Signals that Matter: Using Signals for Decision Making

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Horizon scanning is a technique for discovering early signs of emerging trends and indicators of significant developments. To determine what is constant and what changes, the method looks at what is new, shifting, and discontinued. It explores novel and unexpected subjects, recurring problems and trends, and evolving nature of fitting matters at the intersection of current thinking.

Signal scanning and analysis are parts of the horizon scanning exercise. They are typically explored from five perspectives: Social, Technology, Environment, Economy, and Politics (or S.T.E.E.P). Specifically, MIGHT's signal scanning practices involve identifying and consolidating information through research and a series of engagements with relevant stakeholders, such as the government and industry, and the public.

This exercise is set up in a systematic way so that possible signals can be looked into before they become widely known in the mainstream. This basis allows us to proactively plan actions and responses that need to be taken. Investigating the potential implications of signals allows us to understand the qualitative differences those signals will have on the stakeholders such as the government, industry, and society in the years leading up to, for example, 2030.

We can then see if the impact and implications are aligned (or vice versa) with various available plans, targets, or aspirations and at various level. For example, the Sustainable Development Goals 2030 (SDG 2030) are discussed at the highest level, and trickle down to national, organisational, or individual level.

So, what are signals?

Signals are concrete and compelling observations through which changes shaping the world at present are viewed and analysed. Ultimately, signals provide future evidence that can be found today. Legitimate signals may provoke reactions in the form of behavioural changes, industry shifts and disruptions. Therefore, signals could potentially create random "a-ha" moments that provide vivid descriptions of where the future is heading in terms of new and unexpected experiences, behaviours, and values.

Signals can appear in many guises.

- A trend; a new event, issue, or challenge, a disruptive technology, new policy or regulation, new product, practice, or market strategy;
- As such, their impact and implications can be positive or negative;
- They could also grab our attention in one situation while pointing to big ideas in another.

Signals help us to think more widely and creatively about an otherwise uncertain future, and potentially anticipate unintended consequences by:

- Revealing disruptions and innovations before they get out of control.
- Mitigating possible risks and vulnerabilities while leveraging opportunities.
- Assisting in developing proactive recommendations and responses.

Signals That Matter

Signals come in many forms, and provide information, and early warnings about upcoming challenges and implications. Even though signals are listed and grouped based on S.T.E.E.P analysis, it is important to note that these signals could impose far more complicated impacts later down the road. Looking at signals from a

combination of S.T.E.E.P perspectives may ultimately provide a more comprehensive and systemic understanding of complex issues.

Followed through with a rigorous assessment, this will filter the real nuggets from the fool's gold as more fact-based assumptions are uncovered. The SIGNALS THAT MATTER.

By doing this, it will be easier to come up with robust strategies and measures to take advantage of emerging opportunities and challenges. Ultimately, by identifying signals that matter to a specific topic will provide worldviews and insights for each possible, probable and preferable future development to help us navigate approaching uncertainties with greater confidence and resilience.

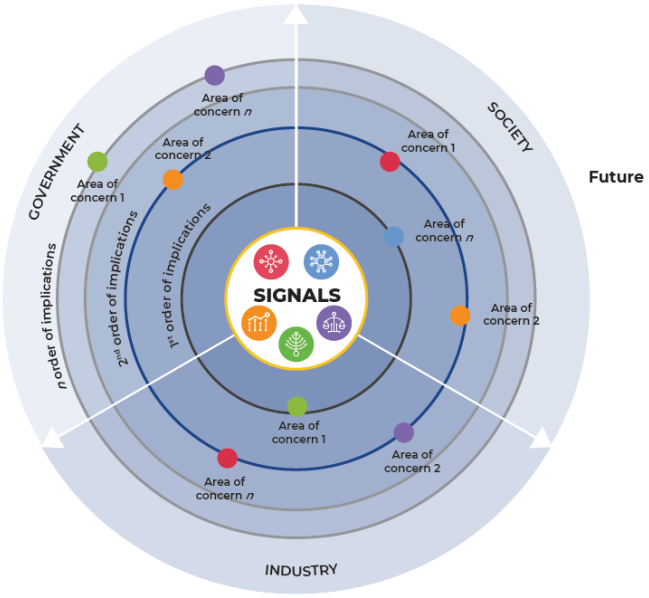
Signals play a vital role in providing insights into the ever-changing landscape of our world as each signal provides information on figures and the impact it has on the government, industry, and society. This is meant to start a conversation and to get readers to think and act in a systemic way while exploring plausible futures. By collecting and analysing signals from credible sources, individuals and organisations can anticipate futures, and a deeper understanding of emerging trends can be computed where risks and opportunities are assessed. However, the future is not a linear progression.

But how can signals help in decision-making?

Signal screening and analysis are mere steps in understanding the current situation and linking it to the future. The future is full of uncertainties. Therefore, signals that matter can provide directions and help us navigate an uncertain future with greater confidence and resilience.

The simple diagram below can be used to assist in anticipating plausible impacts and implications for respective stakeholders, such as the government, industry, and society.

- The central part represents the signals that matter.
- The layered circles represent a specific duration or timeline in the future.
- Moving towards the future, the signals may pose plausible implications to the stakeholders based on their area of concern.



Understanding how the signal/combination of signals impacting the stakeholders in the future

By having this big picture of how to connect today and the future using signals, understanding comprehensive and systemic complex issues, and developing measures and actions to respond proactively to arising challenges and opportunities will become more robust.

In terms of foresight, signal scanning and analysis are not standalone processes. They are connected parts of the larger practice of horizon scanning. They are continuous, objective explorations that monitor what is happening now and what might happen in the future.

Signals connect the present and the future. The main objective of this publication is to raise awareness among readers about foresight through signal scanning. Signals provide future evidence that can be observed today. Therefore, signals should not be taken lightly, as legitimate signals may provoke reactions in the form of behavioural changes, industry shifts and disruptions, and governance responses and policy creation.

So, the next time you look around and observe things around you, ask yourself: How can they impact your future?

Reference

(MIGHT), Malaysian Industry-Government Group for High Technology. 2022. *Horizon Scanning - Signals That Matter.* Cyberjaya : MIGHT , 2022.

https://www.myforesight.my/might-horizon-scanning-signals-that-matter/