

Tribal Dimensions

How will they shape the world of talent and recruiting in 2038?



MindemicLab

Welcome to 2018. Welcome to 2038.

This scenario report describes two possible future states for recruiting and talent. One of them may happen, or neither of them may happen. We believe that considering and planning for many possible futures makes our profession more agile, and stimulates creative thinking. Please take a look and let us know what you think. Better yet, join the conversation!

Why are we doing this?

We see significant changes coming in the talent and recruiting world. While no one can be certain about what exactly that future will bring, we believe that participating in scenario planning will help our industry be better prepared to embrace whatever happens. We have created an organization known as MindemicLab to sponsor an ongoing series of scenario planning events.

How can I follow this work?

Visit MindemicLab.com and sign up. There is no cost.



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On the Cover

Our vision of the future was created, just for this report, by artist Filip Čekić.

Flip is a freelance illustrator from Belgrade, Serbia. A self-taught artist working with a wide variety of genres and themes, both traditionally and digitally, he has worked on numerous projects ranging from game concept art, album cover artwork, book and board game cover artwork as well as numerous private commissions. He has a degree in Art History and also occasionally dabbles in photography, filmmaking and other media as well.

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THE WORLD OF WORK IN 2038:

How our Tribal Dimensions will shape the future of Talent and Recruiting

What will the world look like in 2038? Will it be a future of jetpacks and food pills? Or will it be a world left scorched and uninhabitable by the effects of man-made climate change? The truth is, of course, that no one really knows what the world will look like in 2038. But for as long as there has been a written record of human thought, people have tried to figure out what tomorrow will bring.

Thinking about the future can be useful. In this series of reports, we will develop glimpses of *possible* futures informed by trends that influence our profession today. By identifying a particular talent-related trend and extrapolating it out twenty years or so, we can craft a surprisingly detailed picture. The benefit of doing this is not in its reliability as a kind of crystal ball, but rather to prepare our profession for change, and to stimulate dialogue.

The current obsession with ... well ... *ourselves* seems like a good place to start this series. And where do we spend the most time reflecting on ourselves? Social media.



Social Media represents a major development in how we perceive the world. Consider, for example, our newfound ability to configure absolutely all virtual interactions to deliver only one particular flavor of information - the one we like.

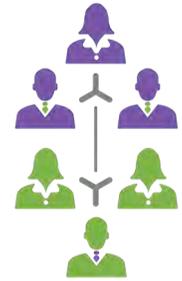


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1 New Inbox
See what update from your ...

Social media represents a major development in how we perceive the world. Consider, for example, our newfound ability to configure absolutely all virtual interactions to deliver only one particular flavor of information—the one *we* like. Flat-Earthers, Birthers, Anti-Vaxxers, and anyone else with a strong view about something not currently considered mainstream can now rest assured that not a single piece of data will ever reach them, which does not reinforce their worldview. Colleges and universities report that the current generation of students lacks an ability to think critically or even defend a simple position. It's been a long road from the all-night debates about politics and race relations in the student dorms of the 1960s to the now ubiquitous, 'If you don't agree with me, un-friend me now.' The technology that powers social media endeavors to give us more of what it already knows we like. It rarely recommends something new, unexpected, or diverse. There is no need to step outside of this comfortable place to even risk purchasing a new brand of shirt now, let alone interact with someone who has beliefs that are radically different from our own.



Technology is particularly well-suited to filtering out opinions we don't like.

In historical times, it was immediately evident who was 'different.' Their skin was another shade, or they spoke with an accent. On the other hand, people could hide information about their heritage, or a criminal past. In today's world of instant access to data, it is much easier to find *all* of the similarities and differences in other people that we meet. With the click of a button, we can find out about someone's religious beliefs, political affiliations, purchasing preferences, friends-in-common, etc. This is historically unprecedented, and we choose to introduce the term 'Tribal Dimensions' to describe the complex array of data points that now comprise our identity, as well as the identities of those with whom we prefer to spend our time. The concept of Tribal Dimensions plays an important role in many of the scenarios currently being studied and will be developed further in subsequent reports.



Our Tribal Dimensions will become increasingly important in coming years.

Everyone belongs to a tribe. Actually, people can belong to multiple, even *many* tribes. A tribe has thousands of unwritten rules and does everything in a particular way. There is comfort in belonging to a tribe, and yet there is a biological advantage in learning from a different tribe. This is how people all around the world learned to build fires and plant crops. Specialized knowledge doesn't appear in multiple places simultaneously—it is shared.

This fundamental choice—whether to stick with one’s own tribe or learn from another one—represents the axis upon which two very different future scenarios turn. A future in which people focus on seeking out others who *mirror* their own Tribal Dimensions as closely as possible will result in the scenario we call ‘People Like Us.’ Or perhaps society will choose to affiliate with *different* types of people who complement their own Tribal Dimensions. We call this scenario ‘There Is No Them.’ Let’s visit both worlds twenty years from today...



People actively seek to work with, live with, and interact with people who are similar to them in order to bring harmony to their lives.

People Like Us

People Like Us is a world of matching, aligning, validating, screening, and ultimate customization in which technology and continual assessment combine to create work experiences that optimize individual engagement and productivity. People actively seek to work with, live with, and interact with people who are similar to them in order to bring harmony to their lives. Companies no longer even try to communicate a single employment brand to an infinity of individual workers. They have learned that such a model is about as attractive as Henry Ford’s policy of selling his customers a car painted any color they chose—as long as they chose black. Job seekers in this scenario would no

sooner work at a company just because of a brand name than they would order something from a company that offered limited purchasing options. They have never known a single moment of not getting constant and customized attention from companies who want them to buy things, and they won't settle for anything less from companies who want them to work for them.

Companies also benefit from this scenario. By creating teams that minimize institutional friction and optimize interpersonal success, they are hugely productive. They can also measure the impact on the business in real time. From a technology standpoint, arriving at this scenario is simple—CRM software and technology that has been plopping Amazon ads on our Facebook pages based on our search engine activity is easily reconfigured to persuade workers to 'buy' a career at a new employer, and offer factual reviews from people in their tribe.

In *People Like Us*, the backlog of legislative challenges that have piled up in the United States ever since 'Separate but equal' made its debut suddenly disappears. An open marketplace of instantly connected needs and skills now replaces legislation that once tried to balance disparate impact and create equal opportunity through punishment and mandate. Protected classes no longer rely upon the government to enforce laws that are designed to make companies hire and fire in ways that are often in conflict with their stated mission. Instead, a new meritocracy has sprung up, and people who have traditionally struggled to find their 'place' are now able to do so easily using technology. They no longer have to wait, hat-in-hand, for state governments to act on their behalf to enforce legislation—they instead find businesses and co-workers that thrive with the addition of their unique contributions. They are more fulfilled, more productive, pay more taxes, and are no longer distracted by a poor cultural fit.

This pattern repeats itself around the world as caste, social standing, and belief system cease being reasons to exclude willing workers from employment. The tribal affiliations that once represented what someone did at 'home' (and frequently delineated the limits of their professional aspirations) now represent the 'union card' that guarantees ongoing work. No matter where you are in the world if you own a pushcart, or a Ph.D., you and your tribe will find work. And if you want to pray during your workday, you may do so openly.



What if public schools stopped teaching students only enough to pass standardized tests?



One could argue that each new 'advancement' in recruiting technology today only makes things harder for job seekers.



Are the current policies,
designed to address
historical discrimination,
really effective?

In this scenario, education is configured around the notion that there is no longer a single and universal body of knowledge that represents the ‘best thoughts ever thought.’ Freed from the burden of ensuring every student graduates knowing only just enough to pass a standardized test, schools now create customized programs of study aligned with the skills and abilities of each student. This isn’t a cop-out—students begin their schooling with clear knowledge of their unique learning style, and each pupil’s curriculum and delivery are tailored to meet their unique needs. It is well established that some students are auditory learners, and some are visual learners. Why not use the available technology to ensure that every single student graduates having maximized his or her own personal educational potential? In this scenario, a school’s ranking is not calculated by how many students pass a single test designed around the worst students, schools are now measured by how well they met every individual student’s needs.

In People Like Us, companies assemble ‘rock-star’ teams for every single project and endeavor. Workers quickly and nimbly move with their tribes from opportunity to opportunity, and each subsequent role incorporates what was learned



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in the prior role. Candidates are no longer tasked with the burden of 'getting through' a complicated, arbitrary, and probably institutionally biased selection process. It's now a free exchange and an open market of skills and opportunities. Candidates maintain and advertise their own unique digital fingerprint of skills, preferences, and weaknesses for companies to review, and companies do likewise. In order to guarantee maximum efficiency, an entire industry forms that ensures the security and integrity of this algorithmic matching of people to a role by acting as a neutral intermediary. New businesses spring up by the thousands as entrepreneurs create customized cultures that tap the very best from every employee simultaneously and deliver value to the marketplace in ways never before imagined.

At first glance, one might imagine that this scenario represents some hideous new dystopian era of voluntary apartheid. And as this scenario began to form, there were very serious concerns raised about allowing such a highly polarized society to take shape. When the global workforce is comprised entirely of small groups of very similar people who no longer have any incentive to interact with others, how does a culture grow? This concern was quickly set aside, for as people found satisfaction in their work and enjoyed economic prosperity, they paradoxically began to emerge from their individual tribes, and to seek out others. In *People Like Us*, it dawns on everyone that the *real* failed social engineering experiment was the one that took place in the first decades of the 21st century. The one where governments entrusted businesses to right past wrongs by forcing dissimilar people to work together to achieve outcomes that determined their livelihood.



What happens to societies when people start questioning long-standing beliefs and seeking deeper truths?

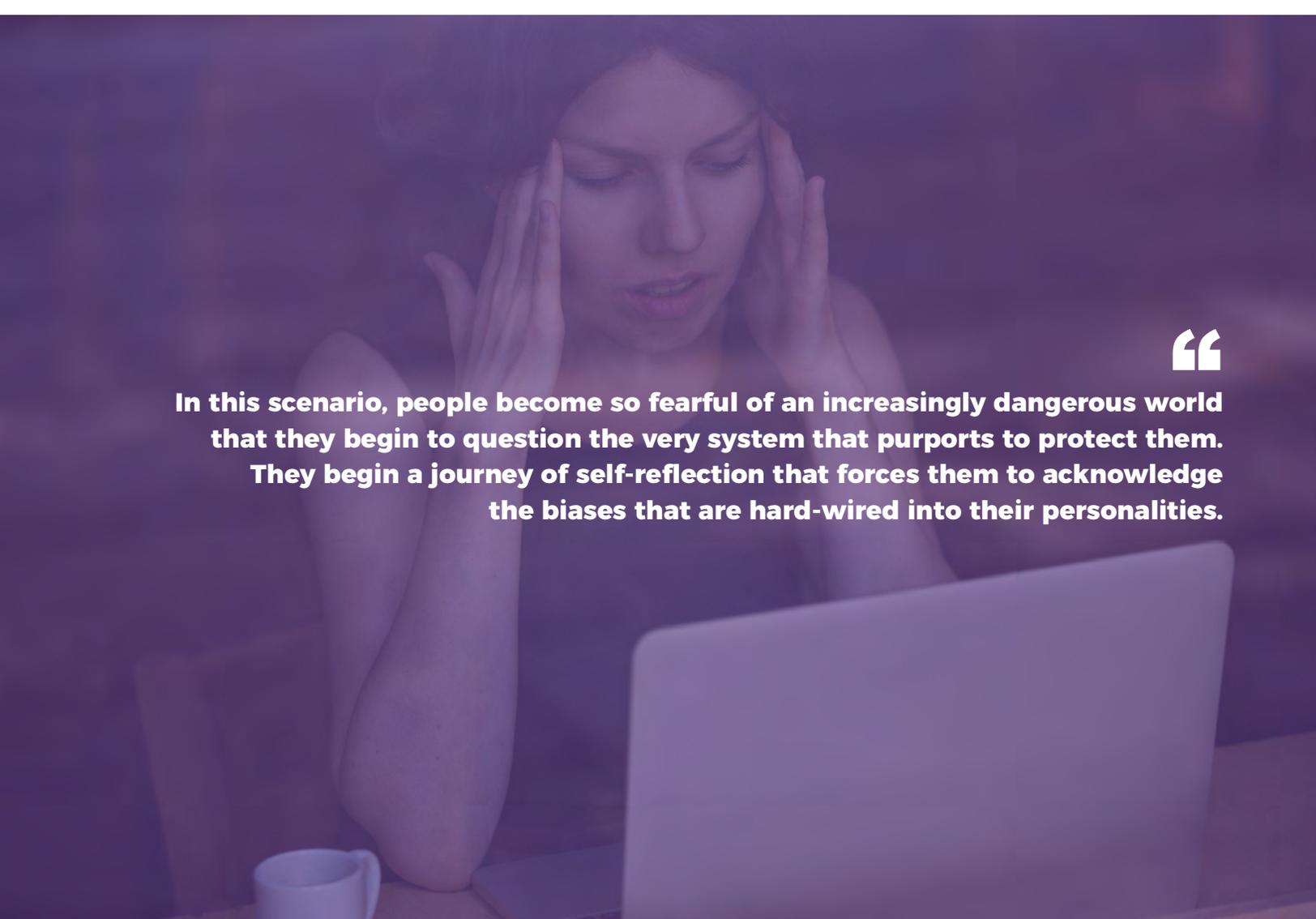
There Is No Them

There Is No Them is a very different world. It's a world of redemption and of boundless possibility. It feels like the final chapter of a beloved book—the kind of book in which the hero discovers that the answer to some riddle that has troubled and vexed him for the duration of the story was actually right in front of him all along.

In this scenario, people become so fearful of an increasingly dangerous world that they begin to question the very system that purports to protect them. They embark on a journey of self-reflection that forces them to acknowledge the biases that are hard-wired into their personalities and explore them unapologetically. In this scenario, people have been operating in a fearful state for so



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many years that they work only to protect what they have—to ‘hide out’ in the middle of the pack. Yet no matter how hard they work, their co-workers still lose their jobs, CEOs still get rich, and celebrities still never go to jail. This results in a slow but *deliberate* process of disconnection from lofty-sounding concepts like ‘career path’ and ‘engagement’ that were never really there for rank-and-file workers anyway and certainly never provided fulfillment. It was bad enough that employers stopped developing future leaders and giving raises—now everyone has to take a survey every year to prove they’re happy about it. After decades of ‘troops on the ground’ and never knowing quite who is on *our* side and on *their* side, people began to seek answers for themselves.



Millennials have been the center of attention for their entire lives – someday that will end. How will they respond?

As people utterly lose interest in the empty promises of corporate advancement, there is a renewed focus on self-help and spirituality. There are several reasons for this. First, it provides hope and a reason for living. Removed from the down-to-the-minute, triple-booked, working-three-jobs existence that has characterized modern life all over the world for decades, people begin to naturally ask the larger questions about the meaning of life—internet memes with inspirational sayings just won’t cut it anymore. But more importantly, as people start to interact with other tribes on their quest for answers, they have the opportunity to see that the world contains *many* belief systems that all provide the answers needed to successfully navigate life. These belief systems are often contradictory, yet to those in other tribes, they are each somehow sufficient. The paradox of a world where everyone is a true believer living in a world of heathens (who themselves believe they are true believers) is dismissed as sophistry.

Millennials are the major driver of this scenario as they begin losing their parents to old age. After a lifetime of dependence and reliance on mom and dad to help them navigate every aspect of their lives, they suddenly find themselves alone and questioning everything. It’s a miniature Age of Enlightenment, and every institution is scrutinized for value. People begin to venture outside the world of VIP experiences, platinum status, and tasting menus. They begin to interact with people who are not part of their own inner circles and discover richness and meaning they never experienced before. People realize that the decision to turn ‘the system’ (charity, retirement savings, education) over to caretakers probably

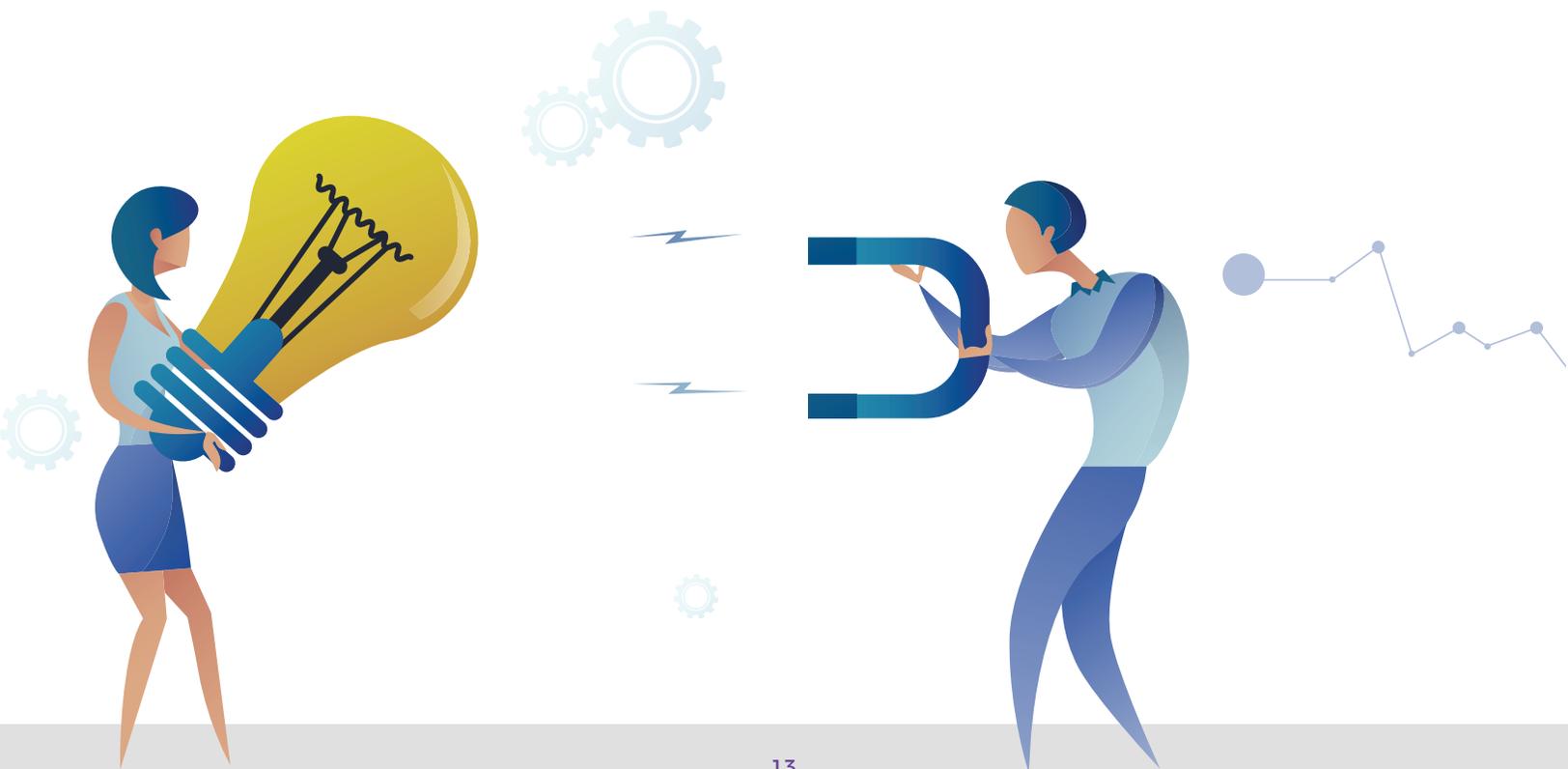
wasn't a very good idea. Overnight, they become a generation of passionate advocates involved in local governments, zoning boards, and Parent Teacher Organizations with a commitment to fixing these broken and neglected institutions. Any remnants of the 'old boys club' that are discovered are quickly overwhelmed by a flood of enthusiastic volunteers who genuinely care about making a difference. There is a general eschewing of 'targeted' messaging and advertising, for people finally realize that the computer will never get it right because everyone is different and unique. People are now delighted by difference and culture, and seek work environments that genuinely promote it. And they have absolutely no tolerance for lip service from companies who make empty promises but don't back them up.

In this employment marketplace, there is no bait-and-switch. Online communities are quickly abandoned and replaced with 'real live' communities that emphasize face-to-face interactions. Pundits mock these aging Millennials for wanting to return to the fictional town of Mayberry. But this generation has no idea what Mayberry was—all they know is that after meeting people on Tinder and following celebrities on Twitter, there is an undeniable authenticity that comes from personal interaction. It's non-linear, surprising, and feels very rewarding. Buoyed by the sheer numbers of this generation, the entire economy switches to communities of work cultures that value differing opinions and alternative points of view. The big surprise is that it all works brilliantly. Companies that make it easy for tribes to interact now attract the best workers. The newly enlightened global workforce even changes the *physical* work environment—shrill and deafening open workspaces populated with rows of gleaming workstations give way to private offices, quiet spaces, and soft fabrics. Even carpeting makes a comeback. It's quiet, interpersonal, and incredibly effective.

This new 'go slow to go fast' work style that seeks first to leverage the Wisdom of Teams makes a huge impact quickly in this scenario. Companies no longer spend months trying to code automated responses for every conceivable customer or employee question. All you have to do is sit next to someone and talk to him or her to realize what an impossible and pointless effort that is, so conversations with diverse teams of real people are used instead. Rather than try to screen candidates out using technology, recruiting departments now seek

to find ways of screening people *in* through group interviews, non-directed conversations, and formalized 'candidate care' teams comprised of non-HR personnel. Companies quickly realize the power of a diverse team of happy workers. They stop focusing on finding ways to make current processes go faster for less money, and instead embed employees in cross-functional teams that offer insights about other entirely different ways to get work done. Work becomes more holistic and less segmented. Change is viewed as a natural progression of business, and not something to fear. People find genuine happiness at work because they enjoy interacting with other tribes.

And what is the outcome of all this happiness? Business has never been better, of course, but there are other benefits as well. For example, there is a decrease in medical costs (through healthier eating and a downturn in stress-related addictions to alcohol and opioids). Companies are able to manage expansions and acquisitions with ease since there are fewer unexpected cultural problems that pop up and derail them. Innovations and breakthrough products happen easily because different cultures and business units are all represented at meetings now. It seems that People really *were* the greatest asset all along—how ironic that corporations tried to sell that very line to their employees for all those years while never actually believing it.



Who wrote this document and what is its purpose?

Scenario planning is a well-established process used to create detailed descriptions of *possible* versions of the future—in this case, the future of talent and recruiting. Scenario planning is not intended to predict the future, nor is it designed to even describe likely or probable futures; the purpose of the activity is simply to prepare people for change, and to stimulate dialogue. This document was created as the first of several reports to come out of a scenario planning exercise conducted by the following participants:



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