Abstract

Futurists need reliable tools to measure the future-readiness of individuals and teams. This paper examines Dian's Foresight Styles Assessment (FSA) to determine whether there is sufficient empirical support for its six proposed styles of foresight: Futurist, Activist, Opportunist, Flexist, Equilibrist, and Reactionist. Factor analysis was used to examine a sample of 3,154 knowledge workers to reveal a four factor solution of Framer, Adapter, Tester, and Reactor. The first and last factors partially matched Dian's original conceptualization of Futurist and Reactionist. The four new factors, when taken together, explained 41.72% of the variance with scale reliability ranging from .66 to .89. Item analysis eliminated 19 questions from the FSA that had relatively lower correlations with items in their set. The refined 26-item FSA is a valid and reliable instrument with construct validity, although further efforts could be undertaken to locate Dian's original factors.

Keywords: foresight, futures studies, assessments, temporal perspective, diffusion innovation, leadership, strategic foresight, factor analysis, cognitive styles, quantitative research

Is there a way to gauge whether one person is more proactive than another about the future? Furthermore, could any of an individual's proactive behavior be explained by their internal disposition, or what Dian (2003) calls a person's foresight style?

This paper is a response to Dian's (2009) recent paper introducing the Foresight Styles Assessment (FSA) to practicing futurists. Future orientation is recognized as a critical competency of leadership, but few studies have empirically examined the construct of foresight. This is in part due to a dearth of quantitative research on foresight as a construct. Academics need validated scales to relate foresight to organizational theory. Foresight professionals need reliable measures that might tell us whether one individual has more foresight than another. To fill this gap Dian (2003) created the Foresight Styles Assessment (FSA) in 2001 as a 45-item survey instrument. At that time no statistical analysis was performed to confirm the styles, or refine the FSA's item pool of questions.