

SIKT 2020

Axes of Uncertainty Foresight Game

 **Future Today Institute**

Axes of Uncertainty Game

Greetings and welcome to the Axes of Uncertainty collaborative game, which will be played at SIKT 2020. The game was designed by the Future Today Institute. Tonight, CEO Amy Webb will facilitate this exciting workshop with you and your fellow innovators.

We tend to under-predict or over-predict change. The reason: imagining plausible outcomes forces us to confront our expectations and cherished beliefs. The Axes result in short stories that tell us something about the future.

OVERVIEW

The Axes of Uncertainty will help you confront deep uncertainty and see alternative futures. A completed Axis results in a 2 x 2 matrix and four first-draft scenarios describing multiple, alternative futures, given what we can observe from the past and present. The scenarios will reveal risk and opportunity, help you prioritize your work and show you where to take incremental actions.

GAME PLAY

You will collaborate as a group. The game is simple and involves just a few steps. At the beginning, you will develop a short list of uncertainties. These are factors over which no one government, company or person has complete control. You will then use those uncertainties to uncover next-order outcomes. You'll continue to repeat this, asking "What If?" again and again until plausible alternative futures come into view.

STRATEGIC USE

The Axes of Uncertainty are used in the corporate, government and investment communities, and it is a core framework in strategic foresight.

Step 1: Brainstorm Uncertainties

External uncertainties are disruptive changes over which you have no direct control. We use four broad categories of external uncertainties including economic factors (macroeconomic trends and forces shaping our economies, the distribution of wealth); social factors (changes to public health and education, demographic and population shifts, environmental changes); politics and activism (regulation, executive orders, trade agreements, elections, use of social media); and ethics/ values.

Generate a list of uncertainties using these categories to start on the following page. (We've offered you a few examples.) You can add in additional external uncertainties you're curious about or that are specific to a question about the future.

These are the four categories of uncertainties you should always use, regardless of what "future of X" project you're working on				These are categories specific to "future of X" question you're asking		
Economic	Social	Ethical/ Values	Political/ Regulatory	YOUR CHOICE	YOUR CHOICE	YOUR CHOICE
Prolonged recession vs. bailouts prop up market gains and global economy thrives	Remote work becomes more acceptable or less acceptable	People become more or less involved with organized religion	Big tech companies are broken up/ antitrust suits don't have an impact	Data science skills increase/ stay as they are now	Artificial general intelligence is accessible soon/ isn't accessible for many years	
Tax reform happens/ doesn't happen	Wealth disparity continues to grow or shrinks (especially related to tech)		The 2020 presidential election is contested/ isn't contested		Tech companies disrupt diagnostics and labs/ do not	

Time Limit: 10 Minutes

Objective: List things you're uncertain about. They can be very broad or very specific. Examples are included. Fill in the white spaces with your team.

These are the four categories of uncertainties you should always use				Other uncertainties about the future		
Economic	Social	Ethical/ Values	Political/ Regulatory	Technology	YOUR CHOICE	YOUR CHOICE
				<i>Example: Artificial general intelligence is available in the next decade</i>	<i>Example: Humans successfully colonize Mars</i>	<i>Example: We find proof of advanced alien life forms in the next few years</i>

Step 2: Express Uncertainties as Opposites

Now, pick 1-2 uncertainties in each category that resonate most with your group. Express those uncertainties using opposite states as you see below.

Uncertainty: Artificial general intelligence is available in the next decade

Expressed as Opposites:

Artificial general intelligence is available in the next decade



Artificial general intelligence takes another 20+ years to happen



Time Limit: 10 Minutes

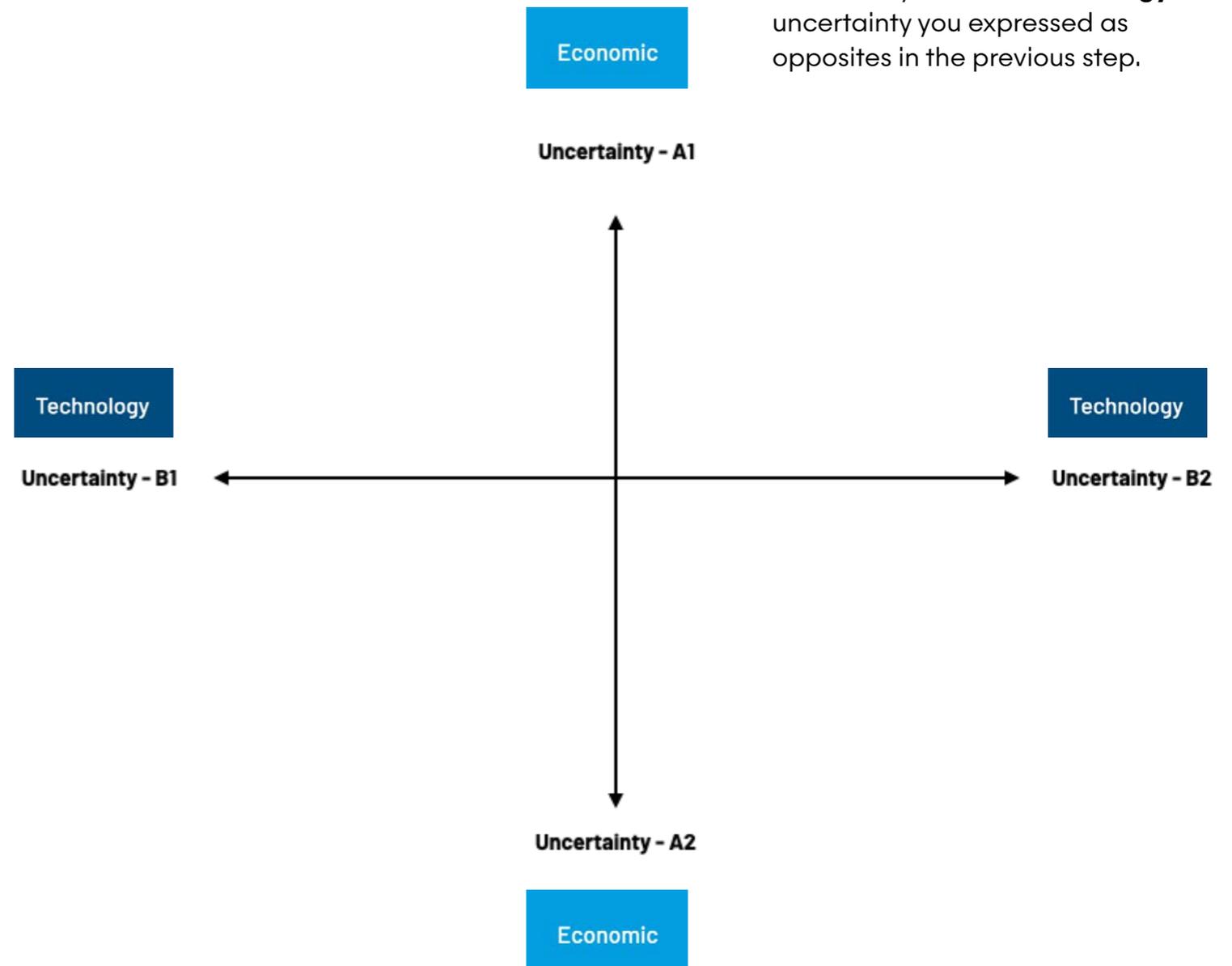
Objective: Explore next-order outcomes.

Step 3: Pick Two Uncertainties to Put On Opposing Axes; Write Headlines and Next-Order Impacts

Pick two of your uncertainties from different categories (example: Economic and Social, or Economic and one of your own categories) and put them on opposing axes, like this.

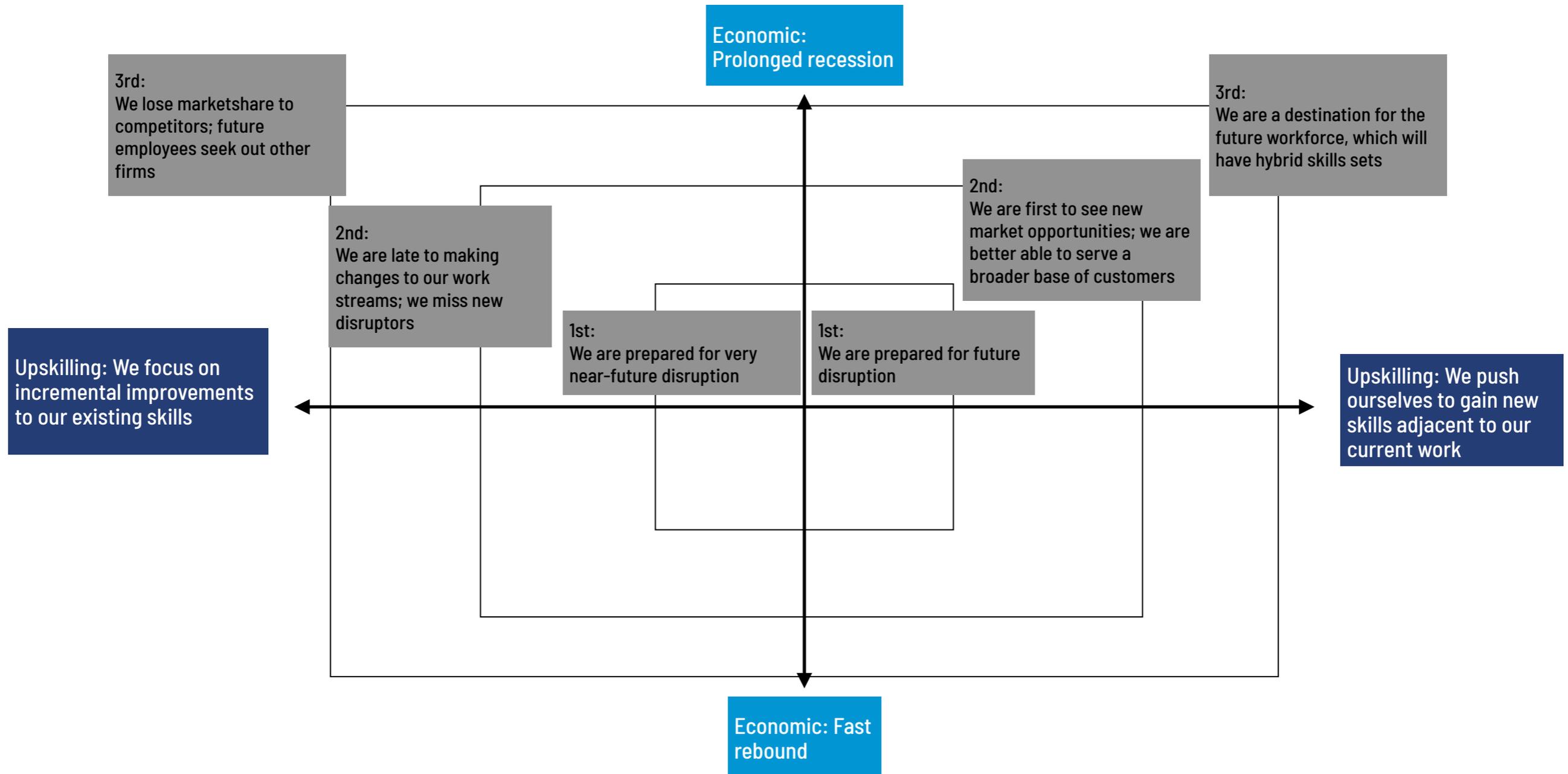
The more closely related your uncertainties, the more narrowly-focused your resulting headlines will be. The more divergent your uncertainties, the more likely you are to surface new insights.

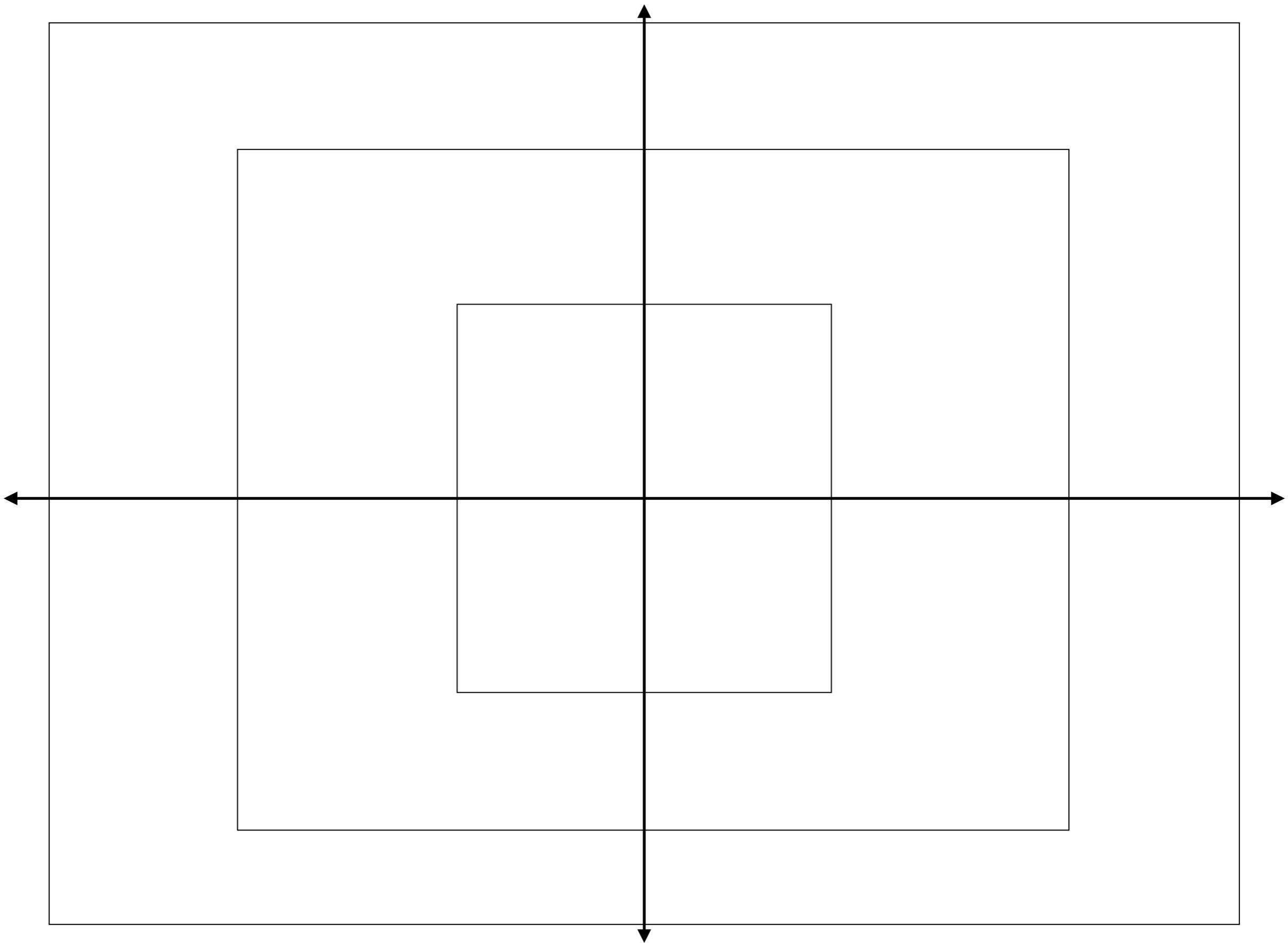
Example: Pick one **Economic** uncertainty and one **Technology** uncertainty you expressed as opposites in the previous step.

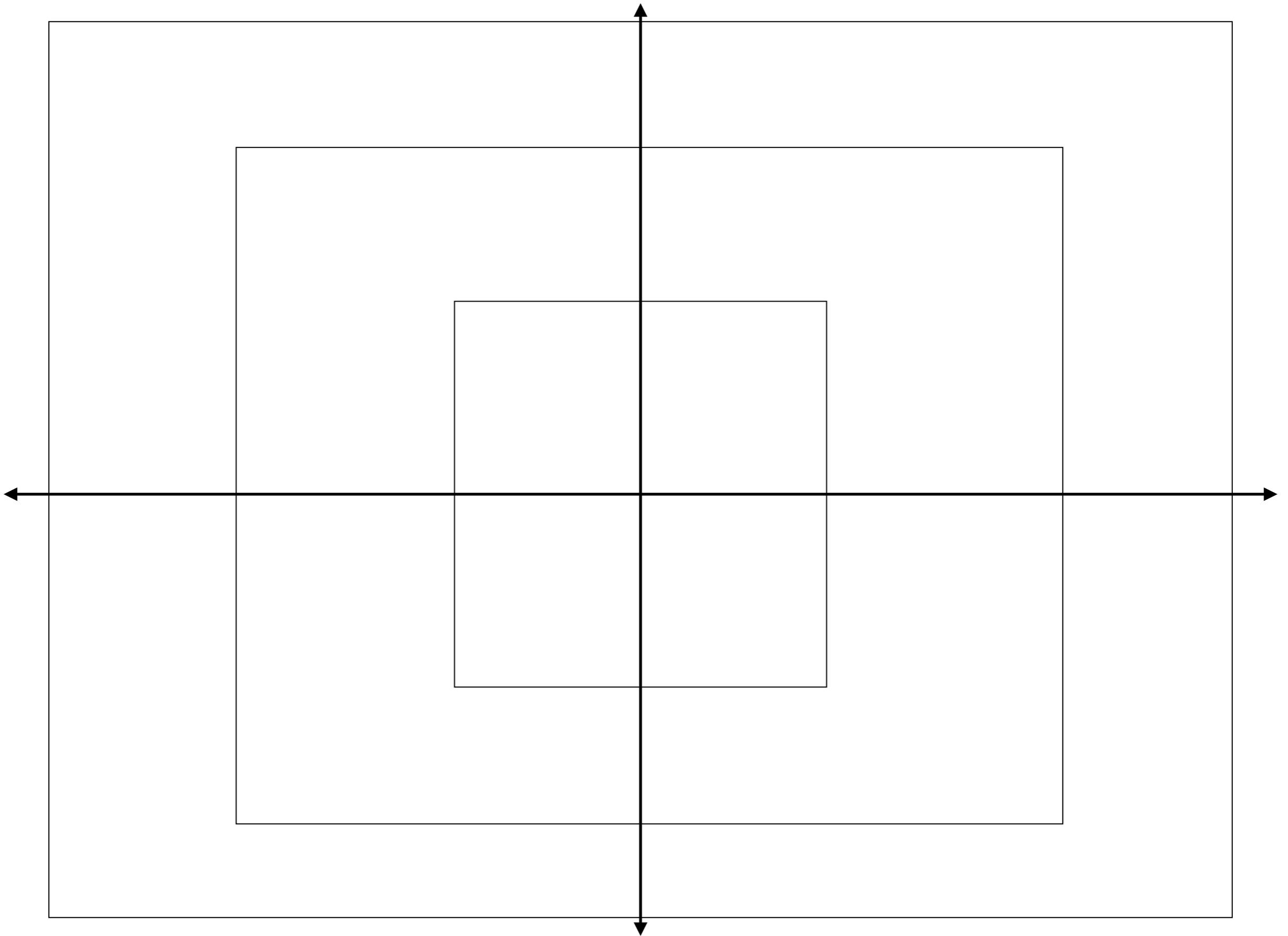


Write headlines, then the next-order impacts

Describe what a future state would look like if each of the uncertainties were to happen. Then describe the next (2nd) impact. And the impact of that (3rd).







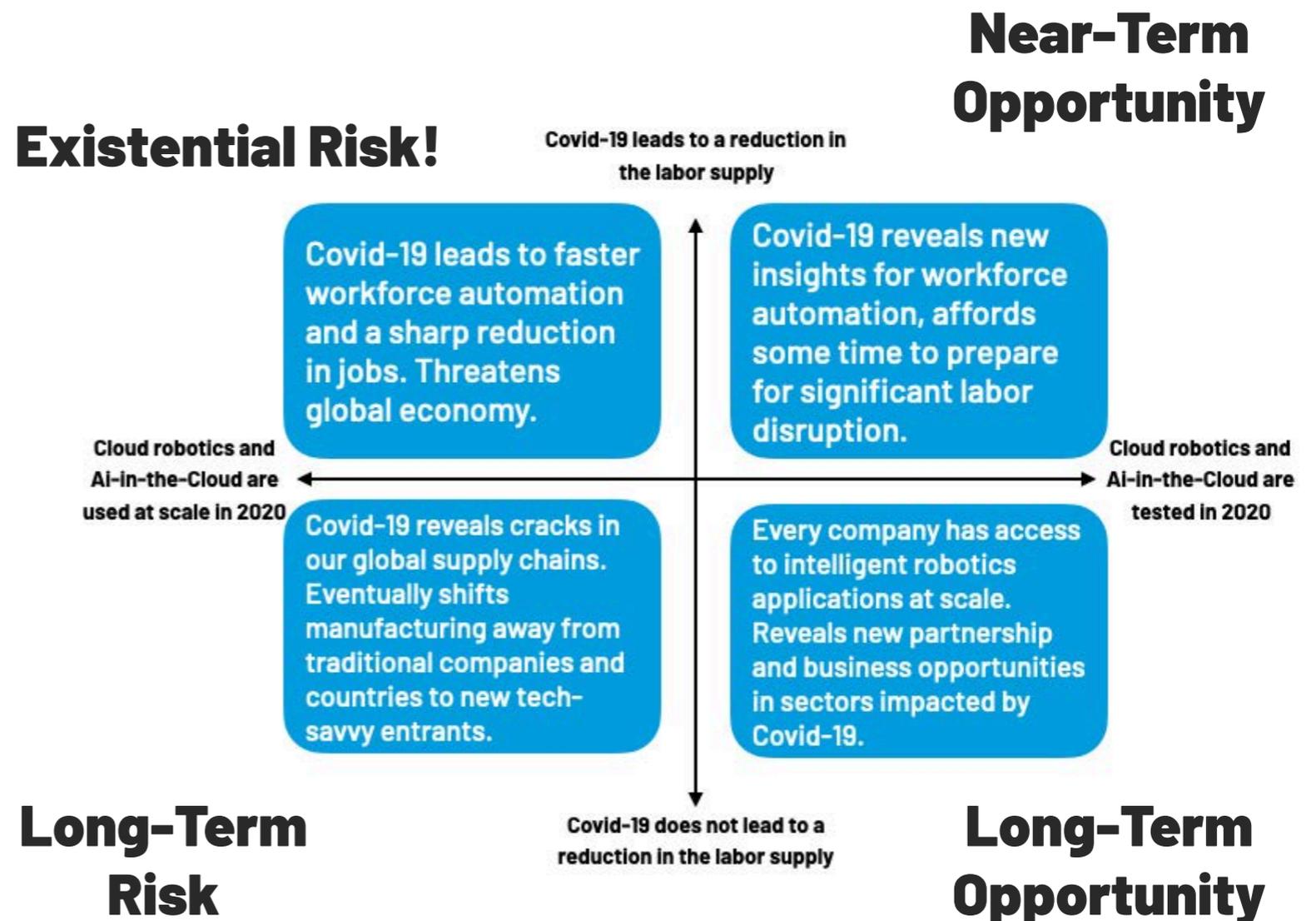
Time Limit: 5 Minutes

Objectives: Identify risk and opportunity. Find actions to take on the future, today.

Final Step: Label Each Quadrant

Label each quadrant to help you triangulate and prioritize the actions you will take.

- Near-term Opportunity
- Long-term Opportunity
- Near-term Risk
- Long-term Risk
- Existential Risk



SENSE AND RESPOND

Create a state of future readiness within your organization.

With so much uncertainty and disruption, every organization must develop future forecasting capabilities. Learn how to use the Future Today Institute's data-driven, rigorous foresight tools to create a state of readiness within your team or broader organization.

Founded in 2006, the Future Today Institute prepares leaders and their teams for deep uncertainty and complex futures. Our technology-led, data-driven forecasting methodology includes signal mapping, trend identification, scenario development, future risk assessment, next-order impact modeling, visioning and strategic planning. Our robust frameworks detect disruption early so that organizations can meet future challenges. We advise a wide range of leadership teams in the public and private sectors and produce successful, measurable outcomes for organizations of all sizes.

For more information or to learn how we can support your organization's path to the future, please be in touch.



www.futuretodayinstitute.com
hello@futuretodayinstitute.com
267.342.4300

120 E. 23rd Street
5th Floor
New York, New York 10010

