

# FUTURE NEWS

TO CONNECT, TO INFORM AND TO INSPIRE

## IN THIS EDITION

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# It's 2053 and we saved the planet: How will we look back at the time before we abandoned fossil fuels?

The Carbon Ruins exhibit looks back on the present from a future in which we solved climate change.

by Adele Peters

CARBON  
RUINS



Carbon Ruins: frequent-flyer cards [Photo: Jessica Bloem/Lund University]

When you walk inside an exhibit currently on display in Lund, Sweden, you're asked to imagine that the year is 2053. Three years earlier, the world reached a goal of net-zero emissions. And you're standing inside a new museum looking back at the end of what the exhibit calls the "fossil age."



Carbon Ruins, overall view [Photo: Lund University]

One display explains what a frequent-flyer card is, as it talks about the history of a social movement that boycotted air travel, forced new taxes on airlines, and made frequent flying obsolete; another talks about the demise of the hamburger. As you walk past a toy model of an oil platform built from vintage Legos, a guide

explains the company's transition to plant-based plastic. Another display talks about how coal, crude oil, and gasoline were used, and then steps through how the transition to renewable energy occurred.



Carbon Ruins: black coal from Värtaverket, Stockholm; crude oil, petrol/gasoline [Photo: Lund University]

"It's making the familiar, unfamiliar," says Johannes Stripple, a political science professor at Lund University who coordinated the exhibit, called Carbon Ruins, with other researchers as part of a larger project called Climaginaries. "A museum is a way of doing that."

Stripple has spent around a decade studying climate-change politics and the way that a transition to a low-carbon economy might unfold, and he wanted to talk about those ideas outside of academic journals. "In a sense, it's about democratizing the public discussion about different kinds of climate futures, and how people relate to them and what they mean to them," he says.

# Carbon Ruins



Carbon Ruins: the fast-food hamburger, *The In Vitro Meat Cookbook* [Photo: Lund University]

If the vision of climate futures is often apocalyptic—picture the floating communities in *Waterworld* or the shortage of drinking water in *Mad Max: Fury Road*—Carbon Ruins takes a different approach. “What I wanted to do was to have people to assume a point in time when the transition is done, when we’re through it, and when we’re looking back at how that came to be,” says Stripple. By starting with a premise that is both hopeful and plausible (Sweden plans to reach net-zero emissions by 2045), the discussion “does not end up in either techno-utopias or dystopian catastrophism,” he says. “In scenario terms, this is sometimes called ‘back-casting,’ assuming a certain stage of future affairs and then outlining how we could get there.”



Carbon Ruins: oil platform, steel bottle, asphalt [Photo: Lund University]

The researchers worked with experts in agriculture, energy, plastic, and other areas, to speculate about objects that would be left behind. Some displays

focus on changes that will happen in coming decades, like a section on new conflict minerals that looks at material shortages caused by battery production for renewable energy. Another section talks about the linkage of unexplained deaths to the ubiquity of microplastic pollution (in 2019, though we know that microplastic is found in drinking water, fish, and many other places, we still don’t understand the health impacts of ingesting it.) A transportation section talks about how most of the technologies in use in midcentury had been in place for decades, but the relationship between people, infrastructure, and vehicles changed:

The decline in car ownership began only once the subsidies and policies that favored them were removed by governments reacting belatedly to the undeniable effects of climate change. Once the ultimate symbol of individual freedom and convenience, cars became an expensive anachronism, unwelcome in (if not actively excluded from) ever-greater sections of cities and towns, and multi-lane highways were torn up to be replaced by tramways and the “linear parks” that are now an urbanist’s cliché.

The exhibit is moving between different locations in the city of Lund, and the researchers are interested in creating a mobile version that can travel to other cities, with the aim of helping people think about how the climate transition can happen. “By focusing on recognizable objects,” the researchers write in a description of the project, “the exhibition bridges the gap between the daily lives of humans and the abstract impacts of climate change.”

The original story appeared in *Fast Company* and is reproduced with permission.

# Book Review

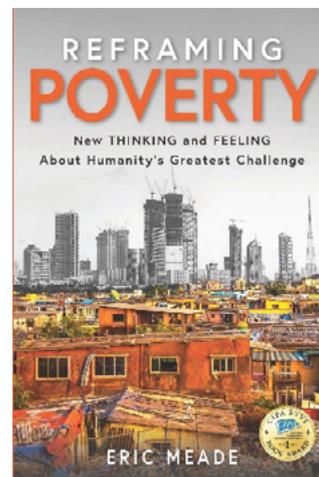
by Charles Brass – Chair, futures foundation

“Poverty is the initial condition of the human species; it has been here as long as we have.”

## Reframing Poverty

by Eric Meade

Eric Meade is a futurist and educator who has been challenging his students to think more carefully about poverty for a long time. The reactions of his students, and his professional commitment to rigorously thinking about the future, have led him to write this small, very readable, yet challenging book.



Meade opens by exploring the various different ways in which poverty is conventionally discussed (more about this below) and then on page 20 he sets out his main (and very challenging) premise:

“Poverty is the initial condition of the human species; it has been here as long as we have. Most of our ancestors lived ‘hand to mouth’, foraging for nuts and berries, hunting for game, or farming small plots of land. This state of affairs continued even into the lifetimes of ancestors whose names we know. Poverty exists without cause; it is the ground from which we humans have been evolving.

For most of human existence, however, no one spoke of poverty. Most humans probably thought nothing of it when they saw someone who was struggling to survive, since they were struggling just as hard themselves. That struggle was not called ‘poverty’; it was called ‘life’”.

He goes on to say: “It seems then, that poverty as a construct has less to do with a certain set of life circumstances caused by a certain set of factors than it does with the effect those circumstances have on an observer – that is the emotions it evokes. These emotions shape the discourse on poverty, including its attribution to one set of causes or another. Poverty is, at its root, an emotional construct” (p21).

From this basis, Meade devotes most of the book exploring, and critiquing the four main approaches that seem to be commonly taken when talking about poverty:

- 1. the structural response:** “poverty is a structural failure caused by unemployment, institutional racism, gender equality, and the like” (p41). “The poor do their best to escape poverty, but traps and barriers keep them where they are” (p52).

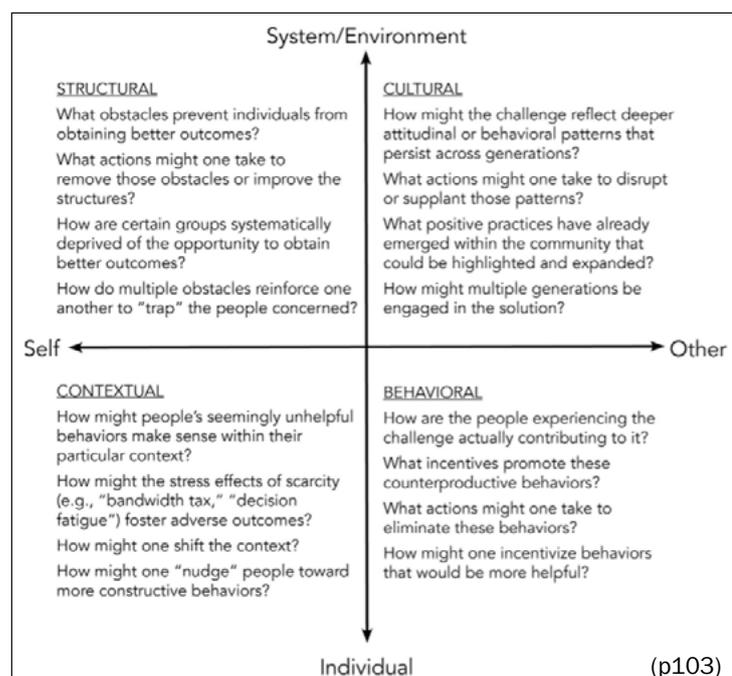
“Poverty results from a coherent set of attitudes and behaviours that tend to keep people poor.”

2. **the contextual response:** “the stresses of poverty promote decision making that keeps people in poverty” (p42)
3. **the behavioural response:** poverty results from bad decisions that put, or keep, a person in poverty” (p42)
4. **the cultural explanation:** “poverty results from a coherent set of attitudes and behaviours that tend to keep people poor” (p65). “The poor in general do not engage with social and political institutions, of which they are often suspicious or fearful. Within their own communities they lack a clear social structure that reaches across the boundaries of individual families” (p66).

Meade suggests that most of us predominantly hold one of these explanations to be most true and this shapes what actions we believe should be taken to alleviate poverty. However, as he also says, “all these perspectives have some validity” (p74) and he proceeds to demonstrate, using both research and anecdotes, a “broader emotional and cognitive space that would allow us to think and feel differently about poverty (and) would allow each perspective to be true in its own way” (p75).

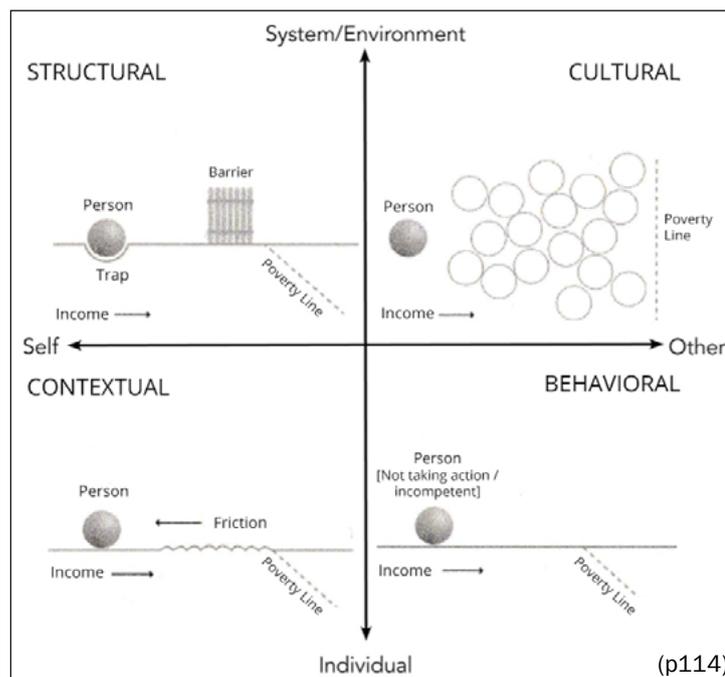
In this endeavor, Meade demonstrates the best of the futurist’s art – exploring alternative possible futures, and acknowledging the partial truth each contains.

To help his readers feel through their emotional responses to poverty, Meade provides the following graphic to invite us to: “strengthen (our) own efforts to reduce poverty by exploring the(se) questions:



In the second half of the book, Meade explores in great detail why efforts to alleviate poverty have failed. Again he uses the same framework as the graphic above to conclude that these failures have occurred for different reasons in each of the four quadrants.

“What am I, as a human being, to do, living as I do in a world where poverty exists?”



Those who believe in the structural explanation see barriers which prevent movement out of poverty. In the contextual explanation something outside the individual is resisting (holding them back) from moving out of poverty. Behaviouralists believe that the impediment is something inside the individual experiencing poverty, and in the cultural explanation there are all sorts of (often amorphous) impediments to moving towards the poverty line.

One of the other ways in which Meade demonstrates his commitment to thinking like a futurist is in his acknowledgement that “small differences matter” (p131). Our increasing understanding of complex systems has highlighted just how different medium and long term outcomes can be even when initial conditions seem almost identical. During Chapter 8 he explores the implications of this recognition and concludes: “Poverty, then, is an emergent property of a system in which some members of the population lack the complexity required to engage effectively with the critical structures of that environment” (p158) – or in other words, any effort to deal with poverty will be ineffective if it doesn’t pay attention to all four quadrants.

Although Meade doesn’t mention him anywhere in the book, this conclusion echoes the work of American philosopher Ken Wilber who has championed the idea that all truth is partial, and that effectively dealing with any significant issue involves paying close attention to both interior and exterior dimensions of individual humans (the structural and behavioural dimensions above) as well as the contextual and cultural dimensions of collective human systems.

Meade concludes his epilogue by saying: “I wrote this book not to answer the question, *How do we eradicate poverty?* but rather, *What am I, as a human being, to do, living as I do in a world where poverty exists?* This is my answer: To accept the world as it is and to uphold the dignity of the human experience and of all of those with whom I share it” (p183 – emphasis in original).

# FUTURISTS IN ACTION

## HOW TO DO STRATEGIC PLANNING LIKE A FUTURIST

by Amy Webb



I recently helped a large industrial manufacturing company with its strategic planning process. With so much uncertainty surrounding autonomous vehicles, 5G, robotics, global trade, and the oil markets, the company's senior leaders needed a set of guiding objectives and

strategies linking the company's future to the present day. Before our work began in earnest, executives had already decided on a title for the initiative: Strategy 2030.

I was curious to know why they chose that specific year — 2030 — to benchmark the work. After all, the forces affecting the company were all on different timelines: Changes in global trade were immediate concerns, while the field of robotics will have incremental advancements, disappointments, and huge breakthroughs — sometimes years apart. Had the executives chosen the year 2030 because of something unique to the company happening 11 years from today?

The reason soon became clear. They'd arbitrarily picked the year 2030, a nice round number, because it gave them a sense of control over an uncertain future. It also made for good communication. "Strategy 2030" could be easily understood by employees, customers, and competitors, and it would align with the company's messaging about their hopes for the future. Plus, when companies go through their longer-term planning processes, they often create linear timelines marked by years ending in either 0s or 5s. Your brain can easily count in fives, while it takes a little extra work to count in 4s or 6s.

Nice, linear timelines offer a certain amount of assurance: that events can be preordained, chaos can be contained, and success can be plotted and guaranteed. Of course, the real world we all inhabit is a lot messier. Regulatory actions or natural disasters

are wholly outside of your control, while other factors — workforce development, operations, new product ideas — are subject to layers of decisions made throughout your organization. As all those variables collide, they shape the horizon.

Chief strategy officers and those responsible for choosing the direction of their organizations are often asked to facilitate "visioning" meetings. This helps teams brainstorm ideas, but it isn't a substitute for critical thinking about the future. Neither are the one-, three-, or five-year strategic plans that have become a staple within most organizations, though they are useful for addressing short-term operational goals. Deep uncertainty merits deep questions, and the answers aren't necessarily tied to a fixed date in the future. Where do you want to have impact? What it will take to achieve success? How will the organization evolve to meet challenges on the horizon? These are the kinds of deep, foundational questions that are best addressed with long-term planning.

### Why We Avoid Long-Term Timelines

As a quantitative futurist, my job is to investigate the future using data-driven models. My observation is that leadership teams get caught in a cycle of addressing long-term risk with rigid, short-term solutions, and in the process they invite entropy. Teams that rely on traditional linear timelines get caught in a cycle of tactical responses to what feels like constant change being foisted upon them from outside forces. Over time, those tactical responses — which take significant internal alignment and effort — drain the organization's resources and make them vulnerable to disruption.

For example, in 2001 I led a meeting with some U.S. newspaper executives to forecast the future of the news business. They, too, had already settled on a target year: 2005. This was an industry with visible disruption looming from the tech sector, where the pace of change was staggeringly fast. I already knew the cognitive bias in play (their desired year ended in

a five). But I didn't anticipate the reluctance to plan beyond four years, which to the executives felt like the far future. I was concerned that any strategies we developed to confront future risk and find new opportunities would be only tactical in nature. Tactical actions without a vision of the longer-term future would result in less control over how the whole media ecosystem evolved.

To illustrate this, I pointed the executives to a new Japanese i-Mode phone I'd been using while living in Tokyo. The proto-smartphone was connected to the internet, allowed me to make purchases, and, importantly, had a camera. I asked what would happen as mobile device components dropped in price — wouldn't there be an explosion in mobile content, digital advertising, and revenue-sharing business models? Anyone would soon be able to post photos and videos to the web, and there was an entire mobile gaming ecosystem on the verge of being born.

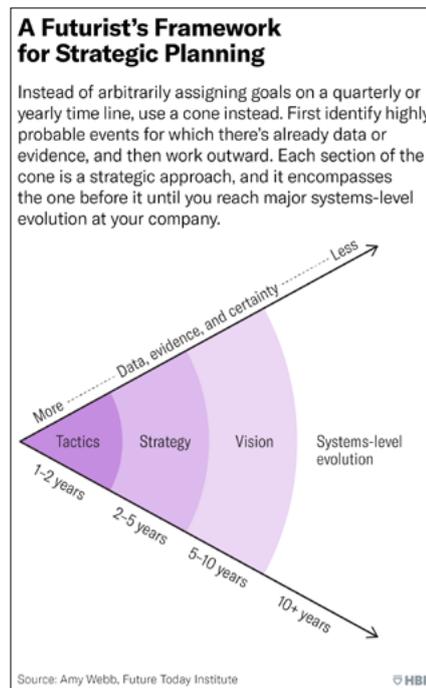
Smartphones fell outside the scope of our 2005 timeline. While it would be a while before they posed existential risk, there was still time to build and test a long-term business model. Publishers were accustomed to executing on quarter-to-quarter strategies and didn't see the value in planning for a smartphone market that was still many years away.

Since that meeting, newspaper circulation has been on a steady decline. American publishers repeatedly failed to do long-term planning, which could have included radically different revenue models for the digital age. Advertising revenue has fallen from \$65 billion in 2000 to less than \$19 billion industrywide in 2016. In the U.S., 1,800 newspapers closed between 2004 and 2018. Publishers made a series of short-term tactical responses (website redesigns, mobile apps) without ever developing a clear vision for the industry's evolution. Similar stories have played out across other sectors, including professional services, wired communications carriers, savings and loan banks, and manufacturing.

### Use Time Cones, Not Time Lines

Futurists think about time differently, and company strategists could learn from their approach. For any given uncertainty about the future — whether that's risk, opportunity, or growth — we tend to think in the short- and long-term simultaneously. To do this, I use a framework that measures certainty and charts actions, rather than simply marking the passage of time as quarters or years. That's why my timelines aren't actually lines at all — they are cones.

For every foresight project, I build a cone with four distinct categories: (1) tactics, (2) strategy, (3) vision, and (4) systems-level evolution.



I start by defining the cone's edge, using highly probable events for which there is already data or evidence. The amount of time varies for every project, organization, and industry, but typically 12 to 24 months is a good place to start. Because we can identify trends and probable events (both within a company and external to it), the kind of planning that can be done is *tactical* in nature, and the corresponding actions could include things like redesigning products or identifying and targeting a new customer segment.

Tactical decisions must fit into an organization's strategy. At this point in the cone, we are a little less certain of outcomes, because we're looking at the next 24 months to five years. This area is what's most familiar to strategy officers and their teams: We're describing traditional strategy and the direction the organization will take. Our actions include defining priorities, allocating resources, and making any personnel changes needed.

Lots of organizations get stuck cycling between strategy and tactics. While that process might feel like serious planning for the future, it results in a perpetual cycle of trying to catch up: to competitors, to new entrants, and to external sources of disruption.

That's why you must be willing to accept more uncertainty as you continually recalibrate your organization's vision for the future. A company's vision cannot include every detail, because there are still many unknowns. Leaders can articulate a

strong vision for 10 to 15 years in the future while being open to iterating on the strategy and tactics categories as they encounter new tech trends, global events, social changes, and economic shifts. In the vision category, we formulate actions based on how the executive leadership will pursue research, where it will make investments, and how it will develop the workforce it will someday need.

But the vision for an organization must also fit into the last category: systems-level disruption that could unfold in the farther future. If executive leaders do not have a strong sense of how their industry must evolve to meet the challenges of new technology, market forces, regulation, and the like, then someone else will be in a position to dictate the terms of your future. The end of the time horizons cone is very wide, since it can be impossible to calculate the probability of these kinds of events happening. So the actions taken should be describing the direction in which you hope the organization and the industry will evolve.

Unlike a traditional timeline with rigid dates and check-ins, the cone always moves forward. As you gain data and evidence and as you make progress on your actions, the beginning of the cone and your tactical category is always reset in the present day. The result, ideally, is a flexible organization that is positioned to continually iterate and respond to external developments.

### **Imagining the Future for Golf Carts (or Mini-Gs)**

For an example, let's consider how a company that manufactures golf carts could use this approach when considering the future of transportation. We would consider some of the macro forces related to golf carts, such as an expanding elderly population and climate change. We'd also need to connect emerging tech trends that will impact the future of the business, such as autonomous last-mile logistics, computer vision, and AI in the cloud. And we would investigate the work of startups and other companies: Amazon, Google, and startups such as Nuro are all working on small vehicles that can move packages short distances. What emerges is a future in which golf carts are repurposed as climate-controlled delivery vehicles capable of transporting people, medicine, groceries, office supplies, and pets without a human driver. Let's call them mini-Gs. The golf cart manufacturer probably already has the core competency, the supply chain, and the expertise in building fleets of vehicles, giving it a strategic advantage over the big tech companies and startups. This is an opportunity for a legacy company to take the lead in shaping the evolution of its future.

With a sense of what the farther future might look like, leaders can address the entire cone simultaneously. There will need to be new regulations governing speed and driving routes. City planners and architects will be useful collaborators in designing new entrance ways and paths for mini-Gs. Drug stores like CVS and Walgreens could be early buyers of mini-Gs; offering climate-controlled home delivery of prescriptions could eventually lead to using mini-Gs to collect blood or other diagnostic samples as the technology evolves. Working at the end of the cone, the golf cart manufacturer's leaders will determine how the ecosystem forms while they simultaneously develop a vision for what their organization will become.

Working at the front of the cone, executives will incorporate mini-Gs into their strategy. The actions here will take deeper work and more time: setting and recalibrating budgets, reorganizing business units, making new hires, seeking out partners, and so on. They will build in flexibility to make new choices as events unfold over the next three to five years. While the mini-Gs future I described above may still be very far off, this will position the company to pursue tactical research today: on the macro forces related to golf carts, emerging tech trends, and all of the companies, startups, and R&D labs currently working on various components of the ecosystem, such as last-mile logistics and object recognition. Over the next year, the golf cart manufacturer will bring together a cross-functional team of employees and experts; perform an internal audit of capabilities; facilitate learning sessions and workshops; assess current and potential vendors; and stay abreast of new developments coming from unusual places. What employees and their teams learn from taking tactical actions will be used to inform strategy, which will continually shape the vision of the company and will position it to lead the golf cart industry into the future. Dozens of organizations around the world use the time horizons cone in the face of deep uncertainty. Because their leaders are thinking exponentially and taking ongoing incremental actions, they are in position to shape their futures. It might go against your biological wiring, but give yourself and your team the opportunity to think about the short- and long-term simultaneously. Resist the urge to pick a year ending in a 0 or 5 to start your strategic planning process. You will undoubtedly find that your organization becomes more resilient in the wake of ongoing disruption.

Amy Webb is a quantitative futurist and professor of strategic foresight at the NYU Stern School of Business. She is the author of *The Signals Are Talking: Why Today's Fringe Is Tomorrow's Mainstream*.

## Signals in the Noise

# 32 FUTURE ACCOMPLISHMENTS THAT WILL GIVE YOU MORE STATUS AND INFLUENCE THAN A COLLEGE DEGREE

by Thomas Frey



“Failure is unimportant. It takes courage to make a fool of yourself.” — Charlie Chaplin

**H**ow many famous artists or musicians do you know that have a PhD in art or music? There are indeed many well-educated artists and musicians, but virtually none were academically trained for the career path they chose. The same holds true for those who have become famous on YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, Reddit, or Twitter.

One common fallacy is that people who don't do well in school are not bright or talented. Not true! A few years ago I came across a study that examined the lives of 755 famous people who either dropped out of grade school or high school. The list included 25 billionaires, 8 U.S. Presidents, 10 Nobel Prize winners, 8 Olympic medal winners, 63 Oscar winners, 55 best-selling authors, and 31 who had been knighted. Today, one out of every eight people on the Forbes 400 list, which includes the 400 richest billionaires in the US, are college dropouts.

This is nothing new as many famous people in history were also academic failures and dropouts. This includes names like Thomas Edison, Andrew Carnegie, Richard Branson, Henry Ford, Walt Disney, Will Rogers, Joseph Pulitzer, Steve Jobs, Frank Lloyd Wright, Bill Gates, Buckminster Fuller, Larry Ellison, Howard Hughes, Michael Dell, Ted Turner, Paul Allen, Mark Zuckerberg, and virtually every famous actor, actress, and director in Hollywood. Suddenly the dropout list becomes a venerable Who's Who of American Culture.

So what are we missing here? On one hand we are being told that the path to success is through academia. Yet, we have literally thousands of examples of wealthy, successful, business leaders, industry icons, and some of our greatest heroes that took a far different route.

## Signals in the Noise

### 32 FUTURE ACCOMPLISHMENTS THAT WILL GIVE YOU MORE STATUS AND INFLUENCE THAN A COLLEGE DEGREE

#### **IGNORING COLLEGE - WHY DOES IT MATTER?**

For years, college degrees have been the world's most recognizable status symbol for smart people. Every degree requires years of study, offering some validity to the notion that people who graduate from college are indeed bright and talented. Colleges have made it relatively easy to enter the system. "Just sign here and all your dreams will come true!"

However, that image has begun to erode.

A new report from Third Way, a think tank based in Washington, D.C. found that more than half of American colleges had over 70% of their students earning less than \$28,000 per year six years after enrollment. More importantly, the report showed over 70% of their students earned even less than the average high school graduate within six, eight, and 10 years after enrollment. As colleges continue to tap into the easy-to-get student loan programs, total student loan indebtedness now exceeds \$1.6 trillion.

According to Noam Chomsky, "Students who acquire large debts putting themselves through school are unlikely to think about changing society. When you trap people in a system of debt, they can't afford time to think!" Indeed, some of the world's most successful people took a far different path and never bothered finishing college. In these situations, few people know, or care, that the sheepskin is missing from their walls. Logically then, if you are a talented person and haven't had the time, money, or opportunity to go to college, are there legitimate substitutes for this type of status? Yes, many options do exist. If we think of our accomplishments as the stepping-stones to achieve status, we begin to understand many of these options.

#### **STATUS AS AN ALTERNATIVE FORM OF CREDENTIALING**

Until recently, colleges have primarily faced competition from other colleges. Even though they will debate the value of one college degree over another, they remain unified in their support of higher education. Today, there are many status symbols that compete with college degrees, and in the future there will be many more. Royalty, such as the King and Queen of a country, is a great status symbol that comes with tremendous privilege, but it is not an accomplishment. People are born into it. A Nobel Prize is also a remarkable status symbol, but it generally requires one or many college degrees somewhere in the person's background.

So what kind of accomplishments are accessible to most people that could be construed by a potential employer, business colleague, or acquaintance as being the equivalent to a college degree, or for that matter, even better?

To answer this, I will break this discussion into four categories:

1. Components of Equivalency (equal to a course or multiple courses)
2. Equivalent to a College Degree
3. Better than a College Degree
4. Future Status Symbols

Even though we are discussing alternatives to going to college it doesn't mean that there is no learning involved. Quite the contrary. Learning becomes an essential ingredient in virtually every path to success, but different kinds of learning and far less formalized. The following examples are simply intended to expand your awareness of literally thousands of options that currently exist.

## Signals in the Noise

### 32 FUTURE ACCOMPLISHMENTS THAT WILL GIVE YOU MORE STATUS AND INFLUENCE THAN A COLLEGE DEGREE



Success is never without hard choices and sacrifice!

## COMPONENTS OF EQUIVALENCY

Much like taking a series of courses that stack up and form the basis for a college degree, a series of smaller achievements can easily be used to form an equivalent status.

### 1. Certificate Programs

Most certificate programs are intended to either replace or supplement existing degree programs. The weight of these accomplishments vary tremendously with the institution that is granting it.

### 2. Become a Credible Volunteer

Volunteers often have tremendous latitude to color outside the lines and work on projects far beyond the original scope of work.

### 3. Apprenticeships

The age old process of working for years under the tutelage of a master craftsman is still alive and well in certain industries.

### 4. Foreign Travel

Foreign travel is becoming increasingly common. The true value in foreign travel lies in your ability to describe the experience.

### 5. File a Patent

Becoming a patent holder is also less rare in today's world than in the past, but is still regarded as a noteworthy accomplishment.

### 6. Produce an Event

Events range from small to huge. But a successful event, no matter the size, has the ability to position you in a way that will cause others to take notice.

### 7. Write a Series of Published Columns

Never underestimate the power of a well-drafted document. Whether it's printed in a respected publication or hosted on your own blog, every article carries with it a certain degree of influence. Over time you will learn how to leverage this influence.

## Signals in the Noise

### 32 FUTURE ACCOMPLISHMENTS THAT WILL GIVE YOU MORE STATUS AND INFLUENCE THAN A COLLEGE DEGREE

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#### 8. Start a Business

Launching a business is a significant learning experience regardless of how successful it becomes. It also adds a new dimension to the identity of every founder.

### EQUIVALENT TO A COLLEGE DEGREE

College degrees are viewed as a significant personal accomplishment sustained over a longer period of time. Similarly any accomplishment competing for that kind of status needs to convey a similar sustained effort. Here are a few examples:

#### 1. Receive a Certification

Certifications have a way of shining a spotlight on urgently needed skills that universities never saw coming. Some of the best paying Certifications include Google Certified Professional Cloud Architect, PMP Project Management Certification, ScrumMaster Certification, AWS Certified Solutions Architect, and Microsoft Certified Solutions Expert.

#### 2. Produce Your Own Podcast Series

Creating a podcast will allow you to extend your influence and develop your own unique audience. People who listen to podcasts are comprised of individuals who might never find you through other forms of content because they prefer the audio format.

#### 3. Become a YouTube Star

There are over a billion users on YouTube with one out of every two people visiting YouTube every month. Start by creating a channel that reflects who you are, and in a genre you love making videos. Once you create your own formula, your own credibility will grow just as fast as your subscriber base.

#### 4. Published a Book

Whether you realize it or not, your life experiences, personality, and view of the world give you a voice that is entirely unique. When you share that voice with the world, you will be surprised by the power of the written word and status that comes with being a published author.

#### 5. Produce a Documentary

There is something noble and noteworthy about producing a documentary that puts documentarians into a class of their own.

#### 6. Serve on a City Council

Local elections have a way of validating your status in the community and serves as an amazing learning experience.

#### 7. Commissioned Artwork

Artwork is only as important as the artist who tells the story. Commissioned art brings with it a rare position of honor.

#### 8. Become an Expert

Brendon Burchard, Founder of the Experts Academy, has defined 10 key elements that qualify someone as being an expert. Most people can achieve the ranks of “expert” once they understand this process.

## Signals in the Noise

32 FUTURE ACCOMPLISHMENTS THAT WILL GIVE YOU MORE STATUS AND INFLUENCE THAN A COLLEGE DEGREE



Learning never stops. Just because you've chosen another path doesn't mean you stop learning!

### **BETTER THAN COLLEGE**

There is a fine line between status symbols that are equivalent to college and those that are far better than college. Here are a few that fall into the better-than-college category. Interestingly enough, there are YouTube videos that will tell you how to accomplish each one of these:

#### **1. Become Famous**

Whether you become famous as an actor or actress, writer, cartoonist, artist, columnist, movie director, or fashion designer, fame is a rare privilege bestowed on the limited few. At the same time, the channels of fame are always expanding and you may also want to consider becoming famous on Kickstarter, Vine, Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, Pinterest, or Reddit.

#### **2. Win a Video Game Tournament**

If you're good at esports, join a team and start competing. Prize money is now higher than what most professional athletes are making.

#### **3. Elected to a Higher Office**

When people vote someone into office, it's a unique and powerful way of telling the world they are important.

#### **4. Build a Financial Empire**

There are many ways to build a personal fortune, but only a limited few who actually figure it out. People who have amassed a financial empire command tremendous respect.

#### **5. Launch a Successful Business**

Launching a successful business is like playing a game of chess without unwritten rules. It is a game of skill, timing, determination, and chance that only the exceptional few have mastered.

## Signals in the Noise

### 32 FUTURE ACCOMPLISHMENTS THAT WILL GIVE YOU MORE STATUS AND INFLUENCE THAN A COLLEGE DEGREE

#### 6. Game Designer

Much like movie producers, game designers are relegated to lofty ranks of royalty in the emerging kingdom of pixel elite.

#### 7. Successful Inventor

Becoming successful as an inventor is far different than what Hollywood would have you believe. It requires mastering many complicated skills. Successful inventors are part business people, part visionaries, part opportunists, and a big part lucky.

#### 8. Create/Manage a Fund

Those who are placed in a position of “trust” and granted the role of gatekeeper to the money, tend to command special respect among the general public.



The esports world is opening the doors for trainers, instructors, tournament designers, and more!

## FUTURE STATUS SYMBOLS

When systems and technologies evolve, so do the opportunities. Each change in these areas comes with a need for next-generation rockstars. Here are a few possibilities.

#### 1. Professional Gamifiers

People who can add gamification techniques to traditional jobs will be in huge demand in the future.

#### 2. Global System Architects

We are transitioning from national systems to global systems and one of the coolest monikers in the future will be that of a Global System Architect.

#### 3. Professional Ethicists

Hundreds of new professions will need this. There will be an ever-growing demand for people who can ask the tough questions and apply moral decency to some of our increasingly complex situations.

## Signals in the Noise

### 32 FUTURE ACCOMPLISHMENTS THAT WILL GIVE YOU MORE STATUS AND INFLUENCE THAN A COLLEGE DEGREE

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#### 4. Clone Designers

“I need a clone.” As time constraints begin to overwhelm much of the world’s population, the pent-up demand for clones can be felt almost everywhere. Uniquely positioned at the apex of this soon-to-be emerging industry will be the people who are designing clones.

#### 5. Operational Contextualists

In between the application and the big picture is a contextual layer that is often overlooked. People who can visualize and understand the context for introducing new technologies will be in hot demand in the future.

#### 6. Pro-Level Freelancers

The world’s top experts are always in demand. As a freelancer, you get to pick and choose which gigs you want to work on. More importantly, you will have the ability to control your own destiny.

#### 7. Founder of a Movement

Find a cause and take the lead. With every movement comes a certain nobility and distinction that helps circumvent the traditional path to success.

#### 8. Master Legacy Builders

For people who are passionate about helping others leave a legacy. The tools for legacy building are growing every day, and the best of the best will be in hot demand in the future.

### **FINAL THOUGHTS**

I work as a professional speaker. Some speakers have college degrees but many do not. For those who don’t, the message transcends the credentials. Successful people don’t have jobs, they have a calling. Each accomplishment stems from a passion and drive that is uniquely their own, not from a requirement that someone else dictates. Competing experiences will be designed to nurture the budding talents in people and give them ownership of the path they choose to take. While the experience of going to college can be quite valuable, so can other experiences. We are entering the age of hyper-individuality, and the path to each person’s most significant accomplishments will demand a hyper-individualized approach. Each of these accomplishments will be based on our own wants, needs, and desires at that specific moment in time.

In the end, it will be far less about the path we’ve chosen and far more about the results.