

# **“Inventing the Future”**

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## **I. “The Future” is a dangerous fantasy**

## **II. The first factor is that we are learning more about what affects our bodies and how to help plants and animals grow**

- A. The Human Genome Project, and the explosion in the biosciences is dramatically accelerating our understanding of what affects our health
  - 1. New diagnostics, pharmaceuticals, and treatments that will allow us to live longer, healthier lives
- B. “One man’s food is another man’s poison”
  - 1. Cliché of the future: “Eat right for your genotype”
  - 2. People will want to know everything about the food they eat
  - 3. Movement towards functional foods (“nutriceuticals”)

## **III. Demographics**

- A. The aging of the boomers
- B. The echo boom: the next big thing in demographics
- C. The downside of demographics: the shrinking workforce

## **IV. Technology and commerce**

- A. The Internet is the way business is being done, now and in the future, and you need to use it as a major business tool
  - 1. The rise of “assassin marketing”
  - 2. Brands in decline.
  - 3. What happens as people become aware of their genetically specific needs?
  - 4. What happens as traditional marketing loses its effectiveness?
  - 5. Look down the value chain to the end consumer, and think about how you serve them.

## **V. Foreign competition & declining commodity prices**

- A. If all you produce is commodity products, you're a sitting duck for international competition

## **VI. Biotechnology and the farm**

- A. The Bioscience Century
- B. Customized plants and livestock
- C. Farming for industrial feedstocks and materials
- D. Ethanol, but not from corn

## **VII. Climate change and the potential for dramatic consequences**

- A. Mounting consensus on global warming
- B. Climate change is a wild card

## **VIII. Preparing for the future**

- A. You can't think about the future in vague, general terms
  - 1. Everyone is going to be caught by surprise
  - 2. The key question is: do you recover more quickly, and can you respond better than than your competitors?
- B. Scenario planning: a tool for capturing uncertainty
  - 1. *The Art of the Long View* by Peter Schwartz (Doubleday, 1991)
  - 2. *Who Owns Tomorrow?* especially chapter 13, by Richard Worzel (Penguin Canada, 2003)
- C. The Desired Future & Backcasting
- D. Wild Cards: Preparing for the unexpected

## **IX. How do we cope?**

- A. Arie de Geus of Royal Dutch Shell futurist group
- B. Alan Kay, technological visionary