

The Mental Time Machine

PAST

Extract wisdom from history by identifying cycles of change.

Trajectory: What trends brought us to where we are today?

Compare: What parallels are there between the past and today?

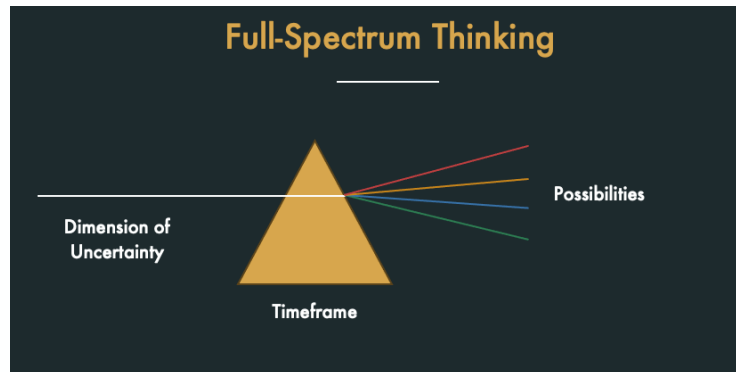
Contrast: What was different about the past?

Context: Are there similar situations in other geographies or industries?

People: Who has experienced this before?

FUTURE

Unlock the uncertainties of the future with Full-Spectrum Thinking.



PRESENT

Make better decisions by embracing the spirit of experimentation.

What experiment could you conduct today?

What relationship could you try to build?

What project could you take on?

What idea could you test?

CYCLES OF CHANGE IN HR

Let's imagine Belinda is in your team. She's 150 years old and has lived through the history of HR.

She first got hired in the early 1900s by a car manufacturer. She's living in the era of "Personnel Administration." Driven by industrialization, regulation and the scale of doing business, companies had to start keeping records and having more formal relationship with the people working there. Rapid growth in the development of administration systems that then flattened out.

After the Second World War, she gets hired by a construction company, and there's a shift to humanize work in companies driven by research in militaries on psychology, leadership and motivation that businesses recognized they could use. The function was still called "Personnel," but a rapid rise in training and job design, which eventually flattened out.

In the 1980s, the emphasis shifts to performance management, talent pipelines, and aligning with business strategy. We see the term "human resources" and "human resource management" start to be used, and a rapid expansion in the influence of the function across the organization, which then leveled out.

Since the start of the century, we've seen human resources become more analytical, with the introduction of HR information systems, e-learning and talent management software. So we've seen a massive rise in the use of data - data lakes, data analytics, Big Data.

The key point here is each transition reframed what HR did. We've moved from compliance → people development → strategic alignment → experience design. AI is forcing us to ask again what is HR for?

ETHICAL CHALLENGES IN RECRUITMENT IN 2031

Return of the Human Touch

After years of lawsuits, scandals, and reputational harm, some sectors scrap AI in hiring altogether. By 2030, "human-led hiring" makes a comeback, especially in industries that value culture and judgment. Recruiters become brand ambassadors again, and firms market themselves by saying "a human will read your application."

The Algorithmic Arms Race

Rather than abandoning AI, companies double down. HR tech vendors pour billions into creating "bias-proof" AI, advertising it as a competitive edge. By 2030, firms race to adopt the latest generation of algorithmic hiring systems, and candidates even start tailoring their résumés for AI readability, creating a new layer of game-playing.

The Ethical Divide

Some companies embrace responsible hiring practices, while others quietly prioritize efficiency over fairness. By 2030, a two-tier labor market emerges: organizations known for equitable opportunities, and those stigmatized as "black box employers." For HR leaders, choosing which side to stand on becomes a strategic identity decision, not just a compliance matter.

Candidate Rebellion

Jobseekers fight back. By 2030, candidates routinely use AI "counter-tools" that rewrite résumés, simulate psychometrics, or game algorithms. Online communities share hacks for beating corporate hiring systems. HR leaders face a trust crisis, caught between detecting deception and proving fairness, turning recruitment into a digital cat-and-mouse game.