

Checking in: *How's your Foresight Work Going?*

November 2022

We recently invited another group of Strategic Foresight graduates to get together over coffee, with Garry Golden on hand virtually, for an informal chat about what's working, what's difficult, and how folks are feeling about things. The most recent group met at Copper State Brewing Co.

Garry offered that the #1 hurdle foresight leaders continue to face is the question, "Why should I spend my time worrying about the future when I have so much to do today?" Steve McCarthy shared an unsettling signal he'd found: Even people *paid* to think about the future spend, on average, no more than four minutes each day actually thinking about the future! Rick Heck of Schreiber Foods pointed out that the same people who are responsible for charting the future course tend to be the ones executing today's course. "People want certainty," he said.



Matt Dornbusch, Dean of the School of Business, University of Wisconsin Green Bay, explained



that leaders' identities are often tied up in what they're already doing. Garry conceded that organizational change is a long process that does, indeed, involve personalities. But he offered this advice: The future is really about curiosity. Focus on the *playfulness* of considering alternative futures. Have fun with it – make it less threatening and remind people that there are no expectations involved in simply envisioning a preferred future.

Steve McCarthy suggested that the process of scanning for signals, developing trends, and predicting alternative futures can be intellectually enjoyable for all involved. Rick, who continues his work to steer Schreiber Foods toward the best possible future, indicated that he will focus more on the fun of headlines from now on. "I think I'll better capture their imaginations if I present future possibilities through intriguing headlines from the future."



Matt observed that, for the university, a full foresight analysis is probably not required every year. Perhaps, he suggested, an annual check in on various trends might be sufficient: *Are these still the right signals to follow? Are we moving in the right direction?* He suggested that a major foresight analysis every three years might be fine. “Until we identify the truly impactful changes we should focus on,” he said, “we’re in danger of burning ourselves out.”

The key to success, Garry reminded the group, is still a positive personal attitude about the future.