

STRATEGY AND FUTURE STUDIES: DISCIPLINES FOR THE FUTURE



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In order to devise competitive strategies companies need to rethink how they design and execute their strategy. The latest research project undertaken by B+I Strategy has allowed us to **detect and define five traits which must be present in the processes of design and development of strategies** of successful organisations.

These traits are based on the combination of seemingly opposing elements:

1. Permanent strategic thinking and structured periodic thinking;
2. Standard methodology individually adapted to companies;
3. Creativity and logic;
4. Participation and speed; and
5. Evaluation of various timelines.

This article will deal with the **element of time**. Strategy should consider different “timelines”, responding to critical questions in the short, medium and long-term. Those companies who are mindful of timelines while structuring their strategies will discover opportunities and risks which their competitors do not manage to comprehend.

In both the medium and long-term, the field of future studies appears before us as a discipline of growing interest to companies and governments. Based on trends and probable events, it is tasked with **studying** the future in order to better **comprehend** it. This understanding of “how” things will occur and, above all, “why” they will occur, enables us to **influence** these events by working to avert the negative while assuring the positive, which is the direct link between future studies and strategy.

In my opinion, **future studies and strategy complement each other enormously**. Future studies can identify hypotheses and one or more future alternatives. It also helps us detect what challenges and opportunities we may find on our path. From that point onward, strategy allows us to analyse and determine what action is best to take in view of these possible futures. Furthermore, both disciplines **engender complementary attitudes in managers**. While it is true that future studies may give rise to a sort of euphoria, leading one to think that perhaps anything is possible, strategy on the other hand, convinced that our skills are limited, obliges us to select and prioritise in the most realistic manner.

In reaffirming our deep-rooted commitment to knowledge and the search for new services of value as pillars of a differential strategy consultancy, at B+I Strategy we continually develop **personalised future thinking services for companies and governments**. Our sectorial and geographical focus is the cornerstone for the design and development of competitive strategies and business models.

This commitment to gaining knowledge stems from a deep concern for a number of relevant issues such as: What will **our citizenry** be like 20 years from now? What factors will impact their day-to-day life? How will supply and demand for public services evolve? What behaviours should we expect from our **clients**? How are the **markets** of our main products in each **geographical area** expected to evolve? What new products will appear on the market? How will specific **technologies** in our sector evolve?

Our work with the Copenhagen Institute for Futures Studies (CIFS) and the VTT Centre for Technological Research of Finland allows us at B+I Strategy to work with quantitative and qualitative methodologies. Some notable examples of this work are: the **analysis and interpretation of trends, micro-trends and new business models, and the analysis of the foreseen evolution of sectorial technologies**. In short, these are useful tools to assist public and private organisations to study, understand and influence the future by marrying future thinking skills with strategy.