

Gerd Leonhard Of The Futures Agency: Don't Confuse Marketing With Value Creation

***How I'm Informed** is a look into the reading and learning habits of people from all walks of life. Tweet me [@kaviguppta](#) if you know someone interesting who should be featured.*

Gerd Leonhard is CEO of [The Futures Agency](#)—an organization tasked with helping companies and governments better understand, then act upon, the challenges facing them in the next 3-7 years.

What is your daily reading habit?

I have a very long queue of must-reads that I save on Instapaper and GetPocket. I get 100+ Google Alerts for news, use approximately 500 RSS feeds via the fab Digg.com reader, and have a [list of 'smart people'](#) on Twitter. Add to that my Facebook news feed, the posts of people I follow on LinkedIn, and 150+ books in my Kindle queue.

I usually start the day by looking at my 'best-of' lists and updates, my Google news and feeds, and then save everything to Instapaper, Safari reader and GetPocket, for reading while on the road. I travel about 100 days of the year for my speeches and talks, so being mobile is absolutely crucial for me.



What has been a recent source of inspiration?

All the smart and wise people that I follow on Youtube, Twitter, LinkedIn, their blogs and their books and keynotes. People like Don Tapscott, Richard Branson, Jeremy Rifkin, Joi Ito, Michio Kaku, William Gibson, Cory Doctorow, Al Gore, John Elkington, Larry Lessig.

What's your biggest challenge as a futurist?

There are a few. First, there's the constantly increasing amount of information and the speed of change which is mind-boggling and exponential. Humans need time to digest offline, and that's the limit, so 'you are what you eat' is a tough limitation. Second, there's the different cultures I work with and in—to understand them and to realize that expertise is not what it's all about. It's more about pattern recognition. As Henri Poincaré says, "it is by logic that we prove, but by intuition that we discover." And lastly, there's the need to keep a clear mind and be able to stand above the noise—to not confuse marketing with value creation.

I make a rather atypical futurist in that I am more of a 'nowist'. Most of my work deals with the next 5 years, and it's more about pretty obvious foresights rather than

‘predictions’.

How would you improve the “thought economy”?

Having ‘time to think’ is the most crucial requirement. Reading, talking, watching is one thing, but actually digesting information and creating some kind of wisdom is what is really needed. That’s my mission. It would be great if we could have more people doing just that, without any consideration of ‘getting paid for a gig’.