

# Horizons – making sense of a brand new world



## Inception

In March 2005, Ipsos MORI was commissioned, in partnership with the strategic consultancy Outsights, to conduct an ambitious programme of futures research and planning for the UK Government's new Horizon Scanning Centre.

The goal was to provide policymakers across Government with a variety of tools to help them plan for the long-term challenges and opportunities facing the UK over the next 50 years.

This partnership continues and our experience in conducting this work has led us to adapt this approach for other sectors. The fast and complex world of media, content and technology, where current and future developments will have implications for all our clients' strategies, is the perfect environment.

## Value

Within Ipsos MediaCT, we work in partnership with our clients to identify the likely drivers of change in the media, content and technology fields. We then consider their possible implications and the kind of strategies that may prove adaptive.

In the process, we identify major areas of future risk, opportunity and uncertainty, as well as critically examine the assumptions that are guiding present day decision-making.

All of this helps our clients to establish their priorities as they look forward, and therefore enriches the process of developing longer-term strategies.

Because our clients' interests are varied and often complex, we need to be flexible and eclectic in our methods, using techniques from a number of related disciplines depending on the situation. The approach is therefore not "one size fits all".

Broadly however, our work involves three elements, each of which seek to combine rigour and structure with creativity and freedom. These elements can stand alone, but work best when complementing and feeding off each other in a continuous cycle.

## Insight

This is the process of collecting, patterning and analysing a wealth of observational data about the world. This process helps us to identify trends and drivers of change that could shape the future of our clients' business. A commonly used term to describe this activity is "Horizon Scanning".

We use a combination of methods involving both primary and secondary research. These may include ethnography, expert interviews and extensive desk research among a very wide range of sources.

As part of this work we have created and maintained a number of databases in partnership with Outsights, which are some of the largest sources of trend data available in the public domain. They contain over 200 fully referenced articles about future scenarios, trends and "wildcards" spanning society and culture, economics, politics, science and technology and the environment.

## Foresight

We use the research base from our insight work to prioritise and make sense of what it all means for our clients. Foresight work may involve the use of any of a number of suitable futures methods, including scenario planning workshops, Delphi surveys, visioning and backcasting.

## Dialogue

The final strand of our work recognises the importance of actively involving citizens and consumers in the development of future strategies. Whilst this is not always appropriate, there are strong practical, business and ethical arguments for this. Even the most careful strategy planning can fall apart without effective public engagement.

Whether through creative development sessions, deliberative evaluation of existing propositions or exercises to build awareness and seek behaviour change, we help to bring your key public stakeholders into the strategy process.

We employ a range of dialogue approaches including Citizens' Juries and deliberative dialogue events, quantitative opinion surveys and online forums.

## For more information, please contact:

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