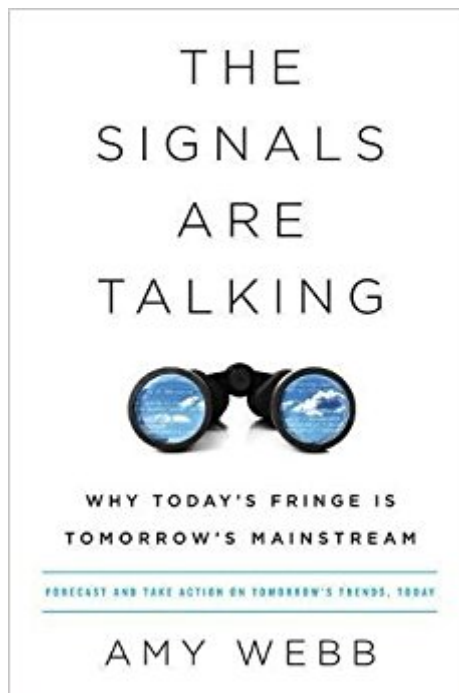




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# The Signals Are Talking: Why Today's Fringe Is Tomorrow's Mainstream



## Synopsis

A Washington Post Bestseller Winner of the 2017 Axiom Business Book Award in Business Technology Amy Webb is a noted futurist who combines curiosity, skepticism, colorful storytelling, and deeply reported, real-world analysis in this essential book for understanding the future. The Signals Are Talking reveals a systemic way of evaluating new ideas bubbling up on the horizon-distinguishing what is a real trend from the merely trendy. This book helps us hear which signals are talking sense, and which are simply nonsense, so that we might know today what developments-especially those seemingly random ideas at the fringe as they converge and begin to move toward the mainstream-that have long-term consequence for tomorrow. With the methodology developed in The Signals Are Talking, we learn how to think like a futurist and answer vitally important questions: How will a technology-like artificial intelligence, machine learning, self-driving cars, biohacking, bots, and the Internet of Things-affect us personally? How will it impact our businesses and workplaces? How will it eventually change the way we live, work, play, and think-and how should we prepare for it now? Most importantly, Webb persuasively shows that the future isn't something that happens to us passively. Instead, she allows us to see ahead so that we may forecast what's to come-challenging us to create our own preferred futures.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

An Best Book of December 2016: At this moment, it seems obvious that we could all stand to brush up on our skills as prognosticators. And not just so we can avoid being blindsided by seismic

elections, but because technology promises to continue its disruptive march through our societies and economies. What will cabbies do when cars are self-driving, and what will warehouse workers do when robots can pick, pack, and ship without lunch breaks and health care benefits? Forget NAFTA; the shift is toward Silicon Valley. But where to start? *The Signals Are Talking: Why Today's Fringe Is Tomorrow's Mainstream* is a good place. Sitting somewhere between Nate Silver and *The Tipping Point*, Amy Webb's book provides a practical guide for leaders - at any level - in the age of Big Data, offering tools for picking out the "true signal, a pattern that will coalesce into a trend with the potential to change everything" - and land on the right side of disruption. --Jon Foro, *The Book Review*

"The clear, insightful, and humorous Amy Webb has crafted a rare treasure: a substantive guide written in a narrative that's a delight to read. While most futurologists want guru status through a few Nostradamus-like visions that never materialize, Webb modestly reports with depth and discipline, and creates a system and tools we can all use to better navigate the future. Through her deep research, specific anecdotes, and brilliant insights, she has performed the selfless but hugely valuable act of teaching us all to fish at the fringe." --Christopher J. Graves, chairman, Ogilvy Public Relations Worldwide

"Amy Webb, with insight and a big dose of pragmatism, shows how to clearly see the next big disruption and then take action before it strikes." --Ram Charan, advisor to CEOs and corporate boards, author of *The Attackers Advantage*, and coauthor of *Execution: The Discipline of Getting Things Done*

"Forecasting the future is a challenging-and absolutely necessary-part of every leader's job. In this ambitious and timely book, Amy Webb shows not only how to identify actual trends and surprises emerging from the fringes but-even more important-how to do something about them so you can thrive in the face of the unexpected."--Craig Newmark, founder, Craigslist

Every job I've ever had has asked me to forecast the future. I've done projections for new projects, new markets, new initiatives. Forecasts beyond the next few months are usually BS. Except in some cases when they aren't. Many people look at those who "guessed right" and either think they are extremely brilliant - or extremely lucky. This book helps disprove both of those assumptions. This book gives clear direction for what to look for, how to analyze and review those data points, and how to string together those signals to theorize what may be coming next. Here in early 2017, we all need to be able to analyze what's on the fringe and see how it connects to make tomorrow's mainstream - sometimes only a few weeks away, and sometimes a decade. Highly recommend the

book, and looking forward to sharing it.

The future is as topical as it ever was but with so many technologies, especially ones like gene editing and AI, delivering real change it helps to have some structure and methods for looking forward.

I thought that this was a fascinating book. It was able to give me a process on how to keep up with the changes of today's technology and what might be coming around the corner.

Excellent book loaded with practical mental frameworks for parsing through all the stuff that's happening in the world, and my industry. Get it!

Consider me mind-boggled! But it's not for the first time. That happened somewhere around 1970, when I tried to wrap my head around Alvin Toffler's "Future Shock" (followed by "The Third Wave" and "Power Shift." Then came books by John Naisbitt, such as "Megatrends 2000," and Faith Popcorn's "Clicking: 17 Trends That Drive Your Business And Your Life." Yes, folks, I eat this stuff up. And now, thanks to an advance copy in exchange for an honest review, comes this one - and it's made no less of an impression. The author has developed a six-part process for forecasting - a way of evaluating new ideas being developed on the "fringe" (a.k.a. around the edges of society) that stand to affect us. Futurists, she says, listen to and interpret the signals that are "talking," looking for early patterns, or pre-trends. "Trends help us to understand change, which is an essential part of every organization's mandate," she writes. "Too often, leaders ignore the signals, wait too long to take action, or plan for only one scenario." Descriptors like "probable," "plausible" and "possible" are used to generate concrete ideas about what's over the horizon. "We must think of trends as signposts that can illuminate the conditions we will likely encounter at some point in the future, even if that future is a century away," the author explains. "Organizations must track them if they are to create their preferred futures...seeing trends is a matter of looking for emerging changes at the fringe, within organizations, and in our societies." In a nutshell, if it's possible to put it there, the book is about the importance of not being surprised by the future, offering a method for creating a path that leads to sustained success. Unlike some of the books mentioned above, it's not a list of what we can expect to happen in the next 10, 20 or 50 years; rather, it's a way to help ensure that organizations will be going strong throughout all those years to come. Along the way, the author explains finer points such as the difference between something that's "trendy" and a "trend." No

doubt it's a silly analogy, but if I interpret it anywhere near correctly, an Erector set is (or was) trendy, but the fact that children love to tear things down and build them up again is a trend that's likely to continue indefinitely. Harness your company's future to the first, and you may be out of business the minute a newer kid hits the building block; on the second, and you're likely to stay ahead of the curve. Roadblocks to identifying the signals are discussed as well, such as the "duality dilemma" between left- and right-brain thinking (put another way, creativity vs. logic) and the need to look at things from both sides now. This I understand; I identify far more closely with the logic side, which most likely explains why I've enjoyed relative success as a journalist (just the facts, ma'am) but couldn't write a novel if my life depended on it. It's also, I'm thinking, one of the reasons I enjoyed this book so much; everything is laid out in an orderly, easy-to-understand manner. That includes, for the record, a glossary of concepts and terms and a chapter-by-chapter list of footnoted references at the end. Highly recommended for anyone interested in expanding leadership skills (or like me, simply interested in the topic).

Is your antenna in tune? Are you looking forward and trying to scan what the future may bring, or are you looking the other way and missing out on what may be the next competitive advantage, new trend or industry breakthrough? What signals are you scanning for? This interesting book seeks to get you thinking about the future, trying to identify signals emerging from the fringes about future mainstream trends, demands and needs. Clearly it can be an inexact science with no guarantees, yet the author believes that you can easily learn how to identify these faint signals and then move to either being ready to capitalise on a developing situation or at least be ready for it. No being taken by surprise here. The harder part is possibly doing things with the gathered intelligence; that falls down to you. As well as looking forward, the author examines cases of one-time leaders who managed to be toppled because they didn't, or couldn't, react to impending changes. Not everybody can be a global leader, of course, although many companies can still feed from the broader ecosystem and its requirements, if only they are ready for it. So learn by the mistakes or inaction of others. There is a six-step process behind the author's learning procedure, although it is far from a quick-fix, tick-box approach. You have to do a lot of research, analysis and maybe even change your way of thinking and working. The process is not a one-time process either, in itself, since once you have learned the new way of thinking and doing you will still have your ongoing intelligence-gathering and analysis activities to undertake as well as any possible implementation work. Reserve a lot of time, it can be a necessity on many levels. Throughout the book there is a sort-of chatty narrative going on, which

makes things a little easier on the mind, as a lot of useful, essential information is being disgorged from the book into your brain. It is a book that requires your focus, despite it being accessible and easy-to-read. At the end is an excellent glossary of concepts and terms that can be very helpful along with references for further and deeper reading. Many people may try and fail with their attempts at looking into the future, through no fault of this book, yet those who persevere and succeed can stand to gain tremendously or, at least, be aware of changes that could lead to otherwise massive losses. Definitely a book to consider.

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