

@ Emergent Futures | New Around the World | What Are We Writing About

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*Welcome to our first edition of Whats Emerging for 2008. 2008 looks set to be another year of rapid change and uncertain times with climate change, energy and security concerns featuring as strong drivers. This month we have a range of links that highlight the extent and diversity of change and innovation that is going on. If a monthly update via Whats Emerging isnt frequent enough for you, then you can subscribe to our Tumblelog feed which aggregates all our scanning and blogs as we go - just go to <http://emergentfutures.tumblr.com/>*

*If you are thinking about reviewing your strategy in 2008, then contact us to see how we can help you make sense of what the future may have in store and develop more robust strategy for these uncertain times.*

*We hope you enjoy this edition.*

*Cheers*

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



## Business Tips

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### How to erase a hard drive

If you really want to protect your data once you have finished with a computer or a hard drive then you need to erase it properly. This article shows you how to do it – requires some computer know how.

### 3 drop mobile data prices

Hutchison have doubled the amount of download you can get on a mobile broadband account for the same price. Paul is now using the 6GB plan for home use and travel and has got rid of the ADSL home service – it was 2GB for the same price only 6 weeks ago

### Cookthink

Ok this is not a business tip but it was so cool (Paul though so anyway) that we just had to put it in. Cookthink allows you to put in a number of selections/tags including what food you have, what you crave, and what you are feeling like. Then it gives recipes to match that up.



## What's Emerging

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### Synthetic DNA on the brink of yielding new life forms

Researchers are poised to cross a dramatic barrier: the creation of life forms driven by completely artificial DNA. This raises extraordinary ethical and philosophical questions.

### **Growing new hearts from old**

Scientists at the University of Minnesota have taken a big step toward making replacement organs with the recipients' cells. In experiments performed on rats and pigs, the researchers stripped donor hearts of their cells to create scaffolds on which the recipients' cells were grown.

### **Ultrasmall flash hard drives**

Those of you that read our article in The Age (Melbourne, Australia – see our download page) last month will know that we have the view that handheld devices are going to mainly replace the personal computer and the laptop – here is more evidence from Intel about what developments are occurring.

### **Energy Watch Group oil report**

The Energy Watch Group has released its oil report. We do not warrant the veracity of the report but they present a very different view than the International Energy Agency and if they are right we are heading to a very different world.

### **Biofuel environmental impacts**

The EU has announced a certification scheme to ensure biofuels are not leading to forest destruction. This article calls for similar action by Australia.

### **The air car preps for market**

A French-designed car that's propelled by compressed air and claims speeds of more than 60 miles per hour is expected to go into commercial production as early as this summer, although skeptics of the technology aren't holding their breath.

### **State of the World 2008**

Worldwatch issues a State of the World book each year. You can go to this web address and download Chapter 1 which is about innovations for a sustainable economy – well worth reading and thinking about.

### **Mission Australia youth survey**

Mission Australia has published the results of its sixth national survey of young Australians "which uncovers the issues that concern them, who they admire and where they turn for advice and support". A valuable snapshot into the minds of young Australians and a wealth of important information for anyone interested in their wellbeing.

### **End of cheap food**

Food prices around the world have risen sharply due to a combination of factors that do not appear to be disappearing in the short term.

### **Tropical diseases in Italy**

Is Castiglione di Cervia in Italy a harbinger of changes in disease patterns to come with global warming?

### **Ship-shape sleep**

Travelodge has announced the construction of a completely recyclable hotel made of 86 high strength steel modules resembling shipping containers, stacked on top of each other and securely bolted together.

### **Climate change and security**

This US Think Tank report gives an interesting perspective on the issues of global security and climate change.

### **Cars as part of the electricity grid**

A team of University of Delaware faculty has created a system that enables vehicles to not only run on electricity alone, but also to generate revenue by storing and providing electricity for utilities. Whether we should be exploring technologies that make electricity cheaper is another question. However if it accelerates adoption of electric cars it may be a plus.

### **Decentralized renewable energy**

Current has developed computer controlled energy management for entire streets through which the available energy can be optimized between all houses. This allows people to produce renewable energy and share it with neighbours instead of feeding it back into the grid where transmission losses can be quite large.

### **Free iPod books**

For something more substantial than just music to listen to while exercising, working or just chilling, why not try a Paudiobook - an audiobook broken down into episodes that you can subscribe to and download to your iPod just like a podcast.



## **What We Are Writing About**

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### **Framing Contests: When Companies Face Uncertainty, Internal Wrangling Can Lead the Way**

This article from [Knowledge@Wharton](http://Knowledge@Wharton) discusses how encouraging employees to champion alternative scenarios or 'frames' is useful in helping organisations develop strategy in uncertain situations. Individuals perspectives or 'frames' have a significant impact on what is deemed important and what decisions are made – particularly those frames that dominate in a company. At Emergent Futures we use a range of techniques from foresight and complexity fields that can help organisations learn how to tap into alternative frames and use them to generate robust strategy.

### **Book Review – Sources of Power – How People Make Decisions, by Gary Klein**

A colleague of mine after returning from a Myers Briggs feed-back session with the consultant who had done the assessment on him told me the following story. The consultant told him how his Myers-Briggs personality type meant that he made decisions based on rational, logical analysis. My colleague replied that this was not very important information because that was how everybody made decisions. What followed was a 30 minute argument where my colleague tried to convince the consultant that it was impossible to make decisions any other way. The truth is that we largely do not use logical rational analysis in most decisions that we make.

While this book is now nearly ten years old it provides conclusive evidence on how people really make decisions in different situations and commonly in ways completely different than training programs on decision making. Gary Klein has studied lots of decision makers, especially those under time or pressure stress such as military commanders or fire-fighters, but the decision making processes he identifies also apply to other situations. On page 10 he describes how students deciding on which job to take at the end of their university courses would apparently use logical rational analysis over a period of days or weeks but in the vast majority of cases come back to the gut decision they had made very early in the process.

Instead of looking at possible options and comparing their merits and flaws we tend to go through a much less rational process where commonly we will go with the first option that we consciously look at that will work.

Klein describes what he calls the Recognition Primed Decision (RPD) model to describe how people go through this process.

Now we are not talking about decisions analysing a large company takeover or purchasing a new defence system for the military where options are clearly analysed in detail (although looking at some recent decisions in both these arenas emotions and intuition seem to play a large part as well). We are talking about smaller decisions and decisions taken under time pressure.

**Interesting areas of the book are:**

- Chapter 10 – The Power to See the Invisible. This is a chapter about expertise and how it aids decision making, in particular to respond to what is not happening when it should be.<sup>1</sup> The chapter also makes recommendations on how training programs should be structured to improve the accumulation of expertise.
- Chapter 11 – The Power of Stories. This is a chapter about how we can use stories to communicate and help people make decisions. This is a chapter that everyone should read.
- Chapter 13 – The Power to Read Minds. This is a chapter on how we should communicate intent. How many times have we all issued instructions, either in writing or verbally, and then something completely different has happened? I thought I was pretty bad at this until I read the story on page 223 of how only 34% of company commanders carried out the intentions of their battalion commander in military exercises, even though the battalion commanders had issued written statements of intent. If this is happening in individuals who are highly trained and promoted on their abilities, how hard is it for all of us to truly communicate our intent? By using models on how people make decisions Klein has some useful tips on page 225 and 229 on how to better communicate intent.

As futurists we are constantly working with people and how they make decisions about what might or might not happen in the future. Understanding how people make decisions generally helps us work better on how to make decisions on the future. Understanding the nature of problems and when to use and not use experts for decision making also helps.

I would recommend this book for anyone that works in teams, has to make time pressured decisions, or is simply interested in better understanding how they and the people around them make decisions.

**Paul Higgins**

1. Note that this does not conflict with our views that expertise can be negative in the forecasting and innovation areas of human endeavour. The areas where expertise can aid decision making are complicated problems where expertise is the preferred method of acting. However, expertise can be detrimental in complex situations where it is impossible to tell what might happen and expertise tends to narrow our focus and lead us down the wrong paths. Expertise used in the right context is highly valuable.