

Jim Carroll lives five, ten, even twenty years into the future. He has woven a variety of leading edge technologies, business methods and professional skills into his daily life. From the captivating stories of his experiences “out there” to the concrete strategic business guidance he provides, Jim delivers a unique, energized and customized presentation. He's now ready to provide you with a list of some of the key trends you should

# 10 Predictions for the Future

## What Do We Need to Be Thinking About?

A viewpoint from author, columnist, futurist, speaker Jim Carroll

### 1. The Return of The Future - For Some

The events which have impacted us in the last few years – Sept. 11, the dot.com implosion, business scandals, a recession and a negative investment environment – have led many to become overly cautious and skeptical about the future. They've become blind to the opportunities of the future by focussing on the past. Yet at the same time, there are others who are maintaining an aggressive approach to the future, with innovation, the exploration of new business models, ongoing new product development and strategic business restructuring. The result? Through the next few years, we will actually see a big disconnect between organizations, as some charge ahead, while their competition remains mired in the mud of their inaction.

### 2. The skills exodus

Through the next decade, the first wave of baby-boomers is set to retire. Companies will see an exodus of knowledge as a result of their departure -- and it will certainly hurt, unless they do something about it. To deal with the *skills exodus*, organizations must get aggressively involved with issues related to knowledge transfer and retention. Training, development, networking and collaboration will take on ever increasing importance as the methods by which organizations can ensure that valuable knowledge is properly exchanged — and retained.

### 3. Generational dysfunction

Kids are about to become politicians. That's right — the “Napster generation,” raised on computers, instant messaging and file swapping will come to make their presence felt on the political stage through the next decade. There is no doubt that they have views that differ from those of their forefathers. They carry with them an entirely different set of values and beliefs, and vastly different perceptions of what is required in terms of the laws and regulations that guide our society. The result? On the political, economic and social stage, we'll see an increasing generational dysfunction that will challenge business markets, industry structures, and accepted business norms. Smart organizations will work to understand the political and moral views and perspectives of this generation, and will take the time to learn how to tap into their uniqueness in order to thrive.

### 4 Time shifting

It is clear that family values, ethics and work/life balance issues are coming to drive the corporate agenda of today. Closely related to these trends is the reality of the “new workplace,” and the trend towards *timeshifting*, a term that usually applies to television. (i.e. you watch a show on your VCR when you want to). Timeshifting has come to describe a significant career and workplace trend that will increasingly challenge organizational structure and culture. Many people have already timeshifted their lives -- they start work at 6AM at home, and then head to the office later in the morning to miss the rush hour. Others might leave the office early, jacking-in to the corporate network later in the evening to finish off. They're being driven by a need to provide some balance between their work and their life. Organizations will find they have to deal with an increase in timeshifting, and will have to learn how to manage and cope with a radically altered work day, and the cultural challenges that it presents.

### 5. “Normal” is “Quaint”

There is no such thing as normal anymore — contingency creation is key to survival. Everything we've learned suggests that we must now plan to deal with the unexpected. The law of unforeseen actions has meant that we've shifted away from the predictive future, to a massively unpredictable future. Jim Carroll's prediction for the future is that we've got to work hard to plan for multiple scenarios, multiple contingencies, multiple plans. In the absence of certainty, we've got to prepare for any-



**Jim Carroll, FCA. As a leading international futurist, he dedicates his time and expertise to making organizations and their people ready and able to adopt tomorrow, today. Since 1992, Jim Carroll has spoken to tens of thousands of people as a conference opening and/or closing keynote speaker, or a workshop/seminar leader.**

## 10 Predictions for the Future (cont'd)

### 6. Hyperconnectivity and über-computing

We are on the precipice of an era of unprecedented connectivity -- the almost 1 trillion microprocessors that our industrial society is reliant upon are becoming linked into a massive, sophisticated infrastructure. In St. John's, Newfoundland, Canada, they've buried computer-chip sensors in roadways in order to monitor roadway temperature. From the data collected, they can determine how to best direct their snow removal fleet. Right now, these chips are "hard wired" -- but tomorrow, they'll be wireless, and will cost but a fraction of a penny. We are headed into a world in which organizations will be able to individually monitor and control from afar any aspect of the sophisticated infrastructure that they are reliant upon. The trend will cause dramatic change, and present unprecedented opportunity to manufacturers and other industrial organizations to government agencies.

### 7. Collaborative community control

There are now literally millions of "self-organizing" online communities, each of which affects the research, trends, innovation and product development in almost every industry and profession. A good example? Jim Carroll's eye doctor participates in a global group of some 1,400 fellow optometrists. Because these individuals are young, aggressive and at the peak of their professional career, their insight, information exchange and sharing of ideas will have a far more profound impact on the future of optometry than any other factor. Need other examples? Think bio-engineered foods, and the global activists who are shaping the future of this sector. Think Linux, and the stunning impact this online community has had on technology companies. The fact is, we are already in a future in which every industry and company is rapidly influenced by collaborative communities, whether they consist of activists, professionals, managers or hobbyists. Organizations that take the time to learn from these communities will discover how their markets, their industry and their future will evolve through the next 5-10 years.

### 8. Innovation driven by hyperfeedback

We are now in the midst of a hyperfeedback-loop — with the result that the evolution of knowledge is occurring at a pace never before seen. Medical professionals can barely keep up with important health-care advances. Scientists are discovering challenges with the peer-review process, as information exchange goes direct. Businesses are discovering that competitive intelligence systems are resulting in competitive advantage that is fleeting at best. The impact of this hyperfeedback loop? The pace of new product development, the need for innovation, and the ability to respond instantly to new challenges and threats, as well as new opportunities, is becoming critical. By learning to plug into hyperfeedback networks, organizations can prepare for future developments, before these developments come to surprise them.

### 9. Aggressive indecision — decide later, not now!

People have decided not to make decisions — and they like it! The business climate of the last two years has been characterized by massive indecision, as people and companies have come to let uncertainty rule their direction. This has taught them something — they can make last minute, instant decisions, and still get it right. The impact is pretty challenging — a business cycle that increasingly relies on short term horizons and little lead time. Organizations must shift their culture substantially to deal with this reality — a future in which "just in time decision making" will be the rule.

### 10. Transaction re-engineering will cause cultural turmoil in the workplace

Through the next year and beyond, an increasing number of organizations will get aggressively involved in supply chain transaction initiatives. They realize there is an unprecedented opportunity to streamline the processing of transactions within every aspect of their business world by interacting with their partners, the result of which is new efficiencies in the processing of information. Yet, they will also discover that such initiatives cause sweeping job and career change, with the result that managing the cultural aspects of workplace change will be one of their most important focus areas.

#### **Jim Carroll's Tips On "Figuring out the Future"**

- Pessimism and skepticism can destroy your ability to see the future
- The future already surrounds us – you just need to learn where to look.
- To discover the future, you also need to throw away your "future filters"- biases and barriers that blind you as to what is going on
- The new future doesn't replace the old future – today's' future and tomorrow's future always come to co-exist
- Predicted futures don't fail to happen. They just evolve.