

"Future is about emotion - not just technology" - video 2007.

[youtube:<http://uk.youtube.com/watch?v=po5m59MzjDE> auto]

The Impact of New Technology on Consumer Lifestyles and Business Strategy

How RFID and other innovation is driving a new wave of change. Good and bad use of technology. Winners and losers for the future.

Interview with Patrick Dixon on Monday, May 16, 2005 - before keynote speech for IBS - see slides and video

• *Dr. Dixon, at the IBS Global Executive Summit in Stockholm in September, you will be speaking about what shape the digital society will take in business and other sectors. Can you elaborate on this?*

The most important thing to understand is that the future is not about technology—it's about emotion—how people feel about technology . The rapid usage of text messaging compared to the mixed reception given to 3G video phones are examples of this. If we want to look into the future, we need to get close to how people think and feel and understand their future behaviours in a world where we have many new toys to play with.

One of the most interesting new technologies is RFID or Radio Frequency Identification Devices. These are personal computer systems compressed to the size of a single grain of sand. They have hardware, software, operating systems, permanent memory, you can read and write to them, they are wireless and have their own power generation and will last up to 100 years without a recharge (they generate their own power using radiowaves in the environment). Last year alone, Gillette as a single company, used 500 million of them. This year, Wal-Mart will need ten billion of these computers just to tag boxes going in and out of their warehouses. These tags are wireless barcodes and are set to revolutionise manufacturing, distribution, wholesale and retail.

It's a sign of a new digital age . Forget the Web - last century's invention. Think about a world where your trousers talk to your watch. Your watch talks to your eyeglasses. And your eyeglasses are talking to the advert which is right beside you while you wait for a train. Not one of these devices is on the traditional Web. The future will be billions of devices talking to each and exchanging information in a way which creates whole generations of new products and services. How RFID is used in the future will be shaped by peoples' emotions with concerns about privacy.

One of the key issues with technology is how it affects daily life. For instance, many electronic products are far too complicated. Most consumers are unable use their PC without a support desk service, video recorders are hard to use, and DVD technology isn't any easier. We have heard a lot of talk about digital homes where everything is controlled by a central computer. Well, many of these systems have failed to deliver because they were built by engineers with no real understanding of how people really want to live.

"Meet customer needs"

[youtube:<http://uk.youtube.com/watch?v=x1G-CddJkWc>]

The greatest winners in the future will be companies that combine brilliant engineering and digital innovation with real needs that people have. A lot of technology is being used in the wrong place. Example: I often pose this question at conferences: "how many of you hate getting through to a robot when you call a company?" The answer is simple: we all hate it! Many people get angry when they have to press layers of buttons only to get cut off, or get connected to the wrong department or get someone who doesn't speak their language. Yet, when I ask the same people: "how many of you have these systems installed in your own companies?" Everyone puts their hands up. This is what I call a total misuse of technology.

You buy a camera, something goes wrong, and you call the help line - there for people who are in trouble and are already very frustrated. The first 60 seconds of this conversation between the help desk personnel and the customer is crucial. They need to have a fast, personal, helpful and friendly conversation, not a robot experience. The lesson is this: stay close to peoples' emotions, listen to how they are feeling and design systems which improve life, rather than for the convenience of the company.

As I say, The future is about emotion--not about technology. It's about how people think and feel in the digital world. How many times have people changed their minds about whether they will use a new technology or not? The generation of people over 60-years who said they would never buy anything on line, have come around quickly, spendingand sometimes decided this at the speed of light.

Take a 70-year-old person who never had a PC in his life, and never dreamed about having one. One day, he believes he is missing out on holiday bargains, business deals etc. and asks his grandson to help him buy a 3G telephone, a fast portable with Windows XP Professional operating system, as well as wireless broadband installed running at 2 MB per second.

In five hours he has jumped 50 years in technology, leaving his banker behind! He now pushes a video COM button and expects to see his banker on the screen. Meanwhile the bank will take five years to catch up.

- *What do you base your futuristic ideas upon: i.e. do you have a methodology as to how to predict future trends? Do you rely heavily on research?*

You can't predict the future by doing market research. In futuring , we build a picture of what life will be like, and then we try to imagine our group of consumers living inside that space. Market research doesn't tell you what people will feel tomorrow. Only what they feel today.

I speak daily with people who are at the cutting edge of their own industries. In one week, I can be talking with people in the oil, electronics, telecom, or food manufacturing industries. This broad perspective is important in a world where every part of society affects everything else.

- *What do you mean when you say that you already see tomorrow as history?*

My job is to imagine the future has already happened. One way for a senior executive to envision their future is for them to sit down and write their annual report for 2010 or 2015. They can find it scary. They come up with scenarios such as takeovers, de-mergers, mergers, etc. It sharpens thinking about what could happen next.

"What is a Futurist?"

[youtube:<http://uk.youtube.com/watch?v=YXbbGg-eR-Y>]

- *Why would participants at the IBS Global Executive Summit want to listen to you? What is your goal when addressing audiences?*

My aim is to provoke fresh thinking about the future, using a high-impact, interactive, multimedia presentation. Either we take hold of the future or the future will take hold of us. My aim is to help people see how they can change their own future, and make things happen that are important to them.

- *What will they learn? How will it help them in their own businesses?*

It will help focus attention on areas that are really vital for future success, including managing "wild cards" – low probability, high impact events which happen more often than we think they should.

But the future is always personal, and the presentation will also touch on some of the most important issues in people's personal lives. What kind of world do you want? What do you want from life? Why are you here? What are you going to do?