



Blueprint **LEADERSHIP**

Building Organizations that Change the World

What Are You Waiting For?

“The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams.”

– Eleanor Roosevelt

Imagine having a thought and immediately grabbing whatever is within reach to make that thought a reality. In 1991, Jimmy Ray, founder of Gogo in-flight communications services, sketched a vision for a future aircraft telephone system on a paper napkin. With a goal in mind and the determination to see it through, the company was awarded an exclusive frequency license by the FCC in 2006 and the company designed, patented and deployed an uninterrupted cellular network to the aviation market in the U.S. With its debut in 2008, Gogo brought Internet access to 30,000 feet, giving airline passengers the means to communicate and access the World Wide Web in the sky. Today, the company continues to lead global aero-communications with innovative technology and services for the commercial and business aviation markets.ⁱ



Ray envisioned new possibilities and created an innovative market space that enriches our travel experience today and has become a necessity for many business travelers. He created something people wanted and subsequently, people needed. Innovations such as this demonstrate the long-term value of futuristic thinking. Futuristic thinking serves customer needs and in some cases, makes the world a better place.

In addition to envisioning possibilities, futuristic thinkers inspire others to imagine what lies beyond the current scope of vision. In essence, those that follow this innovative way of thinking paint a picture of the future that the rest of us don't yet see. Leaders at companies like Apple, Google, Southwest and Gogo dare to push the boundaries in their industries, anticipate what's to come, and bring innovative products and services to life without hesitation, knowing there are always risks. In order to survive and thrive in our ever-changing technological world, futuristic thinking is imperative. This school of thought should begin immediately, without hesitation, not in the future. Maybe the idea of futuristic thinking should be coined 'futuristic thinking now.'

Now that we know what's at stake, let's take a look at what it means to be a futuristic thinker.

Be a visionary. Look to the grander scheme instead of getting intellectually trapped in the short term and existing conditions. Use your imagination to think creatively about the long term with



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no limits. Predict changes in your current reality and open your mind to the endless possibilities that have not been thought of yet. Understand the interdependency between your customer's needs and technology, for this will be the new tomorrow.

Be fearless. Challenge the status quo. Ask probing questions that challenge assumptions and the current state of thinking. With a strong sense of curiosity and a spark of creativity, we all have capacity to envision a new and improved future. However, in order to do this, one must possess the humility to acknowledge that the current parameters may not suffice as technologies and customer needs shift over time. Consider how your decisions today are limiting the expansion of your long-term vision.

Be an expert. Collect and analyze valuable information that contributes to shaping the future of your business. This may include finance reports, risk assessments and technology options. Also, pay attention to intuition and be willing to take risks. As bestselling author Daniel Pink explains in his book "A Whole New Mind," our left brains are going to play a bigger role in breakthrough thinking over the coming years and decades.

Be proactive. Prioritizing your organization's success requires setting aside sufficient time to think forward and around corners. Many leaders voice major concerns about getting caught in the day to day, not spending enough time contemplating the future. Strategic thinking takes time and must be purposefully addressed. **Futuristic thinking has to start now to reflect the future you desire to create.**

How do you begin developing futuristic thinking?

- Start engaging in conversations with colleagues and mentors who demonstrate futuristic strategic thinking.
- Allocate time to brainstorm critical shifts impacting your sector of the marketplace.
- Set aside time to ask tough questions.
- Think long term, not just the immediate effects an idea may have.
- Take risks knowing you may not always succeed when attempting to predict the future.
- When you have an idea, act on it immediately and know if you don't, your competition will.
- Explore shifts and trends. Here are a few websites to investigate:
www.futureconscience.com/top-10-futurist-websites/
- Invite people from diverse backgrounds with various education and expertise to share ideas. (Visit www.ideo.com for examples of working well with people across industries and platforms.)

As every moment passes, the world is evolving. We challenge you to inspire and lead your organization to a future not yet imagined. Grab a napkin and a pen, and get started. What are you waiting for?

ⁱ <http://gogoair.mediaroom.com/history>

ⁱⁱ <http://www.thecompleteleader.org/futuristic-thinking>