



TOOL | 3 HORIZONS PLANNING

The 3 Horizons (3H) Planning Tool enables people to think and plan for multiple time horizons within the context of their current knowledge and assumptions. Looking across overlapping timelines makes it easier to spot risks and identify emerging opportunities and patterns of change that build consensus around possible scenarios of the future.

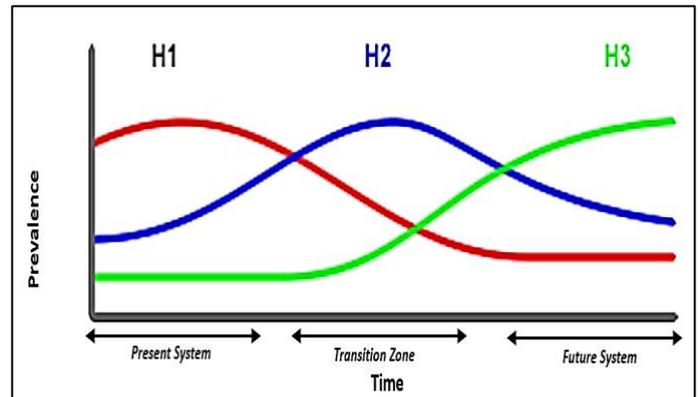
TOOL DESCRIPTION

The 3 Horizons Planning Tool offers groups an opportunity to think together – initially mapping their current knowledge and assumptions – to “futureproof” their thinking and planning.

As participants are consider the three horizons, they co-create a visual depiction of current thinking and assumptions; emerging trends; and, possible and desired futures. From this shared context it becomes easier to identify and prioritize possible strategies.

The 3 Horizons Tool is a useful way for groups to think about how and why the way things are currently being done may no longer fit our current reality. It can also be used to consider how emerging trends may shape the future; and, finally, it offers an opportunity for a group to explore what an ideal future should look like and the kinds of actions the group might take to “nudge” current trends to increase the likelihood that their desired future becomes reality.

3 Horizons Planning



USING THIS TOOL WILL HELP YOU:

- Build consensus on current thinking and assumptions
- Recognize and consider the impact of emerging trends
- Identify and prioritize patterns of change into possible future scenarios
- Generate strategies to best navigate and leverage a variety of possible futures

TOOL HOW-TO

1. **Orient to the 3 Horizons Framework** - Create and post a large copy of the 3 Horizons visual on a blank wall or virtual mural (which serves as your shared workspace) and have 3 colours of post-its available (1 colour per horizon). Provide an overview of each of the 3 Horizons to be explored.
2. **Co-Create Horizon #1: *What Does Now Look Like*** (10-15 min):
 Invite people (individuals and/or in pairs) to brainstorm as many examples/answers as possible (one per post-it) to the question: **What Makes You Think Our Current Situation Needs to Change?** Depending on your focus additional prompting questions might include:
 - What are current assumptions about production, services, resources, staff customers & capital that may no longer be true?
 - What are managers taking for granted as they make decisions?
3. **Co-Generate Horizon #3: *What Is Our Ideal Future?*** (10-15 min):
 Invite people (individuals and/or in pairs) to brainstorm as many examples/answers as possible (one per new colour of post-it) to the question: **What Would You Like the Future to Look and Feel Like by 2050?** Depending on your focus additional prompting questions might include:
 - What emerging changes are you seeing that may signal a transformational shift from how we address our current situation today?
 - What new inventions or issues are you worried or excited about?
4. **Co-Generate Horizon #3 Part II: *Examples of Our Ideal Future that are Happening Now?*** (5-10 min):
 Invite people (individuals and/or in pairs) to brainstorm as many examples/answers as possible (one per post-it) to the question: **Identify examples, from anywhere in the world, where the 2050 vision is happening now, even in just a small way.**
5. **Co-Develop Horizon #2: *Possible Opportunities to Manage Change*** (10-15 min):
 Invite small groups to identify (one per 3rd colour of post-it) responses to the question: **What projects, ideas or initiatives are now emerging that aim to change the status quo?** Additional prompting questions might include:
 - What elements of Horizon 1 should we keep in the future?
 - Does this innovation enable our desired future (if yes, mark as H2+) or does it hinder our desired future (If yes, note as H2-)?
 - What trends may influence Horizon 2 and 3 that could take our plan for change off-course?

A Description of the 3 Horizons

H1 = What Does Now Look Like? - H1 is the dominant way of doing things right now. It identifies “cracks” that suggest this way of doing things is declining and that change are needed but some of this way of doing things may be worth keeping in the future. H1 focuses on maintaining stability and the H1 mindset is that of the manager.

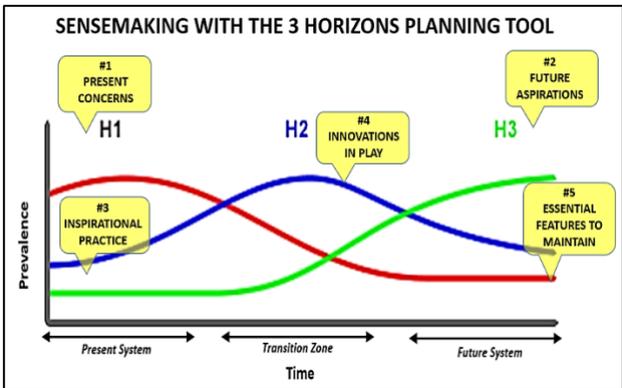
H2 = How Can We Manage Change? - H2 captures current innovations that can help shift – or hinder – our journey from Horizon 1 to Horizon 3. Here we map actions that A: help resist change; B: adapt to change; or, C: build on change. The mindset of H2 is that of an entrepreneur.

H3 = What Is Our Ideal Future? - H3 is our vision of our ideal future. It describes visions of our preferred future and what we’d ideally like to see happen by 2050. It also notes current examples of where this ideal future is already happening now. H3 is focused on transformation and the mindset of H3 is that of the visionary.

6. **Group Sensemaking** (10-15 min):

Once the group has generated data for each of the 3 Horizons, take time to review and “make sense” of the insights that have been captured. As shown on the visual to the right, these insights can typically be captured under the following 5 headings:

- Present Concerns (Top Left)
- Future Aspirations (Top Right)
- Inspirational Practice (Bottom Left)
- Innovations in Play (Centre)
- Essential Features to Maintain (Bottom Right)

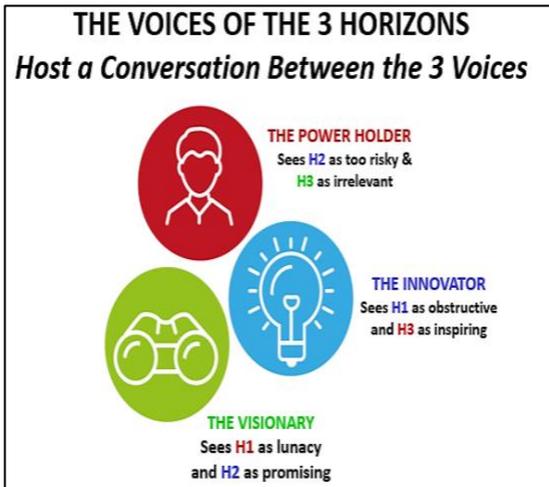


The group can discuss how they might want to capture and share their insights for further input and engagement from others. Opportunities to strengthen desirable innovations in play or weaken undesirable innovations in play can also be identified.

VARIATIONS ON THIS TOOL

One variation on the 3 Horizon Tool is to invite individuals and/or groups to role play a conversation between the three different horizons. The conversations can either emphasize the negative or the positive, but overall offer all an opportunity to appreciate the inter-relationship and dynamics at play between the 3 horizons.

- **H1 = The Power Holder** – These are the one(s) in charge of how things currently are. They are accountable for targets being met and often feel pressed for time and resources. They are constantly firefighting and have little headspace for anything else.
- **H2 = The Innovator** – These are the people with big ideas who see how things could be better if they could only have a say or be heard. They struggle to attract the funding or resource to reach their potential or have impact at scale.
- **H3 = The Visionary** – These are the people that can picture a perfect world and are passionate about making it a reality. They can see it will require us to completely overhaul how things are currently done but believe with certainty that it will be worth it!



DIVING DEEPER

Below are links and resources to investigate to learn more about the 3 Horizons Tool:

- [Three Horizons Framework](#) – Foresight Toolkit
- [3 Horizons: A Toolkit to Help You Think and Plan for the Long-Term](#) by Dr. Louisa Petchey, Public Health Wales and the Office of the Future Generations Commissioner for Wales
- [Three Horizons Framework](#) - International Futures Forum
- [Collective Impact Post-Pandemic: A Framework for Response, Recovery and Resilience](#) by Liz Weaver

NOTES: