



RETHINKING REINVENTION

JARED NICHOLS

RETHINKING REINVENTION

BY: JARED NICHOLS

© J.P. Nichols & Associates Inc. 2014

This book is copyrighted material. All rights are reserved. It is against the law to make copies of this material without securing specific written permission in advance from J.P. Nichols & Associates Inc. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in retrieval systems, or transmitted in any form or by any means including but not limited to electronic, mechanical, photocopying, and recording– Without prior permission of the copyright holder.

ISBN: 978-0-9885821-2-5

THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED...

to the individuals and organizations who have allowed me to join them on their journey to reinvent themselves.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Jared Nichols is a deep futures strategist, executive advisor, speaker, and coach. He provides the tools to help leaders and organizations gain competitive advantage, seize new market opportunities, drive in new revenue, and increase profits. As one of the few people in the world to hold a Masters Degree in Strategic Foresight, Jared is sought out by leaders, organizations, and entrepreneurs to help them identify and create their long-term successful future.

Jared is a recognized speaker and delivers several keynotes and concurrent sessions throughout the year. Major trade associations, government entities, universities, and business development organizations regularly seek Jared out to deliver customized workshops and seminars that position their members for significant growth in the 21st century.

As a highly prolific author, Jared has published over 30 articles and is the author of *Leading the 21st Century: The CEO's Guide to Thriving in a Volatile and Uncertain Future*, and *Four Futures for the 21st Century Non-Profit*. Jared is regularly quoted in the media on a wide variety of issues, which have included the future of entrepreneurship, the changing face of the news industry, capitalizing in uncertain times, the information economy, and the future of the workforce and education.

Jared's insight and expertise is utilized across a wide variety of sectors and industries from Fortune 500 companies to government municipalities, entrepreneurial start-ups, as well as some of his most recent work in Hollywood with accomplished actors, writers, and producers, helping them reinvent themselves and discover new areas for growth both inside and outside the bounds of their industry.

Jared is also a musician, competitive cyclist, and trail runner living in Charlotte, North Carolina with his wife and their two sons.

INTRODUCTION

The rate of change we see in the world today is unprecedented. New innovations, products, and services fade to irrelevance more quickly than ever before. The constant bombardment of the vast array of information now available can easily make us, as leaders and entrepreneurs, feel overwhelmed. We know we must change, constantly and quickly, but we lack clarity about how and why. Consequently, our futures are driven by outside forces to which we constantly react, and we lose all intentionality and vested interest in the future being created.

As such, the need for reinvention in our individual lives and the lives of our organizations is urgent. Reinvention demands that we change our perception of the future and reassert control over the direction our lives are taking. It ensures our actions today have meaning and purpose and are not merely reactions to the constant challenges and obstacles we face. In this e-book, I offer a process for reinvention that will enable you to imagine a future that is truly of your choosing and empower you to begin creating it today.

HOW SHOULD WE APPROACH RE-INVENTION?

For some the concept of reinvention implies a clean break from the past in order to blaze ahead boldly into the future. For those not wanting to leave behind the large body of work they have built over their careers, reinvention may seem like too risky an undertaking. Others are simply too inundated and overwhelmed by information to make a decision about how to move forward. Instead, they default to business as usual, continuing to do what they've always done and hoping that the right answer or clear direction presents itself. Both individuals and organizations are susceptible to these challenges.

Reinventing yourself or your organization, however, does not require a clean break from the past. It does require that you rethink your past experiences, your present actions, and your future narrative. You can no longer rely on past successes to dictate present actions in hopes of future success. Instead, reinvention requires that you reimagine your idea of future success, constructing an ideal future state for both you and your clients that will re-infuse the actions you take today with meaning and purpose. Then, you will be ready to leverage the past experiences, skill sets, and expertise that will help you moving forward.

THERE ARE THREE STEPS TO EFFECTIVELY REINVENTING YOURSELF:

1. Re-imagine your future
2. Re-frame your value proposition
3. Re-purpose your skills and expertise

RE-IMAGINE YOUR FUTURE

Imagination is everything. It is the pre-view of life's coming attractions. - Albert Einstein

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO “REIMAGINE YOUR FUTURE?”

HINDSIGHT IS 20/20

When you reflect on past decisions, events, relationships, employment, etc., what stands out in your mind as defining those periods in your life? Was it the day-to-day stress of surmounting obstacles, or was it the end result, such as landing the job you wanted or finishing a marathon? We tend to remember pivotal moments of victory and defeat and forget the day-to-day specifics that weighed us down. The reason is because in hindsight, the daily stressors weren't that important. This same principle should apply to our view of the future. We tend to let the day-to-day stress rob us of our vision and hope for our individual futures, our organizations, our communities, and our world. Although we have to deal with the day-to-day stress, we do not have to accept its version of the future.

We can avoid this trap, which I have referred to in the past as the “urgency trap,” by reimagining our future through a different framework than we normally use. When we normally think of the future, we tend to project our current opportunities, skill set, value, obstacles, and limitations forward into the future. We consider only the linear model of our future, as a series of obstacles to overcome, a list of

things that we would like to achieve. We view the future as a place, a destination we will reach once we have taken a series of steps forward. Now, ask yourself what is more important, where you are in 10 years or who you are in 10 years?

If you would rather discover who you would like to be, then you must learn to reimagine your future. You must approach the question of your future from a different standpoint, allowing yourself to bypass all the current obstacles and distractions in your life. You can do this by simply using your imagination to stand in the future.

Our ability to imagine the future and adapt accordingly has been the key to our success as a species. Today's rapidly changing environment requires that we undertake the challenge of reinvention like never before. Standing in the future will enable you to imagine a future free from current limitations, in which you have achieved a fuller expression of yourself in all aspects of your life. Only then, once you have uncovered this vision of who you are truly meant to be, can you begin the work becoming that person.

WHAT DOES THIS PROCESS LOOK LIKE?

Reimagining our future requires us to place ourselves in a future context in order to determine who, not where, it is that we ultimately aspire to be and whom we aspire to be that to. I've worked through this process with individuals and teams from a wide variety of industries, and without fail, each of them has had a profound experience rediscovering what is truly important to them and the lasting impact they want to have.

You can start by making a list of the different roles you play in your life. For example, you may be a mother, husband, entrepreneur, athlete, etc. Reflect for a moment on what you are most proud of, what has had the greatest impact on who you are today in each of those roles as you look back over the past 10 years. In each of those roles, use the following language:

"As a (mother / father / entrepreneur, etc) I am proud of the fact that"

Now I want you to put yourself 10 years into the future and repeat this exercise.

- What did you discover about your future aspirations that otherwise may not have surfaced?
- Who do you see benefiting the most from the value that you are able to provide (your target audience)?
- Whose lives do you make the greatest impact on?

The result of this process is that each action you take will have new meaning and purpose. The question of "why" change is answered, and you can begin to work on "how."

RE-FRAME YOUR VALUE

“You can't just ask the customer what they want and then try to give it to them. By the time you get it built, they'll want something new.” - Steve Jobs

RE-THINK YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH YOUR ENVIRONMENT

Once you have discovered who you aspire to be and whom you aspire to be that to, you can then begin to reframe your value in light of that knowledge. You can start by re-thinking your relationship with your environment. There are two ways to look at the world in which we live and the rapid rate of change that is taking place all around us. Either we allow disruption in the environment, whether in the form of new technology or cutting-edge competitors, to dictate our actions as we desperately try to compete or maintain status quo. Or, we step back and reevaluate where our competitive advantage lies as it relates to our ideal future state. In the business world, this means also considering our client's ideal future state.

In a 1989 interview with Inc. Magazine, Steve Jobs, the former CEO of Apple Inc. commented,

"You can't just ask the customer what they want and then try to give it to them. By the time you get it built, they'll want something new."

That statement is more relevant today than it was almost 25 years ago. When we take the approach of asking our customers, members, or clients what they want, we assume

that they can accurately anticipate their future behavior as consumers. That is a false assumption for the very same reason that we discussed earlier. We tend to make plans for the future following the linear model of projecting our current needs forward. As a result, we default to our most immediate and basic needs and desires rather than considering our more important and longer-term needs - our ideal future state.

This is why it is important for individuals and organizations to reframe their value as it applies to their target audience's ideal future state, rather than competing to address their immediately apparent needs.

START BY TAKING THE FOLLOWING STEPS:

1. Clearly identify your target audience group(s).
2. Clearly state the issues and obstacles your target audience faces.
3. Determine their ideal future state / improved condition.
4. Determine what makes your approach / solution unique.

Step #1: Clearly identify your target audience group(s).

It's important to be as specific as possible here because specificity helps you create the right message for the intended audience group. The better you identify your audience, the better you can understand their needs as it relates to their ideal future state. While recently working with a start-up company in Knoxville, TN, we identified one of their target audience groups as "parents with children suffering from chronic disease."

Step #2: Clearly state the issues and obstacles your audience faces.

Begin by considering what is of greatest importance to the target audience you have identified. Is it family, career, community, ideology, etc? Then, determine the obstacles and issues that interfere with or undermine these priorities. Is it time, skills, resources, information, etc.?

If we take the example listed above (parents of children suffering from chronic disease), we can deduce that, in general, the priorities of parents in this situation are similar to those of any parent, which is their child's long-term health and well-being. However, the obstacles faced by parent's of children with chronic conditions are much greater. They often include:

- A lack of knowledge, resources, and valuable information around alternatives and options for care and treatment.
- A sense that they are losing control in the decision-making process and selection of best care for their child.

As a result, these parents often lose valuable time, energy, and money as they sort through a dizzying array of information, question whether to rely solely on their child's physician, or attempt to do everything themselves.

Step #3: What is their ideal future state and / or improved condition?

If you've clearly identified the issues and obstacles facing your target audience groups, then this step is fairly simple. Continuing with the previous example, the ideal future state and / or improved condition of parents with children suffering from chronic disease would be:

- They have greater knowledge, resources, and valuable information around the alternatives and options for care and treatment.
- They have a greater sense of control and confidence in the care of their children.

This step is critical because for many businesses and organizations, their perceived value is around what they do rather than the impact or results they create for their customers. Focusing first on your client's ideal future state gives you a better starting point for determining how to get them there.

Step #4: What makes your approach / solution unique?

Now that you've identified who you are trying to reach and their ideal future state, you must clearly identify how your approach differentiates you from the "business-as-usual" approach or solution. Distinguishing yourself from the competition also means that you are distinguishing yourself from the norm and common knowledge around particular issues.

In the case of my clients in Knoxville, TN, they identified the business-as-usual approach to achieving the ideal future state for their target audience group was to either solely rely on advice from their physician or to conduct their own research online which often wastes valuable time. In the case of my clients, they provide guidance, resources, and information that are customized to the needs of children with specific chronic conditions. This is what they identified as making them distinct in their market, enabling them to attract the type of client and customer that identifies with this approach.

The end result of this process was a clear and powerful value proposition that spoke directly to the needs and aspirations of their target audience:

"We work with parents of children with chronic disease helping them to gain control of their child's care by guiding them to the information and resources they need, saving them valuable time and money, equipping them to make the best decisions for their child's long-term health and well-being." - East West Advocates, Knoxville, TN / Virginia Beach, VA

As you begin this process for yourself, consider the following questions:

- What resources / solutions are currently available to your target audience group?
- How effective are these resources / solutions at improving their condition or helping them achieve their ideal future state?
- Where do you see opportunity for modification or disruption to how things are being done today?
- In what ways does your new approach provide previously unavailable resources or solutions?

The power of a good value proposition is that it speaks directly to your target audience and is specific to their ultimate needs and desires, helping them to realize their ideal future state.

RE-PURPOSE

RE-PURPOSE

YOUR SKILLS AND EXPERTISE

YOU ARE MORE VALUABLE THAN YOU THINK

On my last flight out to Los Angeles I sat next to a woman who was on her way to pitch her newly finished first novel to a few prominent literary agents, with whom she had not yet secured meetings. She shared with me that she was in the process of reinventing herself and her work. As we continued our conversation, she related to me the general concept of her book (a crime novel peering into the psyche of an FBI agent), her aspirations as a writer, and her plan of action. While her plan for getting in front of these agents may have lacked strategy, I admired her willingness to take a chance.

Other than the obvious obstacle of getting quality face time with these agents, she felt her biggest hurdle would be convincing them that she had the expertise and credibility to author this book. Nearing the end of our five hour flight I asked her what previous line of work she was in. She leaned in as if she were sharing a secret and said, "I spent 22 years as a homicide detective with the LAPD." You can imagine my surprise as it clearly hadn't occurred to her that her 22 years of experience could increase her credibility and marketability as a crime author and greatly increase her

chances of landing a book deal. Rather than promoting her real-life experience as an asset, she saw her past career as a liability due to her inexperience as a writer. In her attempts to reinvent herself she missed the value and expertise her previous experience lent to the success of her new direction.

When reinventing ourselves, the idea that we need to make a clean break from or completely reject our previous line of work makes the process of reinvention extremely difficult. We have to build on our previous experiences and find the ways in which those assets make us distinct, regardless of the industry or sector in which we gained those skills.

I underwent this process when I transitioned from my previous career to the work I do now as a deep futures strategist and executive advisor and coach. During my 10+ years as a benefits broker, I gained a unique perspective and understanding of organizational dynamics across several different industries that allow me to quickly assess a client's condition and offer solutions to dramatically improve their condition. Not only did I become a broker of valuable resources and relationships, I became a master networker, a trainer of entrepreneurs (during my years as a manager), and a skilled problem solver on both a corporate and individual level. These are the kinds of transferable skills and expertise that connect one phase of your career to the next, increasing your credibility, and enabling you to provide exceptional value to your clients.

How to identify your transferable skills and Expertise:

Start by making a list of the skills and expertise you've acquired over the years. Do not focus on the industry or sector in which these skills and expertise were acquired. Instead, focus on their application. i.e. "What problems, issues, or obstacles did those skills and expertise solve for your customers, clients, or members?" Once you have identified your transferrable skills and expertise, look for ways in which they enable you to meet the needs and improve the condition of your target audience groups. Go even further and identify how these transferable assets are unique and distinguish you from the competition.

Being aware of your existing assets will help you to be more strategic in your growth. It will enable you to determine what new skills will add the greatest value to current expertise. It will also alert you to where your unique blend of competencies will be most effective and impactful.

ONE FINAL NOTE...

Reinvention is the hallmark of a healthy career, one in which you are able to continuously grow, add competencies, and become more of who you are meant to be. Whether we do so intentionally or not, we are always changing and becoming someone new. We can either be forced into change by the challenges of a rapidly changing environment or we can choose to be more conscious and mindful of the future we are creating for ourselves. Practicing reinvention as a regular undertaking enables us to do this.

Regardless of whether you or your organization is going through a specific transition at this time, it is important to be proactive about reinvention. Start by putting yourself through each of the three steps outlined in this e-book (Step #1: Re-imagine Your Future, Step #2: Re-frame Your Value, Step #3: Re-purpose Your Skills and Expertise).

You may also visit my website where you will find additional resources to help you in this process:

<http://www.thejarednicholsgroup.com/free-resources/>

For general information about Jared Nichols' products, speaking, and consulting services please call: 828.367.0290.

Our email is: jared@thejarednicholsgroup.com

You may also subscribe to our free electronic newsletter:
[Hacking Your Future](#)