**[“Seeing’’ for organizational foresight](https://blackboard.mdh.se/bbcswebdav/pid-320811-dt-content-rid-1593767_1/xid-1593767_1" \t "_blank)**

***Key concepts***

According to Pierre Wack “seeing” is the challenge for organizations to see what they are currently not seeing. There are three major themes in this call for papers. The ﬁrst theme concerned the organizational ability to explore and recognize the underlying structure of the business environment—seeing drivers of change before they manifest themselves in near-term events. In that way, organization will be prepared for all threats that can happen. To “predict” is not appropriate term. Organization has to anticipate events before they happen and they will be more prepared to engage with whatever may happen. The second theme concerned the impact of heuristics and biases in managerial judgment and decision-making, which might impact on the ability of an organization to detect drivers of change. Even if there is recognition, within the organization, of a mis-alignment with the business environment, the psychological stress in adapting and changing may prevent managers from engaging in seeing activities. Intense conﬂicts are likely to arise whenever a person has to make an important decision. Such conﬂicts become acute as the decision-maker becomes aware of risk of suffering serious losses from whatever course of action is selected; for example, continuing with business-as-usual or changing strategy. The organization should give good instructions to its employees and planners so that there is no confusion and fear of changing things. The third theme concerned the development of an organizational capability (or capabilities) to see the future. Understanding the development of organizational foresight and how it is sustained would provide insight to organizations—giving them an underpinning conﬁdence to manage change proactively rather than reactively. Management tends not to be appreciative of the need to harness multiple perspectives from within the organization to help them see. The organization should stop thinking just about local trends and explore a little more. Twenty years ago, Pierre Wack wrote about seeing (beyond business-as-usual) and argued that the challenge for organizations—private/public, big/small, was to see what they were currently not seeing. Only the broad context gives you the ability to understand what is already in the pipeline, i.e. anticipate, and do better. And, at the same time, know the limits of your anticipation. Wack used the term microscope that ﬁlters details of events and ampliﬁes the interactions that link events together as a system. He argued that a macroscopic view would help managers to understand the broader and deeper system within which their organization operates. There are seven papers from Organizational Foresight Conference 2004. This set of selected papers from the second Strathclyde International Conference on Organizational Foresight develops further our understanding or organizational foresight.

***Strong points***

This article is important for all organizations, even they are small or private. If you want to succeed you need to follow all these themes. Three major themes are well defined and explained to details how to follow the best ways of “seeing” environment. Also importance of this is well defined with an example of the organization that failed because of wrong way of “seeing” i.e. “not seeing”. An example with macroscopic view gives good visualization of everything that has been said.

***Weak points***

It is mentioned that all people from organization have to evolve in changing processes but just once. In my opinion, this is very important but not well defined in this article.

***Valuable (personal) lessons***

From this article I learnt that I don’t need to follow day-to-day activities. I knew it before but I have never realized how important that actually is. Sometimes we are not aware that we got into the circle. If you think twice about macroscopic view you will understand what is the best way to follow these themes. Never think that something is stupid and useless. At one point it can become very important.

**Weak signals: Ansoff today**

***Key concepts***

This paper examines the concept of weak signals: its basic idea presented by Igor Ansoff and its later developments. In the present paper, it is summarized and evaluated both theoretical contributions and managerial implications of these new approaches. Ansoff not only was a pioneer in the ﬁeld, but developed many ideas that are still applicable today. Ansoff started to develop his idea of weak signals as an alternative or supplement to strategic planning, which in the 1970s and 1980s was a dominating future-oriented approach in firms and organizations. He stated that strategic planning is reasonable in the case of incremental development of historical trends, but it is not successful when dealing with surprises. In circumstances where the rate of change is continuously accelerating, a more reasonable approach is to increase strategic ﬂexibility and determine which actions will be feasible when the detailed information becomes available. This kind of approach can be called *response to weak signals*. A change of focus has taken place in futures studies since the late 1980s. The approach, in which the primary object is not to identify the most probable state of affairs in the future but to understand the new processes initiated, has gained more and more ground. The central ideas of this approach are preparedness for many different futures and ‘making the future’. As the examination and evaluation of possible and probable futures are the core of futures studies, weak signals belong to this discipline as a natural element. Weak signals are ﬁrst symptoms of strategic discontinuities, i.e. symptoms of possible change in the future, acting as warning signs or signs of new possibilities. When a weak signal ﬁrst appears, the information included is very vague; there is only a sense of a threat or opportunity. Progressively the information increases and describes the source of the threat or opportunity, its characteristics, the responses needed, and ﬁnally the outcomes that can be expected. Ansoff divides the responses needed into two main groups: responses that change the firm’s relationship with the environment and responses that change the internal dynamics and structure of the firm. The idea of weak signals must be ‘sold’ to senior managers, whereas strategic and creative managers have to be persuaded to see the value of the management of weak signals. In order to affect the future, the signal has to traverse three ﬁlters: *the surveillance ﬁlter*, *the mentality ﬁlter* and *the power ﬁlter*. In order to pass this ﬁrst ﬁlter, an actor or several actors have to discover the emerging signal. There are other terms used as synonyms for the concept of weak signal (‘germ’, ‘seed’, ‘wild card’). Consequently, the term ‘early warnings’ has been used as a synonym for weak signals in some studies. The interrelation of weak signals and trends can also be understood in the way that weak signals point towards trends instead of being part of trends. Driving forces are forces of change which direct the decision making and choices of individuals and groups. Ansoff’s model of weak signal management included some general guidelines on the sources of weak signals. Their detection requires sensitivity and expertise: advisory groups with broad knowledge on social, economic, political and technological issues are good sources for external weak signals. Also individuals working in the interface functions such as marketing, purchasing and R&D are good sources for external weak signals. Employees with broad contacts inside the firm, including developers and planners, are sources for internal weak signals. Day and Schoemaker launched the term peripheral vision to point out that organizations should not focus too much on what they are currently doing but open their eyes to the outside world. In this article there are different views of the ways in which weak signals can be detected.

***Strong points***

The fact that Ansoff’s work is studied after so many years tells us how valuable this theme is. Ansoff has very accurately explained the notion of a weak signal to the smallest detail. Other researchers of Ansoff's work have tried to find the essence of the problem and give answers to all the questions that could be found.

***Weak points***

There are no examples from real world. It is still abstract what actually weak signal is. It would be understandable with some examples.

***Valuable (personal) lessons***

This article gave me a lesson that I should never go over the little things quickly, nor understand them lightly. Everything that happens means something, whether it's good or bad. We are the ones who need to see things on time.