

DANIEL BURRUS'

# TECHNO TRENDS

THE BIG IDEAS THAT ARE  
CHANGING EVERYTHING

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## The Anticipatory Organization™

By Daniel Burrus, CEO of Burrus Research

A few weeks ago, a Fortune 50 CEO shared with me that “The pace of change is now faster than our organization’s ability to respond to it.” I hear this observation quite often as I travel around the world working with executives from some of the largest companies on the planet. And you might find it interesting to know that many of them are technology-focused companies that create, manufacture, market, and sell various types of hardware, software, or both.

It is no secret that the world is changing at an increasing rate, but in the past few years the increased pace has surprised most. Yet it was all there to see long ago; the problem is that most have not learned how to separate the wheat from the chaff.

### Acceleration<sup>3</sup>

Way back in 1983, after launching my company, Burrus Research, I was studying global innovations in all areas of science and technology on a global level. I came across something that is well known today, but back then very few knew about — Moore’s Law. Because of my science and research background, I knew he had created something that could shed light on some of the darkness the future holds. In short Moore’s Law states that processing power would double every eighteen months as the price halved.

Using this, I could look out to the year 2000 and know how powerful a computer would be, and roughly how much it would cost. Knowing this, I could make predictions about technology-driven change that would be very accurate, but I needed more than Moore’s law.











# The Anticipatory Organization™

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After more research, I came up with the Law of Digital Storage and the Law of Bandwidth — which, in short, would closely mirror Moore's doubling prediction for processing power. In 1983, I put them together, calling them the Three Digital Accelerators, and I started writing and speaking about how they would drive predictable exponential change and economic value creation for decades to come.

As the first professional futurist to accurately identify the Exponential Change curve in '83, I can tell you it was much harder to get people excited about all of the transformational changes that would happen, because the time frame was so far off. Let's face it: it took 20 years to go from a five-megahertz chip to a 500-megahertz chip, and while I knew it would happen, I still had to wait like everyone else. However, thanks to the power of doubling, it only took less than a year to double that — and that was years ago, now.

The point is that today, we are in what one could call the Big Deal phase, because the Digital Accelerators have reached a point of exponential change that is creating dramatic change in very short periods of time.

Why did Netflix start out by renting DVDs of programs instead of starting with a streaming video model from the beginning? The Three Digital Accelerators were not ready yet.

## **Agility's Good, but Not Enough!**

We are all good at reacting and responding, putting out fires, and managing crises. In addition, organizations large and small have learned how to be lean and agile, and how to best execute a strategy at a high level.

However, despite these skills, General Motors still declared bankruptcy, Blockbuster closed its last store, and Blackberry quickly moved from leading to bleeding. And let's not forget Hewlett-Packard, Sony, Dell, and a host of other companies who failed to thrive despite their leaders and workers being constantly busy.

To thrive in this new age of hyper-change and growing uncertainty, it is now an imperative to learn a new competency — how to accurately anticipate the future.

This may seem impossible, but it's not. The future is there for you to see when you know where and how to look for it. And when you and your employees master this skill, you'll be able to create what I call an ["Anticipatory Organization™."](#)

Based on three decades of research and applying the principles I've developed to organizations worldwide, I have developed a way of separating what I call Hard Trends from Soft Trends. Over the years, I've written about this extensively in books and articles.

A Hard Trend is a projection based on measurable, tangible, and fully predictable facts, events, or objects. It's something that will happen: a future fact that cannot be changed. In contrast, a Soft Trend is a projection based on statistics that have the appearance of being tangible, fully predictable facts. It's something that might happen — a future maybe. Soft Trends can be changed, which means they provide a powerful vehicle to influence the future, and they can be capitalized on.

This distinction completely changes how individuals and organizations view and plan for the future. Understanding the difference between Hard and Soft Trends allows us to know which parts of the future we

can be right about. When you learn how to analyze trends in this way, you can accurately predict future disruptions, identify and solve problems before they happen, and practice what I call “everyday innovation.” This enables you to solve challenges and problems faster, and see opportunities that were impossible just a few years before. In other words, you become anticipatory rather than reactionary.

Based on decades of research and working with top executives from some of the most innovative companies on the planet, I refined our Hard Trend Methodology into a proven business model for turning accelerating change into an advantage. I call it the [Anticipatory Organization™ Model](#). An Anticipatory Organization applies the methodology of separating Hard Trends that will happen from Soft Trends that might happen to their innovation and decision making processes. Employees of an Anticipatory Organization understand that those who can see the future most accurately have the biggest advantage. They actively embrace the fact that many future disruptions, problems, and game-changing opportunities are predictable and represent unprecedented ways to gain advantage. Employees know that it's better to solve predictable problems before they happen, and that predictable future problems often represent the biggest opportunities. They know that being anticipatory means modifying plans to keep them relevant and from becoming obsolete before them are implemented, based on the Hard Trends that are shaping the future. They are confident and empowered by having a shared view of the future based on the Science of Certainty.

What is the Science of Certainty? Once you can separate Hard Trends from Soft Trends — once you

can differentiate between the things you know will happen from the things that might happen — you can accurately define the certainties, going forward. For example, we know that the iPhone 7, 8, and 9 will all have faster processing chips than those before them. We know that after 3G and 4G will come 5G and 6G in a predictable way. And we know that we are putting more and more in the cloud — that we're going to increasingly use cloud computing.

Those are technical examples. Here are some non-technical ones: We know that Baby Boomers are not going to get younger. We know that governments are going to continue, all over the world, to issue future regulations. We know the cycles of nature, that after winter comes spring.

In other words, there is so much we can see that it's absolutely possible to create certainties using the Hard Trend/Soft Trend model I've developed.

Why is this so important to business? Because strategy based on certainty (on Hard Trends) has low risk, while strategy based on uncertainty (on Soft Trends) has high risk. Also, when you have certainty, you have the confidence to say “yes,” to move forward, to hire, to start businesses. When you have uncertainty, it's like a giant roadblock. You're stuck and you don't move forward.

To succeed in business, these days, simply being lean and agile is no longer enough. You and your team need to harness the ability to anticipate the future. In fact, I see this as being the most important missing competency that we've seen for decades. So learn how to anticipate today, before your competitors do.



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