INNOVATION

Policy uncertainty creates all sorts of hurdles for innovation teams. However, the Biden administration has taken office with clear, decisive plans. This should give innovation teams the foundation they need to work on new products and services related to climate change, transportation, biotech, artificial intelligence, and systems that use biometric recognition.

China has emerged as an R&D powerhouse. In recent years, China has launched new programs to repatriate researchers from their U.S. and European posts. The Thousand Talents initiative bestows lavish packages—high salaries, luxury apartments, automatic admission to the best schools for children of researchers—to those who are willing to bring their expertise home. But tech companies are poaching talent also, from academic departments and other companies. With so much competition, companies should develop strategies for R&D team acquisition and retention.

China’s Belt and Road Initiative, which has been a huge success in expanding trade throughout emerging economies, has also been a boost for the country’s digital initiatives. As China pursues its cyber sovereignty plan, our existing splinternet will worsen. This will challenge foreign businesses that operate in China, spark new cybersecurity challenges, and eventually prevent some companies from reaching the Chinese market. Risk models should be developed to determine plausible near-future scenarios so that leaders can adjust their strategies accordingly.

Application

The intersection of technology, policy, and politics affects every business. Anti-competitive lawsuits and antitrust investigations will have a chilling effect on merger and acquisition activity by the big tech companies. If one of the companies under scrutiny provides some (or all) of your technology stack, further improvements and features could be paused if lawsuits were to siphon off resources. Chief strategy officers should work closely with chief technology officers and others in their organizations to develop near-term plans. Ongoing tensions between China and the U.S. will continue to impact the supply chain, intellectual property, and trade.

Strategies, innovation, R&D, risk

Policy & Government
Key Questions

We recommend using this report to support your strategic foresight activity in the coming year. Every executive team should begin by asking these questions about technology, science, and policy:

1. Is our company’s government affairs team proactive enough—or is it simply responding to policy changes?

2. What parts of our business make us vulnerable to state, national, or international government action?
   When was the last time we audited the systems that keep those parts of our business safe?

3. Is our government department adequately planning for the longer-term? What assumptions must hold true for our current strategy to succeed? How will we make needed changes?
Selected Sources


Amy Webb pioneered FTI’s data-driven foresight methodology that is used within hundreds of organizations globally. Her focus is to transform organizations as they prepare for complex futures. She advises CEOs of the world’s most-admired companies, three-star admirals and generals, and the senior leadership of central banks and intergovernmental organizations. She leads FTI’s technology research initiatives on AI, synthetic biology and genetic engineering, next-generation networks, and quantum technologies. Webb is a professor of strategic foresight at the New York University Stern School of Business, where she developed and teaches the MBA course on strategic foresight. She is a Visiting Fellow at Oxford University’s Saïd School of Business, was elected a life member to the Council on Foreign Relations and is a member of the Bretton Woods Committee. She is a member of the World Economic Forum where she serves on the Global Future Council on Media, Entertainment and Culture and the Stewardship Board of the Forum’s Platform for Shaping the Future of Media, Entertainment and Culture. Webb is the bestselling author of several books about strategic foresight and emerging technologies. A lifelong science fiction fan, she collaborates closely with writers and producers on films, TV shows and commercials about science, technology and the future.

Brian Alapatt spent the first part of his career working at the intersection of state and federal government. Previously, Alapatt was the legislative director to state Sen. Thomas F. O’Mara (D-New York). He is an MBA candidate at the NYU Stern School of Business.

Sarah Kaufman leads projects related to smart cities, mobility, urban planning, policy, and improving transportation through technology.
Sam Guzik is a Foresight Affiliate specializing in technology, media, digital products, subscription products, and newsroom tools. His career includes a broad range of experience that includes product management, strategic foresight, scenario forecasting, audience engagement and leadership in legacy news organizations. Passionate about building a sustainable future for local news, Guzik has demonstrated results creating innovative, engaging and impactful journalism — and thinking about the business model to support that work. Guzik is a graduate of Washington University in St. Louis, Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism and the NYU Stern School of Business.

Leah Zaidi is an award-winning futurist with specializations in systems thinking, worldbuilding, science fiction prototyping and experiential futures. She is an Associate Editor of the World Futures Review. She holds an MDES in Strategic Foresight and Innovation from OCAD University and a BA from York University.

Marc Palatucci is a Senior Foresight Associate at the Future Today Institute, with research specializations in new realities (AR/VR/MR/DR), digital fashion, future of work and learning, retail and e-commerce. He co-leads the MBA course in strategic foresight at the New York University Stern School of Business. Palatucci serves on the World Health Organization’s Learning Strategy Advisory Group and is a Senior Deputy to the World Economic Forum’s Platform for Shaping the Future of Media, Entertainment and Culture. He holds an MBA in Emerging Technology from New York University’s Stern School of Business and a BA in Linguistics and Languages from NYU’s Gallatin School of Individualized Study. Palatucci serves as editor-at-large for an arts, fashion and culture magazine and collaborates with writers, designers and producers on films, TV shows and commercials about science, technology and the future.
Authors

EDITORIAL

Jennifer Alsever
Editorial Director
Future Today Institute
jalsever@futuretodayinstitute.com

Jennifer Alsever is the Future Today Institute’s Editorial Director. She has been a journalist for more than two decades covering tech, biotech, startups and business for such publications as Fortune Magazine, the Wall Street Journal, the New York Times, Wired and Fast Company. A popular young adult fiction writer, Alsever has won multiple YA awards for her Trinity Forest Series.

Cheryl Cooney
Director of Operations
Future Today Institute
ccooney@futuretodayinstitute.com

For over a decade, Cheryl Cooney has served as the Future Today Institute’s director of operations, where she manages workflows, planning and logistics. Cooney is a published poet, with works appearing in American and Australian anthologies.

Tom Foster
Editor

Sarah Johnson
Editor
Authors

CREATIVE
Emily Caufield
Creative Director
Future Today Institute
ecaufield@futuretodayinstitute.com

Emily Caufield is an award-winning designer and illustrator. Serving as FTI’s creative for more than a decade, Caufield applies design thinking to visually communicate complex trends, scenarios and foresight research. Caufield designed all aspects of this year’s trend report. She is a graduate of Boston University’s College of Fine Arts.

Julia Durgee
Artist and Futurist

Julia Durgee is a rare left and right-brained MBA with creative, strategic, analytical, and digital experience at world-class brands. She illustrated the portraits that appear in this year’s trend report.

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT
Mel Blake
Business Development
mblake@futuretodayinstitute.com

Mel Blake handles commercial development and client relations for FTI. He was formerly founder and managing director of Monitor Talent, a speaker agency he founded at the Monitor Group, a global consulting firm. He is a board member of The Yale Center for Customer Insights. He holds an MBA from the Yale School of Management and a BA in Economics from Wesleyan University.
Why FTI

We answer your most challenging questions using data, creative inquiry, and strategic foresight.

• What are plausible deep (20+ years), long-range (10+ years), and near-term (2+ years) futures?
• What scenarios describe our futures?
• What’s happening outside my industry that I should know?
• What companies, startups, and partners make up our future value network?
• What new products, services, or businesses should we build?
• Which tech trends should we monitor? When should we act?
• How can we build an early warning system to see the next disruptive event?
• How do we reduce uncertainty about our futures?

We support executive leaders and their teams.

The Future Today Institute works closely with executive leadership and management teams to transform their strategic thinking on the future. Advisory services include signal mapping, trend identification, scenario development, risk modeling, visioning, and strategic planning.
About the Future Today Institute

Founded in 2006, the Future Today Institute researches, models, and prototypes future risk and opportunity. As the leading strategic foresight and futures management consultants to executive leadership teams worldwide, FTI’s data-driven applied research reveals trends and calculates how they will disrupt business, government, and society.

Together with our clients and partners, FTI is helping leaders achieve their preferred futures. Our pioneering, data-driven forecasting methodology and tools empower leaders to make better decisions about the future, today.

Contact Us

The Future Today Institute
33 Irving Place
10th Floor
New York, NY 10003

hello@futuretodayinstitute.com
267-342-4300
www.futuretodayinstitute.com
Disclaimer

The views expressed herein are the authors’ own and are not representative of the greater organizations in which they have been employed. The names of companies, services, and products mentioned in this report are not necessarily intended as endorsements by the Future Today Institute or this report’s authors.

The Future Today Institute’s 2021 Tech Trends Report relies on data, analysis, and modeling from a number of sources, which includes sources within public and private companies, securities filings, patents, academic research, government agencies, market research firms, conference presentations and papers, and news media stories. Additionally, this report draws from the Future Today Institute’s previous EMT Trends Reports, FTI Trend Reports, and newsletters. FTI’s reports are occasionally updated on the FTI website.

FTI advises hundreds of companies and organizations, some of which are referenced in this report. FTI does not own any equity position in any of the entities listed in this presentation.

Any trademarks or service marks used in this report are the marks of their respective owners, who do not endorse the statements in this report. All rights in marks are reserved by their respective owners. We disclaim any and all warranties, expressed or implied, with respect to this report.
Using and Sharing The Material In This Report

You are free to:

Share
Copy and redistribute the material in any medium or format, including in your organizations and classrooms.

Adapt
Remix, transform, and build upon the material for your own research, work, and teaching.

Under the following terms:

Attribution
You must give appropriate credit to the Future Today Institute, provide a link to this Creative Commons license, and indicate if any changes were made. You may do so in any reasonable manner, but not in any way that suggests that the Future Today Institute endorses you or your use.

NonCommercial
You may not, under any circumstance, use the material for commercial purposes.

ShareAlike
If you remix, transform, or build upon the material, you must distribute your contributions under the same license as you see here.

You are prohibited from:

Commercial Sharing
Don't copy and redistribute this material in any medium or format for commercial purposes, including any personal/corporate marketing and client services.

Representing This Work As Your Own
Do not represent any part of this material as your own without giving credit to the Future Today Institute.

Additional Restrictions
You may not apply legal terms or technological measures that legally restrict others from doing anything this license permits.
This is volume 7 in the Future Today Institute’s 2021 Tech Trends Report. Each volume covers a different set of topics.

To find additional volumes, visit www.futuretodayinstitute.com/trends