

CALL FOR PAPERS

Special Issue: Scenario Planning for Strategic Decision-Making, Learning, and Managing Uncertainty

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The strategic landscape for businesses and other organizations has grown increasingly turbulent, uncertain, unpredictable and ambiguous.^{1, 2} Events such as the 2008 financial crisis, COVID-19 pandemic, Ukraine invasion, war in Gaza, catastrophic natural disasters, and other pivotal events have added unprecedented disruption and forced most businesses to adapt strategically. Contemporary challenges demanding C-suite attention today also include meeting social expectations that organizations be diverse, inclusive, and equitable; adapting to climate change; leveraging the power of artificial intelligence ethically; preparing better for the next pandemic; and navigating complex regulatory, civil and geopolitical issues that can spawn additional turmoil. Strategic resilience is needed that accommodates high levels of uncertainty, with the ability to anticipate and prepare for new challenges as well as emergent opportunities. This has risen now to a must-have capability.

Scenario planning is a commonly used methodology for identifying a broad array of risks and opportunities by surfacing³ and challenging decision makers' deep assumptions. A basic definition of scenario planning is that it is "the development of multiple scenarios about the future, and use of them to make decisions"⁴ in the present. While this definition is simple, the practice of scenario planning is becoming increasingly sophisticated as managers try to anticipate diverse external futures and envision strategies to keep their organization flexible and resilient.^{5, 6} Instead of focusing on predicting the future, scenario planners emphasize the inherent uncertainties that lie ahead and try to equip leaders and organizations with sufficient adaptive capabilities and agility to succeed. The aim is to build better collective mental models of possible futures⁴ while also developing early warning signs⁷ and sufficient organizational resilience to withstand whatever may come.

For decades⁸ scenario planning has been implemented at various units of analysis ranging from business units, organizations and industries,⁹ to cities,¹⁰ nations,¹¹ technologies,¹² supply chains,¹³ and global challenges like climate change¹⁴ and COVID-19.¹⁵ For example, various regional and global climate change scenarios were published by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.¹⁴ Among organizations and industries, practical applications often use the type of scenario approaches pioneered by Royal Dutch Shell,^{5, 16} and since then scholarly interest in scenario planning has increased.^{5, 17} Surveys of 8,500+ executives periodically conducted by Bain & Company¹⁸ document that practitioner interest in scenario analysis has also grown.

With academic and practitioner interest in scenario planning on the rise, this special issue of California Management Review (CMR) is focused on research about contemporary scenario planning in businesses and other organizations with a future focus. Our main areas of interest surround how scenario planning might enable organizations to navigate significant uncertainties while recognizing and strategizing for the new opportunities and risks embedded within them, and doing so sustainably and inclusively from a societal perspective. We invite submissions of original, evidence-based articles addressing (*without being limited to*) the following sample topics and current management challenges in scenario planning:

- **Scenario planning methods in organizations**
 - What contemporary trends, shocks, events, risks, opportunities, or management changes prompt businesses to embark on scenario planning? Conversely, what has propelled some businesses to actually abandon scenario planning?
 - How is scenario planning undertaken in different kinds of businesses and organizations, and what explains the major differences?
 - What challenges do managers commonly face when implementing scenario planning, and how have these been addressed?
 - What are the benefits and limitations of one-time versus ongoing periodic use of scenario planning?
 - What are the advantages and disadvantages of scenario planning versus other strategic planning methods? Which other practices (e.g., forecasting, risk-management, modelling, issues management, agility enhancement, etc.) have been found to complement or clash with scenario planning, and how were conflicts resolved?
 - What are the benefits and limitations of practicing scenario planning when multiple organizations join together (such as supply chain partners) compared to a single organization doing it alone?
- **Developments in scenario planning practice**
 - How are scenario planning methods being updated or revised to accommodate important developments, such as artificial intelligence and other information technology tools? In particular, how is artificial intelligence used to enhance or replace scenario planning?
 - What kinds of organizations have successfully applied scenario planning, and where has it received less traction? How have these patterns changed over time and why?
 - Where has scenario planning failed in important notable public cases (such as COVID-19) and why? What lessons and silver linings can be extracted from these failure instances?
 - What role do quantitative decision analyses play in scenario planning in organizations? How may they enhance or diminish the practice of scenario planning?

- What roles do consultants play in scenario planning? When is it more effective for an organization to outsource scenario planning to consultants instead of building an internal scenario planning team?
- **Limitations of scenario planning**
 - What limits or caveats does scenario planning entail for the management of organizations broadly?
 - What challenges does scenario planning not address well, and why? For example, how should long-term scenario perspectives be connected to short-term planning forecasts?
 - What kind of education and training is typically employed to increase an organization's readiness for scenario thinking?
 - How are organizations addressing challenges associated with assessing the usefulness and effectiveness of scenario planning over the short-term and long-term?
- **Measuring the effectiveness of scenario planning**
 - What impact does scenario planning have on organizational strategizing, decision making, innovation, culture, etc.? How does it influence the judgment and decision making of organizational leaders and managers? How are these assessed?
 - When do organizations that utilize scenario planning perform better than those that do not and what may explain such differences? How is this evaluated?
 - Managerially speaking, how does scenario planning help build organizational resilience and agility? What methods can assess this appropriately?

Submissions must be submitted no later than 31 October 2024. Authors should submit a full manuscript to the corresponding co-editor, Nardia Haigh, at nardia.haigh@umb.edu.

Manuscripts should run between 5,000 and 8,000 words (excluding charts, tables, figures, and endnotes). Please bear in mind that CMR publishes original articles that are research-based and provide practical advice to managers. Thus, submissions should clearly state:

- The purpose and motivation of the study;
- The particular management or leadership issues addressed;
- The contexts in which phenomena are examined; and
- The relevance of the study for practitioners and academic scholars.

Additional CMR submission guidelines can be found at <http://cmr.berkeley.edu/resources/submit/>.

Please note that while Guest Editors make recommendations, all final publication decisions are made by the CMR Editorial Team. The Guest Editors and CMR Editors will select submissions that are likely to result in first-rate, high-impact contributions. The authors of promising submissions will receive an official invitation to submit their article online through the CMR submission portal to be peer reviewed. Such formal submissions must be invited ones; a special-issue submission received without an official invitation will not be considered by CMR.

ENDNOTES

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15. Crawford, M.M. and G. Wright, *The value of mass-produced COVID-19 scenarios: A quality evaluation of development processes and scenario content*. *Technological Forecasting and Social Change*, 2022. **183**: p. 121937.
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