

Preparing for the upturn

“I never cease to be amazed by the tenacity, creativity and passion of UK entrepreneurs. When you put those values together with the power of preparation you create a clear blueprint for growth.” James Caan

The big idea

This tool highlights the importance of environmental scanning as a mechanism to prepare your business for a future upturn. Most businesses need to scan their environment to avoid unpleasant surprises, to identify threats and to bring opportunities to the surface. It tends to involve two forms of activity, both searching for information and looking at information. It can range from a chance conversation over lunch to a formally commissioned research programme.

Purpose

The purpose of environmental planning in the context of the current downturn is to ensure readiness, indeed preparedness, for the upturn. Many organisations in the creative and cultural sector will be altering their business models to respond to the current economic environment. Even if you haven't, it is important to recognise that there may be further changes to come and you want to be ready for them.

The tool

Environmental scanning consists of a number of steps:

1. Identify the key trends or issues likely to impact on your business over the next five to ten years. You can use a PESTLE analysis to help you (this tool is covered in the 'Where are you now?' section of the toolkit)
2. Rank the trends or issues by deciding if they are vital, important or interesting
3. Taking all those you have classified as **vital**, use the following template to rank them:

Trends	Impact			Likelihood			Timescale		
	High	Med	Low	High	Med	Low	Immediate	6 months	+7 months
A									
B									
C									
D									

- Carry out any further research you need to ensure you understand the issues in more depth
- Now consider the opportunities and threats that these trends or issues might present. Look at them from a variety of perspectives, including your enterprise, your customers/audiences and your stakeholders. You can use the template below

Trends	Likely impact on				
	Customers/ beneficiaries /users	Stakeholders	Your activities/ offer	You and/or your team	Your systems and processes
A					
B					
C					
D					

- Develop an action plan based on your findings. What do you need to improve, what innovations might you consider, how might you improvise?

Take the next step

Take one area of your activity and think about all the factors that might affect its development over the next five years? What are the opportunities that might arise? How do you know?

Top tips

- It may be hard to contemplate an upturn at the moment but this sort of planning will help you be proactive as things change
- Involve as many people as possible. Have fun imagining the future
- Use existing research to help you do the leg work. There is a wide range of organisations that scan future drivers and trends, such as [Future Search Network](#), [Third Sector Foresight](#), [Global Future](#), [International Futures](#), [Mapping the Global Future](#) and [Outsights 21 Drivers](#)
- Use the findings to help you decide where you might compete, where you might collaborate or where you will complement. There are other tools in the planning section, which can also help with this decision. See 'Compete, collaborate, complement' and 'Strategic options'