

Futuring Skills for Career Success

By [Jim Schreier](#)

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To succeed in today's complex, information overloaded, constantly changing world, [career success](#) (including job seeking) depends on multiple skills – communications and problem-solving, for example. But there's another skill set, less discussed, that can become a critical factor in a person's career success – FUTURING.

The importance of futuring skills as a key competency has been recognized by professional organizations like the World Future Society and the Society for Human Resources Management. The goal of this article is to focus on three specific examples of futuring skills that can be developed and used for career success.

Monitoring

“All the available information means people have to work harder to consume it, categorizing information, sorting facts from opinion, and putting everything into context. Unless we take the time to do that, and have the skills to do it well, we could actually be less knowledgeable.” (Ron Ashkenas, Harvard Business Review)

Multiple skills are called for here but the “futuring” component involves the need for a process to become aware and monitor the “things you should be looking for...”

Futurist Joel Barker developed a process, called T.I.P.S. Tracking (**T**rends, **I**nnovations, **P**aradigm **S**hifts). The process enables individuals to focus, organize, and interrogate

important information. The organizing component is driven by software (Scoop.It) that any job seeker can access for free to organize – and share – information relevant to their career field of interest.

I use the [T.I.P.S. Tracking process](#) to organize, share, and evaluate key information for career work. This empowers me to monitor several sources of career information, with automated searching for keywords like resumes, interviewing, and then select (and comment if desired) only those items that I think meet the criteria I've created for more hard-hitting career advice.

Scouting the Future

It's pretty standard [advice for job seekers](#) to have support, from someone reviewing resumes to coaching for interviews. But a futuring skill takes it further and involves learning the value of scouting – a time honored skill that recognizes the importance of looking over the horizon.

Learning guru Elliott Masie called on his followers to draft five scouts – and meet with each them once a month. He suggested scouts from a generation older, a generation younger, technology, global, and faith. Good career advice would suggest that every person seeking career success, identify at least five different areas where having someone scouting and reporting on important topics from different perspectives would be valuable.

Using T.I.P.S. Tracking, particularly the Scoop.It platform mentioned above, allows me to “follow” the information begin generated from key people I know, my scouts, professionals in particular fields, or specific topics. Focused, important information is directly tied to my needs.

A Formal Scouting Process

Think for a moment of the value of having better information about the future based on the characteristics of scouting. The scouts who worked with the wagon trains in the old west:

- Were fast. Slow scouts provide information too late to be useful.
- Sought quality, not quantity. Surveyors went later to get the detail on selected areas
- Sampled. In today's world, if you try and cover everything, you'll never act.
- Mapped. Scouts present information in an organized way.

Futurist Joel Barker takes the scouting metaphor to a powerful new level with a strategic exploration tool, The Implications Wheel[®], that can help any job seeker better explore the short and long term consequences of any change. It can be used to explore questions like: “What are the possible implications of pursuing this career field, or accepting a particular job offer?”

It is a process for “finding the future faster,” scouting over the horizon of time. It asks a participant to examine both the positive and negative implications by asking a question that explores possibilities: “What might happen next?”

Then ask the question again for these possibilities identified: “What might happen next?” And ask the question again. The Implications Wheel process includes scoring for desirability and likelihood. A recent job seeker I coached reported that “understanding this process made every decision clearer.”

The first questions I get when introducing these techniques are how to determine topics to “scout,” and which sources to follow. This is exactly why futuring is a skill to be developed.

“Scout” the topics that are most important to you. For a job seeker, look for specific information on resumes and interviewing. Look for information on a particular field or industry. The least effective ways to find good information are search engines like Google or Bing. They reveal the universe – you want more focused information. Look for sources of information you trust.

A closing point, perhaps the most important characteristic for career success, the futuring techniques discussed here provide information to enhance decision-making. They do not – and should not for job seekers – provide answers. That’s your decision, your job choice, your career, and your future!



About Jim Schreier

[Jim Schreier](#) is a management consultant with a focus on management, leadership, including performance-based hiring and interviewing skills.



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