



THINKING AHEAD

In this year's **Fast Forward Forum** in Venice, some of the world's brightest minds got together to discuss the most pressing issues of tomorrow. We asked them what major changes we can expect to see in the 2020s – and what is likely to stay the same

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Shafi Ahmed,
'the world's most-
watched surgeon',
futurist and
innovator

What will change

Now that there is so much new tech in the world, the next big question will be how we can use it to improve wellness. We are fast approaching data-driven healthcare and it is an exciting time to be alive in medicine and tech. The next decade will bring personalised medicine and treatment plans, an AI interface or hologram being our first point of contact.

What won't change

Robots won't replace doctors. However, there are some areas – radiology, for instance – that will be more efficient with machines than humans. It's really important to allay people's fears so they aren't scared or worried about this but embrace it, as it will improve lives.



Lucie Greene,
futurist and
global director
of The Innovation
Group at JWT
Intelligence

What will change

We are shifting towards radically individual experiences of adulthood. People will choose to stay single, get pregnant in their 50s, or launch a company in their 60s. Traditional life stages are in flux and there are no rules.

The role of the city in society will also change. Creatives won't be able to afford to live in a city like New York, which has three times the average cost of living. Creative hubs won't be in cities that have become extreme in wealth disparity and are no longer the cultural melting pot they once were.

What won't change

People trying to take control of their health proactively to stop them needing health services – particularly in places such as the USA and UK.



Sandra Matz,
computational
social scientist
and professor
at Columbia
Business School

What will change

Virtual 'echo chambers' will become a lot more real. In the next decade we will see the emergence of contact lenses that will track what you are seeing 24/7 and present you with personalised information – maybe suggesting you enter a coffee shop you pass because one of your friends is inside. This will mean each of the worlds we see through our contact lenses are completely different.

We will also have more of a dialogue with companies, interacting with them and telling them what we want and need. At present, the exchange still tends to be very one-sided.

What won't change

Interpersonal relationships. One of the things we are good at is looking after people, and these are the jobs that make people happy. Automation will take over some areas of our jobs, but care and human contact will stay human.



Sunnie J.
Groeneveld,
entrepreneur
and one of
Forbes '30
under 30'

What will change

In the last decade, we had a buffet of technological opportunity and were figuring how we could use it all. In the next decade, we will look at which technologies will actually make a difference to our organisations. Not everyone will benefit from implementing AI, and blockchain won't change everything.

What won't change

Technology is an enabling tool but nothing will ever trump human contact and interaction. Human connection in 2020 and beyond will still be at the heart of business.



Heimo Hammer,
CEO of the
Kraftwerk
group and host
of the Fast
Forward Forum

What will change

The last ten years saw the rise of smartphones. In the next ten years, they will disappear and we will find other solutions that are more data-driven and personalised. We will have to choose the right technical option out of millions.

The C-suite structure will change to a more fluid board. A less rigid structure will help us adapt to situations – the market, technology and people.

What won't change

Our need to learn. We will need to encourage people to keep learning and using their brains in a world of automation. They will need to implement 'lifelong learning' to keep developing throughout their career.



Moran Cerf,
professor of
neuroscience and
business at the
Kellogg School of
Management

What will change

The meaning of death. We will begin to move to Human Version 2.0, where we download our memories into a computer when we die. This will change the definition of human death.

The business world will also change. In a world where businesses know you perfectly, they never need to convince you of anything. Brands will perfectly match you with items without question.

What won't change

If we travelled back 75,000 years to meet our ancestors, we would look like God to them. We move faster, we're stronger, and we live longer. However, the one thing that would be the same is the way we talk. Communication has not changed in the last 75,000 years and is the one thing that will stay the same.



Cindy Gallop,
advertising
guru and founder
of social
sex revolution
MakeLoveNotPorn

What will change

Everyone deemed 'other' (women, people of colour, LGBTQ, disabled people) will start their own industries, shaking up the corporate structure, which still centres on the existence of the housewife. These new 'other' businesses will offer fresh perspectives, including shared parental leave, work-life balance and remote working.

Another thing that will change is the socialisation and normalisation of sex and sexuality. It has so far been the one universal human experience that we have completely ignored in the business world – but we will open up to building sex tech businesses and be able to talk about this area to consumers of brands.

What won't change

The resistance to change in the business world. At the top of every industry, there is a closed loop of white guys talking to white guys about other white guys. They have enormous salaries, gigantic bonuses, big pools of stock options, lavish expense accounts. Why on earth would they ever want to rock the boat? They have to talk diversity a lot (especially in public), but deep down inside they don't want to change a thing. It's like the old joke – how many therapists does it take to change a lightbulb? Only one, but the lightbulb has to really want to change.



Carla Johnson,
world-renowned
storyteller
and business
influencer

What will change

We will go back to being more human in how we look at business, and will move towards craftsmanship and slow work. We'll look more at burnout, stress and meditation. Growth drives business but we can only push it so far.

What won't change

I don't believe everything will be replaced by machines. Things will shift – AI, AR, VR will change the world but in a way of looking at how they can support humans, not replace them.

Interviews by Natalie Connors. The Fast Forward Files discussing the themes of the conference will be available from January. fastforwardforum.eu

KNOWING ME, KNOWING YOU

Personalisation and transparency will be key for businesses in the 2020s, says **David Mattin**



Metamorphic design

Online, we take personalisation for granted: our experience is shaped around our unique tastes, interests, and past behaviours, all instantiated in our personal data. So what's next for personalisation? In the 2020s, consumers will come to expect truly metamorphic products and services that continually shift and change along with the changing needs of the individual user. Indeed, we can glimpse these kinds of services emerging already. Baze is a new monthly vitamin subscription service in which customers draw blood quarterly, send it back for analysis, and then get sent nutritionally optimised supplements. Meanwhile Asian cosmetics giant Shiseido recently launched Optune. Users take a selfie each morning, and then a device mixes them an optimised skin cream that is just right for their skin. The 2010s saw the rise of an on-demand, 'everything as a service' mindset. In the 2020s, consumers will expect personalisation as a service, too.

Glass box brands

Once upon a time, a business was a black box, and the brand was whatever the marketing department painted on the outside of the box. People either liked what they saw, or

they didn't. Today, radical transparency is transforming our society. And that means a business is something closer to a glass box. People can see right inside. They can see the people, processes, and values at work: they can see, in other words, the internal culture. That's a profound shift. The key implication? In the 2020s, the internal culture of a firm will become a crucial part – perhaps the most important part – of its public-facing brand. One signal of all this? Just see the way some iconic businesses of the 2010s, from Facebook to Uber, ran into difficulty because the truth of their internal culture was at odds with the image they wanted to project to the world. Once, it was possible to get away with that kind of disconnect. Not any more. Businesses should not despair.

Consumers don't expect perfection. The answer is to make positive changes to your internal culture, and find ways to share those stories with the world.

Sentient spaces

People are ever-more aware of a growing eco-system of cameras and smart sensors taking shape around them. And across the last few years we've seen the maturation of AI-fuelled facial recognition technologies. Now, the convergence of all that is giving rise to a new expectation: for physical spaces that can recognise and respond to their inhabitants. In the 2020s, this trend will extend radically. Consumers are already becoming accustomed to facial recognition-fuelled airport gates and payment systems, but in the coming years they'll see a huge range of physical spaces – airport lounges, retail stores, health clinics and more – that can identify them and respond to their needs in real-time. But privacy concerns are also likely to increase. Brands will need to walk a tightrope between satisfying consumer expectations of responsive spaces, and respecting privacy red lines. Transparency – about the data being collected, and how it is being used – will be the key. ■

David Mattin is head of trends and insights at trendwatching.com

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