

Welcome to the Event Tech Podcast where we explore the ever-evolving world of event technology every week. This show is brought to you by Endless Events. The event AV company that doesn't suck. Now, let's talk tech.

Brandt Krueger:

Hello everybody and welcome to another edition of the Event Tech Podcast. I'm Brandt Krueger and that guy over there is Will Curran.

Will Curran:

You are definitely listening to the voice of the condemned Brandt Krueger analysis.

Brandt Krueger:

Condemned?

Will Curran:

That what it is this week. Okay. Yeah. Yeah. It seems like we get a lot of negative adjectives recently.

Brandt Krueger:

Yeah. I thought you're going to work on that and try and work on the algorithm to start flipping that into more positive show me.

Will Curran:

Definitely the Event Tech Podcast adjective generator coming soon.

Brandt Krueger:

Okay. All right. If you could go ahead and work on that that'd be great. All right. Well, folks, I am really excited today. We have been working on getting this guest on for the better part of a year, but she's a busy person because she is a best-selling award-winning author. She's the professor of strategic foresight at the NYU Stern School of Business and the founder of the Future Today Institute. More than that, she is what they call a quantitative futurist. We're excited today to be joined by Amy Webb. Amy, thanks for joining us.

Amy Webb:

Hey, there. Thanks for having me.

Brandt Krueger:

All right. Futurist is one of those things for me that is tough because it's one of those terminology titles that for me for a very long time rank right up there with like social media guru or anything that's got ninja in the title.

Amy Webb:

I was just going to say ninja is probably at the top of that list. Yeah.

Brandt Krueger:

Exactly. I first ran across you when you started doing some interviews on the TWiT Network and that's the one that we have recommended quite a few times in various ways on this program and on event icons as one of the resources that I really use to stay on top of technology, so when I saw you interviewed, it was regarding your first book, which was *The Signals are Talking* and what was really interesting to me is that you weren't out there saying, "This is what I think is going to be. This and this is going to be this." This kind of like futurist kind of thing.

Brandt Krueger:

You had a really data-driven approach that had very specific methodology behind it, and so I was really fascinated by this. Will and I, we get asked again kind of all the time, how do you guys stay on top of this stuff? How do you do it? We usually recommend just paying attention to the regular technology trends. The meetings and events industry, we actually dedicated an entire episode to the fact that the meetings and events industry always tends to lag behind the general trends because literally, we're event planners, right?

Brandt Krueger:

Planning is in the name so we get really, really fussy about the details and making sure that things are as bulletproof as possible. When I saw the opportunity to perhaps have you on to talk about this methodology, to really talk about the approach that you guys take at the Future Today Institute of how you identify these trends. It seemed like a natural thing to do, to bring you on and talk about that.

Brandt Krueger:

That's where we kind of want to start. Really your first book, *The Signals are Talking*, I really saw it as kind of a how-to manual on how to be a futurist. Can you tell us a little bit about what you consider to be a futurist, and then, maybe specifically a quantitative futurist?

Amy Webb:

Sure. Well, a couple of quick things. I'm excited to be on the show because I'm somebody who goes to a tremendous number of events and meetings. I'm happy to talk shop with you and I have a bunch of observations for how I think the whole industry can continue to work in the near-term and long-term simultaneously, which to be honest is a lot of what a futurist has to do.

Amy Webb:

The other thing is this is actually, so *The Signals are Talking* is my second. My first-

Brandt Krueger:

Oh, I'm sorry. The first that I knew of so-

Amy Webb:

No. The first book was a little different. That was a memoir that came out ... Gosh. Almost 10 years ago and it was about how I tinkered with the algorithms on a dating website and came the whole system and that's how I met my husband.

Brandt Krueger:

Awesome.

Amy Webb:

That was the first one. The second one is about foresight. I realize I have a strange-sounding job title futurist and I get it. It sounds really dumb. It sounds like I'm a ninja. It sounds made-up. This is an academic discipline that goes back over a hundred years and a lot of people who go into strategic foresight in a, again, in a very rigorous way as I do have backgrounds in the social sciences so, or even in some of the hard sciences.

Amy Webb:

In my case, my academic background is game theory and economics and political science. Usually, game theory and economics is a base component for a lot of people who work in strategic foresight. I teach the MBA course at the NYU Stern School of Business. There's a master's program at the University of Houston. There's a very well-known program at the University of Hawaii, and then overseas there are plenty of places where you can get bachelor's, master's, and even PhDs in strategic foresight.

Amy Webb:

It's something that's been around for a while and you're probably hearing the term futurist more today because we're sort of staring at the event horizon for a whole bunch of groundbreaking technologies and scientific advancements, whether that's artificial intelligence or robotics or digital currencies, blockchain-driven authentication systems. I mean, I could sort of give you a whole bunch of buzzwordy sounding things that are on the horizon and I think that as a result, we're all feeling a sense of deep uncertainty.

Amy Webb:

We've sort of fetishized the future and as a result of that people are seeking guidance. The good news for me is that this has happened historically several times before in the past 150 years. For me, right now professionally this is a very good time. Uncertainty, for me, means a lot of business. But it also means that we have to do sort of a much better job of explaining what foresight is and why it matters.

Amy Webb:

The work is really not about predictions. That's mathematically impossible so I could build a statistical for baseball, and like I'm a long-suffering Chicago Cubs fans so I could probably if I had emotional strength do something like that. But if we're talking about the future of I don't know AI and events and/or pick a bunch of things, there's just too many variables. There's too

many things outside of our control. The idea here is not to predict but rather to reduce the uncertainties using data so that we can simply make better decisions.

Brandt Krueger:

I was so excited to dive into the methodology. I probably should have given you more opportunity to expound a little bit on that, and so I appreciate you taking the time to do that. At what point did you realize, okay, this is going to be a career, and then at what point did you realize, I'm going to start the Future Today Institute.

Amy Webb:

I've had two careers. My first career was journalism. I was a foreign correspondent and I lived in China and in Japan. I was there in the late 90s. Part of this was just like being at the right place at the right time and being able to speak the local language. Mobile was lightyears ahead in the late 90s in China, Japan, and also Korea that then it was anywhere else. I got to see stuff way before anybody else outside had seen it and was able to ... I think it's all the pattern-recognition training that I've had but, and the storytelling.

Amy Webb:

I started making connections and thinking through the downstream implications and I was always covering economics and business and tech and culture and at some point, I got very frustrated seeing what the news industry was not doing. This was, again, like the commercial internet was about a decade old. We were quickly moving into mobile, at least, in Asia, and a lot of newsrooms were still struggling with the concept of putting content online. They didn't see a value in it.

Amy Webb:

For me, it was just infuriating. I mean, I had a phone with a camera in it. They didn't take like amazing photos but I had a phone that was connected to the internet that had a camera and I remember showing that to some newsroom managers and saying like, "Guys, this is what's coming next." I remember being told over and over again, "No newspaper in its right mind, nobody would ever publish a photo taken from that tiny little phone. I mean, give me a break."

Amy Webb:

I was like the point, that's not what I'm talking about here. I'm not talking about pictures in a physical newspaper. I was like, "What does it mean when at scale everybody has one of these?" Moore's Law at that point was still holding. It's like, "What do you think is going to happen here? You think people aren't going to drastically shift how information is shared?"

Amy Webb:

Ultimately, I got tired of having those fights, and to be honest, I was a pain in the ass. I think everybody amicably parted ways. I started an R&D lab because I wanted to see how far I could ... when I moved back to United States, how could we push this? What could we do? Could we build new interfaces? Could we build new storytelling templates?

Amy Webb:

I've always been a big believer in open source and collaboration so we were giving everything away for free and I was being asked to sort of show other ... Like now that I was no longer a journalist and inside of a newsroom, everybody was happy to hear what I had to say. That became more research-oriented and focused. Then, that grew and it grew beyond news and became ... Also, because I was more interested in other things and the connection between those things, and so 15 years ago what became ... what started out as this lab grew into what I have today which is the Future Today Institute.

Brandt Krueger:

It's funny. I had a virtually identical story in the company I used to work for when Uber first came out and because we tangentially deal with transportation I was like, "This is going to be huge. We need to get in with these guys." At the time, they were desperate for partners and things like that. They were still a black car service. They're like, "No. That's too weird. I don't know about that."

Brandt Krueger:

I don't mean that in any way to say like, "Oh, look how smart I was." But more just like, "How resistant we tend to be about something that's new like that." Or it's like, "No. No. No one's ever going to want to do that. Why would I ever want to do that?" That happens so much in pretty much every industry.

Amy Webb:

Well, it's not entirely our own faults. Humans are biologically limited by the squishy computers inside of our heads. We are wired against change when we look for patterns in the real world, especially when we think about the farther future. There'd been all kinds of really interesting academic studies showing that the farther out in time we go the more we start looking like characters in somebody else's story.

Amy Webb:

Part of our resistance to change is just part of our evolutionary wiring. Unfortunately, for people and organizations who aren't flexible and aren't willing to confront deep uncertainty head-on, they are going to really be challenged over the next several decades.

Will Curran:

I was going to ask when it comes to that like block that you are seeing that happens biologically, how can someone unblock that to be able to really be open to change and open to the technology changes that are going to happen? Because we talk about that a lot I think on this podcast is that like, "Hey, we ... the evolution and the adoption of technology is only as good as its adoption, right? If everyone's willing to adopt it then it's not going to go anywhere." How would you recommend someone who can stay 100% open over time as technology might even break beyond what they even thought was possible?

Amy Webb:

This is a challenge because most people aren't comfortable in the middle. They are either on the side of needing at a biological level to control, to micro-control all facets of life and whether they recognize that or it's more hidden that creates a certain amount of inflexibility that prevents us from even thinking about change or adopting new ways of doing things.

Amy Webb:

The flip side of that are people who tend to be much more easygoing thinkers and just believe that change is inevitable, and so if change is inevitable why bother fighting it. The sweet spot is really in the middle, and it is ... It reminds me a lot of being in ... I learned a lot of this, I lived in Japan for, in the north where there's not very much English spoken for a long time. I got to be friends with some folks who were Zen priests, and it's interesting a lot of foresight I think, a lot of strategic foresight has interesting connections to Zen Buddhism so without getting weird or wonky, let me just say this.

Amy Webb:

You have to be comfortable at alternating between control and no control. Recognizing the things that we have control over, so for a business that might be something like your budget or your staff or the ability to reorganize or to train, and then those external events over which you have no control like trade policy, for example, or the markets ... or they yield curve doing weird things like it's doing today and being able to counterbalance those two continuously, and the way that you do that is to constantly check-in and make thousands of little adjustments constantly all the time.

Amy Webb:

It sounds exhaustive and like it would take a ton of energy to do this but once you train yourself to think more in that way, you become much better attuned to developing strong visions that are data-driven on what the future can look like, but then being very flexible in the pathway and all the stepping stones to get there.

Brandt Krueger:

First of all, you never have to apologize on any of our shows for being weird or wonky. It's absolutely well within the scope, well within the scope.

Will Curran:

So true.

Brandt Krueger:

We've actually had entire shows dedicated to being weird and keeping it weird. What's fascinating ... I mean, man, we could just go down this rabbit hole for a while, but I want to make sure that we start to move things over to the methodology. What's fascinating to me is that

I think a lot of what we do in events is exactly that. Writing the wave of we've got control over the things we've got control over, but then there's this runaway element of anything can happen.

Brandt Krueger:

I think that's why a lot of us are in the business-

Amy Webb:

Totally. Yeah.

Brandt Krueger:

... old theater people so it's ... Well, some of us are old theater people. There's an element of that as well. We're like, "It's the same show every night but anything can happen at any night."

Amy Webb:

Yeah.

Brandt Krueger:

Okay.

Amy Webb:

Well, I too am an old ... I'm a musical theater person, but that's why I don't count because I was in the pit. But, yeah. I mean, that's interesting, right? But that's more about being in the moment. I think people are flexible and events people more than anybody else. Flexible and agile at making quick adjustments, but this is not responding to something that is currently happening.

Amy Webb:

I'm talking about being responsive to your future self and being flexible in the sort of path to get there. Maybe an easier way to understand this is like a GPS analogy. You know that you're trying to get from your house to, I don't know, the top of a mountain, and you're going to drive part of the way there, at least. The GPS is giving you potential different routes and even Waze which is pretty quick isn't going to have all information all the time because there is no way to have every single variable accounted for, which means that you have to do some thinking in advance and you have to plug yourself in and be logical as you're thinking about the way forward, but you have to be responsive, and you have to constantly be willing to recalibrate.

Amy Webb:

It's a very different way of operating. If you're familiar with Daniel Kahneman's Thinking, Fast and Slow. What I think really great futurists do is thinking near and far, right? It's a matter of prioritizing the near-term and the in the longer term and thinking through them simultaneously, which is a very strange way to be thinking but it ultimately is the best way to plan for the further future.

Brandt Krueger:

Nice. Let's dive into the methodology now. I mean, you guys have a fully basically open-source methodology for how we start to look at that and do that forecasting and start to put together what changes we might need to make based on that forecast, but it starts in an interesting spot that is not where I think most people start when they start thinking about what are future trends, and it starts with the fringe. Can you tell us a little bit about that?

Amy Webb:

Yeah. The methodology that we use alternates between flared thinking, which is very, very unruly sort of big, creative, messy, and then focused thinking, which is much more about systems and process thinking. At the beginning of the process, we start with macro sources of change. In my experience, most change at the moment comes from 10 or if you want to get very picky about it, 11 different key areas.

Amy Webb:

The connective tissue between those areas tends to be technology. If you want to figure out the future of something like events or even something very specific like autonomous cars, you really have to look at that future through the lens of, or through the lenses of all of these different areas of change because they all overlap and they all have impact. What we do, therefore, is look for activity in all of these places and the way to do that is to get very specific and granular and to look in unusual places. We would look at what is the ...

Amy Webb:

If we're looking at future of events, we might look at infrastructure as a central node. We might look at the environment and demographics so some of these key big areas and we would do things like look at patents and pre-publication academic research. We might look at what people are doing in research labs and you may say to yourself, "Why do I need to follow somebody's public health research? What could that possibly have to do with the future of events?"

Amy Webb:

If you were to go back in time about seven years, you might have been able to see then that there was going to be a demand for lactation areas and for nursing moms, which you're now seeing all over the place but the first movers ... I remember like the first movers in the event space got a lot of praise for doing that early on, and especially for commercial event planners that made them, I think a little bit more in demand because people were really excited about that. It got everybody a lot more positive exposure.

Amy Webb:

The problem is that if you just look at the future of your industry or of your industry and maybe one ... if you widen that circle a little bit, and you lose sight of the fringe, you're going to be narrowing the scope so far that it's almost like looking at the world through a pinhole. If you intentionally go really broad which seems counterintuitive and often like a complete waste of your time and you focus there first and just create a map of information that is as big and broad as you can possibly make it and you start with big nodes, and then you come up with sub-nodes

and you're developing relationships and connecting lines and you're basically making what amounts to a giant crime map kind of thing.

Amy Webb:

It's there that you're going to then start to look for patterns and before you get to a point where you're identifying trends, you go through this very rigorous work and when you create the fringe map, it's not just a matter of brainstorming some thoughts and connecting them on a whiteboard. There's a methodical process that you go through, so that it happens in different layers and steps and by the end of that, you have this big map which you can then apply a technique that we use that helps you identify patterns in that that giant mess, essentially helps you find that the noise that's worth paying attention, the signal that's worth paying attention to within all that noise.

Brandt Krueger:

Now, I've seen in some of your other interviews on-camera examples of some of those maps, but for someone who might not have seen it, could you describe a little bit about what those fringe maps look like?

Amy Webb:

Yeah. They look like the product of a crazy person so think of any like true crime show that you've seen and there's always some-

Amy Webb:

... the killer is always standing in front of like a chalkboard... Exactly. You've got like string everywhere and just like circles with lines drawn between them. That's what I'm talking about. I prefer to do it by hand. Here's the flexibility, right? You always do it a little differently. The framework is rigorous but depending on what I'm working on or who I'm working with, we may do that part of the process in a giant whiteboard or a room covered in white paper or we may use a statistics program and instead of mapping it out that way, we might map it out using a spreadsheet first so that we can run a regression analysis afterwards. It totally depends but that the method is less important than the purpose and the purpose really is about trying to get as broad a map of information as possible before looking for trends and patterns.

Brandt Krueger:

I love the idea that you brought up a moment ago about kind of looking back as an example. If you were trying to figure out the future of the festival's industry, looking back at ... we were trying to do that a few years ago, you would have to look at a cellphone battery technology because festivals were some of the first events that I knew of that started offering charging stations for their attendees because we didn't have cell phones that could actually last from dawn till dusk as required by a lot of these festivals.

Amy Webb:

That's right. We have all these questions that we asked constantly. This codified lists of questions. One of the questions is if this, whatever it is that we're looking at, succeeds, who fails? Conversely, if whatever this is, fails, who succeeds? If we came to the idea that charging stations would be a great idea, we would immediately ask, who stands to win if this thing goes catastrophic wrong? Which would have then led us to a place where we're like, "Oh, maybe people shouldn't be like ..." It's like having unprotected sex, right? You don't want to stick your phone, something to your phone you don't know.

Amy Webb:

That was a problem. It's fine, you just mitigate that in advance in some way or it's a great sponsorship opportunity. You get a security company to come in and tell everybody that their phones are protected because whatever is protecting them, and then you've also offloaded your risk to somebody else.

Brandt Krueger:

Right.

Amy Webb:

My point is there are, and I kind of jumped ahead to something, the different part of methodology which is scenarios but then that's sort of an if this, then, that process but, yeah.

Will Curran:

I love these maps and they sound awesome and I actually Googled to try to see if I find some examples and they are amazing and really, really cool. How do you keep it from when you're deciphering or you're not deciphering, but you're kind of creating this map from almost creating a map within the map, and then it just goes on forever and ever? How do you stay laser-focused as you do it?

Amy Webb:

Well, usually, we do this with teams and each team will do it with a big group and we'll break up that group into smaller teams, and we'll assign teams different nodes to be tracking and everybody will have done a lot of pre-work so before we get together to start doing the map together everybody knows that they're going to come in and they have to focus on these five areas. It's pretty intense work and usually, what happens is everybody goes really strong for several hours, and then your brain starts to melt.

Amy Webb:

At that point, everybody loses focus, but usually if the pump is primed everybody comes in and it's a really good activity.

Brandt Krueger:

The next step in the process you've got is CIPHER.

Will Curran:
Awesome.

Brandt Krueger:
C-I-P-H-E-R. That stands for, if I'm reading right, Contradictions, Infections, Practices, Hacks, Extremes and Rarities. What is that all about?

Amy Webb:
Right. Once you have this giant map of information all that tells you is where to start from. From here, we're now just looking for change. Really seeing the future all it really is, is identifying change as it's happening or just before it's going to happen. With this giant map of information, we're looking for instances of contradictions. Two things typically happen at the same rate or time we're together, and yet they're not or the converse is true that things usually happened sort of an opposite. Now, they're there working together.

Amy Webb:
We're looking for inflections so sudden bursts of activity of R&D of M&A of huge inflections of capital, sudden spikes in popularity, our social activity, social movements. That's an inflection that we're tracking. P is practices so shifts and changes in things that are cherished beliefs and standard practices. H stands for hacks so this is where people are creating sort of alternate uses for how something was intentionally built or they're building onto it in some ways. Hack doesn't necessarily mean something bad.

Amy Webb:
What am I up to? E. E is extreme. This is when people are sort of taking a technology or a science or really anything to truly extreme levels. Usually, one instance of that is not all that interesting, but if you see a cluster of people or companies that are pushing boundaries in that way that usually tells us, that's a sign that changes afoot. R stands for rarities and rarities are a kind of catch-all anything that looks like a Black Swan event, anything that seems like a true outlier but somehow it's caught our attention, that's a rarity.

Amy Webb:
What we're doing is we're looking for instances or examples of this in the giant map that we've created and you're never going to find all ... If you find all of those all the time it means you're not doing it right. It's easiest to look for inflections and contradictions, they're the most obvious things. I would say increasingly hacks because we have so much ... we have so many interesting things entering the marketplace that had previously only been under the control of a giant company.

Amy Webb:
We've so many different startup ecosystems that we're starting to see more and more hacks to off the shelf or off label technologies or science or tools or whatever it is. Anyhow, you're looking for instances of that and when you find ... Usually, one instance is not going to be important

unless it's a big one, in which case, you pay attention, but you're looking for little clusters and when you see this, they are clear indications that there is a trend where there is some kind of social change or there is something on the horizon.

Brandt Krueger:

You're taking all of the things that you identified in the first section and categorizing it underneath each one of these things?

Amy Webb:

Yeah. I mean, again, it's about taking disparate sources of information and data and doing everything possible to make sense of them as we combine them in new ways. This is where you're able to see things early. I'm trying to think of some recent examples.

Amy Webb:

A good example I think is the Sony hack, and I mentioned this in the book. I think it's a pretty clear one. Sony between the 1990s and the big hack that happened a couple of years ago, they were breached repeatedly. But they were breached in different ways each time, and so the company considered each one of those instances to be novel, to be sort of a one-off. When, in fact, they were very likely connected and the kinds of things that connected them had to do with social unrest and a growing sense that data and privacy were being siphoned off for commercial gain, things like that.

Amy Webb:

Again, sometimes you're not going to ... or another example actually from when I was living in Japan. I was on a subway and I remember feeling the sort of poking on my back. I turn around and there's a kid with a cell phone that had a giant television antenna sticking out of it which ... It's Japan, right? Part of me is like, "Okay. Fine. I accept that. I don't even need to ask questions because it's Tokyo."

Amy Webb:

But then another part of me was like, "What the hell is this thing? This is crazy. This is a person watching television on a phone. I must know more." I asked the kid like, "What the hell is this? What is this thing?" It was a new phone that was coming out and I ran to the first mobile phone store that I could find and they were starting to build television and video watching functionality into phones, and so the antennas I didn't think we're going to be around forever, but as connectivity ... because they were still on the CDMA.

Amy Webb:

I don't mean to get super nerdy here but the wireless standard was not going to fully support video at that point, but it was probably going to in the future. If I looked at that and I looked at all the haptic technology that was coming out and haptics is when you get like a feedback. If you push down on a screen, you feel a little buzz or you feel something get warm. That was in the gaming community but there were all kinds of new applications.

Amy Webb:

YouTube was just coming out. I mean, there were all of these different piecemeal things happening that might have looked totally unrelated except that I had a phone with a camera in it, and all I could think of was at some point, somebody's going to build something that's going to be more like a computer. I'll be able to watch TV. I'll be able to send email and this phone is no longer just going to be a thing that's for office productivity.

Amy Webb:

I could not have told you in the year 2005 that Apple's iPod would someday become an iPhone that had a full touchscreen. I didn't know it was going to be Apple. I hadn't seen any work. I mean, they were keeping everything under pretty tight wraps, but I knew somebody somewhere was making something like that. How could they not be?

Amy Webb:

What's fascinating to me is that I was able to piece all of that together and that's not even my full-time ... I work at Mobile. Mobile was not my primary thing and yet the leadership within Blackberry, which at the time was the world's most popular phone completely missed it. I mean, they missed it. They later-

Brandt Krueger:

That's a great example. Sorry. Go ahead.

Amy Webb:

They missed the thing that was just on the horizon.

Will Curran:

Yeah. I was going to say it's all too common I think is that we all, "Oh, man, we totally missed that one." I think which is why we're all watching this ... Well, listening to this episode. Then, the next portion is like I think is so you kind of like start to see these broader trends, and the next part is asking questions. Can you talk a little bit about the asking questions portion?

Amy Webb:

Yeah. At this point, you should have some sense of the change and some sense of what the trends are, but the journalist in me feels like we need to ask more questions and we need to start tracking time and velocity. Basically, we can't just act on the trends alone. This is where I see a ton of companies get stuck.

Amy Webb:

At FTI, we produce a couple of annual reports but one of them is this huge mega tech trends report that launches at South by Southwest every year, and we give it away for free. It explains the methodology and it also explains all the trends that we think you should be paying attention

to and it's intentionally very broad to force organizations to pay attention to stuff outside of their usual field of vision.

Amy Webb:

This current report for 2019 has 315 tech trends. Now, we state very clearly at the beginning of the report. This is just the beginning of your work. Just knowing the trends is basically useless, right? You have to now do something with them. Step three of the process is asking a ton of questions. What does this mean? How does this impact us, our industry, all of its parts? Is there a way for us to try ... I guess this is steps three and four. But like, "How can we track the velocity of change? How can we track the way that this is changing or the way that these different trends form a constellation and are impacting us?"

Amy Webb:

Basically, you're asking a ton of questions. The problem with a lot of organizations is they get a list of the trends that they should be paying attention to, and then that's like it, right? Then, they start making decisions. You got a long way to go before you can make any kind of strategic decision.

Brandt Krueger:

That's one of the things, just to pause on that for a moment because ... and let that sink in for folks is one of the things that really attracted me to this methodology is that identifying the trends is like step two of six. Like you said that's where people tend to stop. It's like, "Okay. This is the trend and this is the trend on this, and "Yey. We're futurists."

Brandt Krueger:

But it really is so much deeper than that if you want to actually make decisions on that information. You can't just identify the trends and we go, "Okay. Great. We need to invest in that."

Amy Webb:

Right. I mean, honestly, the trends are useful because they're just sort of like way points. They're a way to organize the continued research because the other thing is like the methodology that we use has six steps. There's actually many more than that. There's like sub-steps underneath those steps, but it's not a linear process. You're not just starting at step one, ending it at step six, and now you're like done.

Amy Webb:

You're constantly going back and forth between them. This is where the flexible thinking comes into play. Having that list isn't enough, you have to ask questions, you have to calculate trajectory and timing. You have to think about influences. You have to recalibrate that list all the time. I know that sounds like a pain in the ass. It is a pain in the ass to do all of that work. But, again, I can easily name 10 different companies that do that really well, and as a result have continued to grow and to prosper and to weather all the change that's happening.

Amy Webb:

I can name a whole bunch of companies that were once part of our lives and are no longer in existence because they weren't willing to do all of that work.

Brandt Krueger:

It's fascinating to me how often that happens in all industries. Where you've got the folks that just kind of sit back on their laurels and maybe they give lip service to looking ahead, and then you've got others that like you say are constantly reacting, constantly changing, constantly evolving, really goes back to what you were saying before about the kind of the Zen thing of making sure that you're constantly re-evaluating.

Amy Webb:

Yes. Somehow being reactive and using strategic foresight has taken on ... like the word pivot. I mean, we all hear the word pivot a lot and pivot it is like ... I think pivot has become this horrible ... I guess it's a five-letter word, right? That's like you never want to be a company that pivots because then you've ... The thing is a company should be ... Like you should be pivoting. You should be recalibrating, if you're not then that tells me, you're not being responsive to the change that's happening and that's on the horizon.

Amy Webb:

I would never bet on a company or an organization or an industry that can't pivot. I mean, think about it. That would assume that we all already know what the future holds and that we're just living in somebody else's source code, right?

Brandt Krueger:

We've-

Amy Webb:

I'm not Elon Musk but I don't think that's what's happening here. I think we have some autonomy.

Brandt Krueger:

Two host sometimes. I was just going to try and keep us moving along. I could spend an hour on each one of these moments but I want to be respectful of your time and that of the audience. Moving into kind of we've asked the right questions, we're starting to look at ETAs of how long these things, how long we look out on all of these trends is kind of listed as step four.

Brandt Krueger:

Then, moving into scenarios. If you can kind of tell us a little bit about those steps because it feels like those are kind of related? That if we're looking at timelines and things like that, and inherently we're going to start looking at the scenarios that play out over those timelines.

Amy Webb:

Yeah. Actually, I don't look at timelines at all, because the future never unfolds in a linear way, and this sort of leads into the next step anyways. As futurists, we don't use lines, we use cones, and so in the present moment, we have the most data that we're ever going to have, and the farther out in time we go if we're sort of making ... if you sort of imagine a cone on its side, the angle gets wider the further out in time you go, and that represents more uncertainty because we have less data.

Amy Webb:

What that tells us is that at the present moment where the angle is at its most narrow, we can make tactical decisions. But if we're going to make tactical decisions that has to be done in service of whatever our strategy is, and most companies are afraid to go out a few quarters or even a few years to even think about those scenarios, building scenarios for describing what might be on the horizon because they feel like there's no point.

Amy Webb:

The problem is if you don't force yourself to go further out beyond, let's say five years into the zone of the time cone where you can think about vision for what your organization or your industry is going to look like, then you get stuck oscillating between just tactics and strategy. What that winds up resulting in is a company that is continuously creating short-term solutions that never actually address long-term risk or opportunity.

Amy Webb:

You just keep like cycling over and over and over again, and all of that should be ... If you're not working sort of simultaneously on your tactics and your strategy and service of the vision that you have for the, whatever, the industry, the organization. If you're not doing all of that while also thinking, how is this entire thing going to evolve? How is my whole entire industry going to evolve either because we pushed it there or because some other third party is going to make decisions for us?

Amy Webb:

That's where you're thinking more like 10 years out, 20 years out. You have to get used to working across all parts of that time cone simultaneously, and companies, a lot of companies feel like there's no point. Again, there are plenty of examples of why it's good to do this. Nintendo does this very well. Nintendo's a company that's been around for more than a hundred years. They started out making playing cards that required specialized artisans who could make paper and paint all this stuff, and it's 2019, and not only do they still make those playing cards, they're also developing the forefront of gaming in the cloud and streaming services and haptics and mixed reality and all this stuff.

Amy Webb:

Anyhow, so as we're thinking about time, you have to take all the work that you've done and start to ask, "Well, what could happen next?" The process for doing this is to try to think through

all the possible uncertainties and this part of the process is formulaic but there's a lot of different components. Part of this is doing an activity called the axis of uncertainty, where you try to chart through all the different questions that you have, you develop two-by-two matrices that describe plausible futures.

Amy Webb:

There's another part of the process where you force yourself to think, to write out optimistic, neutral, and pessimistic or catastrophic headlines that describe the stuff, and then, yet using yet another framework, you build out in a narrative form what that future would look like given what we know to be true today. There are different times to write scenarios so plausible scenarios or scenarios where we have a lot of data but we're going to be a little further out in the future, maybe five to seven years where we're trying to figure out the vision.

Amy Webb:

You can write very near-term scenarios to help figure out what your next couple of quarters should look like in the tactical space of that time zone. I know I'm throwing out a bunch of buzzwords. I know this is like hard to wrap your head around but it's a process. It's a process that anybody can do and that's why we've made everything open-source, but it is a vastly different process than getting together with some friends and Post-It notes and Sharpies and like telling cool science fiction's sounding stories about the future. What I'm talking about is very, very different.

Brandt Krueger:

Definitely some science fiction when it comes as axis of uncertainty.

Amy Webb:

Yeah. The axis of uncertainty. Basically, there are-

Brandt Krueger:

Axis of uncertainty, and then time cone sounds like a great book.

Amy Webb:

Yeah. I know. I know. Listen, at some point, somebody came up with a spreadsheet and a P&L and that sounded like the distant scientific sci-fi future.

Will Curran:

Cue that the sound effects. Okay. There's so much we can literally ask about this and there's so much we want to cover. I'm like looking at all the questions that I'm writing down that I have to go. Now, we come to the lasting, kind of final step once we've done the scenarios and that's the pressure test, which is an awesome name. Can you tell us a little bit about that?

Amy Webb:

Yeah. Pressure test or another way to frame it is backcasting. Basically, once we have a sense of this is what the future could be now, and we're not just like pulling this out of thin air. We've done the work, right? We've got 37 plausible future scenarios, right? Describing all these different ins and outs.

Amy Webb:

Now, we're going to be practical and we're going to say, "Let's just come up with our preferred future." It can't be all unicorns and rainbows because unicorns aren't real, right? But we can get pretty darn close. We're going to come up with a plausible preferred future. One that can be measured. One that can actually happen in the real world because it obeys the laws of physics and everything else.

Amy Webb:

Basically, what we're going to do is reverse-engineer all the steps that it would take for us to get from today where we are to that point in the future, and that forms the basis for strategy. Again, like the more detail that you can be the better, but you're going to be the most detailed in the present day and the details and the specifics are going to be sparse the further that you go out into the future. Then, as a part of that process, you're going to ask questions like this is all ... this thing that we're going to build now is amazing, but are we going to have to rely on some third party that has proprietary software to do it?

Amy Webb:

If so, what are we going to do if this company goes out of business? You try to figure some of that out in advance. You're not going to have all the answers, but by the time that you're ready to move forward, man, you're going to be so amazingly well set up to deal with vendors.

Amy Webb:

If every event planner just did this, just did that part of the process and nothing else before deciding on what venue to hold their event. I mean, think of how much easier your lives would be.

Brandt Krueger:

For each.

Amy Webb:

Yeah. I mean, listen, I've hosted a couple of events myself and there are always things that you think you're just going to mitigate, you acknowledge it but then you sort of figure you're going to mitigate it later on, and I can remember a giant high-pressure event that I was hosting that required me to work with some New York City unions and it just ... at the time, I was like, "I'm a people person. I'll be fine." I had no idea. I had no idea what I was getting myself into.

Amy Webb:

That's what we call a catastrophic framing, right? That's me acknowledging the data and saying, "Ah, it'll be fine." It was not fine. It was very much not fine. It was very difficult. Anyhow, I mean, you can use ... the beauty of this process is we're constantly surrounded by uncertainties so you can use all these frameworks and these tools to map out the future of an industry or your company, you can also apply them to an event itself. You can also apply them to like your daily life. It's just a different way of thinking about the future.

Brandt Krueger:

I'm looking at the infographic that you've got behind this and we'll post links to that in the show notes as well. The bottom of it is answers and if you go through this process, you're going to come up with some answers for things that maybe you didn't even know what the questions were when you started, but ultimately, kind of what is the future of this thing, and so it's what is the future of this event, what is the future of this industry, what is the future of this product?

Brandt Krueger:

One of the things that I love about this methodology is that you can apply it to just about anything. Absolutely, as soon as I started hearing you talking about it, man, going on a couple years now, it immediately triggered for me thinking about events in this way, and being able to apply-

Amy Webb:

Totally.

Brandt Krueger:

... this methodology to our events. To see where they're going to go and what the future of events hold.

Amy Webb:

Right. You're kind of in a cool position because most events have ... You're doing the paperwork on that. You're papering those events, what 18 to 24 or even 24 months or even further into the future, right? Without realizing it, you've already reduced a bit of your uncertainty. If you're doing a huge event like you get started on it now, my assumption would be you're working two years out three years out. We already know-

Brandt Krueger:

It so depends. I wish sometimes it was two years out, but sometimes it's, "Yeah. Let's do this amazingly huge thing in a month."

Amy Webb:

Yeah. Well, okay, so that's a whole separate issue but within-

Amy Webb:

... or for companies that do multiple events were you ... like for the same client over a period of years, there's something nice about that because you can say, "Okay. Well, what does the audience ... what does an audience member alive in the year ... who's 30 in the year 2019 going to ... How are they going to behave? What are they going to be holding? What are they going to be thinking? What's their life going to be like five years from now?"

Amy Webb:

To get to the answer of that question, then you have to start deconstructing. Well, what is this person who's 2019 like in the present day? The answer is this person has probably experienced a silent disco, right? They are probably going to be somebody who has, at the very least been exposed to, but more likely have experienced on more than one occasion being digital ... being quiet, but together with a whole bunch of other people at the same time using technology as an intermediary.

Amy Webb:

That opens up some really interesting avenues, right? Maybe it tells us something about having simultaneous events or simultaneous presentations. Think about some of these big events where there are trade show floors, they're the worst, and you've got people speaking in corners, and nobody ... There's just distractions, nobody can pay attention to anything.

Amy Webb:

Well, a way to mitigate that could be the silent ... You guys know what I mean when I say silent disco?

Brandt Krueger:

Yeah.

Will Curran:

Absolutely.

Brandt Krueger:

Some do. Some do. I've actually seen that.

Amy Webb:

Yeah. Maybe there's like a silent disco version of that-

Brandt Krueger:

Yeah.

Amy Webb:

... and your vendors gives everybody a set of really awesome noise-canceling headphones that they wear when they're on the trade floor. Actually, why don't you guys do that? That would be amazing.

Will Curran:
That does exist. Yeah.

Amy Webb:
No. No. No. No. No. I'm not talking about a guided tour. I'm talking ... Oh, my god. That'd be amazing. I think I've just ... If like I walk into just pick a giant thing, right? That solve so many problems. Every booth area is geo-fenced, everybody is wearing a little lab or something, and I get near that thing and that also ... Oh, I could have the headphones be green or red and I could push green, meaning, yes, approach me, or keep it red, meaning like stay away from me, just looking at with it, I don't want to talk to you.

Amy Webb:
But I mean, there's so many ... Right? That'd be nice because it gives you much more intimate experiences. It cuts down on some of the horrible noise, the other stuff that everybody hates. It gives you the ability to do more intimate small group presentations. I mean, if I was a vendor, I think I would like that. If I was a user or a participant that feels so much less stressful to me, especially for an introvert.

Amy Webb:
I guess I'm telling everybody now that I'm an introvert, but giant trade floor, short ... It can be challenging for people. Anyhow, my point is you've got huge differences in people's social expectations. We know that, and yet, event planners I don't think are doing a very good job of incorporating that in a way that could be really beneficial. It could be much more meaningful and relevant for everybody.

Brandt Krueger:
I do and I mean, where my mind went is, is VR. There's been a lot of resistance to VR in events because ... Well, we're people people, why would we want to go into this individual world where it takes away from the face to face and all that kind of stuff. But I've seen some amazing examples of group VR experiences where people are laughing and holding hands and giggling and having ... It's that kind of like you with the disco thing of the alone together but not alone, but silently together or individually together, something along those lines.

Amy Webb:
Yeah, and so to that end, like I'll bring up Sony again. Sony really didn't do a good job of paying attention to some areas. But it's computer science lab, the research division of Sony that's based in Tokyo is doing some really cool stuff around sensory experiences and shared perspectives so there are some pretty cool VR glasses. They're more like mixed reality glasses now that allow you to see the real world and a digital overlay at the same time.

Amy Webb:

It's in a similar vein as Magic Leap but has additional features like you can see other people's perspectives, and they built a really crazy maze where you have to get around the maze, but you see where the other people are but you can also see what they see. It sounds crazy but there are all kinds of I think very interesting ways that are not, that don't have to be gimmicky and silly that can enhance everybody's understanding of whatever it is they're there to learn about, right? To learn more about each other.

Brandt Krueger:

Absolutely. I originally kind of planned on doing a kind of a lightning round of various technologies but because of the fact that you brought up the fact that you've attended and even helped plan some events, I'd love to hang on that topic a little bit more before we have to wrap up.

Amy Webb:

Oh, yes.

Brandt Krueger:

I'm curious to know with your eye as you're going to all of these conferences and events and things, what are some of the biggest mistakes that you think folks are making out there?

Amy Webb:

I will give you two sets. One is sort of as an attendee and one is the person ... I'm on stage a lot, right? Because I speak at a lot of these things. From an attendee point of view, I think people are going to become increasingly concerned about their privacy. If that's the case think about your registration process and what you are giving away. If you're an event where ... Now, you can't prevent some vendor from going through the list of speakers or attendees and scraping everybody in off that list, and then going to LinkedIn and you're paying somebody for a list of their email, but if you're in an event and it feels like as an attendee your information it's not secure or if it's one of those deals where everywhere you go somebody's got to scan a QR code on your badge that kind of thing.

Amy Webb:

I get that everybody wants everybody's data but I think is going to be problematic just from a social point of view, but also from potentially a regulatory view going forward. Every single event planner, every single one of them and the companies that they work with need to develop a data governance policy, one that describes and codifies how data are being collected, how they are being used, with whom they're being shared, and all of that should be made transparent.

Amy Webb:

It may not be a problem right now. I can guarantee you it's going to be an issue going forward.

Brandt Krueger:

100%. Absolutely. What's fascinating to me to watch as GDPR has gone, being implemented and we're starting to see more like state laws coming in with data privacy and protection is that while the Europeans were on the forefront of codifying all of that, they're also on the forefront of doing like personalization in events, so they're being really fussy about what you opt-in to, but when you opt-in they're doing amazing things with like, when you register, greets you with the hello from your native language and things like that or-

Amy Webb:

Yeah. I know that sounds cool but I was in Dubai a couple months ago where there was something similar. I was there speaking, but I was also just walking around looking at stuff and ... That was not universally well accepted nor was ... Right. I mean, there were a couple of very big Chinese tech companies that were showing off very cool recognition technology but if you were anywhere within ... anywhere close to that booth, you were being recognized, and as a result, people were ... there were people who were pretty upset about that, people who are staying away, people who are oblivious, of course.

Amy Webb:

I just think that you can mitigate some of ... that there are tons of opportunities to use that kind of technology in a way that's mutually beneficial, that people would like, but you just got to be incredibly transparent about how you're doing that and not assume that personalizing somebody's experience is going to wow them first. It might freak them out first in a way that then they have a negative idea of your brand or whatever it was going forward.

Amy Webb:

I would say stuff like that, I would say that there are some opportunities to ... there's a whole bunch of bots that could make life easier, physical robots. There's a company called Savioke. I don't have a relationship with them. I just know of them. They've been putting little service bots in hotels and it's a pretty simple thing to do to geo-map the floor or even the hotel where you're holding your event and you could have a little Savioke stocked with water or stocked with maps or whatever it might be just roaming around.

Amy Webb:

That kind of small amenity could go a long way because a lot of people, especially when they're at larger events like think about the choke points, food, water, bathrooms, that kind of stuff, hand sanitizer or whatever. I think that there's some really interesting use cases around smaller, more lightweight robotics that could be pretty cool.

Amy Webb:

From a speaker's point of view, I travel, I always present from my own machine. I travel with all of my own dongles. Here's my observation. My observation is I totally ... I get why everybody thinks that it's cool to have enormous screens everywhere with tons of graphics and light shows and lasers and everything else, and giant walls a video, but if you're just a person sitting in the

audience and you're trying to focus on what the tiny head very, very far away from you is saying, I think a lot of that stuff is distraction.

Amy Webb:

In 2019, I've spoken at a few things where they still have like the Twitterfall walls. You know what that is, like the big screen?

Brandt Krueger:

Yeah.

Amy Webb:

I didn't think that was a good idea to begin with, and I'm somebody who literally live ... I live-tweet my own presentations so when I'm speaking I ... because I share a ton of ... I go fast and I share a ton of research and I think it's a great way to engage with people. I built a bot version of myself to interact with people-

Will Curran:

What?

Amy Webb:

... because, well, I'm trying to empathize.

Will Curran:

Cool.

Amy Webb:

I'm trying to be emphatic. If I was listening to me and I say something like, "Oh, there's Savioke blah-blah-blah." I would probably then immediately Google, "Well, what's that thing?" Then, I've lost track of what I'm saying. I've used the word I too many times. Instead what I do is try to anticipate the questions that people might have now that I've said something or I try to anticipate what they're probably going to be googling and I just send them that link the moment that I say it.

Amy Webb:

I do that on Twitter, and so when I speak, I invite people who use Twitter to just follow along and basically, I'm going to like the bot version of me, they can interact with, ask questions, whatever to help them have a more deep experience I guess. That's a good use case. Having a Twitter wall with a bunch of random bots who are trying to hijack your event with hashtags and just crap is never a good idea.

Amy Webb:

I think erring on the side of fewer enormous screens and pyrotechnics and everything else and giving everybody a more intimate, which you can do, even in ... I mean, I've spoken in front of

crowds that have like 10,000 people in them. You can still create an intimate exciting experience for everybody if you empathize with the people who are going to be sitting in that room.

Brandt Krueger:

That's good advice for all sides of an event. Is empathizing with the attendee.

Amy Webb:

Yeah, and I feel like sometimes it's the attendees and the participants get overlooked in the name of cool graphics and whiz-bang screens and I will not say which conference this was, but I was there the day before ... I don't need to rehearse or anything but I always like to plug in make sure stuff works. I was there-

Brandt Krueger:

You sound like a dream speaker by the way. Like you bring your own dongles, you've got your own machine. You've got the Twitter bot.

Amy Webb:

Oh, god. I will tell you one other story. I know we're going like way over time but I feel like I've seen it all, and so this was different story but I got to a very famous, very well-known gathering of people, very high-profile people a couple years ago. I'm scheduled to be the lunchtime keynote and I get into the room just like I always do-

Brandt Krueger:

Like literally.

Amy Webb:

... like somewhere in between half an hour and an hour in advance, got all my stuff, happy to see everybody, excited to talk, and I don't know what happened before I walked into that room, but the A/V team quit. I heard the tail end of it but there was some screaming and like five guys and one woman wearing black polo t-shirts walked out and nothing was connected.

Amy Webb:

I'm like, "Okay. Cool. That's going to be a challenge." They could not move to a different room because of what this thing was. The screen was nowhere near the ... I mean, like it was bizarro world, whoever put the stuff wherever it was supposed to be totally screwed it up. There was no physical wiring that went from the projector, the overhead projector. It was an overhead system, it wasn't like one of those huge big setups where it's, there's the big A/V stuff in the back. This was just like ...

Amy Webb:

Anyhow, so I MacGyvered that room. In 45 minutes, we moved the stage to the center where I could actually plug everything in. I got the screen plugged in. I got the A/V stuff plugged in, and I was sweating like I've never sweat before but we started on time, and I just did it in a round, we

made it work. Anyhow, it's a totally separate thing. That was a challenge but this other one, they had so much technology, they had so ... I've never seen a setup like this in my life.

Amy Webb:

I mean, biggest things that I've spoken at, right? With the biggest rooms and the fanciest stuff still did not top this thing. I get there and literally, nothing worked. I mean, nothing worked and there was such a, there were so many people that had been in charge of so many different things that nobody could even figure out with a snake pile of Ethernet, like with cords and stuff went to. Anyhow, so don't be that. I guess the point that I'm saying is like don't do that and sometimes simple is ... sometimes you don't need a fog machine I guess is really what I'm trying to say. Sometimes just like having lights that turn on is enough.

Brandt Krueger:

You might have to have an entire separate episode dedicated to you venting on your experiences on the speaker circuit.

Amy Webb:

Most of my experiences have been lovely and wonderful and I love just about all of the A/V people, however ... Oh, let me add one more thing, one last thing. Because in the United States there is now a transition between the live mics that get used and the over-the-ear mics. Over-the-ear mics were not designed for or by people who have curly hair and/or also wear glasses, which means that if you either have curly hair or glasses, that thing is going to move around and be challenging, and so people like to use tape.

Amy Webb:

I am somebody with a severe latex allergy so that kind of tape like doesn't work and sometimes once I had somebody who didn't have any alternative, and so we just ... I basically just like put that thing underneath my dress and stuck the microphone out. It looked a little weird but it worked. But the moral of that story is I think allergies are ... I developed the latex allergy as an adult and I think for whatever reason, especially in this country we're seeing more and more allergies. I would just plan ... like that's sort of a trend that I know sounds strange and maybe disconnected but if I was an event planner, that's the kind of thing I would be asking more questions about and paying attention to going forward.

Brandt Krueger:

Oh, it's paying attention to trends again, right? Also, on a similar note, I'll just throw out either making sure that you're using clear tape or if you're using "flesh-colored tape" that you have multiple flesh tones for multiple speakers because I've seen-

Amy Webb:

Oh, totally.

Brandt Krueger:

... bright pink tape on a dark-skinned speaker and it was really just ugly, and just made it like so noticeable and like wrong on a whole lot of levels.

Amy Webb:

Yes, and I guess one last, last thing. Well, I know the event planners are not typically also the programmers but don't be the people who in the year 2019 program your event with [inaudible 01:10:03], right? Don't do that. There's plenty of qualified women. There are plenty of qualified people of color and don't be the person who solves the problem by plopping a woman into the moderator's chair or making the person of color the sort of emcee and that checks off the box for you. People notice that stuff now and I know it just seems lazy to me if you're producing an event and it looks homogeneous.

Brandt Krueger:

Well, the good news is that's a pretty popular topic of discussion in the industry is making sure we aren't doing...

Amy Webb:

Yes, but it's also ... Yeah. Well, no. I mean, what I'm seeing now is like ... I was at the ... I'll just tell you. I was at Milken Global Institute, huge important, big gathering of people, and this was three years ago. They had asked me to come and talk about autonomous vehicles and AI and trends and stuff like that, and they were talking about how that year is the highest percentage of women, 20% and everybody was very excited about this.

Amy Webb:

I just remember thinking to myself, "Huh. I haven't seen that many women. I guess maybe I just haven't ... maybe most of this conference is somewhere else. I don't know. Because like the qualitative data don't make sense to me." It turns out that the two-hour lunchtime keynote session was like 30 women giving 2-minute stories about themselves. No joke. It was bad.

Brandt Krueger:

Wow.

Amy Webb:

Yeah. They totally were. Don't solve your diversity issue or even champion the diversity issue by having a panel on diversity, and then like that's it. Don't do that.

Brandt Krueger:

Yeah. Another amen. Well, we need to start wrapping it up. I want to give you an opportunity though just to give folks ... It's on a little bit different subject but I wanted to give you an opportunity to talk about your latest book, *The Big Nine*, and so just give folks a little bit of an overview about what that one's about.

Amy Webb:

Sure. The short end of the story is there's a tremendous amount of misplaced optimism and fear when it comes to artificial intelligence. Part of that is because we've been living with the idea of AI for so long and it's been anthropomorphized in books and movies and we have these indelible images. In fact, the real future of AI is already in progress and on two different developmental tracks.

Amy Webb:

In the West, capitalism is driving progress and, therefore, speed is prioritized over safety, and in China, AI is part and parcel of the ruling government's vision for a new world order. One in which China is at the helm. As a result, there are essentially nine companies building out the future of AI, three are in China. Those are called Baidu, Alibaba, and Tencent. The other six are based in the United States. That's Google, Apple, Amazon, Microsoft, IBM, and Facebook.

Amy Webb:

While there are plenty of other companies doing amazing work, overwhelmingly, it's these nine companies that control the lion share of patents. They have the most money. They've got the most data. They have the biggest user bases. They are building the ecosystem. It's their clouds. It's their frameworks. Basically, all roads lead back to them. The book explores the business governing and societal implications of this bifurcated track over the next seven decades as artificial intelligence and the ecosystem matures.

Amy Webb:

I've been told that the three, the book is written in three parts. The first sort of sets up the problem and goes through a history. The center part of the book are three scenarios. There's a chapter that's the optimistic framing. One on the neutral framing, and one on the catastrophic framing, and then the third part of the book is solutions. I've been told, I think this is a compliment I think, that people have been sick to their stomach after reading the catastrophic framing and that it's kept them up at night and is very, very disturbing. If that's your thing, it's a good book for you to read, maybe not right before.

Brandt Krueger:

I'll definitely vouch for that. There's portions of it that should absolutely scare the pants off of you, but if you're into this stuff at all, if you're into the idea of, or following AI technology, which I know there are a lot of folks in our industry that are, as we're starting to look more at chatbots and more machine learning type stuff, but it's all on the periphery. If you're nerdy and wonky and into this stuff at all, it's a fascinating read.

Brandt Krueger:

I just wanted to gush a little bit for a moment on that, because it is actually applying these same, to a certain extent, these same techniques that we just talked about to this specific industry. The good news is that we can do something about it but we probably got to get on it if that's not too much of a spoiler.

Amy Webb:

No. I think that's right. That's right.

Brandt Krueger:

Okay. All right. Well, thank you so much, Amy. We really appreciate you coming today. I could talk to you all day but I know we got to get it moving on, but where can people find out more about where to pick up the books and find out more about you in general?

Amy Webb:

Thanks. Well, the books are available everywhere books are sold. You can learn more about me at amywebb, A-M-Y-W-E-B-B.io. You can access all of our research and our reports. Like I said everything is free and open-source, which means you can download it but you can also build on it and make it your own. All of that's available at futuretodayinstitute.com.

Will Curran:

Awesome. Oh, my gosh. Amy, thank you so much for being on the show. It has been such an honor and I know Brandt and I are just like nerding out over here hardcore, as evident by the fact that we just literally could have kept asking you questions all day so thank you so much for being on the show. Thank you, Brandt, for also hosting with me as well.

Brandt Krueger:

Absolutely. Love it as always.

Will Curran:

Awesome. For everyone else tuned in, audience, if you want to check out more of the Event Tech Podcast, you know where to head out to. Just go to eventtechpodcast.com. That's where you're going to get all the show notes, links to the resources. We got the infographics that Amy was talking about, all these cool examples of maps that I was able to find as well, so you want to go check all of those out. As well as all the transcripts as well in case you, if you like doing some old school reading.

Will Curran:

Also, if you do want to listen and continue to listen, you can also subscribe on iTunes, Pocket Casts, Google Play, Spotify. We're pretty much everywhere you are and we also want to know, what do you think? What do you think of Amy's amazing predictions and her framework for designing out the future? To reach us at eventtechpodcast@helloendless.com or #eventtechpodcast. Reach out to us. We want to hear from you. We love you, guys, and we want to thank you so much for listening today to the Event Tech Podcast and we'll see you next week on the Event Tech Podcast.

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Event Tech out.