

**DAVID GOLDSMITH**  
with **LORRIE GOLDSMITH**

# Paid to **THINK**

**A leader's toolkit for redefining your future.**

***TOOL: FORECASTING ORIENTATION (From CHAPTER 14)***



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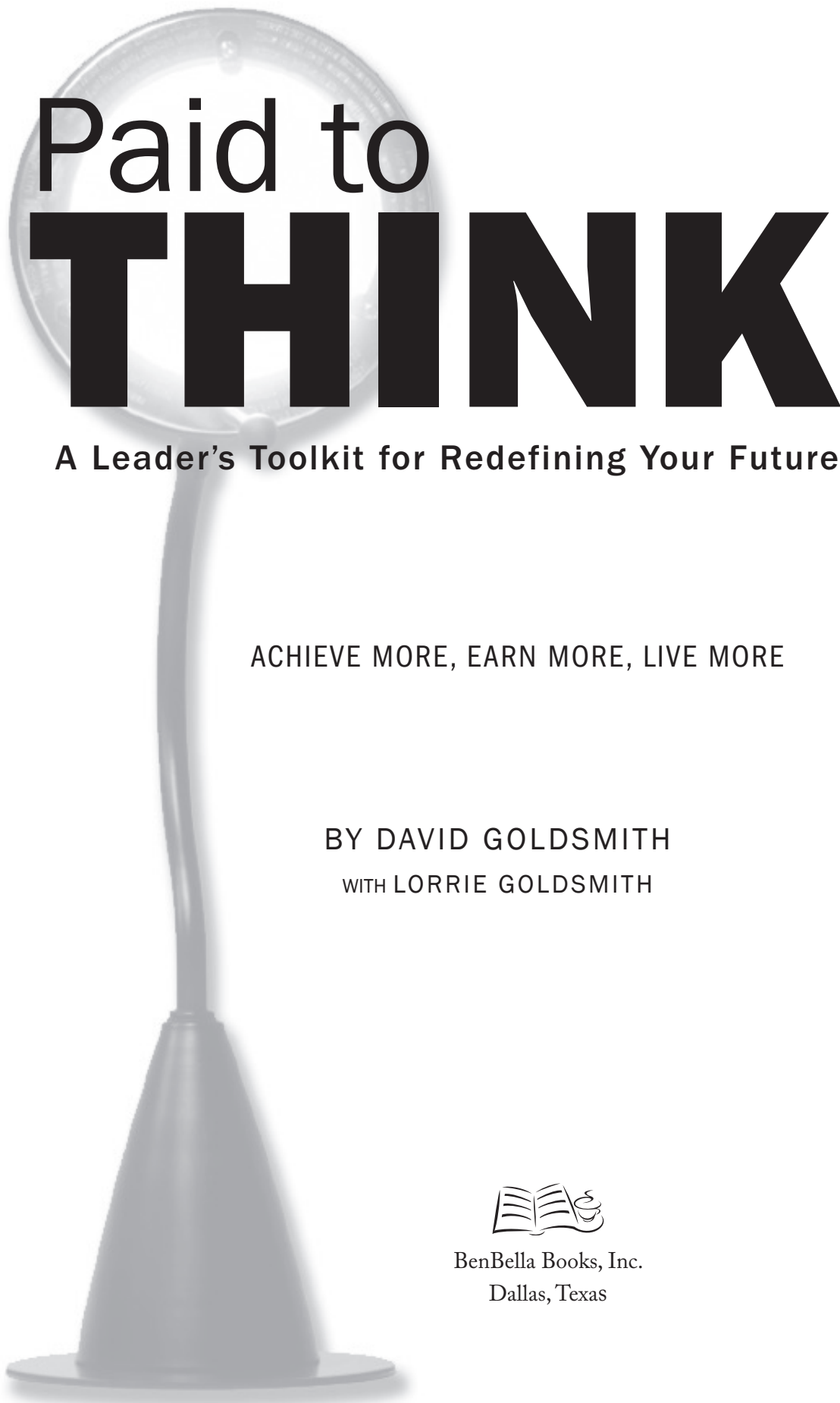
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# Paid to **THINK**

**A Leader's Toolkit for Redefining Your Future**

ACHIEVE MORE, EARN MORE, LIVE MORE

BY DAVID GOLDSMITH

WITH LORRIE GOLDSMITH



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To my wife, Lorrie, my love of 26 years,  
thank you for everything. There are no words to describe  
what you mean to me.

∞ DAVID

To my sons, Adam and Jake,  
I wish for you love, happiness, and experiences  
that will enrich your lives as much as you have mine.

∞ DAD



surround you. When you complete this chapter, your vision will extend farther into the future than it does today, and you will be able to use that forward focus to make a difference in all areas of your life.

## The Art and Science of Forecasting

The decisions you make today create your organization's future. So it makes sense that your ability to anticipate tomorrow's challenges and opportunities will directly impact how well you strategize today and that in turn will determine your organization's preparedness to operate and compete in the months and years ahead.

Right now, look at your entire organization—its operations, products, services, staff members, cash flow, assets, and relationships with stakeholders and allies. Currently, each of these areas is either thriving or struggling based on decisions that you or your colleagues made in the past. An underlying concept of forecasting is:

*You are where you are today based upon decisions you've made in the past.*

It's important that you understand how this concept affects your career and your organization, because, as I say to so many leaders, the challenges you face today are most likely the result of some leader's decision a month ago, a year ago, or a decade ago. Although you may think you already realize this fact, I've found that once people truly come to see their current challenges and opportunities as products of past decision making, they become more interested in how to forecast so that their current decisions have the greatest chance of producing excellent opportunities in the future.

So as you engage in Cyclonic Thinking and you develop plans, try to imagine what your organization will become five or ten years from now should its decision makers continue making similar decisions. Even if you like what you see in your mind's eye, you can probably admit that there's room for improvement. Now it's only a matter of having the right thinking tools to do better.

We've talked a lot about good decision making coming from the top down. While the 50,000-foot perspective is an essential component for good decision making, it doesn't stretch your thinking very far into the future. For that, you need forecasting, an activity that informs your decision making, launches your thinking forward, and empowers you to make the types of anticipatory decisions that secure your organization's stronghold in its future, not just its present. And like all the other activities of ET, you perform this activity every day, throughout each day.

Forecasting is not guesswork. It's a blend of both art and science. While you have to be creative and innovative, you also have to make your decisions based on data, observations, knowledge, and facts if those decisions are to have long-term power.

In essence, forecasting will enhance your decision making the way that high-beam headlights enhance your nighttime-driving vision. When you switch your headlights from low to high beam, you immediately see farther into the distance and you identify the sharp curves, bumps in the road, and other would-be surprises ahead of you. High beams also widen your vision horizontally, illuminating objects such as pedestrians and animals on the sides of the road sooner. Having better information and more time to decide how you will handle what's coming at you puts you in an advantageous position both on the road and within your organization.

## Living Mentally in the Future

Already, you look into the future every day. You forecast hours, days, weeks, months, and years into the future. Each time you search for an answer to a challenge and you ask yourself a “what-if” question, you're playing out a future-focused scenario in your mind. What if I can secure the funding for the equipment this month instead of waiting until next quarter? What if I consolidate two work crews on the larger job's site tomorrow and wrap up work there four days early? You may be figuring out human resource needs, identifying capital market changes, anticipating troop movements, calculating where the next hurricane or disease may strike, or anticipating next week's payroll.

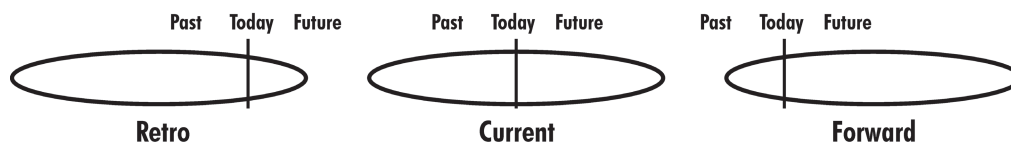
A passage in the book *McDonald's: Behind the Arches*<sup>181</sup> describes how the forward-thinking solution to the company's cash-flow challenges was derived by an accountant named Gerry Newman during McDonald's early years. After calculating that there would not be enough funds to cover payroll at the end of the week, Martino changed paycheck distribution to a biweekly schedule and kept McDonald's running. Whether you're forecasting about tomorrow or about twenty years from now, this type of mental modeling is one of the ways that you “live mentally in the future.”

Your organization, career, and personal life are all greatly impacted by your ability to live mentally in the future, yet, if you were to estimate how much time you spend doing so compared with focusing on present issues or past experiences, where would you say you spend the majority of your mental time?

The Forecasting Orientation diagram (Figure 14.1) is a visual representation of three types of leadership thinking—Retro, Current, and Forward—that correspond to a leader's focus on the past, present, and future respectively.



## Forecasting Orientation



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Figure 14.1—Forecasting Orientation

Most leaders will admit that they aren't sure how to forecast accurately and don't believe they can stretch their thinking as far into the future as they probably should. When they see this diagram, the majority of them identify their ways of thinking as somewhere between the Retro and Current orientations, because they tend to live mentally in the present and the past. You might associate with their tendencies if you're apt to make statements like, "It's impossible to plan 60% of my day, because my industry is so unique that I can only realistically schedule 10% of my days in advance." (As an evolving Enterprise Thinker, you already know that no industry or sector is too "unique" for ET tools.) Ideally, you want to live in the Forward Orientation, but it takes extra effort to stay there, because the future is always moving, which requires you to continually think, read, learn, listen, model, and so on to advance your thinking.

Retro-oriented forecasters are leaders who spend more mental time in the past than in the present or future. They might believe they are looking forward when they say, "We need to review our stats," but they're only looking at information from the past and trying to guess what the stats mean for tomorrow. When they don't innovate, update operationally, or bring new products to market, they are not leaping out of the past. Some leaders' thinking is so entrenched in the past that even when they are given a proven way of, say, increasing productivity by 40%, they will insist that the old way is better. If you are a Retro-oriented forecaster, you find yourself holding onto old ways of thinking, saying, "We tried it that way in the past and it doesn't work." As I've said before, you can't solve tomorrow's challenges with yesterday's thinking. A Retro-oriented perspective puts your group or organization behind others, in a position of playing catch-up. It hinders your organization from offering anything more than me-too products and forces your people to function with outdated equipment and technologies. Although you shouldn't discount the importance of reviewing historical successes and failures when you strategize, you need a continuous supply of updated information to plug into a forward-moving mechanism to be efficient and competitive.

Current-oriented forecasters lead by spending a lot of mental time either in the present or spending equal amounts of time on the future and the past. They might be the walk-around manager who believes that being seen supporting their group displays how progressive they are, but they're still only looking at conditions as they exist in the present. Current-oriented forecasting won't cause your organization to fall behind, but it tends not to stretch your thinking far enough into the future to consider long-term opportunities and challenges, and therefore, won't propel you and your organization forward as advantageously as is possible. For example, if you're a Current-oriented forecaster, other people are likely to consider you to be on top of your game, because you can still make good decisions about which projects to develop, but those projects aren't likely to make the big-enough movements to hit aggressive targets or to protect against longer-range challenges. Current-oriented forecasting will not place your organization in its best strategic position long term.

Forward-oriented forecasters spend most of their strategic thinking time living mentally in the future. They click on their mental high beams and look everywhere down the road, seeking their best future options for both their professional and personal lives. If you're a Forward-oriented forecaster, you research data and then extrapolate and calculate to seek new and better techniques, products, services, technologies, and more. You are not primarily focused on the past and the present, like the Retro- and Current-oriented thinkers are. As a Forward-oriented forecaster, you're seeking stats on population shifts, consumer needs, and behavioral changes as ways to live in the mental future and bring a fresh perspective to your decision making.

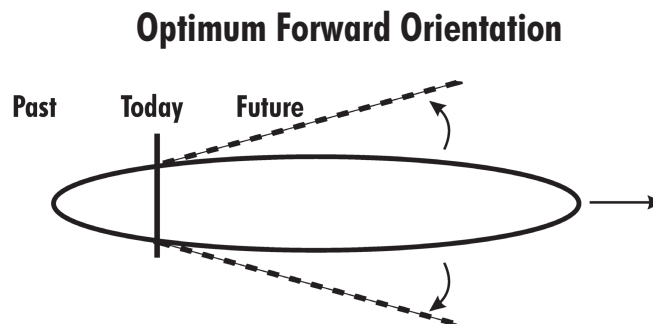
**Note:** Be careful not to confuse leadership's Forward-oriented forecasting with projects' future-focused outcomes. For example, if you're working on a project that you expect will preserve the environment for future generations, that project is different than your internal operations, and no matter how much your thinking stretches into the future to protect the environment, if you're not planning, innovating, establishing alliances, implementing technology, etc. as a Forward-oriented forecaster, your decisions could remain seated in Retro- or Current-oriented thinking, and therefore, be so short term that they put your organization at risk of not surviving to see the effects of your project's outcome.

After learning about the three orientations, where do you fall on the orientation scale? Already, your awareness about the three forecasting orientations will begin to evolve your perspective, so if you believe that you're not yet at the Forward Orientation, at least you can begin to make strides to advance your thinking in a direction that focuses you on the future.

You're going to strive to move yourself into the Forward Orientation position using the tools and concepts forthcoming in this chapter. In addition, you will begin to see how you can apply forecasting to all of your other ET activities, which will enhance your performance and create a stronger future for your organization. You

can learn to forecast innovatively just as you can forecast for innovation. You can use forecasting knowledge to plan, just as you can utilize planning to forecast more frequently, more precisely, and more effectively. As you learn more about forecasting and its accompanying tools and concepts, your Forward Orientation will advance, also, to the Optimum Forward Orientation, which not only projects your thinking forward, but it also widens the scope of your vision to uncover and make even more opportunities and sustainable decisions than you ever thought possible. The Optimum Forward Orientation is diagrammatically represented in Figure 14.2.

Think back to the analogy of using high beams on a vehicle at night, and envision how your headlights on high beam not only spray the illumination ahead, but also widen your vision on each side of the road so that signs and obstacles become visible earlier. By forecasting an Optimum Forward Orientation, similarly, you see more of what is coming at you sooner and with a greater breadth of information at your disposal than you would have with low-beam light, so that you and your organization stay on the road to Desired Outcome. This new orientation enables you to view opportunities and challenges in improved ways, too. For instance, a Retro- or Current-oriented forecaster might run a cash-flow analysis using the previous quarter's financial data, spending most of their time analyzing what happened and then making a few projections, whereas Forward-oriented forecasters will use some historical data and, in addition, look to gather real-time data about today and then spend the bulk of their time extrapolating farther into the future with it, all the while realizing that what they project must tie to real-life conditions and the ability to actually do what's projected. Then, as Forward-oriented forecasters learn additional tools, the orientation expands to that of the Optimum Forward Orientation, where advanced tools and more data—experiences from the past, awareness and knowledge of the present, and forecasted data about the future—lengthen and broaden the scope of vision and improve decision making even more.



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Figure 14.2—Optimum Forward Orientation

With Forward-oriented forecasting, every activity you perform yields better outcomes, because when your decisions are made with an accurate eye on the future, they are more on target with your Desired Outcome, and therefore they have longer-lasting impact on your entire organization. Think of the impact you can have on developing new products and services when your organization is able to set its competitive intelligence in motion earlier. Imagine what kinds of results you can achieve from your plans when they contain specific project-related details that offer insight into government oversight changes happening a year ahead of others in the industry, enabling you to progress your organization ahead faster than it would have progressed otherwise. Consider how the arsenal of information at your disposal for establishing alliances can help you select allies that are not only useful for your current needs but will help leverage patents currently under development months or years into your future, too. These are only a few examples of how the Optimum Forward Orientation improves leaders' ability to perform all ET activities, even if the outcomes improve only by a nose!

When you optimize your forecasting orientation, opportunities and advantages increase in number while anxiety or firefighting diminishes, because you are prepared to address any reality you foresee in the future. Alternately, as your forecasting orientation regresses toward the past, your focus slips into that rear-view mirror thinking, and once-available opportunities and advantages dwindle. Keep in mind that you need to work to achieve and maintain an optimal forecasting orientation. Think of it like losing weight and keeping it off; once you get to your optimal condition, the only way to maintain it is with sustained effort. Forecasting is a continual activity.

## Forecasting Tools

People can become confused about what forecasting is and how to do it, so a good rule of thumb is to think of a good forecaster as more like a meteorologist than a wizard looking into a magic ball. A meteorologist uses tools that combine knowledge, theories, technologies, patterns, and so on, to predict future weather conditions with some degree of accuracy.

In contrast is the pseudo-futurist who doesn't use these types of tools to gain a precise prediction. In fact, anyone can play the pseudo-futurist by looking out their window on a cloudy morning and "predicting" that they might need an umbrella that day. It doesn't take much skill to deduce rainy conditions when you look at the sky and see a dark wave of gray clouds moving in. Some go as far as to wait for rain sprinkles to hit the pavement before announcing their "prediction."

But the meteorologist, a more credible (albeit not perfect) source of forecasting

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**DAVID AND LORRIE** are based in New York State. *Paid to Think* is their first book.



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**“For six months I fought with the publisher...  
then finally I was able to purchase one chapter.”**

That’s a real quote from an executive named Elizabeth who wanted only multiple copies of a single chapter of a certain book to lead her staff members to desired outcomes, but she wasted valuable time and effort appealing to the book’s publisher for the tools she needed. Maybe you’ve had the same wishes as Elizabeth; perhaps you supervise, oversee, or manage a group of people, and you’ve wanted similar tools to maximize potential and drive performance but found that chapter singles were inaccessible or unaffordable. Well, put all that behind you, because I’ve made Paid to Think chapter singles easily and quickly available.

So while I’m sure you’re perfectly willing to purchase the entire book of *Paid to Think* for yourself or for a leadership team, I also understand that there may be times when it’s more efficient or cost effective to buy single chapters given certain circumstances.

In these types of situations, some of which are included here, single chapters can be a quick and easy solution, such as:

- ✓ When you work with a large team and you want them to understand a single topic without breaking your budget. Say that you’re working on developing new products within a department consisting of 47 staff members and seven leaders. In an instance like this, exposing all 54 participants to Chapter 4, Developing New Products and Services, would put everyone on the same page and ready them to proceed on the project at hand.
- ✓ When you’re about to undertake an endeavor and reading the entire book at that time is not feasible, you can address a particular topic area quickly. Let’s assume you about to enter into negotiations with a prospective ally, and you’d like both your team and the other party to build a successful union based on PTT’s proven Alliance Pillars. Distribute copies of Chapter 5, Establishing Alliances, and you’ll not only fend off the needless challenges that often plague alliances, but build the kinds of alliances that help your organization achieve desired outcomes now and in years to come.

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