

BETTER THAN TREND WATCHING...

People are intrigued by changes, most particularly radical changes. In ways more than one, we're always trying to get a clear view, and even grip, of what lies ahead.

ONE RADICAL NEW METHOD IS TO USE OF FUTURE CONSTELLATIONS

THERE ARE DIFFERENT TYPES OF TREND watching. Conventional trend watching is highly emotional. "I see what you do not see". New signals are picked-up and are sometimes related to each other. Next to this, a more rational school of scenario planning exists, which is used to develop full-scale world views. Often consisting of four worlds based on two important (but uncertain) dimensions. A less severe form of scenario planning are the 'what-if' scenarios. What will it mean if one essential quantity changes drastically?

An entirely different approach is working with future constellations. The future constellation is a emotional and global approach (emotional-holistic). This method has its origin in family constellations, based on the theory and practice of the German therapist Bert Hellinger. Family constellations simulate family relationships to gain more insight in the relationships and one's own role within the family, often one's role as a child. Future constellations work similarly. The future is being mimicked here in order to gain insight into what developments might mean to existing relationships and

the specific possibilities for the parties involved. Often the possibilities for a brand are investigated.

Zeitgeists

The Rabobank has recently conducted a couple of future constellations. Each constellation consisted of the brand Rabobank (R) with its brand pillars: Members (M), Society (S), Future (F), and Network (N). Subsequently, a Zeitgeist came every now and then in the game. We worked with four Zeitgeists: Safety (S), Entrepreneurship (E), Professionalism (P), and Harmony (H). The Safety (S) Zeitgeist feels safe but has with it the risk of chaos. The Zeitgeist Professionalism (P) is focused on new structures but risks the loss of the existing ones. The Zeitgeist Harmony (H) feels warm indeed but risks idleness. People from the public were typecasted instinctively to play a role. None of the participants knew who he or she was, they only knew the letters they received and held up on their chests. And whether they belonged to the brand (R, M, S, F, N) or a Zeitgeist that could change everything

(E, S, P, H). The four Zeitgeists were directors of the constellation, as it were. He or she had complete control over the brands. The future constellations meticulously showed what can happen to your brand in different Zeitgeists.

Wedding

The Zeitgeist Safety (S) didn't change the starting position at all. As a matter of fact, this Zeitgeist distanced itself from the whole, especially from the Members. Everything was good as it was. The participants found it boring.

On contrary, the Zeitgeist Entrepreneurship (E) changed the whole playing field. All pillars changed position. A lot was going on; even conflicting matters. The pillar Future (F) first embraced the brand Rabobank (R), after which it turned its back on the brand Rabobank (R). The Zeitgeist was very enterprising. All of the participants were energetically enthusiastic about it.

The Zeitgeist Professionalism (P) looked for a more logical new structure, without taking the current structure into account. Reorganisations abounded until the participants grew weary and unhappy. They expressed themselves by comments such as 'the excitement is gone' and 'I don't get it, it has become one big mess'.

The Zeitgeist Harmony (H) brought everything together. It became sort of like a wedding: the brand Rabobank (R) married the pillar Members (M), with their sights set on the Future (F). The other two pillars were witnesses at this wedding. All participants felt greatly involved and were happy.

As a brand that is more than 100 years old, we can confidently say that we have already experienced all of these Zeitgeists. And that we recognise what happened. As the famous football player Johan Crujff says: you'll only see it once you get it. Thanks to these future constellations, we saw it and we got it. The session brought about a clear insight into the impact of the future on the brand Rabobank. And it consecutively brought us clearer perspectives as to how we, as a brand, can better respond to future developments without losing ourselves. It provided insights that one cannot get out of trend watching. I recommend every brand to use future constellations.



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