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Welcome to a restyled April edition of What's Emerging. We have some good business tips this month to help you prepare early for those end-of-financial year reporting, performance and planning chores. These include tools for visual analysis of data and tips for improving performance measurement.

We are in the process of moving our office due to storm damage at our previous location. We will advise of our new address soon but for the meantime all our contact details remain unchanged.

Cheers

Paul Higgins, Sandy Teagle, Syed Ahmed Muqthar and Samantha Kyle-Little



Business Tips

[Performance measurement](#)

An excellent review of performance measurement and tips for improvement by Michael Hammer. It can be downloaded free for personal use.

[Many Eyes Visual Tools](#)

You can load your own data sets and create interesting visualizations of the data on this site. The visual tools may help draw out new insights from data that you wouldn't have otherwise noticed.



What's Emerging

[Greenhouse calculator for cotton](#)

An online calculator enables cotton growers to estimate their greenhouse footprint on their farms by comparing the relative contributions from fuel, soils and nitrogen for their operation, allowing on-farm energy use to be effectively audited and more efficiently managed.

[Cutting edge computer interfaces](#)

This link goes to a video so you will need broadband to look at it. It is a video at a trade show of a depth sensing camera and interactive tracking system that allows you to do all sorts of cool things with networked computers that has the potential to revolutionise collaboration over the web. Worth a look.

[Brain boost](#)

Use of drugs by healthy people to manipulate mood, memory, concentration, libido, and capacity to learn is on the rise. Termed cosmetic neurology, the trend and its management or otherwise has serious implications for society – will we feel pressure to use neuro-enhancers to retain our jobs, access exclusive schools, erase painful memories? Who will be the winners and losers of brain enhancement and will these modifications change what it means to be human?

[Music by mood](#)

In the mood for music but don't know what to choose? On this interactive radio station you can select an era, one or more genres and indicate how your mood is on the mood map to produce a playlist in tune with how you feel. It's like your very own mind-reading DJ.

[Nano fights HIV](#)

A promising new technique in fighting disease is called interference RNA where small pieces of RNA are inserted into a cell to block genes which are involved in the disease pathway. The difficulty has been efficient delivery of the RNA to cells. Now researchers at Stanford University have used carbon nanotubes to transport RNA into white blood cells to protect them from the HIV virus.

[Traveling the web via Lincoln](#)

No it is not a car, it is a new beta tested system for smart phones from Microsoft. Lincoln is a system that allows you to browse the web using photos taken with your camera instead of trying to use the tiny keyboards in smart phones. At the moment you can take a photo of a DVD cover and get review etc. but the future is to have people tagging all sorts of pictures. Will potentially revolutionise the way we shop.

[Health experts bet on flu](#)

Health experts have established a betting market for health professionals on when a flu pandemic might occur. Using an existing system called ProMed, the Iowa Health Prediction Market allows professionals to bet (without real money) on the outcome. Similar systems have been set up inside companies to bet on launch dates for products, etc. and have been found to be relatively good predictors of some events.

[The Gorb](#)

Gorb is a new website where people rate your professionalism. It is a bit like 360 degree assessments at work except it is open to the whole world. Another example of internet bringing transparency to the world. There are conceptual problems with the service but it may well thrive.

[Free mobile phone service](#)

Blyk is a European mobile phone service that plans to offer free services funded by advertising. While such a concept is not unique the difference in this service is that it is aimed at the 16-24 yr old group and people must fill in a detailed questionnaire when they sign up so that advertisers can produce targeted ads to sub groups in the customer base.

[Ning](#)

Ning is a new free social network system developed by the founder of Netscape. You can sign up and create a mini social networking site related to your special interest. It is paid for by ads.

[Machiavellian robots](#)

Swiss entomologist Laurent Keller has built a set of robots that are designed to evolve and trick outsiders. The robots are able to learn and share genomes with each other. A fascinating insight into the development of more intelligent robots.

[New non reflective material](#)

A team of researchers at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute have developed a material that reflects hardly any light, opening up the door for more efficient solar cells and other optical devices.

[New knee ligaments](#)

Researchers at the University of Virginia have developed a braided polymer that can be used to regenerate ligaments in the knee by encouraging cells to develop in conjunction with the polymer.

[Artificial lymph nodes](#)

Scientists have successfully inserted an artificial lymph node into mice, raising hopes that such technologies may be able to help AIDS sufferers in the future.



What We Are Writing About

There is no article this month but we have some in the pipeline for next month. Instead, we have a book recommendation - [The Halo Effect](#) by Phil Rosenzweig.

This book critiques in forensic detail those popular management consulting books such as In Search of Excellence and Good to Great. It is a must read for anybody that wants to understand how to examine the performance of major companies and how our view of what creates good performance is clouded by our knowledge of results. The halo effect is that good results result in glowing reports on a company regardless of what really happened, which may include just being at the right place at the right time.

In one example the author quotes a study where groups of people were given the task of analysing the financial reports of companies and providing a report on present and future performance. When this was complete the researcher threw all the reports away (unknown to the participants) and randomly allocated each group a "great" or a "poor" rating on their analysis. He then got the groups to self rate their teamwork within the group. The groups that were randomly told that they were great rated their teamwork far higher than those that were randomly told they performed poorly. This is an example of what we call retrospective coherence – people feel a need to make sense of what they see and great teamwork does not make sense to people in the situation of a poor result even if that result was totally made up.

The halo effect and retrospective coherence are important factors of how people view the past, and how they reached the present. This affects how they think about the future and needs to be taken into account when working with people on thinking about future strategy.