

Two Important Market-Trends Vantage Points: Broadview + Futureview®

Even the most traditional, by-the-book organizations share a common goal with their more forward-thinking counterparts and competitors: How to stay in front of market trends.

The obvious advantage to keeping ahead of the curve is that you know what your customers currently value—and, just as important, what they're likely to embrace in the future.

The trouble is, that particular challenge is becoming more acute all the time. As technological development and innovation continue to gain speed—and, in so doing, impact most every aspect of our lives—change is coming at a faster and faster pace all the time. That can make just keeping up with market trends a chore, let alone being out in front.

But there are strategies to help you keep your foot on the gas pedal to stay ahead of market trends—and, from there, to make the most of what you learn.

Stay in Touch

Although technology is the driving force behind an increasingly faster rate of change, it's also an ally so far as providing tools to stay informed. For instance, most everyone is familiar with services such as Google Alerts that let you set up automatic feeds for news, information and other data. Likewise, subscribing to blogs and websites can further boost that flow of information.

Leverage these as much as possible by targeting trade-specific sources. For instance, if you're in the medical field in some capacity, sites such as Medical News Today offer free news feeds on a variety of health-related topics. That way, not only will you keep track of those particular areas of interest to you, you can also forgo having to sift through other information that may be of significantly less value.

But don't completely overlook more general sources. If, by chance, you're in retail or some other sort of sales, reading consumer publications and websites with a broad focus can often help you identify trends that, while not particular to your field, are nonetheless important to be aware of.

Additionally, don't forget other sources of information that are decidedly less day to day. For example, my annual review of top technology trends offers a variety of insights impacting organizations of all sorts.

Collaborate

One of the major distinctions that I establish in my Anticipatory Organization Model is the difference between cooperation and collaboration. In short, cooperation is tied to necessity—you cooperate because you have to. Cooperation is based on a scarcity mindset—you are cooperating because you have to, and your focus is on protecting your piece of the economic pie. On the other hand, collaboration is based on an abundance mindset—you are collaborating because you want to, and rather than fighting over each share of the economic pie, you work together, sometimes with competitors, to create a bigger pie for everyone.

Consider applying that mindset to staying ahead of trends. Rather than looking to hoard every scrap of information and insight, consider sharing it with others who may share with you and often lend a fresh, compelling perspective. That can push you all that much further ahead of market and consumer trends.

Meet Hard Trends and Soft Trends

A stumbling block to getting out—and staying in front—of market trends is the assumption that the future is utterly unpredictable. If what comes tomorrow is pretty much a shot in the dark, why even bother?

That's simply not true. My Anticipatory Organization Model™ emphasizes the value of identifying both Hard and Soft Trends. Hard Trends are based on future facts. They will happen from aging Baby Boomers to technology that is becoming more sophisticated and useful at an increasingly faster rate. By contrast, Soft Trends are based on assumptions that might happen. Think of them as future possibilities—things that may or may not occur but which are open to influence.

Now, just apply those two ideas to market trends. By using Hard Trends, you can anticipate with confidence certain types of consumer and market movements. By contrast, Soft Trends offer insight into market shifts that may or may not take place—but which you can change if you don't like the impact they might have.



DANIEL BURRUS is considered one of the world's leading technology forecasters and innovation experts, and is the founder and CEO of [Burrus Research](#), a research and consulting firm that monitors global advancements in technology driven trends to help clients understand how technological, social and business forces are converging to create enormous untapped opportunities. He is the author of six books including The New York Times best seller [Flash Foresight](#). This article is reprinted with permission. Reproduction without permission is strictly prohibited. For reprint permission, contact Burrus Research, Inc. at office@burrus.com.



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