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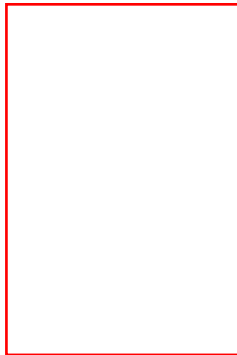
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Seeing What's Next: Using Theories of Innovation to Predict Industry Change

by [Clayton M. Christensen](#), [Erik A. Roth](#), [Scott D. Anthony](#) "The first part of using theory to predict industry change involves understanding when to reasonably expect innovation to lead to the emergence of new companies..." [\(more\)](#)



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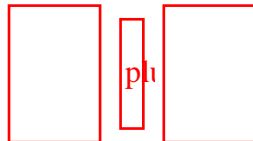
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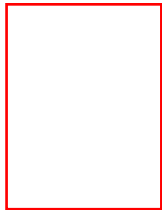


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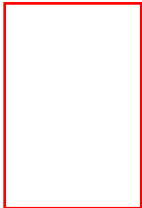
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Editorial Reviews

Inc. Magazine, September 2004

"Just as kids await the latest Harry Potter installment, so do business leaders look for Clayton M. Christensen's next offering."

Product Description:

A Framework for Predicting Industry Winners and Losers

Every day, individuals take action based on how they believe innovation will change industries. Yet these beliefs are largely based on guesswork and incomplete data, and lead to costly errors in judgment.

Now, internationally renowned innovation expert Clayton M. Christensen and his research partners Scott D. Anthony and Erik A. Roth present a groundbreaking framework for predicting outcomes in the evolution of any industry. Based on proven theories outlined in Christensen's landmark books *The Innovator's Dilemma* and *The Innovator's Solution*, *Seeing What's Next* offers a practical, three-part model that helps decision-makers spot the signals of industry change, determine the outcome of competitive battles, and assess whether a firm's actions will ensure or threaten future success. Through in-depth case studies of industries from aviation to health care, the authors illustrate the predictive power of innovation theory in action.

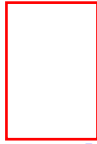
A unique, "outside-in" perspective on industry change, *Seeing What's Next* will help executives, analysts, and investors develop invaluable intuition into the future that matters to them.

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Product Details

- **Hardcover:** 312 pages
- **Publisher:** Harvard Business School Press (May 1, 2004)
- **ISBN:** 1591391857
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The first part of using theory to predict industry change involves understanding when to reasonably expect innovation to lead to the emergence of new companies or business models that could be harbingers of industry change. [Read the first page](#)

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Pursuing The Innovator's Solution to The Innovator's Dilemma, November 5, 2004

Reviewer: **Donald Mitchell "speaker, author and change consultant -- see www.fastforward400.com"** (a happy Red Sox and Patriots fan in Boston) - [See all my reviews](#)

(TOP 10) **(REAL)**

Seldom do I remember a book that totally replaces the old and popular business literature quite as effectively as Seeing What's Next does in superceding The Innovator's Dilemma and The Innovator's Solution. If you have not read either of those books, you can skip them now and read Seeing What's Next instead. If you have already read those books, you will be delighted to see how much more practical the advice is in Seeing What's Next than in the earlier two efforts.

Before going into the details of what the book covers, I want to especially compliment Professor Christensen for overcoming in Seeing What's Next two of the three most serious weaknesses of The Innovator's Solution -- the lack of discussing business model innovation and the omission of leading technology business model innovation examples.

In Seeing What's Next, the authors take on the challenge of helping executives and managers consider the likelihood of disruptive technology changes occurring and how they should evaluate their potential responses in light of current information. The analysis looks at both the perspective of the companies that will be disrupted and displaced as well as those who are leading the disruptions.

The book is a remarkable combination of theory, process suggestions and detailed case histories to explain the suggested process. As a result, this book will be the most practical guide available for technology executives until Professor Christensen brings out the next installment of his thinking in a future book.

In Part I, the authors use existing theories about disruptive innovations to suggest which signals to pay attention to as suggesting that opportunities exist, how to determine if competitors will be a factor in disruption, choosing an appropriate response and considering how government and other nonmarket influences can affect the result.

In Part II, the process of applying the Part I theories are exemplified in higher education, commercial aviation, semiconductor customer benefits, health care productivity, non-U.S.-based innovations and strategies, and the telecommunications industry.

The book also contains a stimulating conclusion and helpful summary of key concepts in the appendix.

As usual, Professor Christensen and his colleagues have provided many interesting and valuable footnotes. I usually found them to be as interesting as or more interesting than the text.

Having said so many nice things, you are probably wondering what the book's weaknesses are. I found a few that are worth considering before you start reading the book . . . which everyone should do.

1. The proposed analysis of signals and competitors is extremely elementary. It reminded me of the state-of-the-art in strategic thinking in 1971 when I first started as a strategy consultant at The Boston Consulting Group. Today, much better sources of information and means of analysis are available. I was surprised to see such primitive suggestions to such important questions.
2. In the competitive analysis, the book assumes rational competitors who understand where they are. In my experience, innovative situations have everyone confused and they mill about aimlessly . . . often acting against their own rational best interest.
3. The authors take the rationalist view that the future can be predicted well enough in one direction that you can plan and act based on that. Most experienced business people would not agree with that assessment. The opposing view is that you should develop scenarios of what might happen along a number of different extreme lines, and then look for directions that leave you better off regardless of which scenario occurs.
4. While the authors do a wonderful job of describing many disruptive innovations, they do a relatively poor job of discussing how to develop, nurture and accelerate the impact of such innovations. Hopefully, the next book will be much more of a "how to" effort in this direction.
5. Finally, while business model innovations are described in abundance, there's little connection in the book to a process for pursuing business model innovation along with technical innovation. As a result, the table is set . . . but no meal is served in this area.

How good is this book? Many people tell me that Good to Great is the most helpful business book they have ever read. I found Seeing What's Next to be a vastly better and more useful book. Try it.

Was this review helpful to you? yes no [\(Report this\)](#)

33 of 36 people found the following review helpful:

Penetrating the Fog of Business, September 3, 2004

Reviewer: **Robert Morris** (Dallas, Texas) - [See all my reviews](#)

(TOP 10) (REAL)

Opinions are divided as to whether or not it is possible to "predict industry change" but it is certainly possible to maintain a system by which to rigorously monitor developments in relevant industries, measure the nature and extent of probabilities, and then formulate appropriate contingency plans in anticipation of them. (FYI, Peter Schwartz in *The Art of the Long View: Planning for the Future in an Uncertain World* and Kees van der Heijden in *Scenarios: The Art of Strategic Conversation* also have much of substantial value to say about that process.) Together with Scott D. Anderson and Erik A. Roth, Clayton M. Christensen offers in this volume further development of core concepts previously discussed in *The Innovator's Dilemma* and *The Innovator's Solution*. However, there is a substantial amount of new thinking and an abundance of new material. Although I strongly recommend that the two earlier works be read first, that is not a requirement to derive full benefit from *Seeing What's Next*.

According to Christensen, "While the two previous books were aimed at managers [in italics] inside firms who wanted to defend again or attack with a disruption, *Seeing What's Next* is written for those who watch industries from the [in italics] outside, and who must make important decisions based on what they see. It will help executives, analysts, investors, and others who have a stake in a specific industry to evaluate the impact of innovations, the outcomes of competitive battles, and the moves made by individual firms -- and to make smarter business decisions, forecasts, and stock recommendations based on those evaluations. The goal here [in *Seeing What's Next*] is to dramatically increase the odds of getting things right in the arena where wrong decisions could be devastating."

The authors carefully organize their material as follows:

In Part I, "How to Use Theory to Analyze," they identify the "signals of change" which indicate where the best opportunities are; explain how to size up competitors; how to identify which strategic choices are of greatest importance; and then explain how nonmarket factors influence innovation.

Then in Part II, "Illustrations of Theory-Based Analysis," they apply various TBA tools when examining the future of education, aviation, semiconductors, healthcare, and telecommunications; using the same tools, they also assess strategies for both corporations and countries. Then in the "Conclusions" section, they step back and recap where they have taken their reader, suggest areas for further investigation, and provide some final thoughts. I especially appreciate the Appendix in which the authors provide a summary of the book's key concepts.

All of the most important points made in this book help us to understand both the opportunities and (yes) the perils of disruptive innovation. They include: disruption is a process, NOT an event; disruption is a relative phenomenon in that what is disruptive to one company may be sustaining to another; different, even radical technology does NOT equal disruptive; disruptive innovations are NOT limited to high-tech markets. Re this last point, the authors carefully explain that disruption can occur in any product or service market and can even help to explain competition among national economies. (Please see Chapter 9, pages 207-223). Another substantial value-added benefit of this book is derived from the generously annotated "Notes" at the end of each chapter. Together, these sections (all by themselves) are worth far more the cost of this book.

Thus, in a single volume, the authors guide and inform decision-makers in all manner of organizations as they embark on the three-part process by which to (1) identify signals of change, (2) evaluate competitive, head-to-head battles between companies loosely classified as "attackers" and "incumbents" (please see the Glossary), (3) formulate appropriate strategic choices that can influence the outcome of competitive battles, and (4) meanwhile establish and then sustain an effective relationship between innovation and nonmarket forces such as government regulation. Christensen, Anthony, and Roth are to be congratulated for what I consider to be a brilliant achievement. Reluctant as I am to predict anything, I feel certain that *Seeing What Is Next* will become a business book

"classic."

Was this review helpful to you? yes no [\(Report this\)](#)

Putting Theory into Practice, December 27, 2004

Reviewer: **B.Sudhakar Shenoy** (Bangalore,India) - [See all my reviews](#)

(REAL)

This book is not only a logical extension of the Prof Christensen's previous two books, but is also a book that excels on its own. The first few chapters reinforce the theories on Innovation and quickly leads us to a framework for analysis in line with the title. Sensing Change, Competitive Battles, Non-market forces and Strategic Choices are the four dimensions of this framework that apply the principles of Disruptive Innovation. Using this framework it is not only interesting as to how the authors are able to explain the outcomes in the past but also enable us to forecast the future of competitive battles and technology trajectories with reasonable accuracy. The authors do mention at the end of the book that there will be exceptions that may not fit into this theoretical framework, but the aim of all theories is to improve our understanding of the phenomenon under study. If this is the definition and objective of a sound theory, this book meets this goal.

Is it possible to evolve a quantitative model that can be used as a tool for answering important questions on technology and competition based on this theory ? In my opinion it worth attempting one even if such a tool lacks perfection in the first attempt. This model by itself might be disruptive in nature and can quickly climb the path of improvement in accuracy.

Five industries are analyzed in detail in this book - Education, Health Care, Aviation, Semi Conductors and Telecom in addition to a chapter on global competitiveness of companies and countries. These chapters are detailed, and explain the technological issues with simplicity for a non-technocrat to understand. At the end there is a quick summary of concepts used in this book , which can be termed as an executive summary of The Innovator's Dilemma and The Innovator's Solution in one chapter.

One Industry that is conspicuous by its absence in the detailed analysis of this book is the Automobile Industry. In the earlier books there were references to disruptive technologies in this sector - the electric car for example. The recent abrupt rise in oil prices, international concerns on the politics and shortage of this fuel, and the vast demand for meeting transportation needs in developing countries at low cost makes this industry a fertile ground for disruptive innovation. Has this industry overshot the needs of mass users ? What would be the structure of this industry in a scenario of imminent modularization ? Which companies are likely to adopt disruptive strategies in un-served markets ? What will be the technologies and how will incumbents respond ? What strategies would auto component suppliers adopt ? Is the under \$ 2000 car a possibility ? Will there be free standing value networks for such products that will be ignored by incumbents in large developing markets ?. This book certainly provides us a good framework to answer such questions and is bound to generate such debates in many other industries not covered in the book.

Was this review helpful to you? yes no [\(Report this\)](#)

1 of 2 people found the following review helpful:

Excellent Read, December 20, 2004

Reviewer: [Naomi Moneypenny "Executive Editor at ManyWorlds.com"](#) - [See all my reviews](#)

(REAL)

A stunningly good book. If you were disappointed at The Innovator's Solution, Christensen and team certainly deliver in Seeing What's Next. This is an intensely theoretically book so it is not to all tastes, and it takes a long time to digest. The analytics and case studies used are rudimentary, but the conceptual frameworks will have true strategists buzzing. Departing from his usual formula, Christensen and co-authors Scott Anthony and Erik Roth, aim Seeing What's Next at those who watch industries from the outside and must make important decisions based on what they see. By contrast The Innovator's Dilemma and The Innovator's Solution were aimed at managers inside firms who wanted to defend against or attack with a disruption.

In this book, the authors proclaim that good theory provides a robust way to understand important developments, even when data is limited. And theory is even more helpful when there is so much data that it is tough to discern what information really matters. Theory helps to identify signals of change amongst a deluge of meaningless "noise". Three big theoretical frameworks are brought together in this work, as outlined in previous Christensen's books.

Firstly the Disruptive Innovation Theory - refers to how new entrants to an industry can use relatively simple, convenient, low-cost innovations to create growth and triumph over powerful incumbents. Disruptive innovation can be of two types: one) low end disruptions which deliver a low priced alternative to customers who are overshot by existing offerings or two) new-market disruptions, which create new growth by making it easier to for people to do something that historically required deep expertise or wealth.

Secondly the Resources, Processes and Values Theory - that helps to explain why existing companies have such difficulty in grappling with disruptive innovations. The theory holds that resources (what an organization has), processes (how work is done), and values (the criteria by which resources are allocated) collectively define the organization's strengths as well as its weaknesses and blind spots.

Thirdly the Value Chain Evolution Theory - this framework helps to assess whether an organization has made the organizational design choices to compete successfully. The golden rule underlying this theory is that companies ought to control any activity or combination of activities within the value chain that drive performance along the dimensions that matter most to customers. In other words, they should integrate to improve performance along dimensions that are "not good enough" for what customers need and outsource what is "more that good enough" (those features and improvements that customer don't need and won't pay more to use).

Combining these three models will achieve a process for "looking ahead, and working backwards", as ManyWorlds CEO Steve Flinn would say. Combine this approach with the StrategySpace™ model, to ensure that your organization is not trying to inhabit the same "strategyspace" as current or future players in your market space and you have an excellent recipe for success. Of course it all comes down to execution, and theories are impotent until they are used, but if you can see what's next, you are half way there.

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8 of 11 people found the following review helpful:

Great, even for those not in the known!, November 11, 2004

Reviewer: [Peter James](#) (United States) - [See all my reviews](#)

I picked up this book on whim, mostly because I recognized the authors and I flipped through the book and found the topic interesting.

I do not have a business background, so I did worry that this book would be over my head. In reality, I found the book both compelling and easy to follow. Rare for a business oriented book, I found it a very good and interesting read.

I don't know where the political spectrum centers in Australia, but this book is FAR from "right-wing." I found it politically unbiased and very thoroughly researched. Whoever wrote that review must not have reviewed the right book because all of his statements are wildly inaccurate.

Overall I would say that Seeing Whats Next is a interesting and informative read!! I enjoyed it so much, I have gone backwards and begun to read the author's first books.

Was this review helpful to you? yes no [\(Report this\)](#)

7 of 27 people found the following review helpful:

American management babble, November 5, 2004

Reviewer: [Keith Frampton](#) (Fitzroy, Victoria Australia) - [See all my reviews](#)

The prior books by the author have been strong, relevant, and based on solid reserach & investigation. Sorry, not true for this one. The information is rehashed from prior articles, and there are many contradictory sources & research carefully omitted. It is also very biased, extremely right-wing, myopic and makes many assumptions as 'statements'. In my time of reading to date (40+ years) this is one of three books I could not bring myself to finish so far.

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