

Why

Companies spend a lot of time making and reviewing business plans focused on the coming year(s). One can ask whether this is effective as so many conditions are not predictable or controllable.

Consider a farmer: it is not effective to plan too much for the coming year as factors such as the weather have a big influence and are not predictable. However, the farmer has to decide on what trees to plant today to have profitable fruits in 10 to 20 years. So, in a rapidly changing world it could be interesting to look 10 to 20 years ahead to decide what kinds of trees have to be planted now but to only plan for the coming days/months.

What

Looking 20 years ahead to determine direction but only planning for the coming days/months.

How

Do a futuring exercise in which you reflect on how the market and the company will look in 15/20 years.

An example of a futuring exercise is: describe a normal day in [year]. What do you see, feel, notice, discover etc.? Ask HR or an external consultant for more possible futuring exercises.

Reflect carefully on your business planning process: is it working, are you planning the right things, does it consume a lot of time and are many revisions needed? Is this effective? Could you do less planning?

When

When you feel that planning is taking a lot of time and effort and are wondering if it is still effective given the many changes required by changing conditions.

Skills and necessary training

Some knowledge of how to explore and picture the future.
Knowledge of simple tools and ways to plan business operations.

Possible workshop exercise

Do a futuring exercise looking 20 years ahead. Discuss and reflect on how this could change current perspectives on activities and the current planning practices of the company.