

CURIOUS CLUES FOR YOUR FUTURE



By Michael Perman, C'EST WHAT? LLC

Curiosity is a core value and powerful transformation tool for many forward-thinking organizations, is certainly one of the things I **CRAVE**. It is true, curiosity provides the fuel to transcend the liminal state of crafting our future, living in that gooey chrysalis stage before the path forward becomes more clear and beautiful. As we enter the new era, some clues to the trends we should follow would be helpful, right?

In addition to journaling, scenario planning and creative visioning as ways to capture your nascent ideas, try creating **CURIOUS CLUES** to deliberately peek at your potential future.

CURIOUS CLUES are realities, ideas, concepts and facts that exist in rare form, yet may not yet be broadly known. They are faint but visible signals of your future that may come to you in a daydream, on a bicycle ride, in the shower or while cooking. As futurist William Gibson once said: "The future is already here, it is just not evenly distributed."

CURIOUS CLUES are examples of happenings in the world that may relate to your passions and desires, from which you can learn, be inspired and envision your future more clearly.

I have used **CURIOUS CLUES** extensively in the work I do with organizations that are seeking innovation and a transformational future. After my MEA experience, I realize these catalysts for action will be useful for people on their personal journey as well.

Here's an example from the culinary world, which is one of my passions and past professions. Back in the early 1980's, after I attended Hotel Restaurant School, I began working for large food companies developing new products. At the times, as I scanned the landscape for new ideas, I noticed Wolfgang Puck experimenting with a new concept called "ethnic fusion," combining flavors from two or more countries into a new dish.

Puck's restaurant SPAGO made ethnic fusion famous and launched a new wave of playful culinary experimentation, leading to a trend. Now we see ethnic fusion all over the world. Later on, around 2008, food trucks in Los Angeles were sporting new combinations such as Korean BBQ Tacos, which signaled the rise of gourmet food trucks which we see in many cities everywhere.

These two examples were early clues to the future, which made me curious, forming my belief system on the power of following clues.



HOW TO CREATE CURIOUS CLUES FOR YOURSELF

CURIOUS CLUES are faint intimations of the future conveyed with images, headlines, and prose that balances “what is” with “what could be.” They can emerge from your intuition, from conversations, internet searches, conferences or even music you hear. My advice is to create each clue separately and make several so you can view all the clues you create together, observing patterns.

- 1) Give your clue a headline that beams with energy and possibility. Make it sound like a news headline, movie, and book title, or even a poem.
- 2) Describe your clue with an image. You can use a personal photo, grab something from the internet or even hand-drawn. Your photo can be a literal depiction or a metaphor.
- 3) Describe your clue with 3-4 sentences of your own prose or poetry that convey what the clue is, how it works, the impact it is having on people, the emotional and physical qualities.

4) Pose “catalytic” questions that raise eyebrows and make you think: “C’EST WHAT?”. Write your questions in ways that invite further exploration by beginning the sentences with questions such as: how might I...”, or “what if I could...”, or “what are the implications five years forward?”

5) Try creating 5-10 clues over time. Once you have created a suite of clues, observe them together. Look for patterns and identify potential actions to explore further. Reach out to people related to the clues, and ask about their thinking. Write your observations and reactions each time you see the clues together. Go deeper in your exploration. Keep probing for meaning, trusting your intuition even when the clue seems ambiguous or far-fetched at first.

CURIOUS CLUES won’t provide hard answers, but they can map your exploration in more future-focused ways. You will likely be surprised how the clues reveal real options and clarity for what is yet to come next in the next phase of your life.



CURIOUS CLUE QUANTIFIED WELLBEING

C'EST WHAT?

How might we define and measure well being? What are the most significant and relevant contributing factors for our business? What is the role of understanding psyche? How will clarity on this subject influence innovation?

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CURIOUS CLUE DRONE PORTS

Considering more than 16 billion packages are projected to be delivered in the U.S. in 2020, drone ports in commercial buildings may emerge to alleviate street traffic.

C'EST WHAT?

How might we re-think commercial buildings to accommodate the growing congestion of street traffic and alleviate last-mile challenges?

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CURIOUS CLUE BIOPHILIA

As climate change and urbanization depletes our natural environments, the 2020's may see an increase in "the urge to affiliate with other forms of life".

C'EST WHAT?

How might we re-think our physical environments in order to navigate impacts of climate change?

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C'EST WHAT? LLC is an innovation strategy and new product development firm that forecasts emerging opportunities and aligns teams on the best path forward. Our holistic approach is based on the concept of regeneration for people, organizations and communities. C'EST WHAT expertise includes ethnographic insights, foresights, strategy and concept creation.

Michael Perman is an innovation leader and CEO of C'EST WHAT? LLC and author of CRAVING THE FUTURE®, Transforming Our Deepest Desires into New Realities, available at Powells Books and on iTunes. Learn more about Michael's work at www.cestwhat.org or contact him directly at michael@cestwhat.org.