



Futurestate design

A workshop to help you
build tomorrow's business

Part of the Wilson Fletcher Futurestate Design series



This workshop

This is a simple, ~3 hour workshop to introduce some of the key techniques involved in futurestate design.

Follow this format, consider the questions and do the exercises and you're guaranteed to start thinking differently about your future.

Note: the workshop is designed for one group, divided into multiple teams at times, but it can be run with any number of people.

The examples given in the exercises are deliberately very basic – to try not to give you anything too leading to latch on to. Be imaginative.

Tools

You'll need nothing more than a pen and paper, but big whiteboards, walls, flip charts and a bucket of Post-It notes will make the process flow better, especially if you're in teams.

When working remotely, video conferencing and the use of online workshop tools such as Miro will enable you to reach similar outcomes.

Outcome

By the end of this workshop, you should be starting to think differently about your future and how to achieve it. It's a simple way to change your perspective and your mindset for a few hours, and emerge with some new ideas.

It won't paint a complete picture, but it will give you a tempting glimpse of what you can become.

Warming up

(Allow 10 minutes)

Exercise 1

Let's start by just setting a basic benchmark for your future business.
In each case, write down your version of the statements .

3 years from now you hear a future customer talking about your company. They say:

“ _____ *are amazing.*
**The experience is more like
something I'd expect from**
”

Think of a company that
you would dream of
being referred to in the
same sentence

In reply, a second future customer says:

**“I know. Can you believe
that we used to have
to _____?”**

Think of something that
you do today that, in the
future, should seem
absurd, like ‘wait for the
paper to arrive to find
out what’s happening in
the world’

And finally, the first replies:

**“Ha! And do you remember
when _____ used to call
themselves a _____?”**

Now describe your
current business in the
way you would normally.
It should already be
feeling a little old...

Tuning in to the future

(Allow 10 minutes)

The year is 2025.
What you're about to see
are ideas for what will be
possible then.

**Your favourite
Michelin-starred
chef works 24/7 –
and never shouts
at the waiters**



**You hand the keys to
your new £30k car
to a robot parking
assistant and fly off
without a second
thought**



**You *always* get
front-row seats to
see your favourite
rock star**



Your blind schoolfriend knows when you're giving them a big smile – and when you're faking it



**You speak the local
language fluently,
no matter where
you go**



Your body is permanently connected to a health service via embedded chips and sweat analysis



Going to the doctors is like getting a passport photo, with instant access to diagnosis and dispensing of drugs for common conditions



Your bank is connected to your employer: AI recognises when you've incurred an expense and reimburses you for it instantly



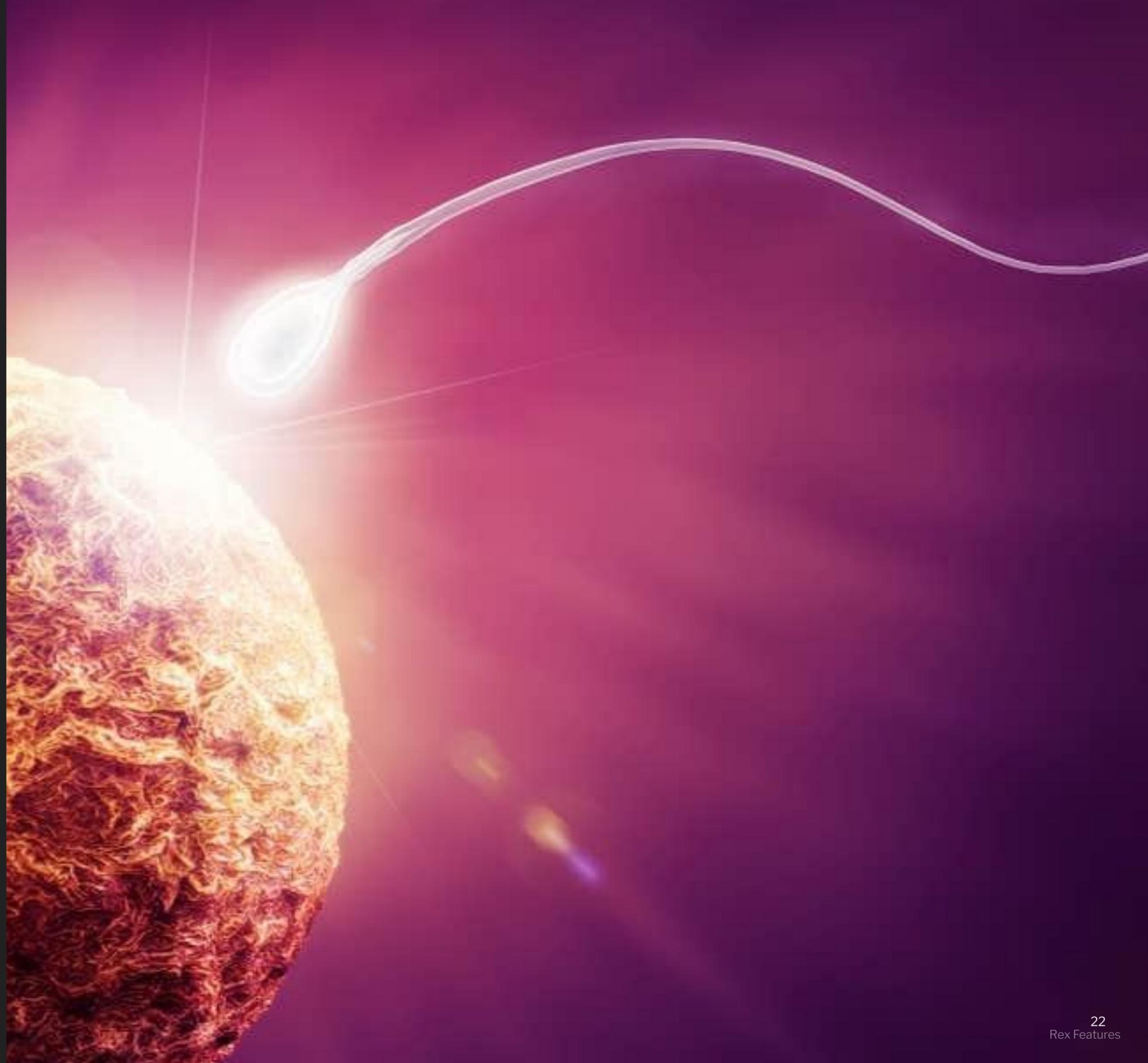
**The city we live in
knows us via a
network of IoT
devices: the bus stop
can tell your oven
when you'll be home**



Relationships will be formed with virtual friends who become a central – and much loved – part of your day-to-day life



... and even the most life-changing events will be possible online; like ordering tailor-made sperm to optimise your chance of pregnancy



The reality?
These things won't all be
available in 2025.

The reality?
They'll be outdated.
Each one is available today.



Take 2 minutes to watch this video. Think beyond it seeming 'creepy', to what it will mean for loneliness, those with social psychological disorders, and more... It was launched for purchase in January 2020.



[Watch on YouTube](#)

So...

**When you're designing *your*
futurestate, don't hold back.**

Assume:

We will routinely trust machines more than people; we'll share our most intimate details digitally; demand *everything* happens in real-time; and we'll expect all of this and more from *you*.

The exercise

(Allow ~2 hours + breaks)

Replace yourself

One of the most powerful futurestate design techniques is to step into the future and design **the company that has replaced yours**. It's a technique we've used numerous times to unlock new ideas and overcome current-state constraints.

We'll use a series of short sprints to build the picture of this new business.

The scenario

You're in 2025. Five years ago, you set up a new company with the express purpose of putting your current company out of business.

Today, you're going to design **what that company is and what it does.**

Remember at every step that you're **replacing your current company with something new.** None of what you have today can be used because the new company can't use it. None of today's constraints are in any way relevant to a brand new company, which has the luxury of **starting from scratch.**

The basic rules

Work together on each exercise and make sure everyone has their say.

Capture everything and be prepared to play back what you do to the rest of the team: if you can use walls, or whiteboards / flip charts, or a virtual whiteboard like Miro, do.

If working virtually, try using Zoom breakout rooms for your group activities.

TIP: If running remotely, ask one person to facilitate the session for you who is not in the exercises

The basic rules

Stick to time slots – appoint a timekeeper.

Banned terms include: ‘we can’t’, ‘they’ll never’, ‘we’ll never’ or, worst of all, ‘the way that works today is...’

ALL reviews must use ‘plussing’: the role of everyone else is to **build on** and **improve** what each team presents, not to pick holes in it. Be ruthless about this.

Rotate presenters. If possible, ensure everyone gets a turn.

TIP: Make an ‘any idiot can find a fault’ sign and use it any time someone criticises without a presenting a better idea

1. The 'what?'

20 mins + 5 mins review

(If working in teams, divide up evenly and add 5 mins review time per team)

Do this...

- **Build a list of things your 'NewCo' does** (give your group's company a great name)
- Each should be **a new way** to achieve the same purpose as your current company (i.e. if you sell coffee, don't make a list for an airline)
- Explain why each enables NewCo to **wipe the floor with your current company**

For example:

- **‘We roast, blend, grind and deliver for free personalised coffee blends, all within 8 hours’**
- Each person gets a coffee that’s perfect for their taste, and they never run out
- **OldCo only has 3 blends, they’re never freshly roasted, and they take a week to deliver them, with a £5 delivery charge**

20 mins: Go!

2. The 'what?' part 2

20 mins + 5 mins review

Do this...

- **Together, discuss your lists, add new ideas and agree a joint top 6**
- You should end up with an agreed name and the **top 6** ways it beats your current company

3. The 'what?' part 3

30 mins + 5 mins review

(If working in teams, divide up evenly and add 5 mins review time per team)

Do this...

- In your teams, **brainstorm how to describe what NewCo is (the descriptor)**, without using any of the language of today
- Brainstorm how to **write its purpose** – the reason it exists – and make it **all about the end customer**

For example:

- **‘Newco is a personal coffee roastery’**
- **‘We exist to make the experience of coffee all it should be for each customer, every time’**

20 mins: Go!

Review...

- Each team presents back what they've done (1-2 mins), and **the rest of the group tries to make it better** (3-4 mins)
- Remember the **plussing** rules

Refine

- Take on board any comments and write up **revised versions** of your statements

5 mins: Go!

Vote

- Each person now votes for the **descriptor** and **purpose** that they think is the **most exciting**
- One vote per person, for each

5 mins: Go!

By now...

**You can now describe NewCo,
why it exists and and what it
does**

4. The 'how?'

50 mins + 10 mins review

(If working in teams, divide up evenly and add 10 mins review time per team)

Do this...

- In your teams, **brainstorm some customer scenarios that NewCo can make possible**
- Try to capture as many as you can, then agree on **one that you all find really interesting**

For example:

- **‘Tom gives every employee a NewCo subscription as a perk of their job’**
- **‘Mary and Sarah haven’t run out of their favourite coffees in more than a year’**

10 mins: Go!

Do this...

- Now, put yourself in the customer's shoes, and try to imagine how to **realise that scenario as a perfect customer journey**
- **Map the steps** they might take in order, and describe **what they do** at each step
- If you're comfortable, **draw** as much as possible

!! New rules !!

- **No humans are allowed** (except the customer) at any point in the journey you make: **your customers have to do everything using only a smartphone**
- **No constraints**, but no rocket shoes either

For example:

A really cool VISUAL
personal blend profile -
made to feel really
scientific

Use pictures or
videos here

Welcome to
BananaCorp -
click [here](#) to
access your
newco coffee
experience!

Let's get you set
up

Build your taste
profile

Make it feel all
about them from
the start

Do you like:
 Super-dark
chocolate
 Dark chocolate
 Milk chocolate
 White chocolate
 I don't like
chocolate

Shiraz

Hazelnut

This is our secret sauce!

Your perfect
blend is
79.3% X
17.1% Y
3.6% Z

Do you prefer:
 Espresso
 French press
 Drip machine
 Drip filter
 Stove top

Your perfect
grind is
0.35mm

...

Again, make this
beautiful and visual

They don't need to
register - we know who
they are from their
company email

30 mins: Go!

Review...

- Each team presents back what they've done (5 mins), and **the rest of the group tries to make it better** (5 mins)
- Remember the **plussing** rules

Refine

- Take on board any comments and develop **revised versions** of your journeys

10 mins: Go!

Review...

- Each team presents back what they've changed (2 mins), and **the rest of the group tries to make it better** (3 mins)
- Remember the **plussing** rules

5. The wrap

30 mins

The final step

- As a group, go back through everything you've done and work together to identify the key things you would need to do to change today's company into NewCo
- These are called 'key transformations' and they help you see how big a change NewCo is from today's company.

Each should look like this example:

From



To

Why?

How?

A company that makes customers fit our coffee

To a company that makes our coffee fit our customers

- We will open up entirely new market opportunities
- Our product will be much higher value to each customer
- We'll build amazing data on coffee taste profiles

- Local roasteries in small geographical areas
- A (patented?) taste profiler

6. Take stock

As long as you like...

Time to reflect

Take a break, grab a glass of something you enjoy, and reflect on what has emerged from this exercise. Remember, it's just a way to start thinking about your futurestate.

By the time you've captured your transformations, you should have the basics of a new futurestate vision for 'newco' – which is you, in 3-5 years.

Many companies find that even after as simple a process as this, they can see a much bigger future opportunity, and should, in reality, be doing it now.



Wf

You made it.

You made the first version of your futurestate company in a few hours. Imagine what you could achieve in a few weeks.

If you'd like some expert hands to guide you along the way, drop us a line: [**hello@wilsonfletcher.com**](mailto:hello@wilsonfletcher.com).

To catch up on our other Futurestate Design series articles and more, visit our website, [**wilsonfletcher.com**](http://wilsonfletcher.com).