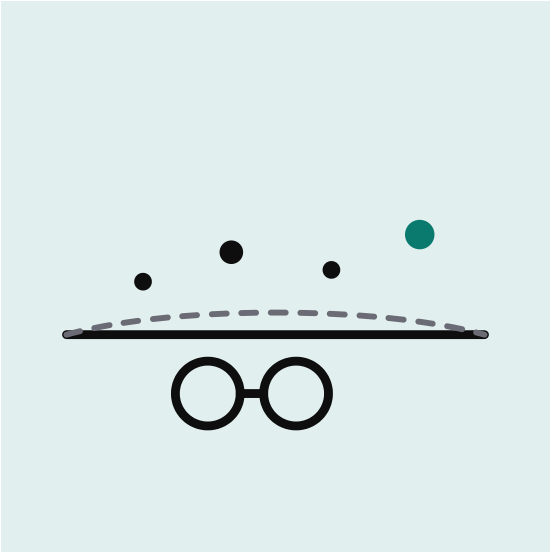
Method

Horizon scanning

Systematically and continuously looking for and reviewing signals of change in the wider context (technology, society, economy, politics, environment) to anticipate what may come.



In Spanish

Escaneo de horizonte

Origin

Aguilar (1967) proposed scanning the environment systematically; the name "horizon scanning" is associated with UK government foresight (Schultz, 2006)

Output

An organized collection of signals of change

What it's for

It helps you spot early changes that often start outside your own industry, before they become obvious.

Key elements

Look far and to the sides

Outside your own industry, not just at the competition.

Continuous

A team habit, not a one-off report.

Record and share

Each signal with its source and why it might matter.

How it's done

1

Define the scope. Which topics and which sources will be monitored.

2

Collect signals. News, products, studies and new behaviors.

3

Cluster and assess. Which patterns appear and what they could change.

Applications in design

When to use it

On an ongoing basis, so you don't learn too late about the changes that affect your industry.

Avoid

Reading only sources from your own industry: they will confirm what you already know.

Don't fall for it

Set aside a fixed time to review signals as a team, and write down why each one caught your attention: in a few months you won't remember.

Connections

Builds on

- Futures cone
- Futures studies
- Weak signals

Used by

- Design for policy

Related to

- Trend research
- Delphi method
- Scenario planning
- Three horizons

Authors and works

1967	**Francis J. Aguilar**	Introduced systematic scanning of the business environment and described its modes.
2006	**Wendy L. Schultz**	Analyzed its use in evidence-based public policy in the United Kingdom.

Sources

Original sources

- Aguilar, F. J. (1967). Scanning the business environment. Macmillan.

Secondary sources

- Schultz, W. L. (2006). The cultural contradictions of managing change: Using horizon scanning in an evidence-based policy context. Foresight, 8(4), 3–12. View source (https://doi.org/10.1108/14636680610681996)

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