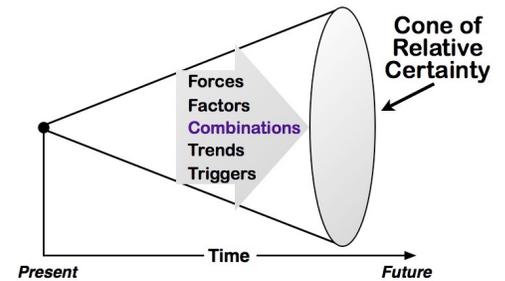


# Vigilant Leadership: Futuring, Anticipation, & Action

## Seeing the Big Picture

You are a **professional** with a **specialty**. Specialists have **deep but narrow expertise**. To be a successful anticipator of what's coming for your organization, I believe you have to create a **perspective, a forward-looking view of what's ahead in the environment**. Here is my advice for how to do that.



Don't predict. Instead, **forecast!**

## Best Practices

1. **Habit** - A prepared mind benefits from **ongoing** scanning and thinking through implications.
2. **Teams** - See the future more broadly, more inclusively, and more **effectively**. The combined intellect of a team of four or more people creates "group as genius."
3. **Open-mindedness** - A **flexibility** to notice and **adopt** new evidence, **understanding**, and **willingness** to change direction.

## Staying Broadly & Forward-Informed - Scanning

How can a leader stay well-informed in a hyper-busy work environment? Through sensible and flexible use of tools, assets, and collaboration. Here are **free, time-saving, web-based** components with broad focus, excellent editing, and eclectic exposure. Consider one or two as a habit.

**Quartz Daily Brief** - Daily e-mail summary. Free. Arrives in morning. Editors with global experience. This can give you the widest reach. **If you only choose one source to add to your scanning, this is the one. 500,000 global readers. Features:** "What You Need to Know." "What to Watch For." "Deeper Dive." "Surprising Discoveries."

**The Skimm** - Women-oriented. Excellent editing and topic selection. I see it daily. Also free. Men - will give you a different take. Great writing.

**Axios** - A best-in-show choice. Lots of options but I most enjoy Axios **Future** and **What's Next**. Obviously. You can even subscribe to versions unique to your larger city. Leader in journalism and editing. Highly recommended.

**farmdocdaily**. Excellent resource right in the agriculture sweet spot. From the University of Illinois. Webinars, news summaries, releases. Specific research, Corn Belt economics, "best of breed." Get it daily or a weekly summary. <https://farmdocdaily.illinois.edu/>

**Seeing Around Corners**

**Four Questions: The “See Around Corners Puzzlers”**

A quiz to demonstrate how to see ahead using your ability to observe, analyze, and anticipate. Poll questions represent techniques in the table below.

Technique	Description	Examples	What to Do
<b>Harbinger Zones</b>	<b>Bellwethers</b> , early adopters, bleeding edges, precursors	Where change happens first? Younger adopters. AI, robotics, genetics, cutting-edge tech. Prosper applications.	Project this to usable information. Example - loan approvals.
<b>Micro-Indicators</b>	Small pieces that move with the mean/ whole system or network	The grocery indicator. Egg sales in Indonesia. Sewage analysis for Covid, opioids.	Forecast movement direction. Take action (grain buys). Prepare for cases (Covid). Raise/lower prices (Charmin).
<b>Upstream Look</b>	Moving up 2-3 steps on the cause-effect timeline	Our tax revenue example, Powell Street BART. Our construction/AIA example.	Position assets. Plan expenditures. Ramp up production.
<b>Signals Hiding in Plain Sight</b>	The unexpected and misunderstood. Overlooked. Ignored. Missed surprises.	Ransomware attacks. Oxford’s 2013 study on computerization.	Pay attention. Realize the most overlooked factors are those that have already occurred.

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**Foresight & Recognition**

**Filtering for Impact**

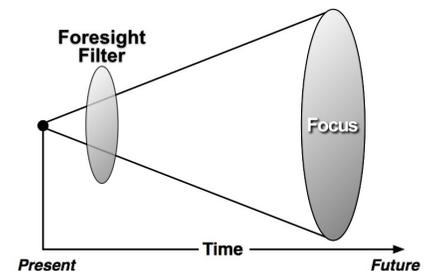
You can choose what’s important with a filter. Look for themes, data, information, and indicators that stand out..”

**3 categories:**

**Surprises (“Didn’t know, or think that.”)**

**Game-Changers (just what it says)**

**Implications (have significant effects, consequences, repercussions, upshots)**



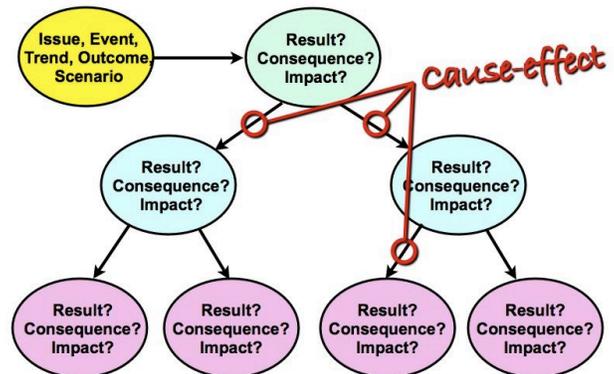
**Implication Thinking**

Understanding meaning and options for the path forward.

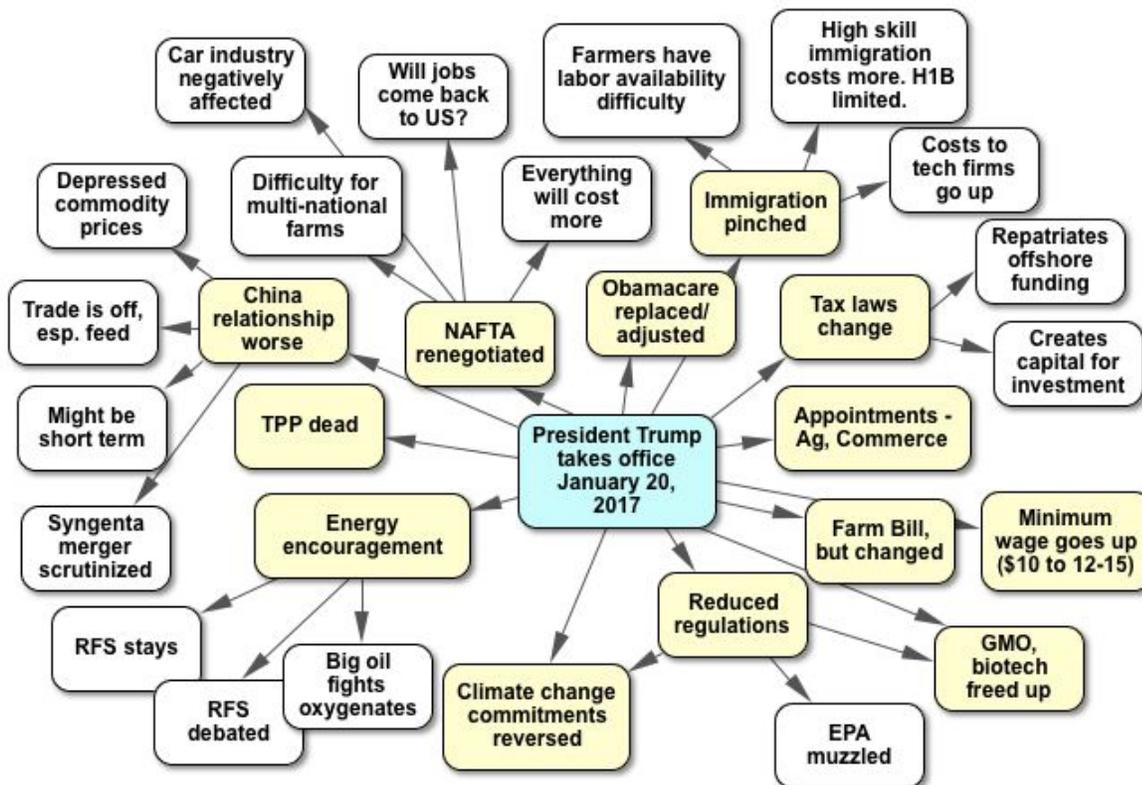
Implications are the after-effects, consequences, results, or impacts of what we've noticed. These are the answers to, "So what?" Implication-thinking is an ability to quickly and easily identify those answers - not in a one-off manner, but in **layers of implications**.

In a group the best way to begin this technique is to start with a scenario, situation, issue, or future possibility you believe will affect you, your team, or your organization. We then ask the question, "Since (or if) this has happened, **then what happens?**"

In order to answer "Then what happens?" we have to project, forecast, think ahead, or determine effects. In short, it forces us to **think in the future tense**. An illustration at right. Notice that we continue beyond the first implication to add others.



**Example: Agribusiness CIO's in November, 2016**

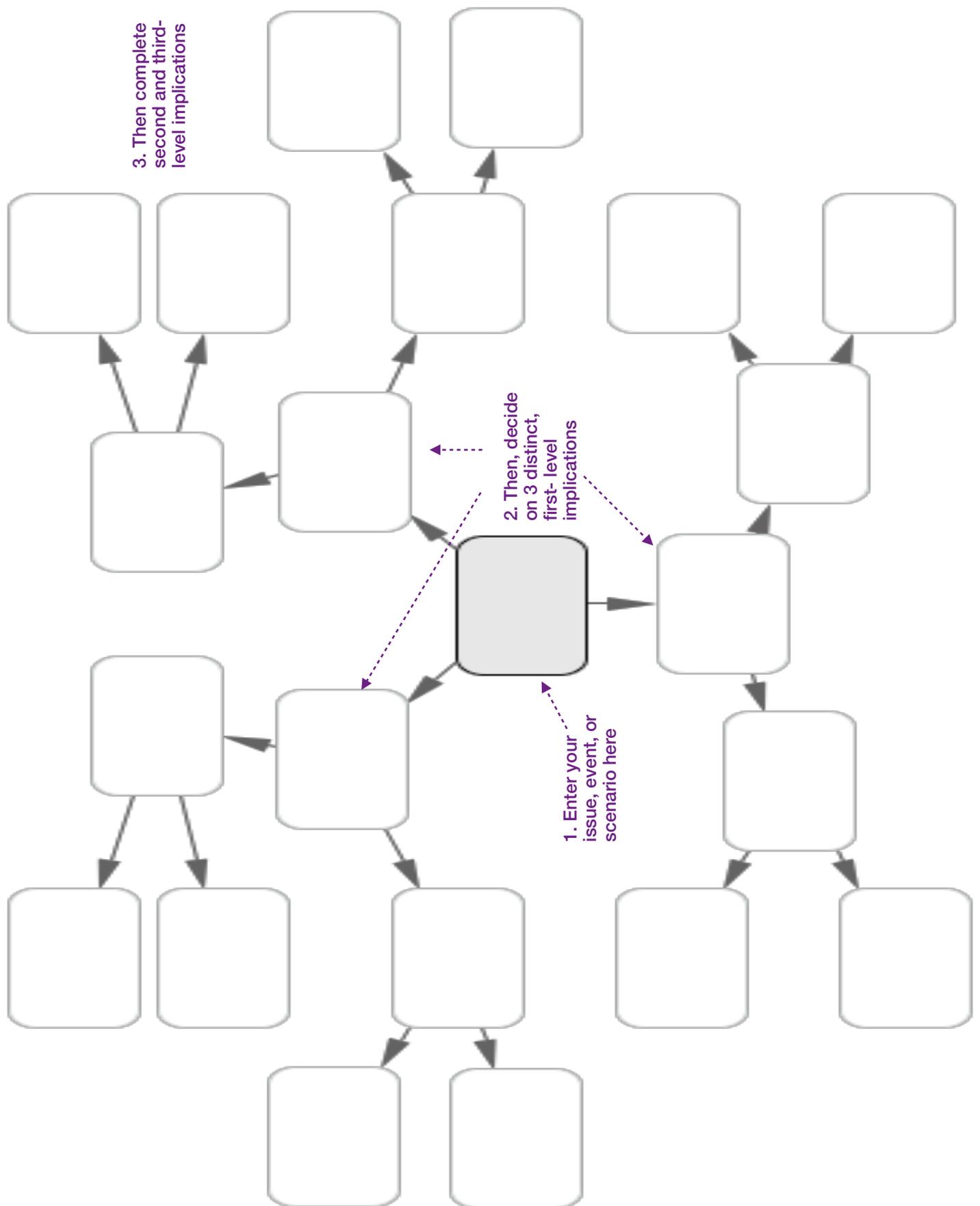


## Instructions for the Implication Diagram

1. **Choose an issue, factor, event, or scenario.** I've put several on the screen. Choose one of those or a choice of your own but don't take a lot of time. Write or enter it in the **center box**.
2. Develop **three distinct, non-related first level implications.** **Extremely Important!** Ask yourself "if *fill in the blank* occurs, then what?" **Avoid** developing actions or responses. Think instead about **what will result.** We're trying to understand the issue. Be descriptive, not prescriptive. **Stay at the first level** for all three of these, making sure they're **distinct and separate.**
3. Once you've completed all 3 of the first-level implications then move to each, one at a time, and ask, "**Then what happens?**" The form suggests **at least two responses** to each implication.
4. **Continue** moving outward **on that same branch** to the third level if you can. Each time you ask of the outermost implication, "And then what happens?" Try to complete as much of the diagram as you can.
5. This will be difficult at first. You may find this kind of analysis a bit difficult but stay at it and it will become easier.
6. Different perspectives make this process more useful and enriching. Encourage participation. Different opinions? Don't argue. Include both. Alter the diagram as you need.

## Uses

- Strategy or action generator. The more you see how events could unfold, the clearer are needed actions and even an overall strategy.
- Decision aid - test choices by subjecting them to an implication analysis.
- Persuader - Face to face with legislators, regulators, allies, opponents.
- Plan B, C, D stimulator - often a response will point to alternative strategies & tactics.

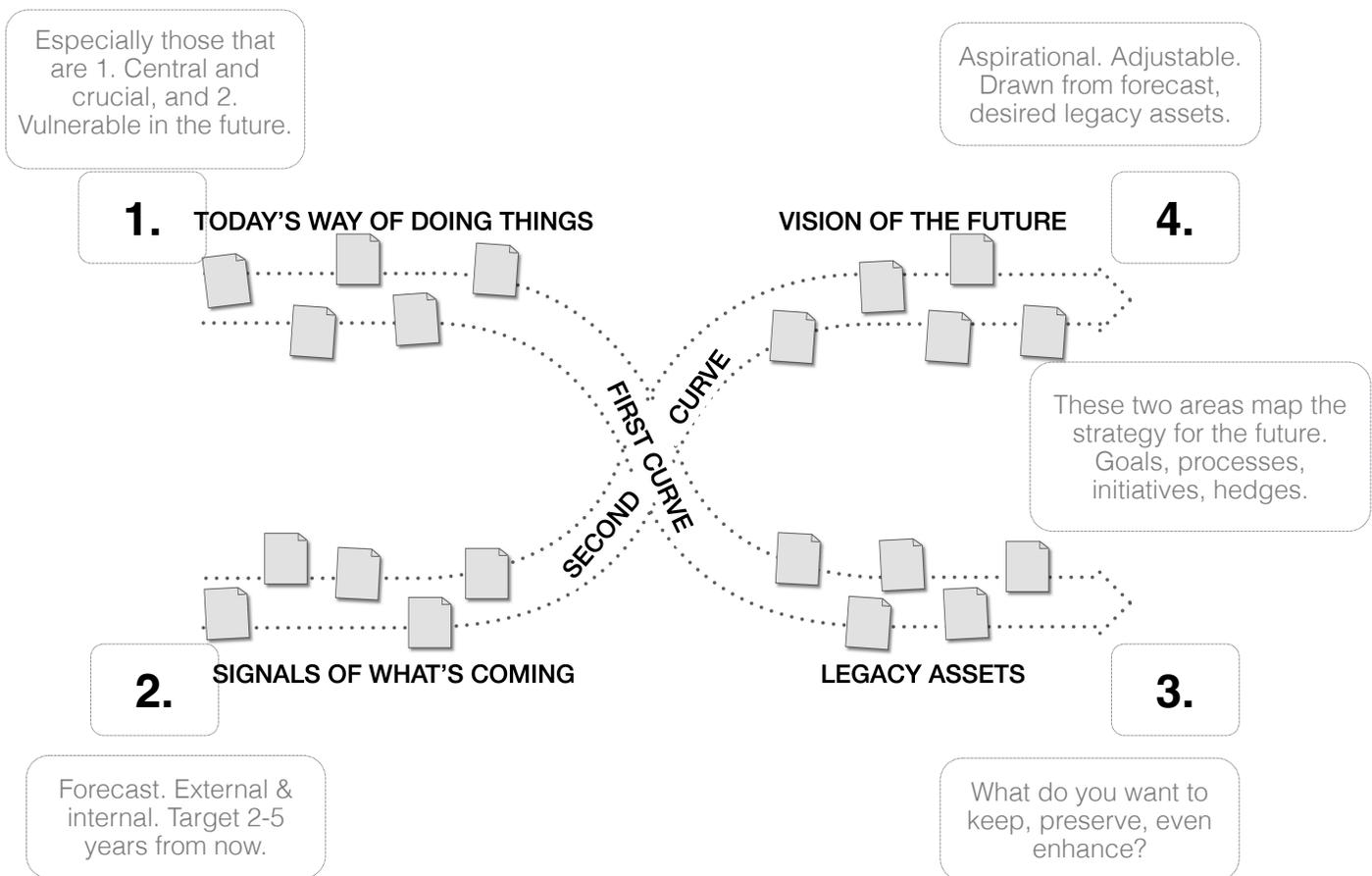


**Two Curves - Build Strategy in the Face of Disruption**

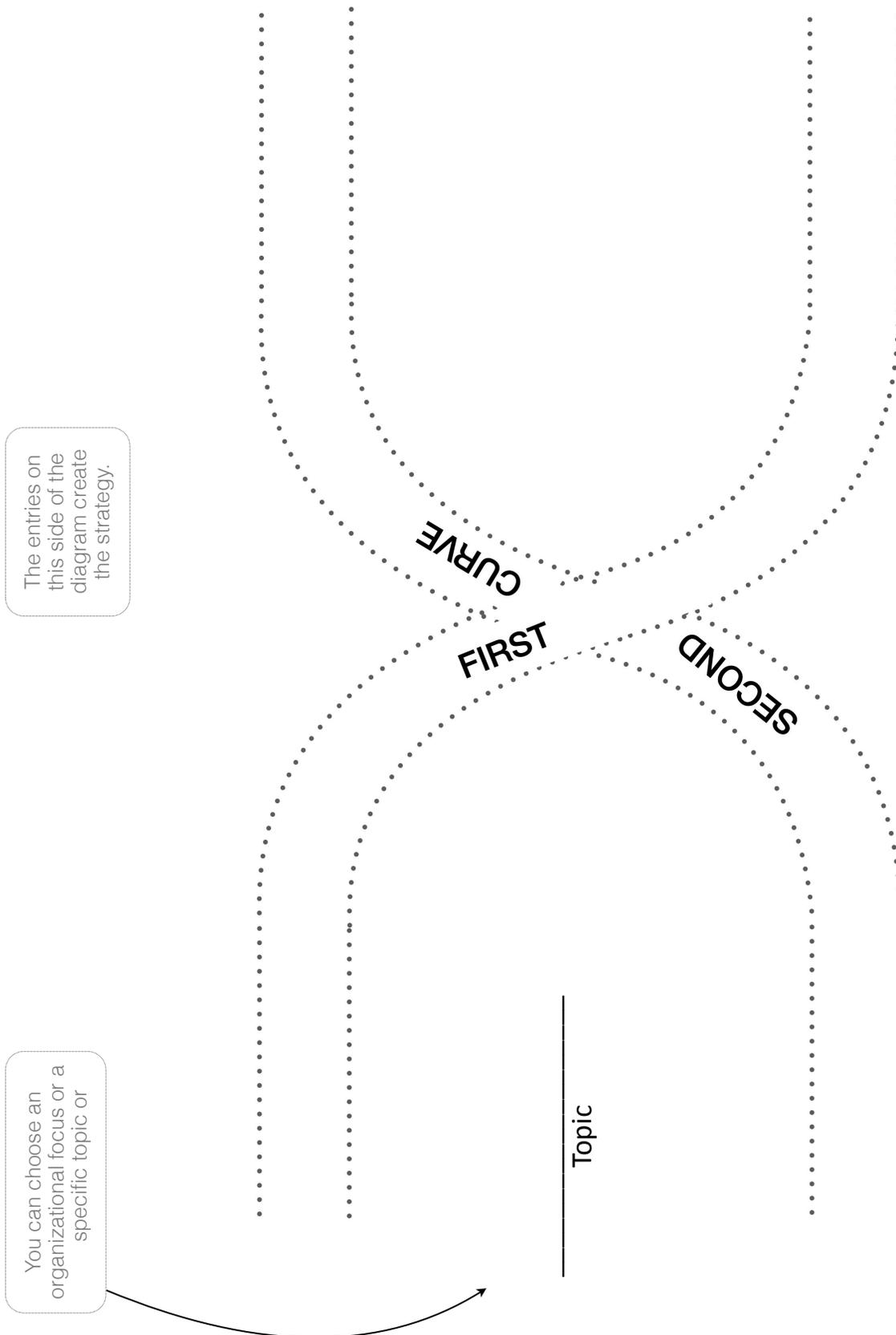
Signals of disruption force organizations to consider transformation to be ready for the future. What has worked in the near term or past declines in effectiveness. This method will help to build alignment and capacity for a disruptive future. Budget cuts, demographic drivers for shrinking enrollment, trade shifts, changes in regulation can be worked into this model.

Two Curves helps build strategic vision based on observable signals of what’s coming and opinions of what works best in the future. It is based on four sectors and a pair of curves that guide groups to consider “today’s way of doing things” and “signals of what’s coming” and how those thoughts can be transitioned to describe a “vision of the future” and supporting “legacy assets” founded on today’s best practices.

A typical process alternates between the curves. The beginning of the first curve is established with consensus on a picture of the present. Then the group addresses the clues of what’s coming by generating a forecast. We go back to “Today’s Way” and consider tomorrow’s “Legacy Assets” for Quadrant 3. All 3 areas advise the Vision of the future for Quadrant 4. The right-hand quadrants give us choices for our long-term strategy.



We want to come away with targets, goals, “desired future” statements and an aid to building a plan for the next 2-5 years.



## RESOURCES

### Recommended Reading

Duke, Annie; ***Thinking in Bets: Making Smarter Decisions When You Don't Have All the Facts***; Portfolio (Penguin), 2018 (Great lessons from a professional poker player who has writing and speaking chops.)

Grant, Adam; ***Think Again: The Power of Knowing What You Didn't Know***; Viking, 2021 (Applicable to the best practice of mind-changing flexibility)

Grawe, Nathan; ***Demographics and the Demand for Higher Education***; Johns Hopkins University Press, 2018 (Carleton College prof on the next 20 years and "The Cliff.")

Lewis, Michael; ***The Premonition***; W.W. Norton, 2021 (Fascinating post-mortem of the Covid outbreak. Imaging if it were a "pre-mortem"?)

Taleb, Nassim Nicholas; ***The Black Swan: 2nd Edition: The Impact of the Highly Improbable***; Random House Trade Paperback, 2010 (The truly unexpected or is it?)

Winston, Andrew; ***The Big Pivot: Radically Practical Strategies for a Hotter, Scarcer, and More Open World***; Harvard Business Review Press, 2014 (Advice that gets better with age.)

Feel free to contact us for additional forms and information on **Implication Thinking** or **Two Curves**. Use the website or e-mail address on each page of this handout.

**BOB TREADWAY** is an internationally-recognized advisor to organizations and leaders on strategy and foresight. He's worked with trade negotiators on global emerging issues, think tanks on the future of high speed internet usage, financial examiners evaluating strategic risk, wealthy families looking for successful investments over a 20 year timeframe, agribusiness companies looking at the 20-year future of pest and weed control, and governments grappling with unanticipated change.



Treadway works internationally as a consulting futurist with clients like Berkshire Hathaway, Motorola, Gillette, ExxonMobil, US Gypsum, Marks & Spencer, Syngenta, Alberta Canola, Hilton, the EPA, Starbucks, CHS, CropLife Canada, National Ag Aviation Association, the Social Security Administration, United Airlines, Farm Credit, National Corn Growers and the American Soybean Associations. He has been adjunct faculty and guest lecturer at eight North American universities and has conducted hundreds of leadership education programs in fields as diverse as healthcare, agriculture, audit, telecommunications, tertiary education, energy, and financial services through the Institute for Management Studies, the Federal Reserve, Syngenta's Leadership At Its Best, and the Food Systems Leadership Institute.