

## Case Study 1: A novel workforce assessment battery for a leading global consultancy

### What was the challenge?

1. A leading global consultancy contracted our Chief Scientific Officer to create the first multi-skill assessment tool for workforce planning (incorporating intelligence, personality and social skills assessment). Such a tool does not exist anywhere in the academic or organisational literature, and so this piece of work truly represented innovation and required a high degree of Futures thinking.

### How did we approach it?

2. Techniques Used: This work combined the very latest scientific approaches with tools included in the Government's Futures Toolkit. For example, a **full review of the academic literature** was carried out according to gold-standard Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) guidelines. This review was initially **qualitative** in nature, drawing out themes and future direction from the most up-to-date scientific literature. The qualitative review was followed by a **quantitative meta-analysis** of the literature, which allows the strength of evidence across scientific studies to be established numerically.
3. A **Delphi** approach followed where the world's leading experts in the area participated in several rounds of discussion, with feedback and a final ranking of options. Somewhat unusually, the highest-ranking options were then used as a focus for **Driver Mapping** and to identify **Axes of Uncertainty**. This slightly unorthodox process allowed a further iteration of highly focused work to provide an extra degree of reassurance in the most highly ranked options. This unusual combination / ordering of methods was used to increase our confidence in, and the reliability of, the output of the Futures thinking process. Although slightly more time-consuming, it allows for far-greater precision and reliability in estimates of future outcomes.
4. Procedures To Analyse Outputs: The quantitative (meta-analytic) review of the literature provides statistical information **allowing uncertainty (and therefore confidence in conclusions) to be quantified**. This information is highly technical in nature, and one of the key challenges of the project was to be able to translate the confidence indicated by the statistics to the client. Our team's experience of teaching statistics in education and corporations allowed the appropriate numerical information to be conveyed to highly numerate members of the client's business group such that they could use the information to make informed choices. Members of clients' teams who were not required to understand the statistical techniques in depth were briefed on what could, and could not, be gained from such data, and provided with high-level overviews of what the data indicated.
5. In order to provide a framework within which the **client could understand the nature of change, why it is happening and how to monitor it**, several procedures were employed. First, a group of client sector experts were taken through a reduced program of all the techniques we had employed. This gave them first-hand experience of the processes and procedures that had generated the outputs from the futures work, and therefore an understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of each technique and the package as a whole. Then a novel 'condensed replay' technique was used for key decision-makers that explained how the understanding of change evolved over the process and enabled them to understand not only the **Drivers of Change** related to the future of workplace assessments, but also to the futures process itself. As a consequence of this condensed but fully experiential programme, **key decision makers were equipped with an advanced understanding of change, its drivers, and how to monitor change subsequently**.

6. Identifying and Managing Uncertainty and Risk: One of the key requirements of the project was to conduct futures work to determine the risk associated with the new workplace assessment package - particularly in an uncertain policy environment with respect to workplace discrimination legislation, and wider employment law governing workforce management, particularly redundancies. This was especially challenging because the consultancy wanted to use the workforce assessment tool across global markets. In particular, the client needed **a framework to identify risks and opportunities from futures work, and risk assessment tools to help manage uncertainty**. The twin challenges to this process are clear, to conduct futures work to identify changes, and to characterise the degree to which they correspond to an opportunity, a threat, or contain aspects of both.
7. The bulk of the work completed under this requirement related to **Horizon Scanning, Driver Analysis** and **SWOT Analysis**, but again an iterative framework was used such that outputs of the SWOT Analysis were used to refocus Horizon Scanning. Here it is worth noting **a novel variant on the Dialogue technique which, as far as we are aware, is unique to TJC**. Scientific research demonstrates that 'two heads are indeed better than one' when each participant freely and honestly shares their confidence in their position. Mathematical modelling reveals that this allows the pair of decision makers – for example when setting priorities – to combine their perspectives in the most mathematically optimal way (even while being unaware that they are doing so). Therefore, in pair, or small group discussions, we encourage participants to express not only their view, but also the confidence with which they hold that view.

#### **What was the outcome or impact of the work?**

8. The Futures thinking involved in this project allowed the development of a completely novel workforce assessment tool, which spanned more competencies than any that had gone before it. The tool was based on the most rigorous science, industry and academic expertise, and was a true co-creation between TJC staff and the client.