Purpose: Organizations across both the private and public sectors must improve strategic decision making to (1) succeed in the challenging environment of today, (2) overcome emerging complex and ill-defined problems, and (3) posture for success in an increasingly uncertain future. Strategic foresight enables organizations to envision a range of possible future environments. Scenario-based planning then enables organizations to develop an adaptive strategy for success as the actual future unfolds. This paper articulates why these capabilities are required in all organizations and the ALIS approach to assisting organizations to develop these capabilities.

The Strategic Environment: Today’s strategic environment is extremely challenging for organizations regardless of their size, function, or objective. As we look to the future, today’s challenges will only grow over time. There are at least five major areas where the challenges of the strategic environment require effective strategic thinking, learning, planning and decision making if organizations are to survive and prosper. These are:

(1) the increasing velocity of human and organizational interaction in an information-rich environment; (2) tightly coupled systems in an interconnected and interdependent world; (3) world-wide economic, social and political uncertainty; (4) numerous complex and ill-defined problems that threaten current and future operations; and (5) emerging domestic and transnational environmental and security threats.

The implications of the strategic environment are manifested primarily in organizational learning and decision making. Absent an effective learning system, organizations in an increasingly uncertain environment will continually be surprised, mal-positioned, and unprepared for future events – resulting in a lack of resiliency and sustainability, and eventual failure. Absent a vision and strategy applicable across a range of futures, organizational decision making will be increasingly reactive, paralyzed and irrelevant at the exact moment when rapid, relevant decisions are required to seize opportunities and mitigate risk.

Goals for Strategic Foresight and Scenario-Based Planning: The overall goal is to improve strategic decision making through improving leader, personnel, and team capabilities to:

- Solve complex problems in the challenging environments of today and the future
- Integrate strategic planning and execution in support of growth and sustainment
- Manage multiple, near term efforts, while shaping future capabilities and organization
- Operate as a learning and adaptive organization to ensure resiliency and capitalize on emerging opportunities while shaping and making strategic decisions during crisis.
The ALIS Strategic Foresight and Scenario-Based Planning Methodology

The ALIS Strategic Foresight Methodology integrates strategic foresight and scenario-based planning in support of the development of organizational strategic thinking, learning, planning and decision making. The result is an integrated, collaborative approach to visioning, sense-making and innovation that produces tangible outcomes in the form of organizational strategic vision, strategic messaging, action plans and learning systems that point the way forward for the organization through a turbulent and ill-defined future. Adapting and improving upon industry approaches, the ALIS methodology steps are:

- **Frame** the organization’s strategic foresight and scenario-based planning effort and frame the current environment using a systems thinking approach.
- **Scan** to identify emerging trends, discontinuities, challenges and opportunities.
- **Forecast** and develop to applicable detail a range of futures to avoid fixation on an expected or desired end state.
- **Vision** to evaluate the full-range of implications and consequences of each environment to develop a vision obtainable across the preferred and probable futures.
- **Plan** by adapting anticipated future environments into scenarios relevant to the organization’s goals and objectives to develop strategic options and risk mitigations.
- **Act** to translate scenario-based planning into organizational decisions, operations and strategic communications for both internal and external stakeholders.

Develop Your Organization’s Strategic Foresight/Scenario-Based Planning Capability

ALIS team members have decades of experience developing strategic thinking, learning, planning, decision making and leadership for both public and private organizations. ALIS offers a variety of on- and off-site seminars and workshops to both develop and support organizations strategic foresight and scenario-based planning capabilities – At ALIS we don’t teach anything we can’t do ourselves. To learn more, contact ALIS, Inc. at:

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