



A Monthly e-Newsletter From:

 Institute for Alternative Futures

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Forward Perspectives

IAF Unveils a New Look

By IAF V.P. for Business Development [Eric Meade](#)

Working with designer Linda McCulloch from the Atlanta-based firm, Design That Works, IAF has just completed an introspective process to update its logo (as depicted in the upper right corner of the newsletter). This is the first step in a longer process to update IAF's brand to reflect how its role, mission and capabilities have evolved over the past three decades.

Ms. McCulloch and Eric Meade, IAF Futurist and V.P. for Business Development, initiated this process with a group discussion of IAF's values, vision and identity. As Ms. McCulloch prepared new graphical concepts for the team's consideration, team members shared their thoughts on which images they felt best represented IAF. Perhaps more importantly, this process provoked meaningful conversations among IAF team members about what they wanted IAF to be.

One obvious difference between the old and new logos is that the organization's name, "Institute for Alternative Futures," is now spelled out in full. Although the organization is known by the acronym "IAF," the team felt that the full name was much more meaningful graphically, conveying one key component of the organization's mission – to help organizations see the full range of possibilities and to create the future they prefer.

Like society in general, IAF is gearing up for a period of significant change and

transformation. This logo communicates IAF's desire to be the best of what the future has to offer. As Senior Futurist Bill Rowley noted, "I like [the new logo] because it stimulates the imagination. Everyone sees something different – the universe, waves of the future, a bird's nest and the hatching of a future possibility." Helping companies, agencies, and organizations see these new possibilities is one of the key roles IAF hopes to play in the decades ahead. We invite you to check out our website and our work over the next few months as we put our new look to use in the pursuit of this goal.

For more information on this process or to learn more about IAF, please contact Eric Meade at <mailto:emeade@altfutures.com>.

President Obama and the Politics of Vision

By IAF V.P. for Business Development [Eric Meade](#)

As our new president takes his final step from campaigning to governing, many people are wondering how he should use the political capital he has built up over the past two years. Which of his major challenges should he address first? The economy? Healthcare reform? Energy independence? Which item on the agenda is most important? How much can he get done during his "honeymoon" period? And how long will the honeymoon last?

These questions recall a political era that may have already ended. The era now beginning may have elevated politics to the level of vision. In 1983, Newt Gingrich articulated a hierarchy starting at vision and moving downward to strategy, operations and finally tactics. Gingrich argued that parties and politicians competing at a higher level than their peers will tend to succeed. President Obama's ability to express the shared aspirations of the people and to connect them to the American story has allowed him to step up to the level of vision in a very potent way.

Politics at the level of vision requires public engagement over values. This is precisely the conversation that the Obama team began during the campaign as a means to build support and raise money and then carried on to its Change.gov website during the transition. Over the internet, the Obama team solicited public comments on a wide range of issues, and then used software to generate "word-clouds" to mark the themes and issues of greatest concern to the public. HHS nominee Tom Daschle responded to those issues in a video discussion of healthcare reform that was posted on the site.

This ongoing engagement of the public builds political capital so long as the public conversation continues. This trend reflects what Stanford law professor Larry Lessig has described as the shift from a "read-only" culture (e.g. broadcast media) to a "read-write" culture (e.g. YouTube videos and social networking), in which consumers often participate in the creation of media content. In "read-only" presidential politics, the electorate expresses its will once every four years, then shifts to "receive" mode as the new administration implements its agenda. In "read-write" politics, politicians engage the public in a discussion of vision and strategy on an ongoing basis, creating the possibility of a "mandate" that actually grows over time.

Strategically, the Obama team is creating the infrastructure required to prolong this public conversation. The president has announced a new website – Recovery.gov – where people will be able to track where the dollars from the economic stimulus package are going. This strategy recognizes the flows and ebbs in the public's trust in institutions. After losing confidence in government after Vietnam and Watergate, and in business after Enron and Lehman, the public may only be able to trust a community in which all citizens have the ability

to participate.

How the president performs operationally and tactically remains to be seen. Operationally, the Obama team has yet to fill many of the positions in government agencies where the “rubber meets the road.” Tactically, however, it is clear that the president incorporates vision and strategy into his responses to new crises and new information.

In this new era, those who are unable to operate at the level of vision and to align their strategy, operations and tactics with their values will consistently find themselves on uncomfortable ground. The tactics of back room deals may no longer be effective, particularly as more and more government operations take place, as Obama has said, “in the light of day.” IT blogger Tim O’Reilly has even suggested that Congress use “revision control” – whereby revisions to online documents can be traced and reviewed, as is done on a Wikipedia entry, for example – to write legislation. If legislation is written transparently online, everyone will know who slid in the earmark for a “bridge to nowhere.”

Companies will need to apply this same lesson to their own operations. When Mac users realized that Apple products contained toxic chemicals that could leak out once the computers were discarded, Greenpeace launched the “Green My Apple” campaign to urge the company to eliminate these chemicals and to offer free “take-back” of their products wherever they are sold. Mac users generated their own ads to put pressure on Apple’s management. In May 2007, CEO Steve Jobs announced that Apple would phase out the most dangerous chemicals by 2008 for products sold in the U.S.

Greenpeace had declared, “We’re not asking for just ‘good enough.’ We want Apple to do that ‘amaze us’ thing that Steve does at MacWorld: go beyond the minimum and make Apple a green leader.” This is what consumers expect of companies today. When faced with a tactical challenge from a public interest group, companies can either take tactical steps to “make the problem go away” or they can use the opportunity to realign their operations with strategy and vision. As more and more business is done “in the light of day,” the advantage will go to those companies that can perform at the level of vision and whose mission is aligned with the larger goals of society.

For more information on how your organization can better align its strategy, operations and tactics with its vision and values, contact Eric Meade at emeade@altfutures.com or at (703) 684-5880.

Trends & Insights

An IAF Look at Healthcare Infrastructure in 2019

Our economy suffers from the poor health of the U.S. healthcare system. Hospitals and other care centers are closing in poor, rural and minority communities. Adoption of health information technology lags behind that of other industries and nations. Shortages of nurses, primary care physicians and physician extenders make it expand access to care and focus on prevention.

The 2019 Project envisions how the nation can create a successful healthcare system. *Healthcare Infrastructure in 2019* explores a successful infrastructure for the next decade. Some of the forecasts for a better healthcare system in 2019 outlined in the brief are:

- A national health information system which operates on open source standards to

connect the nation's medical records.

- Powerful knowledge technologies allow providers and patients to review their health data, identify trends and develop programs for healthy living.
- Healthcare is managed in the home through virtual patient visits and biomonitors devices.
- The government supports the development of care centers in underserved communities.
- The government provides incentives to increase the numbers of primary care doctors, nurses and physician extenders.

The economic challenges of 2008 create a unique opportunity for change in 2009. Creating a healthcare system that works for all is vital. The Obama administration is currently looking at ways to create a healthcare system for the future through investments in health information technology, reform in payment systems and a focus on prevention. IAF will continue to update the [2019 Project: Healthcare that Works for All](#) webpage with discussion briefs as the nation works on healthcare reform.

For more information on the 2019 Project or IAF's work on healthcare reform, please contact Craig Bettles at cbettles@altfutures.com.

News & Events

IAF Welcomes Jerusha Haasenritter

IAF is continuing its commitment to developing talented future-oriented thinkers. In January, IAF added Jerusha Haasenritter to the IAF team. Ms. Haasenritter will be working with IAF on the second phase of a futures project for the United States Army Medical Department. The AMEDD Futures 2039 Project looks at the future of military medicine. She will also be assisting IAF with the DRA Project. The DRA Project is IAF's multi-year, multi-stakeholder project to reduce health disparities.

Jerusha Haasenritter received her Master of Social Work degree last year from the University of Michigan. Ms. Haasenritter previously interned with Reto Juvenil Internacional (RJI) and Ecumenical Center and International Residence (ECIR). While working with RJI, she was located in Costa Rica where she volunteered for local non-profits as well as acting as a consultant for a small organization dedicated to creating jobs for women in the community. At the ECIR, Ms. Haasenritter led service and cultural learning experiences for international students, and also co-led a group of local students on a service learning spring break to Honduras.

Health Equity: Focusing on Health in All Policies

The Disparity Reducing Advances (DRA) Project, in conjunction with the Congressional Black Caucus Health Brain Trust, is holding its third Disparities Foresight Briefing on Wednesday, February 25th, 2009 in Washington, D.C. The meeting will be held from 12:15 to 2:00 in the Members Room of the Library of Congress. Below is a description of the topics to be covered at the meeting.

Investing just \$10 per person in community level initiatives such as reducing tobacco consumption, improving nutrition and increasing physical activity can have a large impact on public health. Policies makers who invest in community level initiatives can get a return of their investment within two years and an estimated annual savings of over \$15 billion by the 5th year and every year thereafter. Investing in other health issues such as reducing violence,

traffic crashes and communicable diseases would result in even greater savings. The February 25 Briefing will look at the benefits of creating health in all public policies, as well as the growing health equity movement and options for the new administration.

Speakers for the event include:

- Dolores Acevedo-Garcia, PhD, Associate Professor of Society, Human Development and Health, Harvard School of Public Health
- Larry Cohen, MSW, Executive Director, Prevention Institute, Oakland California
- Brian Smedley, PhD, Vice President - Director of Health Policy Institute, Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies

If you would like to attend the Disparities Foresight Briefing, make a reservation by going to http://www.altfutures.com/foresight_dra_reg.asp or call (703) 684-5880 (extension 18) by noon on February 20th, 2009. If registration reaches the venue's capacity, registration will close before this time.

Upcoming Events

Health Equity: Focusing on Health in All Policies, DRA Foresight Briefing, February 20th, 2009, Washington, DC.

Wiser Futures Workshop, WorldFuture 2009: Innovation and Creativity in a Complex World, IAF Futurists Clem Bezold, Craig Bettles and Eric Meade, July 17th, Chicago, IL.

Health For All and a Health Care System Worth Creating, WorldFuture 2009: Innovation and Creativity in a Complex World, IAF Futurists Clem Bezold and Craig Bettles, July 18th-19th, Chicago, IL.

The Futures of China, WorldFuture 2009: Innovation and Creativity in a Complex World, IAF Futurist Eric Meade and Social Technologies Futurist John Cashman, July 18th-19th, Chicago, IL.

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