

STYBEL PEABODY & ASSOCIATES



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With the Convergence of AI, Big Data, and Robotics, Position Yourself as a Reframer.

Are you proud of your analytical skills? The authors of *Framers: Human Advantage in an Age of Technology and Turmoil* (2021) warn that your skills may be less valued in the future. On the other hand, the world will be seeking “reframers.”

The authors are Kenneth Cukier, senior editor at *The Economist*, Victor Mayer-Schonberger, professor of internet governance and regulation at the University of Oxford, and Francis de Vericourt, professor of management science at the European School of Management and Technology.

How Ben Bernanke Reframed a Crisis

A classic example of reframing is Ben Bernanke. In 2008, U.S. Federal Reserve Chair Ben Bernanke was confronted with the bankruptcy of the global investment bank Lehman

Brothers. The Fed let Lehman Brothers collapse. AIG, a large insurance company, also faced bankruptcy. Would the Fed let AIG also collapse?

Why should the Federal Reserve bail out AIG yet not rescue Lehman Brothers?

In analyzing this problem from a classic capitalist perspective, using taxpayer dollars to bail out a failing company goes against the capitalist notion that companies should rise or fall on business merits. We live in an economy based on creative destruction.

In analyzing the problem from a liberal perspective, the federal government's bailing out wealthy capitalists who make bad decisions is unethical. It encourages others to make risky decisions.

Ben Bernanke, however, reframed the problem: if banks and insurance companies become fearful of providing business credit, economic chaos would ensue. He reframed the problem as what needs to be done to prevent a system-wide credit crunch.

With the benefit of hindsight, we can appreciate the wisdom of Ben Bernanke's reframe.

Framing at the Individual Level.

The authors argue that we are at the beginning of the confluence of three things: Big Data, Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Robots. While the confluence is only beginning to emerge, we are far enough into the process to understand that no human or team of humans can be more efficient than AI in analyzing large quantities of information. If your unique value proposition is your analytical skills, you may have a short career.

AI Cannot Reframe:

If you want a winning career strategy, focus on what AI systems cannot do: Change the conceptual framework. In a previous *Psychology Today* blog, we gave an example of how we reframed an issue for a client:

A physician's father-in-law had invited her husband, son, and her to spend ten days at a cabin in rural Michigan. She framed the trip with the focus on her discomfort with her father-in-law. She focused on how to avoid stress for herself while feeling trapped.

We helped her reframe the purpose of the trip as providing happy memories for her son. This reframe allowed her to enjoy her vacation in Michigan. (Stybel Peabody, 2021).

Creating a Corporate Culture Open to Reframing.

As a company moves towards the growth phase of its life cycle, there is a tendency to want to hire like-minded individuals so that the company can focus on operational efficiency/scalability.

This tendency for scaling is both natural and dangerous.

To survive a changing marketplace, you want to hire for diversity of perspectives. Our experience with Boards of Directors would confirm the importance of conceptual diversity: We see too many boards that are racially diverse and have powerful male and female directors. But if they approach problems from the same cognitive framework, real diversity of thinking is lacking.

We have developed a problem solving diversification framework for Boards of Directors that take risk tolerance and strategic flexibility into consideration.

The authors recommend that companies institute policies to have team members show a variety of options from different frames of reference. Ask a plan's major champion to take the role of the plan's biggest critic. Ask a plan's biggest critic to take the role of its biggest champion. Create multiple scenarios of success. Create multiple scenarios involving failure.

You might consider designating one team member as the Reframer. As the team closes in on a solution, the designated Reframer should look for alternative paths to the same solution.

For example, one of our clients was the Finnish company Nokia. At the time Nokia had a mobile device on the market that was losing customers to market leader Blackberry. The framework was "develop a new product to beat Blackberry."

We observed that many of Nokia's engineers were using the Apple iPhone as their personal mobile devices because they could do so much more with it. Perhaps the problem needed to be reframed away from Blackberry?

A Question to Ask in Considering an Employment Opportunity.

In considering employment, ask yourself how open is the corporate culture? We recommend you ask current and former employees this question:

One a scale of 0 (Never) to 10 (Always) how open is the corporate culture to new ideas?

If responses tend to clump around the 8-9 range, that is good. If responses clump around 6-7, be cautious. Anything below six is a warning.

You can find current and former employees by doing a LinkedIn search. In addition, check your online college alumni database.

References:

K.Cukier, V. Mayer-Schonberger, F.de Vericourt. *Framers: the human advantage in an age of technology and turmoil*. New York: Penguin Random House, 2021

L. Stybel and M. Peabody. "How to Have Better Conversations with Yourself." August 2021. Psychologytoday.com. <https://www.psychologytoday.com/intl/blog/platform-success/202108/how-h...>

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