The Computerworld Honors Program

Honoring those who use Information Technology to benefit society

Final Copy of Case Study

YEAR:
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STATUS:
Laureate

Organization:
The Millennium Project

Organization URL:
http://millennium-Project.org

Project Name:
The Millennium Project

What social/humanitarian issue was the project designed to address?
What specific metrics did you use to measure the project's success?

The Millennium Project (MP) is a unique global participatory think tank established in 1996, after a three-year feasibility study supported by the U.S. EPA, UNU, UNDP, and UNESCO. It has now grown to a network of 41 Nodes (groups of individuals, networks, and institutions) that connect local and global perspectives around the world. The Nodes identify participants for MP's research, which provides the basis for the annual State of the Future report used by policy advisors, thought leaders, and educators around the world to improve thinking and decision-making about the future. MP also produces Futures Research Methodology, now in version, 3.0 with 39 chapters on different methods or categories of methods, making it the largest, most comprehensive collection of internationally peer-reviewed chapters on methods and tools to explore future possibilities that has ever been assembled in one resource. All its information, software, and participants are now being organized into a unique global collective intelligence on the future. The State of the Future Index is a measure of the 10-year outlook for the future. It is constructed with key variables and forecasts that, in the aggregate, depict whether the future promises to be better or worse. The SOFI is intended to show the

directions and intensity of change in the outlook and to identify the factors responsible. Some of the Millennium Project's experiments with the index have illustrated how it might be used for policy purposes by demonstrating the effects of proposed policies on a nominal State of the Future Index. The SOFI approach provides a mechanism for studying the relationships among the items in a system and how making a single change ripples throughout a system, in other words, creating some positive and intended consequence as well as unintended results.

People did not have a framework to understand and track global change – not just economic change, or technological change, or social change, or environmental change, but global change – the whole picture, and put together by people from around the world. The 15 Global Challenges is that framework used by such diverse countries as Finland, Egypt, and Chile. It is also taught in universities on every continent except Antarctica.

There was no regular system for people around the world to think together about the future and implications for decisions today. The annual production of the State of the Future report with inputs from an accumulative total of over 4,350 futurists, business planners, and scholars over 16 years is the most evolved to date.

There was no broad yet detailed system to see if the future was getting better or worse and how to know – systematically the reasons. The State of the Future Index does that.

People are overwhelmed with information overload – how to keep track of what's important and what affects that from around the world and accesses all domains. Collective intelligence is likely to become the next big thing and the Millennium Project has developed three prototypes – one for climate change, one for a country (Kuwait's Prime Minister's Office), and one for global futures research for The Millennium Project itself.

We are a contributor to the growing global movement toward rational decision-making and systematic planning in a climate of uncertainty, and we promote understanding of the significance and lasting effects of the changes in which we are imbedded.

Some metrics:

1. The improvement of the annual State of the Future report in depth, quality, and clarity.
2. The increasing number of countries that translate and distribute it – in now up to 10 languages.
3. The increase of the number of Nodes around the word – from 4 in 1997 to 41 today.
4. The improvements in the number and quality of methods now described in Version 3 of the Futures Research Methodology.
5. Universities that use both the State of the Future and Futures Research Methodologies and the graduates that further develop these ideas and decision-improving methods and carry them forward.

Please describe the technologies used and how those technologies were deployed in an innovative way. Also, please include any technical or other challenges that were overcome for the successful implementation of the project.

From the beginning of the project, ICT was used as a way to leverage the goals of the project. How to establish a global network for near real-time foresight. The current Director of the project and the Director of the project's CyberNode were very early adopters of computers for communications. They pioneered a unique global online community in the late '70s using Murray Turoff's EIES computer and the early nascent pieces of the now global Internet. Patching together networks in Europe, Canada, Australia, and the U.S., they broke all records for geographic scope of access and volume of message traffic at a time when NSF scientists were having to brow beaten into using the same system. Current tools include new forms of Delphi Survey techniques, pioneered at Rand by our first project director, Ted J. Gordon, who has currently developed a real-time version of the Delphi tool called Real Time Delphi. He is also instrumental in using computers to develop a new index for countries and regions called the State of the Future Index (SOFI). This tool projects the country's or region's likely trend regarding many different indicators to result in a SOFI indicator for how that country or region is doing. The most ambitious undertaking to date is the use of computers to develop a collective intelligence in foresight matters. It is perhaps best epitomized by an early prototype created for the Prime Minister's office in Kuwait. (See Appendix1-2.) Open source tools were used to put together a comprehensive aggregator of relevant news sources. Then collaboration tools were integrated to create an Early Warning System (EWS) to alert the government to important trends, impacts, and weak signals it could use to stay well in advance of these issues.

Please list the specific humanitarian benefits the project has yielded so far.

The Millennium Project arms decision-makers facing some of the biggest challenges in human history -- climate change, water and energy, amongst others -- based on a 15-year track record of measuring and reporting on the progress and regress of these issues. It is the only such resource available worldwide. Some of the more direct impacts of the project have come through the "Special Studies" conducted by ourselves and also those sponsored by our clients: Some Elements of the Next Global Economic System -- How Might These New Elements Affect the Human Condition over the Next 20 Years? Leading futurists, future-oriented economists, and future-oriented financial experts were invited to participate in this study, thinking 20 years ahead for imagining alternative futures for the world economy. The study was conducted in 2009, intending to collect fresh thinking, new ideas along with results of futures research about what's next after the global financial crisis and what elements may become part of the next economic system. Global Energy Network and Information System (GENIS) (Appendix 3): A concept and design of a system of collective intelligence that could be used by the policymakers, energy experts, and the general public around the world. The options to create and update national, global, and corporate energy strategies are so complex and rapidly changing that it is almost impossible for decision-makers to gather and understand the information required to make and implement coherent policy. Yet the environmental and social

consequences of incoherent policies are so serious that a new global system for the identification, analysis, assessment of possible consequences, and synthesis of energy options for decision-making is urgent. Other studies conducted by the Millennium Project that demonstrate different kinds of humanitarian benefits are: Global Scenarios Future Possibilities for Education and Learning 2030 Future Global Ethical Issues

Reduction of anxiety about the future and efforts to improve future conditions by action today – we receive many emails and comments after public talks from people who say that they are now more willing to take seriously that they can do something to improve the future of their communities and countries; they are less fatalistic and more proactive than before.

Environmental security is one of the top policy issues for major militaries around the world due in part to the Millennium Project special research, publications, briefings, and public address beginning in 1996 – global assessment of definitions for environmental security, emerging environmental security threats, the role of the International Criminal Court, health and environmental knowledge requirements for nanotechnology safety, and 74 monthly environmental security reports with implications for action. Humans have benefitted from military cleanup of their environmental impacts, reduction of environmental impacts of operations, and potential prevention of environmentally related conflicts.

Media seem to focus on future threats -- and maybe appropriately so, but that creates an air of pessimism; by tracking the positive elements as well, we promote a more balanced outlook, away from fatalism and toward productive optimism.

Please provide the best example of how the project has benefited a specific individual, enterprise or organization. Feel free to include personal quotes from individuals who have directly benefited from the work.

"Gaining insight into the meaning of the information here provided is a MUST for effective global and local strategies." - Eduardo Sojo, President of the National Institute for Statistics and Geography, Mexico. "The State of the Future is an informative publication that gives invaluable insights into the future for the United Nations, its Member States, and civil society." - Ban Ki-moon, Secretary General, United Nations. "The 2003 State of the Future is an exceedingly valuable and unique resource for corporate strategic planning." - Michael Stoneking, Partner, Deloitte & Touche. "The 2007 State of the Future report offers well-researched evidence of global trends and challenges that are shaping the agenda of the United Nations." - Hans Blix, Former Director General, IAEA. "The 15 Global Challenges updated annually continue to be the best introduction by far to the key issues of the early 21st century." - Michael Marien, editor, Future Survey. "The State of the Future is a unique, all-encompassing outlook for future global trends and issues. It is both a bloody good read and a thought-provoking one." - Jerome Binde, Director of the Office of Foresight, UNESCO. "A unique contribution for all those interested in understanding globalization trends, positioning institutions and governments to better transform themselves to protect public goods." - Carlos Lopes, Executive Director, UNITAR. "The State of the Future is a valuable overview of global change, and its discussion of the future of educational possibilities has

provided important ideas for our Ministry of Education." - Lee Young-tak, Chairman and CEO, Korea Stock Exchange. "Success for policymakers depends on anticipating the consequences of their actions. The predictive insight that the State of the Future provides for the policymakers holds great appeal in this regard." - Prof. Dr. Ali M. Abbasov, Minister of Communications and Information Technologies, Republic of Azerbaijan.