotrends continue, evolve, or recede.

Think across all possible futures, including:

**BASELINE** – The goal of all predictions, but not the only option for thinking about the future

**TECH DISRUPTION** – Envisioning a set of futures radically changed by tech

**DECLINE** – A set of negative, unpleasant (but possible) futures to avoid

**TRANSFORMATION** – Radical change to some social, economic, environmental, or political aspect of culture

**PREFERRABLE** – The futures your brand desires



# 2 IDENTIFY DEEPER FORCES OF CHANGE

Connect a wide set of **signals** to deeper systemic changes and avoid **'trend fatigue'** facing large organizations.



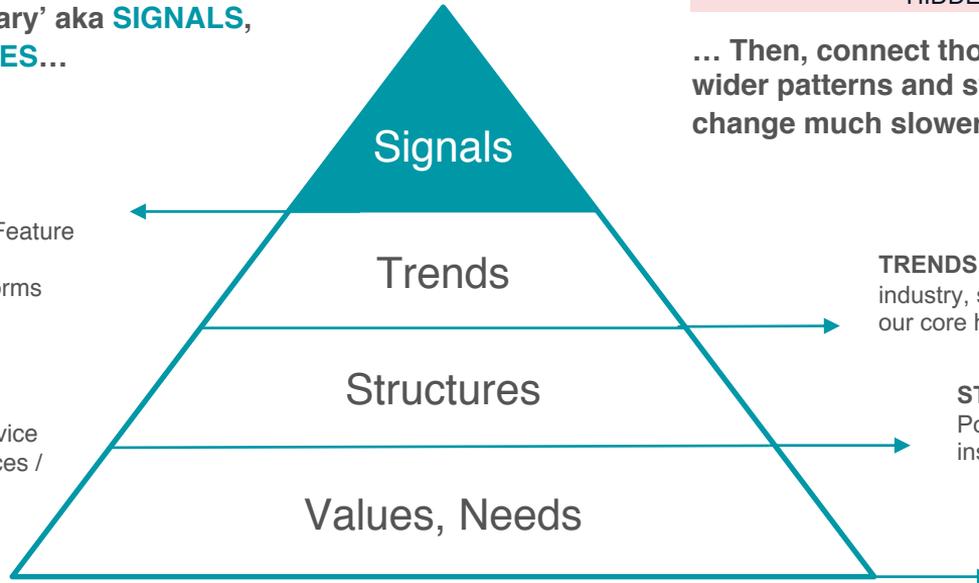
# 02

## HOW TO DO IT

### VISIBLE CULTURE:

Stay on top of trends so you can spot anything 'out of the ordinary' aka **SIGNALS**, across a range of **SOURCES**...

- Media Articles
- Research Studies
- Service / Product / Feature
- Business Model
- Crowdfunding platforms
- Academic research
- Corporate R&D
- Expert Interviews
- Social Media
- Retail / Point of Service
- Exhibits / Conferences / Showcases



Systems Thinking: The Iceberg Model (P. Lustig)

### 'HIDDEN' CULTURE:

... Then, connect those **SIGNALS** to the wider patterns and systemic structures that change much slower, including:

**TRENDS:** Sustained change within an industry, society, or human behavior; meets our core human needs in a new way

**STRUCTURES:** Infrastructure, Policy/laws, organizations/institutions, cultural rituals

**VALUES, NEEDS:** The assumptions, beliefs, and values people hold

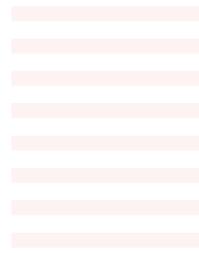
# DEVELOP THE ABILITY TO GET SMART FAST

Continuously collect and catalog important signals as they occur, making it easier to see **patterns** as they occur.



# 03

## HOW TO DO IT



Review your company's current knowledge gathering system, in terms of both process and categories of content you collect. What sources are you using today? What topics are on your radar?

**Answer the following questions to define your company's process for tracking signals:**

### SOURCING



### COLLECTING



### CODING



### SHARING



### CURATING

Who in your company is responsible for spotting and capturing links and images for new/important signals?

How and where are you storing these new signals?

Is there a tagging system in place (examples: "artisanal", "ice cream", "dessert", so team members can quickly find relevant signals?

What's the optimal way to share relevant signals with your company's various teams?

Consider curating signals. What makes sense for your company? Example: Periodically, Kelton adds a set of Signals to subfolders ('Stacks') based on sub-themes or related trends

# REFINE YOUR **INSIGHTS** **TOOLKIT**

Building strategic foresight principles into your **insights toolkit** allows for a convergence of cross-functional perspectives and innovative actions.



# 04

## HOW TO DO IT

Kelton has built a **Futures Insight toolkit** that complements more traditional forms of insight gathering. Consider exploring:



### Emergent Opportunity Analysis

Getting deeper than the traditional trends reports, identifying root causes and in-category activations



### Expert Brain Trust

Enlisting a range of expert perspective on the future, ranging from the academic/ analytical to the creative and divergent 'weirdos'



### 'Alternative' Consumer Targets

Leading edge / non-traditional consumers with the ability to creatively think outside their own space



### Pop Culture Semiotics

Using existing Scenarios as fodder for ideation, including plausible SciFi



### Modular Quant

Adding a future-facing module to a tracker, including judgement from the consumer on what's likely to happen



### Social Media Tracking

Scraping the consumer's POV on what feels futuristic, what new behaviors or attitudes are starting to emerge



### Media Scanning & Analytics

Trawling the 'litany' around a given topic, via simple search or robust platforms (e.g. Quid)

# LEVERAGE DESIGN THINKING TO TAKE ACTION

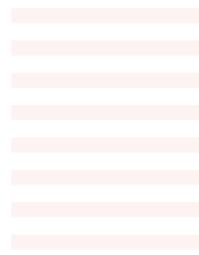
Design Thinking provides the perfect set of complementary tools to translate concrete **Future Scenarios** into action.



05

# HOW TO DO IT

These Design Research tools can help translate trends into action:



## SCENARIO PLANNING

Using a combination of trend analysis and creative writing to envision a range of possible Futures

## RAPID IDEATION

Collaborative, hands-on process for converting Scenarios into product/service platform sketches

## ITERATIVE PROTOTYPING

Creating MVP and working prototypes to kickstart the learning process

# 5 ways to strategically think ahead:

1. Think action, not prediction
2. Identify deeper forces of change
3. Develop the ability to get smart fast
4. Refine your insights toolkit
5. Leverage design thinking to take action



Want to learn more about Strategic Foresight and how it can help your business think about the future? Talk to John or Jessie.

**John Wise**, VP Cultural Insights & Brand Strategy  
[John.Wise@keltonglobal.com](mailto:John.Wise@keltonglobal.com)



**Jessie Sims**, Senior Director, Brand Development  
[Jessie.Sims@keltonglobal.com](mailto:Jessie.Sims@keltonglobal.com)

## WANT MORE?

If you only read 3 things:

1. [Strategic Foresight: Learning from the Future](#), P. Lustig
2. [Thinking About the Future](#), A. Hines
3. [Foundations in Futures Studies](#), W. Bell

If you only watch 1 thing:

1. [Andy Hines](#) at TEDxHouston

# WE **LOVE** TALKING ABOUT THIS STUFF.

Want to learn how  
Kelton can help you  
think about the future of  
your business?

**Give us a call or drop  
us a note.**

[keltonglobal.com](http://keltonglobal.com)

[+1.310.479.4040](tel:+13104794040)

[contact@keltonglobal.com](mailto:contact@keltonglobal.com)

