Gartner Global Scenarios: Scenario Planning Resource Center

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Initiatives: Executive Leadership: Enterprise Strategic Planning and Execution; CIO Leadership of Innovation, Disruptive Trends and Emerging Practices

This document gives an overview of Gartner’s recent work on global and industry-specific scenarios. Use it to improve your scenario planning and learn from the varied scenarios that Gartner has examined, starting with those for 2021.

Analysis

This is a beta format that provides an at-a-glance view of Gartner’s latest scenario-planning content. If this format is helpful to you, please click “Yes” to the question in the top right rail: “IS THIS CONTENT HELPFUL TO YOU?”

Since March 2020, numerous Gartner clients have told us that they need to be prepared for any type of disruption. Many had considered the possibility of an economic slowdown in 2020, but had no scenarios for a pandemic or any other major discontinuity. Most had been focusing on optimizing their business models. Scenario planning is an important strategic tool for dealing with fundamental uncertainty.

This document collects Gartner’s latest work on global and industry-specific scenarios. We hope it encourages you to use them within your business and inspires you to build your own scenarios and scenario-planning practices.

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**Research Highlights**

Gartner Global Scenarios 2021: How to Sense and Respond to Social Fracture

This section will be updated as new publications appear. So far, we have published the following (from latest to earliest):

- **The Voice of Society Seen Through the Lens of Social Media:** This research analyzes social media data on the influence of the “voice of society” on social justice and social fracture. Racism was the social topic most discussed on social media, but many other social topics also arose. Executive leaders can use this directional research to see how employees and other stakeholders relate to these issues, and the potential impact on products, brand and reputation.
How CEOs, Senior Business Executives and Employees View Social Justice and Its Business Impact: The 2021 Gartner CEO and Senior Business Leader Survey gives insight into how these leaders view the issue of social justice and its impact on business. Executive leaders generally see a business benefit to speaking out on social issues, but are cautious as not everyone in their company would agree on what stance to take. They can use these findings to gauge how best to engage stakeholders and achieve more beneficial business and social outcomes.

Why the Voice of Society Is Getting Louder: The “voice of society” can make or break your brand and reputation overnight, and those voices are increasingly demanding to be heard. Executive leaders who track “social fractures” effectively can respond better than, and gain a competitive advantage over, those who do not. They are better placed both to handle potential reputational damage and to capitalize on the voice of society by becoming representatives of brands of choice.

Expert Insight Video: Gartner Global Scenarios 2021 — The Role of Business In Society: Gartner Global Scenarios 2021 will focus on how executive leaders and their organizations can prosper by sensing and responding to societal fractures. Executive leaders should factor these fractures into their strategy processes with the help of scenario planning. This video is a short introduction to the topic, one that prompts you to ask who is monitoring the voice of society in your organization.
Gartner Global Scenarios 2020: Use Gartner Reset Scenarios to Move From Survival to Renewal

These scenarios explore the various outcomes of the COVID-19 crisis. Even after this crisis is over, you will be able to apply its deep insights to other sudden disruptions. Additionally, the “reset” scenarios teach you how to conduct scenario planning yourself, and a diagnostic tool helps you assess your strategic initiatives in the light of disruptive scenarios.

Toolkit: Gartner Global Scenarios 2020: How to Accelerate Business Success in a Time of Worldwide Disruption:
Executive leaders in all industries, roles and functions are struggling to reset their strategy, due to COVID-19. Use this Toolkit to understand how the future may unfold, the opportunities and risks those futures will bring, and how to assess and reset mission-critical priorities to enable success.

Digitopia 2035: Three Scenarios for the Digital Society
These scenarios sketch three different perspectives about how people think the “digital society” will develop through to 2035.

The first scenario, “A Smaller Circle,” argues that people will be looking for a more “human-scale” world to live in, and offers guidance on how to build more meaningful local relationships.

The second scenario, “A Question of Convenience,” prompts you to ask whether you prefer to use technology to make life easier or to make new things possible.

The third scenario, “A Sustainable Society,” sketches a new global narrative that replaces “globalization” with moves toward more sustainable approaches to food production, energy production and consumption, the climate and the economy.
Digitopia 2035: 3 Scenarios for the #DigitalSociety, and What They Mean for Us Today: Ask people about the future and they will share their hopes and fears. We crowdsourced stories from around the world and now summarize them in three common scenarios. They can help functional leaders rethink sustainability, build value beyond transactional convenience, and create meaningful connections.

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Industry-Specific Scenarios

Every industry has distinct themes and dynamics. Here is an overview of Gartner’s latest industry-specific scenarios, aimed at CIOs.

Use Banking Industry Scenarios to Generate New Value in the Digital Platform Age: Banking and investment services CIOs faced a challenge to meet critical business needs in response to the pandemic. Now they must focus on the future — what value to create for clients and how to do it. Gartner’s four scenarios will help CIOs prepare for operating and business models through 2030. They will have to decide whether to maintain their organization’s current attitudes and approaches to customer empathy, risk appetite, business models and centralization, or start driving change in pursuit of entirely new business goals.

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Digital Government 2030: Planning for an Uncertain Future: Government CIOs must anticipate the increasingly disruptive forces that will affect their organizations. This research presents four plausible future scenarios to help them develop digital strategies that can adapt to a rapidly changing world. Common themes include the fusion of business and IT missions; the use of modular, agile service-based solutions; a focus on emerging technological capabilities; and the need for talent management, data and analytics, and cybersecurity.

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Manufacturing Industry Scenarios in 2023: Leading Through Innovation: The manufacturing industry faces extraordinary technological, market-related and societal challenges. To envision the future, CIOs must recognize and act on critical internal and external factors. These manufacturing scenarios provide insight and advice on how to innovate to increase value. They should encourage CIOs to think about how innovation will contribute to their manufacturing organization’s environment in 2023 and what it will take to succeed in that setting.

Insurance 2030 Scenarios Update: CIOs Need Greater Adaptability to Survive and Thrive in an Era of Ongoing Industry Transformation: Insurance business and IT leaders face an era of increasingly unpredictable and highly challenging operating conditions. Gartner’s research presents four newly updated scenarios for the future that will help insurance CIOs anticipate and prepare for change through 2030. The top three strategic business priorities for CIOs in life insurance and property and casualty insurance are growth and market share, digital business and digital transformation, and profit improvement.

Higher Education Ecosystem 2030: Planning in the Face of Radical Uncertainty: Disruptive forces are creating critical uncertainties for higher education. CIOs can navigate this radical change by using Gartner’s 2030 higher education scenarios — plausible, but intentionally extreme, futures — to prepare for a changing ecosystem through 2030. The most common issues concern changing demographics, a changing workforce, public perception about the cost and value of degrees, and decreasing public financial support.
Use Scenario Planning to Prepare for an Uncertain Energy Future: Rapidly growing demand for energy, together with the consequential environmental impacts, is creating global disruption for every industry. Executive leaders should use Gartner’s “future of energy” scenario framework to anticipate, prepare for, and navigate a complex and volatile future. Industry experts’ forecasts beyond 2050 diverge significantly. Some predict sustained growth, some negative growth, and others initial growth before a decline. The uncertainty makes it impossible to plan specific strategies to cope with exposure to energy market disruptions.

The New Retail Scenarios: Digital Acceleration and Consumer Behavior Change the Mission: Retailers face a difficult challenge to move from a stagnant situation to one in which sustainable business and consumer value is achieved through the use of flexible and composable retail business models. Retail CIOs should use Gartner’s scenarios to address the immediate imperative of managing their businesses amid the continued market volatility manifest, for example, in bankruptcies, changing government policies, social influence, the fluidity of human behavior, the uncertainty of epidemiology and other disruptive forces.

Note 1. Other Examples of Scenario Plans

Blockchain Competitiveness in the Energy Sector, Copenhagen Institute for Futures Studies

These 4 Scenarios Show How We Might Be Working in the Future, World Economic Forum

Sketch: The Digitalisation of Society, Shell

Four Future Scenarios for Businesses, Rabobank

Four Scenarios for Geopolitical Order in 2025-2030: What Will Great Power Competition Look Like?, Center for Strategic and International Studies
Recommended by the Authors

Some documents may not be available as part of your current Gartner subscription.

Scenario Planning Playbook

“Connection to the Future” Scenario-Planning Workshop

Scenario Planning Capabilities Assessment

Don’t Make Predictions and Choices, Instead Create Options by Using Scenario Planning for Pandemic Recovery

Backcast the Enterprise's Next Future State Vision

Quick Answer: How Do I Capitalize on Future Trends Using Levels of Uncertainty?

Introduction to Scenario Planning

Ignition Guide to Conducting Scenario Planning for Finance

Case Study: Capability-Operating Model Scenario Planning Assessments (LavenderLake*)