

Japan Future Centers Support Materials

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1. Why Create A Future Center?

This is a special time in Japan. In all parts of Japan people are asking questions: What kind of a future do we want? What is really important to us now? How do we measure quality of life? How do I live when there is so much uncertainty? What is the right thing to do?

These are precious questions and it is easy for them to get lost in the non-stop activities of our daily lives. Some of these questions are broad and can seem overwhelming. Some are very particular and annoying because there is no clear answer. A Future Center is a BA where we work together to address all kinds of questions – big and small!

1-A: Rationale for Creating Future Center

All over Japan companies are rethinking their products and services. They are reimagining their community – employees, suppliers, customers. They are asking questions about energy use, resource supplies and sustainability. All of these questions were present before the triple disasters of March 11, 2011. As many business leaders have said, 3.11 simply made the questions more immediate. The future is now.

Our companies and the communities that surround them have people filled with incredible experience, knowledge and wisdom. They are filled with people with vision and creative ideas. However, often these people, whether they are employees, customers, or suppliers, are isolated into their small and important daily roles. They are also often overworked, stressed, and a bit afraid of the future. Divisions and units and structures of hierarchy keep them focused on the tasks seen as necessary for current company operations.

But that is no longer enough!

A Future Center is a special BA where people are invited to enter into a different quality of relationship with each other in order to create “newness” in the company. This newness takes many forms:

- People work together to better manage work within a certain part of the company.
- New directions for the company are envisioned.
- New products or services are imagined and designed.
- An entire new system of workflow between several different departments is strategized.

You can easily imagine others as well. Future Centers are a way to help people discover opportunities that already exist, solve perplexing problems, and more easily see a range of viable alternatives.

It all begins by creating a BA in which different people can have a better dialogue which begins to make new possibilities visible. In order to understand this new kind of BA, let's compare it with how we frequently listen and talk to each other:

- When the same people sit around the same table in the same room, we often stop listening to each other. We think we know what the other person is going to say – we’ve heard it all before. We are worried about some issue in our family and not really paying attention. We are preoccupied by all the reasons why things will never change.
- We’re concerned about our work deadlines and the pressures our own department faces. We know that we don’t want to walk away from this meeting with even more work to do – we’re doing enough already! Others in the company just don’t understand how much we are already doing.
- Yes, for sure, we’re all part of the same company, but within the company we have different allegiances and priorities. We trust some people and are not quite sure about some others. AND, we want to advance our own position in the company, so we had better be careful about what we say to who!
- And, really, new ideas just don’t work. It is safer to keep doing what we’ve been doing. Things will get better.

Of course, this is a stereotype – but does any of it remind you of how things are in your company?

A Future Center creates a new BA with new rules! They are simple and powerful:

- We come to a Future Center session because we want to create something new!
- We really want to listen to other people’s ideas and to share our own.
- We are excited about the invitation to be creative.
- We know that change is needed and we want to be part of creating it.
- We believe in the ingenuity and insights and talents others in our company have.
- We know that others are coming to learn and think with us – not judge and criticize us.

These new rules help us see new possibilities and invite them into our business.

1-B: The Essence of Future Centers

Future Centers are special BA that helps organizations and people break out of patterns and routines, see issues from multiple perspectives, develop new ideas and choose effective courses of action. They are working and learning spaces, which enable people to create, develop, prototype, and communicate ideas, strategies, plans, solutions and actions that help them to:

- deal effectively with today’s challenges;
- achieve middle- and long-term goals;
- deliver sustainable solutions and results.

In Future Center session we create a BA that combines right and left-brain competence, creative and critical thinking skills, dreaming and dialoguing with

deciding and doing. In this way, Future Center sessions create a working environment where consensus can be found, co-creative collaboration is supported, and systemic and sustainable innovation is possible. Capacity is developed for people and organizations to create new mindsets about the issues that are important to them, and improved competence to use Future Center thinking outside the sessions, in their life and work.

Future Centers create the conditions for effective work by paying attention to five areas:

1. *Principles.* There is a clear philosophy and approach to stimulate and support people in working on innovation together.
2. *People.* Working with people is the central function of Future Centers. Participants are drawn from as many relevant perspectives as possible. Collective intelligence emerges from combining and understanding multi-stakeholder perspectives.
3. *Space.* A Future Center is a BA that supports people to engage in thinking that challenges existing assumptions, addresses important issues, explores new possibilities and tackles tough problems environments that matter to people and organizations.
4. *Methodologies.* The right methods, tools and processes for helping people achieve their objectives are brought together and orchestrated by skilled facilitators to address specific issues.
5. *Hosting and Facilitation.* Trained facilitators and experienced hosts play an essential role in helping participants achieve desired results. They create impact far beyond what people working alone can achieve.

Future Centers are stimulating environments for:

- *Relationship building*, based on respect and trust.
- *Dynamic interaction*, through deep dialog.
- *Forward thinking*, using a wide variety of methodologies.
- *Focused collaborative action*, based on prototyping.

They encourage people and organizations to focus on important issues – the complex issues, wicked problems and stuck situations that defy easy solutions – and create breakthroughs in thinking and appropriate action. And they strive to be effective learning environments, helping people to understand what works and doesn't work and why, to develop skills, competence and the capacity to apply the Future Center approach consistently in their lives and work.

Centers stimulate and support people to *do things differently*:

Think differently about the *future* and its diverse possibilities as well as about the *past* and its relevance to today's situation in order to make a difference in the *present*.

Break free of routines, ingrained assumptions and dominant logics releasing session participants from restraining patterns of behavior and habits of thought.

Use new ideas and sources of inspiration to unleash unused and often hidden potential of people and organizations.

Work towards systemic innovation and sustainable solutions to problems, not simply newness and short-term fixes.

1-B-1: Why Future Centers are effective?

People are taken seriously – they are real people, with their own interests and passions, and not simply representatives of a department or organization.

Professional facilitators and facilitated activities relate directly to the needs of session participants.

A diverse group of stakeholders can work together on the issues important to them

Participants can 'cross borders' and 'go beyond limits' in the broadest sense.

The integration of physical, virtual, mental, emotional space creates an 'opportunity space' in which many things are possible, which otherwise seem impossible.

They provide a neutral space to deal with difficult issues.

They combine playfulness and hard work on serious issues.

They focus on concrete results.

People are able to use them to create practical solutions to tough problems.

1-B-2: What makes Future centers unique and powerful?

Centers create value because they help people and organizations to:

Break down barriers to change, creativity, and trust.

Facilitate collaboration across borders of all kinds.

Work from the positive: solution seeking, not problem-finding.

Break through tunnel vision to see *systems*, find *combinations*, explore new ideas.

Create workable, testable prototypes.

1-C: Six Broad Purposes

Future Centers may be created for a wide variety of purposes and in a variety of contexts. In our work, we have seen six different types of Future Centers:

<p>Business Innovation Within a company, people who often don't talk with each other because of organizational and work flow boundaries work to accelerate speed of innovation. Frequently this Future Center creates new organizational vision, new culture, innovation, knowledge sharing and knowledge management.</p>	<p>Business Collaborators Future Center that opens introversive companies and creates social shared value from connections beyond sectors. Company owns it, and opens up to other sectors. Appropriate for projects which promote new business creation, CSR strategy, and branding.</p>
<p>Community Design Led by local citizens, this Future Center brings a people together to envision what they can do themselves to create a healthy and resilient community. Coming from many sectors – business, government, NPOs, schools, homes – people work to become aware of their local resources and abilities and begin to build new community themselves.</p>	<p>Social Design Experts from various fields and social entrepreneurs gather around a common theme to dialogue about possibilities and programs in order to create a social change. Appropriate when many group from various network are ready to combine their knowledge and expertise.</p>
<p>Open Government Representatives from government at all levels – national, prefectural, local – work with civic groups to create a BA for dialogue with citizens about important issues. Can be used to find a new vision, to develop policies, or determine new actions. Public spaces such as municipal offices, public halls, universities, and libraries are used as Future Center.</p>	<p>Translocal People from local communities gather together “translocally” to share ideas and experience. A community in Tohoku may have insights needed by a community in Shikoku and both may be helped by the insight and wisdom of a Future Center in Amsterdam.</p>

Frequently Future Centers have different aspects of these six types. When a Future Center is formed, it begins with a view of the world and a vision of those who create and lead it, drawing of different characteristics of these six types.

Ask yourself “What does Future Center mean to you?” You might get an inspiration.

1-C: Types of Future Center Sessions

We can use a Future Center for many different kinds of work. Remember, it is a BA where we work with each other do make use of the wisdom, knowledge and experience we already have. We can use Future Center sessions to:

- Build Teams
- Work With Old Problems and New Possibilities
- Develop Ideas
- Find New Resources
- Make Decisions

And much more!

We can **build teams** by creating a BA in which people listen to each other, sharing stories about what is important in their lives, building common visions for the future, talking frankly about different stresses and problems. In a Future Center we create an atmosphere where we are able to show each other who we really are.

These days we need to identify both **old problems** as well as **new possibilities**. You know how it is. Sometimes there is a problem that just won't seem to go away. We keep quiet about it, or we complain a little bit to our co-workers. And nothing changes. Often we are making a whole range of assumptions about the nature of a problem. Dialogue, especially with people who have no relationship to the problem, usually opens up a whole range of unseen possibilities. Often it is not so much that problems need to be solved, as it is that when we see a broader set of possibilities, the problems simply disappear. In a Future Center we bring together diverse people who make it possible for us to develop different views.

Many of us have **new ideas** every day, but never have an opportunity to pause and play with the new ideas to see how they might work. Usually new ideas don't grow by just thinking about them. Something more is required. Dialogue can help. So can work with different media – drawing, building models with clay, even asking someone be the idea and talk to them! Sometimes just taking time to be quiet and let our subconscious mind work with the idea is helpful. In a Future Center we work in all these different kinds of ways to develop ideas. In some ways, we don't take ideas too seriously – we just play with them and see how they develop.

Sometimes, in our busy lives, we things become invisible to us. One thing that seems to easily become invisible are all the **resources** we have available. Resources to help us do what we want are all around us, but we don't see them. This happens because we narrow our minds and think that one particular resource is what we need. Usually it is more money, or more of someone else's time, or something like that. Once again, talking with different people about what we want to do can help us see resources we didn't know were there. Other people ask us questions which help us think differently. Other people help us brainstorm and see resources which had forgotten about. In a Future Center people start with the idea that everything is possible and then work together to make that true.

It is often hard to **make decisions**. We hesitate. We are not sure what will really happen. We don't know if other people will support the decision. We are afraid that some things will be lost if we make a particular decision. In a Future Center we can share our concerns through dialogue with other people and we can explore a decision

before making it. We can ask other people for their ideas and talk about our thoughts and feelings. Often the decision gets made by just talking about it!

2. Future Center Overview

What makes a Future Center? How is it different than, for example, an R&D laboratory or a “think tank?” In some ways, the answer is a simple one. A Future Center operates on the assumption that the people who are part of any business – employees, suppliers, customers, friends – have a huge amount of knowledge which is often not made explicit. A Future Center creates a BA where people who care use dialog to make a new future visible.

Some core principles and design guidelines help to create this BA. They Include:

2-A: Principles

- **Future Centers address issues that are important to people.** People come to a Future Center session because they care. They come because they know they have a contribution to make. They come because they want to make a difference. In other words, they come because the issues to be discussed are important to them and they know they can make a contribution. They know that their insights and their experience when combined through dialogue with that of other people can make a difference for the companies future – *and they want to be involved!*
- **Future Centers draw on diverse knowledge and experience to make new possibilities visible.** Diversity is key in a Future Center. Different people see things differently! Diversity is powerful and creative. A Future Center recognizes that new possibilities become visible when people with different points of view really talk and listen to each other. Together they see things which are not possible in the daily life of a business or when they try to envision a different future separately.
- **Future Centers enhance the quality of relationships and the effectiveness of initiatives.** We all know it from our own experience: when we are in good relationship with each other, work (and life) flows more easily. When we trust each other and know we are all working for the same purpose, we can act quickly and effectively. When we understand what is being proposed because we helped to create it, we can get work done rapidly and easily. A Future Center builds a system of relationships that support us in getting good work done.
- **New and improved practices emerges through experience, and from active learning from present practice.** Experience is great – and it is rarely sufficient. We each have many experience each day, but we are often so busy that we don’t stop and learn from them. What’s more, dialogue makes it much easier know what we know: often we *do* many things based on past experience and think nothing of it –it just seems obvious to us. Dialogue helps us share those practices and make them explicit. Once they are explicit, they combine through dialogue with other people’s experiences to create something entirely new and unimagined.

- **Prototype EVERYTHING!** A key principle for Future Centers is to try things out at a small scale before taking them to a larger scale. When we are creating something new, we rarely get it right the first time! Our minds and our dialogue open up some new ideas and possibilities – but it is always important to find a way to test them out before releasing them in the world! Sometime this means creating a model, other times it means a test run. Try it out first before proclaiming it to the world!
- **Quality dialogue the reveals the direction, steps and path for effective action.** Finally, when we create the new in a Future Center, remember that we are really doing three things. First, we are making a new direction clear – where is it we want to go? Second, we are envisioning the first steps in that new direction – where do we begin and how? Third, we are trusting that subsequent steps will become clear to us as we move ahead – knowing that we will continue to use Future Center dialogue to learn from our experience and to continue to envision the way forward.

2-B: Guidelines

When we begin design of Future Centers, there are some key guidelines which will help us do the highest quality work. They include:

- Each time a Future Center session is convened, it should be called by someone who is a champion for the cause and ideas to be discussed. This champion carries the core purpose of the session with passion and commitment.
- Careful attention is paid to inviting and creating the BA long before people arrive. Future Centers thrive on diversity. The champion builds relationships with each person, engaging in early dialog about purpose and possibilities.
- When one enters the Future Center, one immediately knows this is a new and different space with different rules for how to be together. It has beauty. It calms. It invites. It helps people challenge their own thinking as well as that of others in a respectful, generative way.
- Everything is held with an intention of inviting people in to their wholeness. People are invited to loosen their personal boundaries in a way that allows them to become more receptive, more permeable. Respect, curiosity and friendship are the foundation on which we build powerful working relationships. People work from the place of what they have, not what they need.
- Great care is taken to make our direct experiences tangible and visible. This is a three fold process: make everything that is present and emerging in the room available to all present; make knowledge and resources from outside the room present in the room; make what happens in the room available beyond the room.
- Finally, an astonishing BA is created. People feel safe. They are called into their deepest dreams and asked to manifest them in their daily lives. Their creativity is fully engaged. They are willing to enter into new and important

relationships which create new, relevant action. The BA is action oriented and produces astounding results.

2-C: Ways of Working Together

In Future Centers we work together with each other in new ways to get different results. While our companies and communities continue to work in the old, normal ways, Future Centers consciously create a new BA intended to invite innovation. These new ways of working together include:

1. **Futurizing** – we consider present challenges, visit the past to see what we have already learned, go into the future to experience new possibilities, and return to the present to apply our learning.
2. **Co-creation and collaboration** – questions, ideas, visions, solutions and action-plans are developed through a collaborative process that involves diverse stakeholders.
3. **Hosted for complexity** – the working process is well designed and hosted. The hosting recognizes that we live and work with complex systems where the best new possibilities are created through dialogue, prototyping, and continuous learning which cultivate unforeseen synchronicities
4. **Continuity and discontinuity** – Future Centers support continuous innovation, rather than one-time events and one-off campaigns. It supports the creation of an innovation culture in the organizations/sectors/individuals using it. It also triggers discontinuity; disruptive innovation and questioning of the status quo.
5. **Contactivity** – we reach out to everyone! Future Centers actively work with a wide range of internal and external collaborators with multiple interests and backgrounds.
6. **Multiple perspective and multi-disciplinary work** – Future Centers invite people come from diverse backgrounds and disciplines to work together. They create rich and robust visions, strategies and solutions. Future Centers encourage participants to adopt multiple perspective and many points of view.
7. **Meeting people on equal terms** – each participant has an equal voice, which is independent of his/her hierarchical, political or professional position.
8. **Thinking-dreaming-playing-doing work environment** –physical, emotional and intellectual knowledge are all called on to create rich environments that contribute to effective group and individual process.
9. **Time-out** – Future Centers invite people to take a time out from their daily workload and routine stress to focus on long-term, to engage in deeper conversations, to ask questions, and to reflect on priorities and consequences.
10. **Concrete results** – the focus of all sessions is on producing concrete results. Prototyping is a work tool actively used to make ideas and intentions tangible.

3. Preparing for a Future Center

Where do you begin? You are ready to use a Future Center to discover the changes that will make a difference in your business. Let's talk about the steps you will need to take.

Most likely, you will want to start small. You will want to hold some Future Center sessions to begin to understand this "form" called Future Center. Eventually you may

want to create a more permanent Future Center which even has, perhaps, a permanent physical location or home.

But to begin with, we should go slow in order to eventually go fast.

3-A: Convene a Core Team

It is always best to have a small core team when you begin to create a Future Center. There are three different kinds of work the team will need to do. First, it will get clear on what kind of Future Center session is needed, and why. Second, it will design the Future Center session itself. Finally, it will host or facilitate the session. Some members will naturally take leadership responsibility for one of these areas and others will support them.

Even when members of a team know each other, it is a good idea to start slowly. Begin, always, with team members seating together in a small circle. It is best if there is no table, just a group of people sitting together with each other. Begin your meetings with a “check-in,” a simple question to all present about how they are doing that helps them really settle in to working with other members of the team.

Invite the members of the team to listen to each other’s ideas and to speak their own. These very first meetings of the design team will actually be the beginning of the Future Center session. Together you are starting to build the BA of the Future Center by how you relate to each other. Your honesty and your kindness with each other will begin to build the foundation for an important Future Center.

3-B: Get Clear on Purpose

Future Center work always begins with getting clear on purpose! It is important for the design team to have a generative dialog which really explores purpose. What is it we are trying to achieve here? Why is it important? Who are the people that have ideas and knowledge to contribute? What do we hope will result from this Future Center?

Please be sure to leave lots of room for silence in this design team dialog to determine purpose. Don’t rush it! Remember, you are beginning to build the BA which will host this inquiry. When you enter into a really good dialogue, the purpose will start to come into sharp purpose. It may be a broad purpose, or it may be very specific. In this case, at this time, size doesn’t matter. What is important is that you as a design team develop a collective clarity about why you are asking people to meet together in dialog.

Remember, Future Centers have a combination of three main foci:

1. Long-term and sustainable focus – Future Centers support participants in addressing long-term issues, significant challenges, and major opportunities. We work to create sustainable solutions.
2. Results and impact focus – Future Centers exist is to make a difference! Participants work together to see new possibilities and to begin to act to realize those new futures.
3. Organizational and personal growth focus – Future Centers are intended to catalyze both organizational renewal and participants growth. It empowers people to take responsibility for their future.

A wide range of work is possible with these three foci! What will we actually do?

3-C: Determine the Work to be Done

Once you are settled on purpose, your next step as a design team is to think clearly about the work you hope will be done in this Future Center. In doing this, you are looking for what it is you hope to see more clearly by the end of the session. There are many types of Future Center sessions and they are each valuable. Which kind of Future Center Session are you creating? Are you building a better team? Are you solving a problem? Are you making decisions? What are the tasks you want to accomplish?

What work will you complete by the end of this Future Center Session? Obviously, you are not trying to define the “content” of your work – but it is helpful to be clear about the form!

3-D: Identify the “Champion”

When developing a Future Center Session, there is always someone who is a champion for the work to be done. This is the person or people who carry a deep concern for the work that is being done and who commits to stewarding this co-creative process. The design team works on behalf of this champion, who will move the results of the session forward in the business.

Sometimes someone of the design team is also the champion, or the whole team itself is also the champion. Make sure you involve the champion as this design process continues. This person will want to be fully engaged with this process!

3-E: Decide Who Should Come

Your Future Center Session is beginning to take shape. Your design team has gotten more clear about purpose and about the work to be done. Don’t hold these too tightly! They will continue to shift and dance and move about a bit. Remember, always, to be sensing purpose and work – both by yourself as well as together.

You’ll need to turn your attention to the question of who should be present in this Future Center Session. Whose voices need to be heard? Who can make a generous contribution to this dialogue? Who needs to have some ownership or stake in the results?

You want people who will come with respect for the others present at the session. You will want people who are curious and interested in exploring new possibilities and ideas. And it is important that those coming are able to regard the other participants as colleagues and peers.

One of the first things you will want to consider is whether this is a Future Center Session where you thoughtfully select and invite each participant – an Invitational Session, or is it a open to anyone who feels this want to participate – an Open Session. Your earlier dialogues about purpose and work will provide guidance here. Both kinds of sessions can be very beneficial!

Generally speaking, an Invitational Session is called for when you are with a somewhat closed system – team building, narrowing down a range of possibilities, making

decisions. An Open System is called when you want to bring a wider range of ideas and perspectives into the room.

In either case, one of the things you will want is diversity. People who aren't normally part of the dialogue need to be invited in. They will provide valuable insights because they have a different perspective – a different point of view. Also, as you may have noticed, when only the same people talk with each other, the dialogue gets a little stale.

Sometimes when we are with the same group of people we have been with for many times, we forget to really listen to each other. We think we already know what the other is going to say and our attention wanders. Diversity in the room helps us remember to listen better and speak more clearly, AND, it brings different perspective and information into the room.

3-F: Decide what will happen after the Future Center Session

We're not done yet! A Future Center session is only part of the job of a Future Center Director.

- What resulted from the session? How will it be communicated in the company?
- Are there specific implementation steps? Who will see to them?
- What about the session itself? What were its strengths and weaknesses? How can it be improved? What is your own learning?
- How can you continue to support the Champion whose idea was brought into the Future Center session?
- What are the potential obstacles moving ahead?

4. Creating a Future Center

4-A: Physical Requirements for Future Centers

In Japan we know a lot about working with limited space. The good news is that a Future Center can be created almost anywhere, anytime!

We've seen Future Centers created at Takamatsu Castle, on the top floors of office buildings in Futagotamagawa, and on University campuses! The first principle we work with, of course, is to create hospitable space. When people enter a Future Center, the space itself should be different. It should reach out and welcome the participants and tell them, immediately, that different rules apply here!

4-A-1: Future Center Sessions

In general, for Future Center sessions we need space with:

1. Chairs and tables are easily moveable and the room can quickly be configured for different uses.
2. Room so all participants in a session can sit in a large circle, able to see all who are in the room.
3. Small tables where four person groups can come together for World Café and other activities. If tables aren't available, they can be improvised, with drawing paper and markers held on sheets of cardboard that people hold on their knees.

4. Areas where people can gather in Open Space Technology sessions. You'll need one such space for each ten or so people and it is best if they are spread out a bit to regulate the noise.
5. Whenever possible, access to nature or at least nice outdoor space.

Work with what you have! Find a space and begin. Make it clean and attractive. Bring in some flowers or special art work. Have beverages and snacks to help people feel more at home. Windows which bring the outside in help. Find a space and open your first Future Center! Literally, you can do it anywhere.

4-A-2: Permanent Future Center Spaces

Some businesses have been able to dedicate one or more rooms as Future Center space. When this is possible, part of what happens is that people begin to understand that they just have to schedule a session – the setup is ready and waiting for them.

When you are ready to have a permanent space, here some of the things to think about:

- ✓ Think about how you will welcome people to the Center and introduce them to this new kind of space. How will you make them feel immediately engaged with the space and with each other?
- ✓ Consider how people will move around in the center. Can you have different kinds of spaces? For example, one area in which you want to encourage continuous sense of action and movement of people and another area that is a quiet space?
- ✓ Consider private versus public spaces. Is it possible to have some area in the Future Center for private and or even confidential discussions and others areas where the visibility and transparency of dialog adds to the excitement of creating innovation?
- ✓ Will you have one or more staff who are working in the Future Center on a regular basis? If so, can you design their workspace to be highly visible so that can be easily accessible to the center's users?
- ✓ In Japan we always work with what's available. How can you think about parts of the space of the Center which might not seem ideal to make them attractive? For example, a tight little corner becomes a comfortable personal workspace for writing and reflection.
- ✓ Look for ways to have flexible space that can be easily be reconfigured according to needs of specific users, events and sessions. Things to think about include:
 - Create spaces which can easily be used for different purposes – for example a library area which can also be a breakout area for smaller sessions.
 - Can you use moveable walls – preferably whiteboard walls – that make it easy for users to arrange larger spaces or smaller breakout spaces?
 - When will it be useful to have clearly identifiable spaces like library, a kitchen, or a theatre that have specific purposes.

What is most important, of course, is to create a space which welcome's people and immediately stimulates their creativity.

Good BA is created by people and the quality of their relationships in a space. We can pay attention to the physical aspects of the space so we make it easier for people to create good BA!

4-B: Future Center Sessions

This guide gives you a number of tips on how to start a Future Center. Often you will begin by simply hosting a Future Center Session. Create a core team, find a champion, identify several people who have had some training and experience in designing and hosting future center sessions, and begin.

We believe that Future Centers are just a better way of getting creative work done. If you find this to be true as well, then it is likely that you will want to have dedicated staff who have had some training and support and a specially designated room or set of rooms which become your Future Center.

Part of what will happen over time is that the vocabulary “Future Center” will begin to spread in your business. People will start to realize that when they have a problem, a conflict, a new possibility or the beginning of a good idea, the place to really get to work on it is the Future Center.

Initially either someone from outside your business or some of your staff will act as the designers and hosts for Future Center sessions. AND, part of what you want to do is to begin developing more and more capacity within your business to host these sessions. Think of it as a progression: first, someone from the outside helps you. Working alongside this outside facilitator or host, your own staff begin to develop capabilities and insights as hosts and then begin to host sessions. Gradually the need for Future Centers grows, and the staff become coaches and mentors spreading the skill of hosting throughout your business.

4-C: Timeline/Checklist for Future Center Session

1. Go through the steps for preparing for a Future Center listed above – get clear on need and purpose, organize your team, determine who you want to come.
2. Arrange for an appropriate facility where people will feel welcome and where you can create a wonderful BA.
3. Extend your invitations early and with clarity so the people you want to involve will show up!
4. Assemble the basic tools you will need for the Session:
 - Name tags
 - Flip Charts
 - Whiteboards
 - Markers and pens
 - Masking tape and scissors
 - Colored A-4 paper
 - Stickies
 - Supplies for work with other media – ropes, modeling clay, drawing supplies

5. Determine the structure of next steps after the session. How will results be harvested and shared both with participants as well as others who you want to bring along? What is your general plan of action following the session?
6. Be sure to plan a reflection time with your core team following the session. Review what happened and what you're learning about hosting Future Center sessions.
7. Go ahead. Do it. Begin!

5. Hosting a Future Center Session

It's time. You've done your preparation well. It is time to announce and then hold your first Future Center Session. Over time, people in your company will come to look forward to work in a Future Center session. They will know it is a generative space – a good BA –where people do really good work. Even though they may address different topics and issues, each Future Center session supports those that follow. People begin to place more and more trust in the importance and effectiveness of dialogue.

5-A: Typical Stages and Processes of Future Center Sessions

Each Future Center Session is called with a particular purpose in mind. Usually, whatever the purpose, there are seven different stages of Future Center sessions:

1. Building trust
2. Identifying needs, problems, and opportunities
3. Gathering data to understand issue
4. Generating ideas
5. Converging on promising options
6. Prototyping
7. Communicating results

Any single Future Center session may include one or more of these stages, depending on the purpose, time available, complexity of the issues and other factors. In each of these stages a variety of processes may be used. Examples of these processes include:

- Dialog
- Puzzles and Games
- U-Process
- Learning Journeys
- Storytelling
- Brainstorming
- Artistic Processes
- Silence
- Critical Thinking
- Scenarios and Futurizing

Different processes are used at different stages:

	Dialog Processes	Puzzles and Games	U-Process	Best Case-Worst Case	Learning Journey	Storytelling	Brainstorming	Artistic Processes	Silence	Critical Thinking	Scenarios and Futuring
Building Trust	x	x				x		x	x		
Identifying needs, problems, and opportunities	x		x	x							
Gathering Data to understand issue	x				x						
Generating ideas	x	x			x	x	x	x			
Converging on promising options	x								x	x	x
Prototyping			x								
Communicating results					x	x					x

This can all be a little overwhelming! But it doesn't have to be. Let's say that your company has decided to use a Future Center to investigate what contribution you make – and what the business opportunities are – around a particular social problem. A “typical” journey through these different stages and processes might look something like this:

Building trust

You have carefully selected the participants for this important Future Center. They will be working together over a period of time to assess opportunities in an area that is vital for your company's future. In your first session, you'll concentrate on building trust. Of course, you will continue to work to build trust, respect and curiosity throughout this Future Center, and it is where you will begin.

- Dialogue: You will likely begin using a variety of dialog methods to help people get to know each other's backgrounds, to understand each other's interests, and to make hopes and expectations visible.
- Puzzles and games: You will probably want to lighten the atmosphere with some puzzles and games which invite people to bring their humor and creativity into the room from the very beginning.

Identifying needs, problems, and opportunities

This is an important issue and it is going to take some time to mature. There's no need to rush! You might engage in the following processes:

- Brainstorming. Use a big whiteboard and stickies to brainstorm. Ask people to use stickies to describe the social problems they think makes the best use the companies expertise. As people are putting the stickies on the whiteboard, ask them to converge the stickies into a mindmap
- Dialog. Use a World Café session to have a dialog about the patterns and possibilities that participants are seeing.
- U-process. Introduce the “U-process” as a methodology to examine the field of possibilities more deeply. Briefly explain Theory U to participants – just the basics: open mind, open heart, open will. Over the coming week or two ask participants to let go of their current assumptions and to open their senses to new possibilities. Ask them to use their beginner's mind to be curious about what else is possible. Ask them to think lightly rather than thinking hard.
- Silence. Ask participants, after opening their senses and before the next time you meet in a Future Center session, to spend some time in silence. Visit a cherished shrine or temple, walk in on a quiet wooded hillside, and then sit down and journal about what they are seeing and feeling about new possibilities.

- Dialog. We come back into another Future Center session. Perhaps you will begin with people working in Appreciative Inquiry Pairs and go from there to a World Café about what people are sensing. In this Future Center session it starts to be clear that there is a particular area worth further consideration.

Gathering data to understand issue

Now it is time to explore more deeply. Some of the things you might do include:

- Learning Journeys. The participants you have gathered undoubtedly know a great deal about the possibilities for new action. It is important to go beyond the knowledge in the room as well. Ask the participants for a day of their time and organize a series of visits to people and organizations that know a lot about the area you are considering. Go together, as a group, on a journey to find out more.
- Dialog. As soon as possible after the learning journey, come together in the Future Center and have a dialog about what you learned on the journey and what additional questions are now visible.
- Storycatching. Organize into teams to go out and interview people you met on the learning journey and beyond. Gather some hard data, but as importantly, listen for the deeper story and catch it!
- Peer Assist. Based on specific questions the participants have, external experts – ask a network of colleagues (internal and external) to tell about their experiences dealing with that question.
- Dialog. We bring back what we are learning from stories and peers and use dialog processes to transform our individual learning into collective insights

Generating ideas

After this through study of possibilities, it is time to think about what your business has to offer to the area under consideration.

- Artistic Processes. Perhaps you will choose to begin with some “right-brain” activities. You might ask participants to assemble in teams and make body sculptures of how the company might respond. Or you might bring out modeling clay and ask people to work in pairs to illustrate what the company’s contribution might be. You might ask people to use colored pencils to make a drawing of how they see the company responding.
- Brainstorming. It is probably time for some brainstorming – what are people’s wild ideas? What patterns do they start to form.
- Many Difference Processes might be used to generate ideas including :
 - TRIZ & ASIT
 - Morphological Analysis & Forced Connections
 - Lateral Thinking
 - Synectics
 - Stretching: going beyond perceived limits
 Look for information on these in the supporting materials.
- Dialog. Not surprisingly, you will want to dialog about the ideas being developed.

Converging on promising options

We are beginning to converge towards a recommendation for new action.

- Dialog. Use Open Space Technology as a means to form subgroups based on the ideas people are most passionate about.
- Critical Thinking. Ask each Open Space group to go away and use critical thinking skills to assemble a detailed proposal for the group's consideration.
- Dialog. Begin with a fishbowl from each the Open Space groups to listen to what each other are seeing as possible. Go into dialog pairs to explore what participants are thinking and feeling.
- Decision Council. Move into a Council Circle space to see what the sense of the whole is about this important future direction. Use a simple "thumbs up, thumbs down, thumbs sideways" process to get a sense of the group will.

Prototyping

The near final stage is to use prototyping to examine the company's potential response even further. This can be done in a number of ways. Look for further information on these processes in the supporting materials:

- Prototyping. Use the 6-question, 6-step prototyping process to visualize how to prototype proposed actions.
- Artistic Processes. Use various media to illustrate what the proposed new activity might look like. Be creative and see what the right brain reveals!
- Future imagining. Co-create visual future images. Co-creation of visual Future Images allows project groups to actively design desired futures. This tool enables a group of people to get out-of-the box and co-create an image of the future in respect to a specific challenge.
- Consequences lab. Understanding what the consequences of a choice, option, decision are – especially useful before the choice is made, but also important afterwards. It focuses on desired as well as undesirable outcomes, intended as well as unintended consequences, possible and impossible consequences.

Communicating results

We are near the conclusion of this Future Center. You've developed some important ideas which you now need to communicate to others in the company. How will you do that?

- Artistic Processes. Artistic Future Images can be based on prototypes and are ideal for communicating the results of a project.
- Poster Session. A poster session for invited guests can be an effective visual way to convey results.
- Storytelling. Send out teams from the Future Center to tell the story of the ideas developed. Combine with a standard set of questions to be asked those who listen to the stories.
- Dialog. And, of course, creating a Future Center session on the Future Center in which selected others from the company and community are invited together in dialog to explore the Future Center's findings.

This, of course is just a sample of what might happen. The supporting materials give you more information on different tools and processes that you can use to support different kinds of Future Center activities.

The important issue is to design wisely and to always be prepared to modify the design based on what's actually happening in the room. This takes practice, and then some more practice. The way one learns to direct a Future Center is by beginning, trying, succeeding, falling flat on your face, and learning, learning, learning!

5-B: Role of Design Team and Hosts in Future Center Sessions

A design and hosting team stands in the center of any Future Center process. The members of this team are may be a subset of the Core Team mentioned earlier. Some may be individuals brought in because of their experience in design and hosting of Future Center sessions.

Because Future Centers endeavor to create a climate of dialogue and deep listening in a company or a community, typically design and hosting teams will include a number of "apprentices" who are improving their own skills as designers and hosts. The design and hosting team begins with meeting with the Core Team described earlier. They get clear on the purpose and intent of the Future Center session. They learn about the history, intended outcomes and the reasons for the session. They spend time with the Champion to learn more about why this particular workshop is important.

Through these sessions, they actually begin to build the field of the Future Center session long before it begins.

Future Center sessions may be for part of a day, a full day, or a number of days. The next section gives some sample schedules for each of these different time periods.

Typically the design and hosting team:

- Does an overall design for the entire session. This "macro-design" creates the flow of the session, as seen at the beginning of the session. AND, good design and hosting teams are continually reading the air to see what's really needed and improvise and modify the design to meet the opportunities and needs which arise during the session.

The macro-design will weave together a number of different elements, as appropriate for the duration of the workshop. Typically including:

- A circle to begin and end, letting the whole community see itself. Circle is an excellent way to listen into the whole and to really see who is present.
 - Work with 2-3 person teams to go more deeply with each other, using processes from Appreciative Inquiry or different forms of story-telling.
 - World Café's to quickly surface the overall knowledge and insight present in the room.
 - Open Space Technology to help people organize around their passions
 - Silence and journaling to provide space for personal reflection and insight
 - Work with other media – clay, drawing, body movements – to invite in non-cognitive learning.
- Determines who will host the different activities in the session. In multi-day events, usually there are "day hosts" who are responsible for the overall flow as well as hosts designated for working with different parts of the day. Whenever

possible there should be 2-3 people on each hosting team so they can think with each other about the detailed design.

- Creates the different displays which will help people feel at home in the Future Center session – diagrams of the overall flow; supplies for the different kinds of activities, name tags if it is a larger group, etc.

5-C: Sample Schedules in Future Center Sessions

Each Future Center session is different, but we want to offer you some “points of departure” for sessions of different lengths. Please don’t think of these as prescriptive – just as ideas to help you move along.

Four Hour Session

15 Minutes	Welcome, introductions, presentation on purpose, review of the flow of our time together
30 Minutes	Check-in
30 Minutes	Possibly a small panel presentation or fishbowl to get important information for everyone into the room
15 Minutes	Break
60 Minutes	Two short rounds of World Café and very brief harvest
45 Minutes	Some combination of activities, depending on purpose – perhaps AI interviews to go to more depth. Perhaps two short rounds of Open Space to organize people around passion/
15 Minutes	Personal journaling on what each is learning
30 Minutes	Final harvest and check-out circle

Day Long Session

15 Minutes	Welcome, introductions, presentation on purpose, review of the flow of our time together
30 Minutes	Check-in
30 Minutes	Work in pairs or trios to really explore the questions and ideas that have brought people into the workshop.
45 Minutes	A small panel presentation or fishbowl to get important information for everyone into the room
15 Minutes	Break
75 Minutes	Two rounds of World Café and a harvest
60 Minutes	Break for Lunch
45 Minutes	Working with a different media – clay, drawing, silence, body movement -- to see what else is know about the issues being discussed, drawing on our non-cognitive knowing
120 Minutes	OST or Proaction Café for in-depth dialogue about the things people are most passionate about.
30 Minutes	Final harvest and check-out circle

Multi-Day Sessions

It is a little dangerous to try to give a sample design for a multi-day session. It depends so much of purpose, participants, location, etc. Generally speaking with multi-day sessions, we include more time to **breathe!** So, time for silent walks in nature, for personal reflection and journaling, for spacious work at different levels of the system using the various methodologies described here.

Rarely do we give ourselves the gift of time. Multi-day Future Centers provide that gift. There is a somewhat typical flow over time:

- Our first day is often a time for connecting the community with itself. People share experiences, build trust and become curious about each other.
- A second day is often a time for divergence – bringing in many different ideas and possibilities and really stretching the minds of participants. Sometimes it feels almost as if it is too much to hold.
- A third day is often a time for convergence, using processes like personal journaling, OST and Proaction Café to really focus down on what is actually going to be done.

6. Methodologies for Hosting Dialogue

In Future Center sessions, it all keeps coming back to dialogue:

- We build new relationships by talking and listening to each other in new ways.
- We surface the tremendous knowledge and wisdom present in the room with dialog.
- When we acquire data from outside the room, we bring it back into the room and talk with each other about what it means.
- When we create prototypes, we dialog with each other about the results.
- When we go on learning journeys, we listen to each others different experiences and perspective.

There are many ways to host good dialogue. In this Future Center Kit we will provide an overview of five core methodologies:

- ✓ Circle
- ✓ Appreciative Inquiry (AI)
- ✓ World Café
- ✓ Open Space Technology (OST)
- ✓ ProAction Café

Additional resources on these methodologies are readily available. See our website (www.futurecenterwebsite.jp.com) for some of these resources.

6-A: Circle

All over the world people have met in circle in order to listen closely to each other and in order to speak their own truths. When we sit together in a circle, everyone is on “equal-footing.” There is no head table. There’s not even a table to hide behind! No one has an assigned place – we are just there together. And we see everyone who is

in the room. The whole system is visible to itself. Many people around the world have done extensive work with Circle Practices. One of the best for circle practices is the work of Christina Baldwin and Ann Linnea at www.peerspirit.com.

Circle is where we speak to, see and listen to the whole system present at any time. We use Circle in a variety of ways in Future Center sessions:

Check-in circles frequently begin Future Center sessions. They help participants get present in the room and see who else is there. Sometimes check-ins are “low-risk” – a person just gives their name and some affiliations. Sometimes we ask people to share a bit about their own personal mood with a check-in question. Other times we ask people to check in with a gesture or body movement to bring themselves present.

Check-out circles are often used to end a Future Center session. People are asked to share a key learning, or to mention what steps they may take next. They may be asked to do something non-verbally, or to summarize all of their feelings in a single word. The purpose is to make the whole community visible to itself before closing.

Discernment circles are where we use dialogue to consider issues of importance to the whole community. When there are a large number of participants in a Future Center Session, discernment circles need to be handled with care – asking people only to speak what is needed for the benefit of the whole community.

Here are a few ideas for good circle dialogue:

Roles

- *Host*. This is the person who calls the circle together and facilitates the process of circle.
- *Guardian*. This person watches the time commitments in circle, invites the silence of a pause when something key has just been spoken, and asks that people speak with more brevity when needed

Practices

- *Listen with attention*. Listen with your whole mind and all your emotions to what is being spoken in the circle. Suspend judgments and listen as deeply as you can.
- *Speak with intention*. Speak from your clarity and from your confusion. Offer what you can and ask for what you need. Speak from the place of your listening to what is present now in the circle.
- *Tend to the well-being of the group*. Remain aware of what you and the group need to realize your purpose.
- *Be present and be curious!* There is something growing in the middle of the circle that greater than what each participant brings.
- *Respect confidences*. We often say that what is spoken in circle stays in the circle. You can share your own learning, but don't repeat other people's stories.
- *Honor silence*. Silence is an important part of the conversation. Let the silence linger until you truly have something useful to offer.

Principles

These principles are true of all work in Future Centers. We include them here as reminders of principles for good dialogue.

- *We rely on human goodness.* This means we assume that people have come because they want to do good. At different times each of us have done things or said things that hurt others – but that is rarely our intent. So we rely on human goodness in Circle and help each other do the best we can.
- *We depend on diversity.* Diversity – difference – is what allows us to see more of the whole picture. We are often pre-occupied with the part of reality we see and we try to solve problems or create opportunities from that small place. Diversity allows us to see more of the whole system in a way that helps create comprehensive solutions.
- *People support what they create.* When people are involved in creating something, they understand it more completely. They also feel a sense of personal ownership and loyalty that will cause them to make a greater effort to do what's required to ensure success.

Beginning a Circle

- *Invoke presence:* Invite everyone to be fully present in the room. Words of welcome, a meaningful poem when invites a receptive, contemplative space, a time for meditation, a moment of silence all are ways to invite people to be fully present to what is about to happen.
- *Speak the purpose:* Remind people why it is we have gathered together -- even if you think everyone knows it already.
- *Always have a good question:* We gather because of questions. Speak the ones which have called this particular circle into the world.
- *Check-in:* Sometimes a word or two or a sentence from each present, spoken into the circle and sometimes just a beginning by turning to one or two people close-by and checking in with each other.

During Circle Time Together

- *Use a listening tool.* A “talking object” often plays an important role in a circle. The person with the talking object gets to speak – everyone else gets to listen! Pretty simple – and it keeps attention focused.
- *Use different modes.* There are numerous ways of being in a circle. Use them all! Sometimes pass a talking object around the circle to explicitly invite everyone's voice into the room. Sometimes use a more “popcorn” style where people around the circle speak when they feel called to do so. Break people into smaller groups – pairs or trios – to have a more intense dialogue with each other. Sometimes use a talking piece, and sometimes set it aside. Practice with different ways of being in circle.
- *Harvest.* Make what is happening in the circle visible to the circle. Make visible what has occurred and what is alive – knowledge, energy, relationships, questions.
- *Reflect.* Always provide space for people to reflect on what is happening, what they are seeing, and what they are learning.

Ending a Circle

- *Check-out.* Create the space for people to check-out with a word or a gesture which signifies what is happening now to them.

- *Seal the space.* Host should offer a closing thought or observation which brings the circle to a formal end.
- *Release the space.* A circle builds up energy! Release people from this intense listening and learning as they move forward into a less formal social space or into other types of dialogue activities.

6-B: Appreciative Inquiry (AI)

Appreciative Inquiry is a way for people to focus create change in systems by discovering and amplifying what's working. Often in business life we are pre-occupied with problems. We look for what isn't working and then try to figure out how to fix it. Appreciative Inquiry takes the opposite approach.

A four part process – Discovery, Dream, Design, Destiny – Appreciative Inquiry invites us to discover what is already working, to dream about what might be possible if we amplified what's working, to design what it is we can see happening next, and to follow those designs to their destiny. Formulated by David Cooperrider and others in the 1980s at Case Western Reserve University in the United States, a variety of resources are available at their website: www.appreciativeinquiry.cwru.edu

In a Future Center session, AI work often begins in pairs, with two people exploring questions that matter. These questions are often very simple – they look for essence:

- *What is working?* Rather than asking people to focus on problems, AI asks people to find what is currently working. If we concentrate on what is working as a starting point, the problems around which we were stuck often simply disappear. It is not so much that old issues and problems get resolved. They just become irrelevant.
- *What is possible?* Often we spend a lot of time complaining about problems. Our focus on what is not working become complaint sessions that drain everyone's energy and succeed in changing nothing. Instead, if we ask what is possible, we can engage our imaginations and invite in ideas and opportunities from a broader arena.
- *Where is the spark of "yes?"* This is such an interesting question! Just asking someone to think about what they are ready to say "YES!" to, opens up the energy in a system. We are often trapped in our "NOs," heavily invested in them in a way that makes it impossible to see forward.
- *What solution is calling to be born?* By sensing into the middle of an Appreciative Inquiry Dialogue, we can begin to catch sight of something that is there, on the edge of our vision, waiting to be born.

Often, spending time in Appreciative Inquiry pairs is a way of opening up people's minds and hearts – they begin to discover things they hadn't know before. The intensity of an AI interview brings ideas, information, knowledge and experience to the surface so it can be used in a variety of ways in a Future Center Session.

Appreciative Inquiry Worldview

Appreciative Inquiry is based on a certain view of the world and human beings. Some of the key aspects of this worldview include:

- *In every organization something works!* That's an amazing statement. We are

often pre-occupied and overwhelmed with what's not right. We focus on what is broken, on obstacles, on all the excuses for why something cannot happen. When we set this aside for a time and begin to look at what is working in our organization, we're often surprised and even pleased. AI helps us recognize and build on these positive characteristics.

- *What we focus on becomes our reality.* You've heard this said many times in many ways. For example, when you focus on how bad a fellow-employee is you behave in a variety of ways to keep acting in ways you don't like. Tell someone what you appreciate about the work they have just done and you encourage them to do more of the same. Where we focus our attention matters greatly.
- *Reality is created in the moment – there is more than one reality.* We each live in slightly different realities. We create our own reality from moment to moment by the questions we ask, by where we place our attention, by how we relate to those around us. We're each doing this all this time. AI helps us slow down and create a more positive reality – a larger reality – together.
- *The act of asking questions influences the business in many ways.* Have you ever noticed that people listen as much – perhaps even more – to questions than they do to answers? We literally get “filled up” with answers – and then we overflow! Remember a day long seminar you went to recently where someone gave answers all day long. Sure, we get some useful information from answers – but those answers are usually someone else's answer and we often forget them. Questions, on the other hand, open up new space. They allow us to surface our own knowing, integrate it with others, and create a new whole together than we all own.
- *People have more confidence and comfort to journey to the future when they carry forward parts of the past.* Our lives are a continuum. Stories of the past as well as dreams of the future inform our actions in the present. AI helps us remember those stories that have empowered us and helped us become who we are. By remembering who we are we can build who we want to be.
- *If we carry forward parts of the past, they should be what is best.* We also need to let go of the past. We don't need to be controlled by memories of what didn't work out the way we wanted. Let those go! Instead, focus on the parts of the past which are worthy of being carried forward into a future we want and deserve. AI interviews help us find what was best in the past that we want to make part of our future.
- *It is important to value differences.* We say this time and time again in talking about Future Center sessions. Difference is required for creativity. Different perspectives, different points of view, different life experiences, views from different parts of the business, perspective from various parts of the community. They all combine to make a more complete picture. We need to learn how to invite difference in, to respect it, and to both learn from and cherish the differences! AI interviews see differences as a treasure.
- *The language we use creates our reality.* Many of us are often unconscious of the language we and others are using. We don't see how the words we use shape the reality we see. When we speak and listen deeply in an AI interview, we pay attention to the words we hear and the words we speak. We “unpack” some of the significant words which sometimes just slip out of our mouth unnoticed. When our unconscious choices in language are made visible, we change the way we think which changes the reality we are creating.

6-C: World Cafe

World Café has become hugely popular in Japan since Juanita Brown's book, *The World Cafe: Shaping Our Futures Through Conversations That Matter* was first translated into Japanese in 2009. Why this popularity? World Café is an easy and natural way to make the knowledge and wisdom in a room visible. It quickly lets us know what many people are thinking about a particular topic. The World Café's website – www.theworldcafe.com -- has a wide array of resources in English and our website – www.futurecenterwebsite.jp.co -- offers more as well.

We make frequent use of World Café in Future Center sessions because WC lets us quickly see the whole system. You've probably been in a World Café before. The room is set up with small tables with four chairs around the table. There's paper for doodling and note-taking on the tables, along with many colored pens and perhaps even modeling clay. People take any seat they want in the room and the café host begins the session.

Frequently a world café will have several rounds of 20-30 minutes each, followed by a "harvest" in which insights from different tables are shared in the whole room. Usually a team of two people hosts a World Café session. These hosts are deeply committed to the questions being explored and are fully present in the space. If you are a World Café host, your own presence creates the invitation for the dialogue.

There are several core operating principles for World Café.

Operating Principles:

- Create Hospitable Space. When people enter a room that has been set up for a World Café, they immediately know they have entered a special place! Lighting is slightly subdued. Four chairs are arranged around a small round table, evenly spaced throughout the room. There might be a checkered tablecloth and small vases of flowers. Paper and colored markers for drawing and doodling are arranged on the table tops, perhaps along with other materials like modeling clay. There may be a "talking object" that is held by the person speaking while others listen. The room looks inviting and intriguing.

Of course sometimes we cannot make the space this beautiful. ALWAYS, we work with what we have to create a hospitable space where people feel welcomed and invited into conversation. Sometimes we have a World Café with no tables. Sometimes there are not paper and markers for drawing. However, always we make a space which will invite people to lean forward to listen to each other and to speak their own truths.

- Explore Questions that matter. A World Café is built around powerful questions – ones which invite participants to reach deeply into their experience and their dreams. "What is possible in Japan that was not possible before?" is one example of a powerful question. Another might be "what needs to happen before any real change is possible here?" Powerful questions cause us to pause and consider before answering. They invite us to speak a truth which otherwise might not find a way to enter the room.
- Encourage each person's contribution. In a World Café session we are both eager to

share our own perspective AND to hear the thoughts and contributions of others. There is no single facilitator. We each are aware of wanting to invite the quiet voices into the dialogue. Sometimes a “talking object” helps to encourage everyone to talk. The idea of a “talking object” is simple – the person holding the object gets to talk while others get to listen. Also invite silence into a World Café, creating space for impressions to deepen.

- Connect diverse people and ideas. In a Café session we are always looking for connections between the insights and experience people offer. Doodling is one way of literally drawing the connections that start to become visible in a dialogue. When we see the connections in front of us on a piece of paper, they become even more real. In a World Café dialogue we connect each other’s experience to make the whole system more visible.
- Listen together for patterns, insights and deeper questions. As we make those connections, patterns begin to emerge if we’re watching for them. When we pause and really listen to our dialogue, new insights and deeper questions emerge. These are the hidden treasures of World Café. We look for them in our dialogue.
- Make collective knowledge visible. Finally, in a World Café dialogue, we are always working to make the tacit knowledge in the room explicit and visible so we can use it to guide our next steps!

Key Assumptions:

The knowledge and wisdom we need is present and accessible. World Café is a way to quickly surface the knowledge and wisdom that is present in any group of people. This knowledge is always present. Often, however, in our busy lives, we don’t pause and inquire with each other. We don’t look for what we already know. World Café opens a space where we find our collective knowledge.

Collective insight evolves from: honouring unique contributions; connecting ideas; listening into the middle; noticing deeper themes and questions. *Listening into the middle....* such an interesting expression. This is actually a deep Japanese cultural capacity and is probably one of the reasons World Café has become so popular in Japan so rapidly! We know that by listening deeply to each other, we will start to see new patterns and possibilities.

The intelligence emerges as the system connects to itself in diverse and creative ways. This is actually a core assumption in all Future Center work. Through successive rounds of Café, ideas and knowledge surface and travel. People start to see the same ideas coming up in different conversations in different parts of the room. The patterns start to stand out right in front of our eyes. We don’t really have to do anything – except speak the truth and listen deeply to each other.

How it works:

So how does this “magic” happen? It is actually quite simple and the spirit is described in the operating principles and key assumptions above. There are also some simple steps which create the form of café:

1. Intimate spaces for dialogue with groups of **four people**. Four seems to be an optimum size. Much bigger, and it is harder to self-facilitate. Much smaller and there's not enough diversity of experience.
2. **Café rounds of 15-30 minutes**. A café surfaces ideas and possibilities and connects them. Generally, it is not the best place for a really deep and long conversation – we can host those well in a circle for things everyone cares about or in Open Space where smaller groups of people want to go to depth on a particular topic. Short sessions surface and then connect what's in the room.
3. **Table hosts** connect one round to the next. As a round is completed, select one person who stays at the table while others travel to new tables. The table host begins the next round of the café with a short summary of what was said at the table and invites people to share insights from their tables in the previous round.
4. Questions – sometimes **new**, sometimes **continued**. Sometimes in subsequent rounds of café, new questions are asked and sometimes the previous question is asked again. Often times the hosts of a World Café make a very quick assessment about which is most likely to best serve the dialogue. Is there more here to be uncovered? Will a continued dialogue with a different group of people around the same question produce more insights? Or is it time to come at the dialogue from a different direction with a new question? There is no single right answer.
5. Make the **whole visible**. Every couple of rounds, it is important to “harvest” into the whole room. Sometimes inviting or calling on people from different tables does this quickly – *what are you noticing in your dialogue?* Sometimes taking a pause and asking people to write the most important idea they are holding on a sticky and having everyone post those stickies in the front of the room. Sometimes there is even a dialogue that will begin to occur in the whole system as these different insights are called forward.
6. As with OST, **when it is over, it is over!** World Café sessions prepare the community for deeper work together. When they are over, the work is still incomplete. We move forward with other activities in the Future Center.

6-D: Open Space Technology (OST)

Open Space Technology (OST) creates time and space for people to engage deeply and creatively around issues of concern to them. It is a simple and powerful way to catalyze effective working conversations and truly inviting organizations to thrive in times of swirling change. It is an effective process for organizations and communities to identify critical issues, voice to their passions and concerns, learn from each other, and, when appropriate, take collective responsibility for finding solutions.

Open Space Technology is useful in almost any context including strategic direction setting, envisioning the future, conflict resolution, morale building, consultation with stakeholders, community planning, collaboration and deep learning about issues and perspectives.

OST, when used in conjunction with the other methodologies described here, helps people talk about the things they really care about. It is an excellent meeting format for any situation in which there are:

- Issues of real concern and importance. Topics in Open Space are ones that the

participants really care about – they are the subjects people want to talk about, NOW.

- Diversity of players. OST, like all these methodologies, thrives on diversity. People come with different ideas, experience and perspectives and enter into a dialogue because they believe their point of view can contribute to new solutions.
- Complexity of elements. Topics in Open Space Sessions are often complex and multi-layered. Because the people who care about the topic are those who come to the session, they are able to work with this complexity rather than avoiding it.
- Presence of passion, including conflict. Sometimes we each wake in the middle of the night with questions and concerns that will not leave us alone. Often we have no place where we can really work with these issues. OST provides a forum for dialogue about the things which concern us most.

How it Works

In our work with Future Centers, Open Space typically comes in the middle of our dialog processes. We've already spent time in a circle, seeing and being with the whole community. We've spent time in World Café surfacing the knowledge and experience present in the room. We've spent some time in pairs or trios going more deeply around questions of importance to the whole community. Now, we're ready for the deep dive of Open Space where we explore particular issues in depth.

1. The design team considers the time available and allocates time for explaining OST, marketplace, sessions and harvest.
2. Often there's a little "drama" in beginning an Open Space session. People are seated in a circle; in the middle of the circle are markers and paper. The host literally calls the energy and passion of people into the room. The host begins by announcing the overall theme of the open space – what is it we want to explore together at this time? The host explains the principles, roles and rule of OST, described below, and explains the allocation of time. Typically there is a grid or matrix which has been created on the wall. Across the top are designated meeting areas, usually 1 for each ten people in the gathering. Along the side are the beginning times for each session. The grid is blank, waiting for people to step forward with their topics. After the host has explained OST, s/he "opens the space" and invites people to step forward, write their topic on a piece of paper, sign their name, and choose a time and location on the grid.

Sometimes space is opened and nothing visible happens for a while; people are reading the air and thinking about what they want to propose. Othertimes, the space is immediately filled with people stepping forward to offer sessions on topics they are passionate about. The job of the host is to stay calm and inviting.—and to keep the space open. Sometimes the host will say something a little provocative, like "what is the question you will wake with in the middle of this night wishing you had been courageous enough to bring into Open Space?"

People will begin to step forward and the grid will be filled. Practice patience and hold clear intention about the purpose of the Open Space.

3. Open Space rounds come in all sorts of sizes. Sometimes the design team will decide to have multiple short rounds – sometimes as brief as 15 minutes. In other cases they will want to provide the opportunity for more depth and made design for sessions of an hour or more. Allocate time based on what you have available and based on your own sense of the depth of dialog which will best serve the community right now.

The grid gets filled. Sometimes people add meeting places because there wasn't enough room on the grid for their topic. Sometimes those who offer an OST session see that someone is offering something very similar and they ask that the sessions be combined. Avoid making it too complex – leave the calling of sessions to people who step forward; don't get caught in negotiations about topics!

Send people off with blank paper and markers AND with clear instructions about how to harvest and share their work with the larger community.

4. Often we will use a simple sheet of paper for the harvest from each session. The paper will have some simple categories like “key insights,” “complexities,” “next steps,” and “participants.” In the harvest at the end of the Open Space we're not looking for a full report – just enough information back from each session to give all the participants a sense of what is happening in the broader field. After one or more rounds of Open Space, participants return to the circle and share their harvest. Encourage both clarity and brevity as insights are shared.

Principles, Roles and Law of Open Space

Open Space operates with four principles, four roles and one law.

The four principles are:

1. Whoever comes are the right people. Trust the process. When you offer an Open Space session, you may be thinking “I hope Hide comes.” And then Hide doesn't come. He has gone someplace else. But the people who show up for your session are the ones who really care about your topic. They have the creativity and insights needed. Work with them! Sometimes one comes – what a gift. You now have 15 minute or an hour of quiet time to really clarify your own thinking.
2. Whatever happens is the only thing that could have happened. Again, trust the process. Whatever happens is exactly right – nothing else could have happened. You've had a good dialogue about a subject of importance and you and the other participants leave with more insight and clarity.
3. When it starts is the right time. You just begin the dialog. People arrive, you see each other, and you begin to talk about things that are important to you. Nothing else is needed.

4. When it's over it's over. Sometimes a dialog you thought would take a full hour is complete in 15 minutes. The central issues have been raised and resolved. The dialog is complete. How wonderful – you can now all join another session. Sometimes the allocated time has passed quickly and there is still much more to discuss; with your participants figure out when you will continue.

The four roles are:

- ✓ Caller. Someone offers a session. They begin the whole process. They offer a session about something they really care about and others come.
- ✓ Participant. People come, eagerly. They join the sessions which they really care about, where they believe they can make a contribution.
- ✓ Butterfly. Some people can't choose which session to join. Perhaps they just need a little quiet time. They go off on their own and look beautiful like butterflies. Sometimes two or more butterflies come together and begin a dialog and a new session is created.
- ✓ Bumble Bees. Some people become bumble bees. They care about multiple topics and want to join the dialog.. They go from session to session, often sharing ideas they heard in the last session. Just as real bees cross pollinate and add to the weath and wisdom in the room, so do these participants. They connect ideas in the room in real time.

There is one law:

The Law of Two Feet: ***If you find yourself in a situation where you are not contributing or learning, move somewhere where you can.*** This is really important. Sometimes we sit politely and nod or try to make a contribution in a dialog, but really, we're not there. In fact it turns out that we don't care all that much about what's being said and our mind is on something else. When this happens, become courageous. Leave, go somewhere else! We are sometimes conditioned to think it is impolite to leave a group. Actually, it is more impolite to stay when we really aren't present. Follow your passion. Find your energy. This is your precious time – use it well!

Open Space Technology is simple and amazing. It works. People come together around the things they really care about and they generate new collective insight, knowledge and wisdom. You might say that it adds appropriate structure and clarity to a nomikai during the day where we talk with each other about the things we really care about!

www.openspaceworld.net

6-E: Proaction Café

Recently people around the world have been experimenting with a new methodology called Proaction Café. It blends aspects of World Café and Open Space to really let people get clear about a particular topic.

Proaction Cafes are often one of the last events in a multi-day dialog. People are getting ready to step back into their lives and want clarity about how to proceed with something important to them. They've been in many other sessions – circle, world café,

AI and open space and now they are ready to use the knowledge and wisdom of the community to get clear about their next steps. They've already talked with a number of people and started to trust those present in the gathering.

Proaction Café uses a very strict structure, intended to give indepth consulting to participants who call sessions. It follows the principles and guidelines of both Open Space and World Café.

How it Works

1. Count the people in the room who will be participating. Divide that number by four. This is the number of separate café tables which will be available. In other words, if there are 40 people in the gathering, there will be 10 tables.
2. Begin in a circle. Create a matrix like the one for Open Space. There's no expansion of this grid – the number of tables is equal to the number of participants divided by four.
3. As with Open Space, people step forward and announce their topics and place them on the grid. While there are typically three rounds in a Proaction Café, the tables/topics will be the same for each round. Different participants in each round, but the caller hosts his or her topic in subsequent rounds.
4. The time allocated for a Proaction Café is often 2-3 hours. A typical schedule might be:

20	Instructions and MarketPlace
30	Round One
10	Table Host Reflection Time
30	Round Two
10	Table Host Reflection Time
30	Round Three
10	Table Host Reflection Time
30	Harvest

The host or caller stays at the same table with his or her question for all three rounds. The participants go to different tables for each round.

Between each of the three rounds, there is a ten minute break for the rest of the participants. They leave the room and the room becomes quiet. The host takes this time to digest what they've heard, journaling, organizing their own thoughts.

Each round of the Proaction Café has a different focus. Typically, the flow is:

Round One. Shift the question. The caller brings his or her question to the Café – one that is really important. The first round of the café typically explores the question behind the question. The first version of the question that someone asks might not be the final question), each participant challenges the table host to help them find the deeper meaning of the question they've asked.

Round Two. Explore what is missing. Once the question has been refined in the first round, what makes the picture more complete?. What is a question not asked yet? What are perspectives or options not yet considered?

Round Three. Consolidate learnings into action steps. Hosts share what they are learning with participants in the third round. Participants question, challenge, offer consultation and perspective. Hosts clarify what next steps they will take.

The Proaction Café ends with a harvest in a circle. At least the host of each table share what happened at their table and what they take away from it. If time allows, anyone can share their Café experience.

Of course the design team may come up with a different questions and process. The intent, of course, is to have powerful questions guiding the three rounds which really allow the hosts to focus and use the considerable expertise that is present in the room.

These sample methodologies are just ways of creating an astonishing BA. While we have given you a lot of detailed directions, the simple essence is this: create good BA. Pay attention to what is going on in the room. Create the conditions that support people in being curious, in being respectful, in really listening to each other and caring about each other.

7. What Makes a Future Center Unique

7-A: Future Centers have a Particular View of the World

The experience, knowledge and wisdom present in any system is inspiring. Families, companies, communities, NGOs, governments each have many insights about how to pursue opportunities or solve problems. Frequently, however, this knowledge is hidden from view. It is the tacit knowledge that any system has.

Future Center sessions work to make this tacit knowledge visible and accessible. As you have read in other materials here, Future Centers use many different methodologies to access this tacit knowledge. Where we begin is with the assumption that has been proven many times – the assumption that the knowledge is, in fact, present.

Good questions unlock this knowledge. Dialog provides access. Sometimes just taking the time to sit quietly and take a fresh view is what is needed.

And, sometimes something more is needed. One of the things that a system knows is that sometimes it needs knowledge from somewhere else. Outside experts have a role to play as well. Sometimes there is specialized knowledge which unlocks a whole new set of innovation.

The wise system is one that knows it doesn't have to have all the answers itself.

7-B: Future Centers Sessions Ask Really Good Questions

Future Center sessions are a place where we inquire about things that actually matter. While answers carry us forward for action, questions open up to exploration.

Asking the right question is the most effective way of opening up a conversation and keeping it engaging. A high-quality question focuses on what is meaningful for the participants, triggers our curiosity and invites us to explore further.

When inviting people into a conversation that matters, it is helpful to have an overall question, one that itself embodies the purpose of the meeting. This is the key question or the “calling question” for the conversation or meeting. The Champion, core team and design and hosting team will spend time sensing this calling question. Literally hours can be spent in this assessment.

The Future Center will include many other questions as well. Each different activity – circles, World Café, Open Space, AI – is always organized around a question. Then the calling question. The questions you choose or that people discover through dialog are critical to the success of the session. A Future Center Session can explore one question or a series of related questions.

Some guidelines for choosing questions:

- A well-crafted question attracts energy and focuses attention on what matters. Experienced hosts recommend asking open-ended questions, not ones that have a simple yes/no answer.
- Good questions invite inquiry and curiosity. They do not need to promote action or problem solving immediately.
- You’ll know a good question when it continues to surface good ideas and possibilities.
- Check possible questions with key people who will take part in a conversation. Does it hold their attention and energy?

A powerful question... • Is simple and clear • Is thought provoking • Generates energy • Focuses inquiry • Challenges assumptions • Opens new possibilities • Evokes more questions!

Eric Vogt, Juanita Brown and David Isaacs have written a wonderful guide to powerful questions which can be downloaded from the World Café website:

<http://www.theworldcafe.com/pdfs/aopq.pdf>

7-C: Future Centers Work with Attraction

Future Center sessions are powerful because people want to be there. Inevitably some people will come for the old reasons – it’s their job, or their superior told them to come – but for the most part, people come because they are excited about the possibility of really creating something new, that makes a difference, with other people who care. The Future Center sessions that are the most powerful are the ones where the Core Team has built a powerful “attraction field.” What do we mean by attraction field? Think of going home late at night and you get off at your train stop. You smell the aroma of Yakitori from the stand on the corner and suddenly you’re hungry. You’re attracted to the stand. If there was just some person standing on the corner yelling “buy Yakitori here,” probably you wouldn’t be as hungry!

Depending on the kind of Future Center session you are offering – Invitational or Open – you will do some conventional promotion with e-mails or letters and posters or flyers, but that's only part of the story. Look for informal ways to attract the attention of the people who should be at the session. Share some of the questions and ideas that come up in core team meetings. Share stories about the conversations you've had. Use company newsletters and twitter and sit down for coffee with someone you hope will come. Let people know who else is coming. Begin to build a "buzz" so that people are curious about what might happen and want to be part of it.

You attract people who are eager to be part of the process of building something new! Future Center sessions work because people want to participate. They come because they hear a call for a topic that is important to them. Future Center sessions need to be irresistible!

A champion makes a session compelling. A design team spends time to make sure that everyone's time will be well spent. Hosts of sessions work to make sure there is a good flow.

But what is most important is that people come to a Future Center session because they really want to be present in this dialog. This invitational quality is what opens the field of the Future Center!

7-D: Future Centers Work with Different Media

We have already discussed this in the section of Stages and Processes, but want to emphasize it here. We all know there are many ways of knowing. Sometimes we rely too much on our mental capacities and cognitive skills. We can get trapped inside of our mental models and habitual ways of seeing the world. Simple processes of dialogue with people who have different perspectives and experience are one way to break open our mental models. There are others as well.

In a Future Center, we invite you to be creative and explorative. Here are a few simple suggestions.

- Dialog Walk. Have people form pairs and go for a walk together. Send them off with a question. They can walk in silence, thinking about the question themselves. They can have a two person dialog while walking. You can even get adventurous and have one close their eyes and be led around an outdoor space, experiencing it without their eyesight. People's minds become refreshed and more open.
- Modeling. Create models of the systems you are working in. You can do this in multiple ways. Use nendo children's clay to create a model of your current work situation and how you would like to change it. Use role playing to station people in different parts of the room to approximate your system. Play any one of a number of systems games to help people understand how dynamic systems actually work. Have a model on the floor of some of your system dynamics and ask people to physically walk to their part of the system.
- Silence and Reflection. Create intentional time and space for silence and reflection. Invite people to slow down and to be still! Ask them to write in

journals about some core questions which need to be carefully considered. Ask them to listen to themselves.

- Stimulate Creativity. Invite people to sharpen their senses of the world around them. Have them go outside, notice what catches their attention, and write a simple haiku. Have them sit down with paper and pastels or crayons and just begin to draw what they are feeling about the things being discussed in the Future Center session. Be a little bit daring.
- Movement. Ask people to get into small groups and use their bodies to create a physical model of the system and where it is stuck. Have them walk as a group and extend their senses into the room. With someone who has some skill as a teacher, bring in Aikido or Yoga or dance to loosen the energy in the room.

Allow yourself to play a bit. There's always someone who has some skill and experience at doing these kinds of activities. Look around and find partners who have some skill and experience in different media and invite them into your process. You'll find it stimulating!

8. Insights

8-A: Working with Diversity

Future Centers thrive on diversity. We can look at this in several ways:

- Diversity gives us access to different information and perspectives. When we bring people with different backgrounds, ages, genders and experience things become more interesting. New questions are asked. New insights are offered.
- Diversity is disruptive. It shakes us out of our conventional ways of thinking. Sometimes it is a little uncomfortable, but it leads us to new thinking.
- When we come together in a Future Center session, we need to come with respect for each other, with real curiosity about what the other participants think, and we have to come together as friends, joined together in a common enterprise.
- Sometimes just being in a room with new people is enough. We listen carefully to them because we've not heard their voice very often. We speak more carefully ourselves because we want to make sure our ideas are heard as well.

When we gather with diversity, we do need ground rules and courtesy. Always remember that we come together to create something with important value. We come together because we want to learn and work with each other.

8-B: Dealing with Existing Organizational Hierarchy

A Future Center session is a special BA. It is not intended to replace existing organizational hierarchy.

Each company exists to delivery a quality product or service. Hierarchies have been established which, hopefully, serve the company well. (Well, sometimes they don't serve well – and that can be the topic of a Future Center session as well!)

When we come into a Future Center session, we are conscious of having entered a special BA. We are all equal co-creators. We've come with curiosity and respect and friendship because there are important issues we want to consider. We have come because we were invited and because we were attracted to the session.

When we leave the Future Center session we will return to our normal roles in our company. One person will return to being an engineer. Another to being a salesperson. Another a Vice President in charge of R&D. But when we are in the Future Center session, we are a group of men and women, young and old, gathered for a common purpose.

9. Supporting Materials

Different supporting materials will be prepared for Future Centers which give tips on a variety of processes and methodologies. These include.

- Brainstorming
- Change Lab
- History Mapping (Past and Predictions) Gaugin
- U-process
 - A methodology suited for dealing with complex issues, in which a direct approach is not suitable. It typically takes several days to several weeks. Major stakeholders are asked to “go away” from the issue by first deeply observing and understanding the context (sensing), then entering the present moment (presensing) and finally to understand what crystallizes in individual and shared intention (realizing). Powerful group methodology for creating personal and shared intention based on deep understanding of emerging realities.
- Best case/ worst case perspectives
 - A scenario-exercise based on defining Best and Worst imaginable outcomes. These horror and the dream scenarios describe which the goals and elements the project must **avoid** and **obtain**. It's grounded on the assumption that people often find it easier to see the problems rather than the opportunities, and this is utilized in the creative process.
- Wild Cards & Weak Signals
- Learning Journeys
- Knowledge safari
- Storytelling
- Peer Assist

Peer assist is used to support knowledge sharing and knowledge-retention between a team engaged in a project and a group of external experts. Based on specific questions the team has, external experts – in the network of colleagues, sometimes in the same organization – are brought in to tell about their experiences dealing with that question. It is a powerful method to bring (hidden) expertise, knowledge and experience into the discussion of how to address an issue, making it easier for a team to avoid mistakes, build on the experiences and failures of other people, and access proven solutions to unexpected problems.

- Questioning technique
There are diverse methods for organizing questioning, including the ICA method and the Socratic Method. See the World Café link (Bob) to a reference document.
- Thought Experiments
 - Thought experiments are highly structured hypothetical questions that use a “What if?” structure to explore possible solutions, options for new policies, products or services, or alternative futures. Thought experiments can be designed to:
 - Help us understand the way we – and diverse stakeholders and/or potential users – think through;
 - Identify assumptions, mental habits and “flaws” in the way we have been taught to think;
 - Help us find the right question or develop an appropriate set of questions.
 - Show how all things are subject to different interpretations.
 - Show how to look at the same thing as everyone else and see something different.
 - Encourage fluidity in thought and different ways of thinking.
 - Challenge the cognitive bias that limits people to using an object only in traditional ways.
- Walk shop
This work form asks participants to reflect on (solo walk) or discuss (walk with a partner) a specific issue or challenge that is the subject of a session. It can be applied both inside the Future Center space (in case of bad weather), but is most effective outside, either in the city or the countryside (depending on the location of the session). It is also possible to hold a walk shop in small groups (4-5 people), stopping on occasion to share ideas and insights. Sometime groups may meet and interact with other groups. When they return to the center, each group (or individual, if it was a solo walk) reflects on what he/she has learned and pools insights with the larger group. A variation of the walk shop asks participants to choose 3 or 4 things they see or find during the walk which resonate with their thinking about the issue. They can weave the significance of these objects in to the story they tell about the insights gathered on the walk. Moving through a space – or several designated spaces – to experience the world / question / issue / option through different perspectives.

- TRIZ & ASIT
 - TRIZ is a powerful engineer-based creativity methodology: the “*theory of inventive problem solving*”. The theory developed from extensive research on how hundreds of thousands of inventions came about. It defines generalizable patterns in the inventive solutions and the distinguishing characteristics of the problems that these inventions have overcome. The theory includes a practical methodology, tool sets, and knowledge base.
 - ASIT, *Advanced Systematic Inventive Thinking*, is a proven methodology for injecting innovative thinking into problem solving and new product development. ASIT is a morphological analysis methodology based on a simplification of TRIZ, which makes it much easier to use. It leads users step-by-step through different perspectives on aspects of a challenge, inviting new thinking that often leads to breakthrough ideas.

- Morphological Analysis & Forced Connections
 - This method involves listing the different attributes of a situation, and then generating diverse alternative ways of thinking about it. Participants are asked to make random connections between attributes and alternatives. This forces participants to expand their thinking and consider random, improbable and “impossible” combinations, which often leads to usable insights about “hidden” connections of ideas.

- Lateral Thinking
 - This thinking methodology, developed by Edward de Bono in the 1960’s and widely used throughout the world, consists of a suite of methods and techniques aimed at solving problems by unorthodox or apparently illogical methods. It is a set of systematic techniques used for changing concepts and perceptions and generating new ones, exploring multiple possibilities and approaches instead of pursuing a single approach.”

- Synectics
 - Synectic thinking – developed in the 1960’s by Wilkiam Gordon – is the process of discovering the links that unite seemingly disconnected elements. It is a way of mentally taking things apart and putting them together to furnish new insight for all types of problems. The essence of Synectics is that all things - regardless of their dissimilarity - can somehow be linked together, either in a physical, psychological or symbolic way. Creative behavior occurs in the process of becoming aware of problems, deficiencies, gaps in knowledge, missing elements, disharmonies, bringing together in new relationships available information; identifying the missing elements; searching for solutions, making guesses, or formulating hypotheses.

- Stretching: going beyond perceived limits
 - There are various ways of helping participants to “go beyond their limits,” whether limits of logic (from “we’ve always done it this way” to “it’s impossible”), limits of permission (“*they* – the organization, society etc. – will never allow it”), or limits in resources and so forth. Several powerful tools include: (i) *Impossible assignments*; (ii) *Absurdist reflection*

- Critical Thinking skills / strategies
 - Various critical thinking skills/strategies are available testing, evaluating, enriching and improving ideas and options in a creative and inclusive way. They are useful for sharpening the focus and deepening the dialogue, sorting ideas for relevance, honoring multiple perspectives, identifying directions for further thinking, and making new connections. An addition benefit of these methods is avoiding “analysis paralysis”. Powerful techniques include:
 - The De Bono 6-Hats thinking technique; The method encourages parallel thinking and multi-perspective thinking separates ego from performance, and promotes the balance of creative and critical thinking. People are asked to contribute ideas and critique under 6 different colored “hats” so that they are forced to examine any idea or option from many perspectives: they look at issues from the point-of-view of facts & figures, judgment and caution, creative alternatives, blue-sky thinking, and broad process overview.
 - The Disney 3-Position Method; seeing things from three perspectives: the dreamer, the realist, the critic.
 - Storyboarding.
 - Assumption Smashing
A useful technique of generating ideas is to list the assumptions of the problem, and then explore what happens as you drop each of these assumptions individually or in combination.
- Internet-based electronic brainstorming
 - IC Café is a web-based meeting tool for anchoring important topical issues in a company. It may involve discussing goals, visions, strategies; exchanging ideas, enriching ideas, prioritizing and evaluating on ideas. It allows the anonymous pooling of ideas and opinions The results are compiled in a shared database of ideas and opinions. This is also useful as decision data.
 - *Group Decision room* and *Zing* are widely used tools to accomplish this.
- Prototyping
 - The 6-question, 6-step prototyping process.
- Future imagining: Co-creation of visual future images
Co-creation of visual Future Images allows project groups to actively design desired futures. This tool enables a group of people to get out-of-the box and co-create an image of the future in respect to a specific challenge.
- Consequences lab
Understanding what the consequences of a choice, option, decision are – especially useful before the choice is made, but also important afterwards. It focuses on desired as well as undesirable outcomes, intended as well as unintended consequences, possible and impossible consequences.
- Future Images

In addition to the methodologies indicated above – a set of **Meta-skills to combine different methodologies** to solve complicated and complex problems is important for Future center directors and key hosts/facilitators.

The ability to choose and combine appropriate methods that are appropriate to: address a particular issue; it includes how to create the appropriate space, to meet the needs (and challenges) of a diverse group of participants, in the time available.

Creating the appropriate process architecture for problem-solving using dialogue, design thinking, intuition, systemic innovation, collaborative co-creation is a key competence for running Future Centers.

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