

## **Who Could Have Predicted It?**

Who in 999 AD could have imagined, much less predicted the course of events that have lead us to where we are now? Who in 1701 would have thought that England would have taken control over North America from the French and that some upstart Colonies would create their own country in defiance. Who in 1701 could have predicted that there would be a French Revolution and a Reign of Terror? Who in 1801 could have foreseen all of the inventions and technological changes that would give rise to the industrial revolution? Who in 1901 could have imagined not one, but two World Wars, Korea, Viet Nam and Desert Storm? Imagine if you told someone in 1945 that the Soviet Union would collapse without a fight before the year 2000? What if in 1950 you tried to explain the internet to someone? What if you tried again in 1985? Who could have predicted all that has happened over the last twenty-five years, much less the last one hundred and one thousand!?!

The answer is of course, no one. The reason being that nothing happens in great, tremendous leaps. Things happen as a result of other things happening and connect as a series of events. Needs get filled. Theories get disputed and overturned by science. Copernicus. Darwin. Einstein. Things get invented because someone discovered something else about an unrelated topic. Someone set out to invent one thing and discovered something completely different than what s/he'd set out to invent in the first place. Edison, Bell, Madame Curie. It's all haphazard. It's all random. But somehow it all gets connected and becomes part of the way we do things and the way we live. The same holds true within the industries and markets you serve. The same holds true for your company. Something happens. A new technology is discovered. Someone invents something. A new way of doing business is introduced. Ford. Sloan. Kroc. Gates. Walton. Bezos. Someone in some far distant land discovers the connection between two completely unrelated things, puts them together, creates a totally new paradigm and changes the way things are done forever more. How do you predict it? How do you stay on top of it all? How do you find out about it? How does your company survive?

Through on-going planning and strategic thinking. Strategic thinking is a process that forces you to think about the future. Not in terms of going from today to 3001,

but from today to perhaps 2010 or 2025. It causes a company's people, sales channels, shareholders, suppliers, advisors, consultants and even its customers to be vigilant. To be proactively on the lookout for new and innovative technologies and methodologies that can help you change the way you currently do business, before someone else puts them to use and forces you to change or perish. To either be the one creating and causing the changes or buying yourself enough time to at least be prepared for them. One way or another, they're coming. They always have. Just look back and see what has gone before. Then look forward and imagine how much more lies ahead. Especially when you consider that the rate of change since 1901 has increased exponentially.

For those who do not plan and think that by taking care of today will prepare you for tomorrow, you are, as they say, "whistling in the dark." You are living day to day, hoping that nothing will come out of the darkness to harm either you or your company. Not planning is like driving a car blindfolded, looking out the rear window. No matter how hard you try, you will never be able to see what lies ahead. Consider this. The "future" really is an invisible place, only until you start thinking about it. The only way to prepare for the future is to plan for it. But, you need to make certain that the future you are planning for is going to exist by the time you get there. Therefore, the plans you create as a result of strategic planning must be reviewed regularly and revised, renewed and reinvented as needed. So if you have implemented a strategic planning process within your company, use it often. If you have no such process in your company, just keep right on whistling or call a strategic planner.