



‘Values Are The New Value’ FutureFocus Takes Guts

By Faith Popcorn, Founder and CEO,
Faith Popcorn’s BrainReserve

As the person who coined the term Cocooning, how has the term changed during Coronavirus?

This isn’t fun, cozy Cocooning. There’s true terror while we’re hiding out at home. We’re facing our mortality and that of our loved ones. PTSD is everywhere; we’re seeking stress relief any way we can find it. Alcohol and weed sales are skyrocketing.

This deep, radical CoronaCocooning is sending shock waves through the Consumer Culture. Brands are losing value; what we care about is who can get us what we want / need quickly and safely. This is a huge opportunity for disruption. Brands need to stand for something other than just “fast and reliable” to gain loyalty. Verizon started streaming concerts, Comcast gave consumers free connectivity, Chipotle created Zoom Hangouts for support and sharing. Connection and community are everything. Values are the New Value.

And we saw that coming, long before the pandemic. The 17 Trends we’ve been tracking over the last four decades let us see what’s 10 or 20 years ahead, and then help our clients chart their path forward. We are helping companies across all sectors prepare for the New (Ab)Normal.

Talk about how the following industries will emerge post-pandemic: retail, travel, financial services, real estate, sporting events, healthcare, technology ...

Retail: It will mostly be from our homes, but bricks-and-mortar will find new ways to operate. It will be gated and curated, separating those with immunity passports and those who are “virus virgins.” Wellness benefits will help lure us from our Cocoons. Imagine infrared-light treatments and IV-dosing in between appointments with an AI-enhanced personal shopper bot that will joke with you, listen to you and delight you with incredible finds. And it will outfit your avatar,



too – our virtual personas will need tending as much as our flesh and blood ones.

Sporting events / entertainment: Everything is going virtual; gaming has soared by 75% or more since the pandemic took hold. Next, our avatars will get into the game, whether you want to pitch against Aaron Judge or compete in Olympic-level snowboarding. Same with plays and concerts; if we pay more, we can join Drake on stage for a duet or star in “Jagged Little Pill” for an audience of our squad.

Healthcare: Tele-health is having its Amazon moment, with the Cleveland Clinic’s monthly tele-visits booming from its usual 3K to 60+K. Soon, the digitization of medicine will go much deeper. A private medi-pod will come to you for a vaccine, testing or minor procedures. Next, implanted chips will read our vital stats and communicate with our robo-docs, that will tweak our diet or recalibrate the vitamins and Rx meds being decanted into our personal water supply.

Technology: Covid-19 has accelerated our evolution, our Technology Transformation. Our every waking moment will soon be filtered through some form of a tech interface. We’ll meet in VR environments and communicate by thought versus speech. This isn’t sci-fi: Researchers at UCSF have translated brain signals into complete sentences. Next, neural lace – like Elon Musk’s Neuralink – will offer tiny brain implants that connect our minds to the web, completing our cyborg-ization.

What are some of the assignments you’ve worked on that you’re proudest of?

I love the work we did for USPS. They have such a unique advantage of touching every address in America daily. We showed how they could tap into that – say, if your mother didn’t take her mail out of the box for a day or two, a chip would tell you that and a postal worker could do a wellness check. We developed a technology wherein envelopes would no longer need addresses, just cell-phone numbers.

How wonderful would that be?

We are also collaborating with a huge, household-name quick-serve restaurant on a driverless, contactless model for food delivery; it also benefits the community. The first steps have been hugely successful, and their stock price is soaring.

We also work with many companies on “How to Think Like a Futurist.” Delivered via Zoom, it’s an incredibly exciting presentation of our latest Future-Thinking and a breakneck brainstorm that delivers dozens of immediately actionable ideas. It’s driven billions in profits – I am very proud of that too.

As the original futurist, what can CEOs learn from your process of predicting the future?

CEOs can understand that there is nothing more important to their success than focusing on their Best Future. Our mantra is, “If you knew everything about tomorrow, what would you do differently today?” Our mission is to help clients succeed into the Future, before their competition gets there. It takes a ferocious FutureFocus and guts—and dropping the inaction excuses.

For inspiration, look at Marcus Baskerville, the founder and head of Weathered Souls Brewing Company in San Antonio, Texas. He started the “Black is Beautiful” global beer initiative, selling stout beer with the mission of raising awareness and funds to overcome the injustices Black people face daily. Baskerville had the idea on a Sunday, and production began on Monday. That’s how you face the Future and activate it.

We can teach client teams to see what’s coming through my Future U, but those in power must prioritize acting on the mandate of Tomorrow – now. Because the Future starts this very second.

Faith Popcorn is a futurist, author, and founder and CEO of marketing consulting firm BrainReserve. She has written three best selling books: The Popcorn Report (1991), Clicking (1996), and EVEvolution (2000).