

## A Test for Future Fitness:

### Make it Safe, Smart, Shared, Sustainable and Satisfying

**By Wayne Visser**

Are you fit for the future? Will your product, organisation, community, city or country survive and thrive in 10, 20, 50 or even 100 years?

We live in a world that is changing faster and challenging us more than ever before. Great progress has been made in lifting people out of poverty, advancing scientific frontiers, connecting the globe with technology and making knowledge more accessible. At the same time, there are disturbing trends of increasing inequality, catastrophic destruction of ecosystems and loss of species, pervasive corruption, increasingly volatile and dangerous climate change, waves of forced migration and floods of refugees, a rise of religious extremism and the omnipresent threat of terrorism.

The question is: how can we – as individuals, businesses, communities and policy-makers – prepare for the future? How can we maximize our chances of success, not only by being ready, but also by helping to shape the future that we desire? I think it helps to view future-fitness in two ways: in terms of *alignment* – i.e. fitting, like a jigsaw piece, into the bigger picture of an emerging world; and in terms of *agility* – i.e. building up the kind of fitness that allows quick reflexes and strong performance in response to future conditions.

The biggest trends in society and our most enduring ideals suggest that there are five key criteria for future-fitness: our products, organisations, communities, cities or countries must be safe, smart, shared, sustainable and satisfying? These 5-Ss of Future-Fitness are summarised in the table below and then briefly defined in the subsequent sections.

#### The Kaleidoscope 5-S Future-Fitness Framework

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Test question</b>	<b>Keywords</b>	<b>Example indicators</b>
Safe	Does X* protect and care for us?	Healthy, secure, resilient	OH&S, toxicity, risk & emergency preparedness
Smart	Does X connect and empower us?	Educated, connected, responsive	Connectivity, access to knowledge, R&D investment
Shared	Does X include and value us?	Fair, diverse, inclusive	Value distribution, stakeholder participation, diversity
Sustainable	Does X protect and restore our environment?	Renewable, enduring, evolutionary	Externality pricing, footprint analysis, renewability
Satisfying	Does X fulfil and inspire us?	Beneficial, beautiful, meaningful	Quality standards, levels of satisfaction, happiness

\* 'X' could be a product, organisation, community, city or country

#### Safe

A safe future is one in which our products, organisations, communities, cities and countries do not damage our health and wellbeing; rather, they minimize our exposure to toxins, sickness, disease and danger, allowing us to feel physically and psychologically secure. Examples include the Zero Toxics campaign in the textiles industry, G.E.'s Healthymagination programme, Freeplay's off-grid fetal heart-rate monitor and HP's Global Social Innovation in Health programme.

## **Smart**

A smart future is one in which our products, organisations, communities, cities and countries use technology to better connect us to each other and allow us to share what we value most. They also facilitate more democratic governance by allowing us (as customers or citizens) to give direct, immediate feedback. Examples include IBM's Smarter Planet initiative, Karmayog's online corruption reporting system, Wikirate, A Little World and the World Wide Web Foundation's Web Index.

## **Shared**

A shared future is one in which our products, organisations, communities, cities and countries address issues of equity and access by being transparent about the distribution of value in society and working to ensure that benefits are fairly shared and diversity is respected. Examples include GSK's patent pool, the GreenXchange, Kickstarter's crowdfunding site, the Fairtrade Foundation, the e-Choupal's farmer empowerment digital scheme and the Occupy movement.

## **Sustainable**

A sustainable future is one in which our products, organisations, communities, cities and countries begin to operate within the limits of the planet by radically changing resource consumption patterns and ecosystem impacts. This includes a shift to renewable energy and resources, closing the loop on production and moving to a low carbon society. Examples include Interface's Mission Zero, Unilever's Sustainable Living Plan, energy-surplus houses and cradle-to-cradle certified companies.

## **Satisfying**

A satisfying future is one in which our products, organisations, communities, cities and countries produce high quality services that satisfy our human needs, as well as enabling a lifestyle and culture that values quality of life, happiness and other indicators of wellbeing. Examples include Six Sigma quality systems, B-corporations (for benefit), GoodGuide's product rating system, NEF's Happy Planet Index, and the Slow Food and Downshifting movements.

## **Conclusion**

The way to apply future-fitness thinking is to test the anticipated stocks and flows in society against these five criteria. For example, do the projected stocks of nature, infrastructure, institutions, people and capital suggest that our product, organisation, community, city or country will be more (or less) safe, smart, shared, sustainable and satisfying? Likewise, do the expected flows of materials, energy, knowledge, money and products suggest a future that is more (or less) healthy, inclusive, connected, renewable and fulfilling?

In the final analysis, our hope for the future is based on creating a better world tomorrow than we have today; a society that gives more freedom and fulfilment to our children and grandchildren than we have enjoyed. The Kaleidoscope 5-S Future-Fitness Framework is just one way to crystallize what a better future could look like – and to galvanise our efforts in shaping the products, organisations, communities, cities and countries that could turn such a bright vision into reality.

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