

A large, white, stylized question mark is positioned on the left side of the image, partially overlapping a gravel road that leads towards a horizon under a blue sky with white clouds. The road is made of grey gravel and has a white dashed line down the center. The sky is a clear, vibrant blue with several fluffy white clouds. The overall scene is bright and open, suggesting a path of inquiry or a journey towards the future.

?

FUTURE YOU

The Owner's Manual

Bill Jensen

I am future you.

Future strong you.

Been there. Done that. Back to tell
you what's what.

Whew. 2015-2025 was crazy, wasn't it? Aggregation. Agitation. Analyzation. Automatization. Ball of confusion. Eight billion hyper-connected people. A trillion-sensor economy. Tech startups completely disrupted healthcare. Dangerous divides between haves and have nots grew ever more harmful and violent. And while the sharing economy freed human capacity and creativity exploded, the shifts also created just as many new ways for people to struggle and lose. The quests for clean water, clean energy and a better-educated workforce, both saved us and threw us into greater turmoil. Twenty-five major economies around the world are facing massive labor shortfalls. Artificial intelligence, analytics, and robotics forever altered how we thought about labor, skills, and the future of jobs. And yet, through all that, you came out strong.

I am your strong future. Let's look at what made you future strong.

Your choices are where it began.

Choosing me meant choosing the unknown when others chose the familiar.

Choosing me meant fanning the flames of that which tested you.

Choosing me meant choosing the best hardships for your best future.

How did you do that? I'll let your guide, Bill Jensen, cover that in the next few pages.

He and his teammates spent several years researching this owner's manual with their Future of Work Study.

Rather than add to all the hyperventilating about the coming disruptions that will radically impact how you live, work and play—both in ways that are phantasmagorically amazing and not so much—the most helpful Future You Owner's Manual must focus on the choices you will face and how you make those choices.

Over the next few years, you will experience up to 100 transformative moments every year. 100 moments yearly that may or may not determine the future, but will most certainly reveal your future.

Your future reveals itself only after you choose how you will face every disruption and opportunity that comes your way.

What goes into your choices—your beliefs, unconscious biases, values and emotions—drives every situation as much as any disruption that is thrown at you.

The future is personal.

SO WHAT? WHY SHOULD YOU CARE IF THE FUTURE IS PERSONAL?

Because the choices you make now will determine what you have to deal with tomorrow and the next day and the next. Those choices will also better prepare you (or not) for whatever comes at you that's completely beyond your control.

This owner's manual is extremely optimistic. You can create an amazing and bright future for yourself and others! However... I must also be totally honest with you.

Our research found that—except for the top 1% to 20% of us—most who work in the industrialized world will experience life-situations that will feel both utopian and dystopian on a weekly, sometimes daily basis.

Every week, as some portions of your life and work are going wonderfully, other portions will be completely disrupted, forcing confusion, trauma and more into your routines. With no discernable pattern in what will go kablooey next. A constant battle between what is right and what is easy.

The best personal strategy for continuously bi-polar, utopian/dystopian experiences in your life is an interconnected troika...

1. **Five Personal Choices:** This owner's manual.

2. **21st Century Skill-Building:** These are beyond the scope of this manual, but here is the short list of the skills most everyone will need:

- Sense-Making
- Novel and Adaptive Thinking
- Social Intelligence (EQ on steroids: Online, face2face, global)
- New Media Literacy
- Computational Thinking
- Cognitive Load Management
- Design Mindset
- Cross-Cultural Competency
- Virtual Collaboration
- Extremely Self-Directed
- Mindful Action (Inner knowingness plus mastering conflict)
- Triage (Ability to do hyperfast root cause analysis)
- Simplification (Both in thinking and in communicating)
- Deep Critical Thinking (Logic, Argumentation, Psychology)
- Trans-Disciplinary (Ability to connect all these skills)
- Clear, Concise Communication

3. **Community-Building:** In the past, who you knew used to matter for access to power. In the future, the connections within your tribe are your source of power.

These three, working together as one integrated strategy, are your best approach to the coming bi-polar future. Typical of what you will experience is the pattern we found when we asked thousands of people: The future of work called. What message did it leave?

“The robots who took your job last month have revolted and Armageddon is scheduled for tomorrow. And you still have not returned your key fob. Please do so by 9am tomorrow.”

“They just found out a way to tap the sun’s energy at low cost. World’s energy problems are things of past. (Unless some selfish country decides not to share the tech with others.) People work for passions. Work from home. Things are cheaper. Globalization has taken a different dimension. And hopefully no wars. Peaceful working atmosphere. Dreams.”

“Hello humans, this is your machine replacement, don’t bother coming in anymore. If you’re all bored because you can’t do anything better than a machine, consider re-examining capitalism, because you’re all out of jobs and still have bills to pay.”

“Instead of vacation days, we have Work-Life Balance Days. Instead of an office, we have Creation Stations. Instead of a salary, we have Gratitude Compensation. Instead of a job, we have Your Life Passion.”

Every trend we examined followed the same 50/50 pattern: Your life will be amazing... You will face unprecedented and very difficult hardships... ALL AT ONCE. Your future will be bi-polar. And how the hell does anyone deal with that? By making the leap. Most everything that makes you future strong will be outside your comfort zone.

FIVE DEEPLY PERSONAL CHOICES

We found that most everyone who had already survived crazy transitions into today, and was best prepared to thrive in tomorrow’s craziness, made five deeply personal choices.

There is no perfect approach or perfect balance to embracing these choices. It’s your future, your life, your choices. As you read about each future strong choice, adapt each to your personal situation.

CHOICE 1: INNER TRUTHS

Will you hear the heartbeat of your past choices?

The biggest challenge most everyone has in facing all the unknowns and challenges of the future is courage... Finding the courage to leap away from what feels safe and secure. Over and over again, we heard that this was the one most crucial piece of the future strong puzzle.

But how does one find that courage? Sure, we can be motivated by others, but that's not a sustainable approach. You need tap into the courage within you. During our thousands of interviews for the study and book, we uncovered the secret.

Your past is handing you a tool to leap into your future: Your crucible moment(s).

These are deeply personal experiences from your past that forged or tested how you view the world.

Sometimes they're traumatic and life shattering, like a death in the family, surviving cancer or losing a job. But they can also be the unexpected kindness of a stranger, a victory or loss in sports, or a spiritual awakening that completely changed how you see things.

During those moments, you mustered what you needed to get through them or figured out the lesson to be learned from them. Those experiences are a crucial part of what makes you, you. They are the heartbeat of your own choices, always beating inside of you, waiting to ignite your own courage, determination, and passion anytime that's needed.

Tap into your crucible moments and you will find the courage you need to face most any challenge the future throws at you. Guaranteed!

If you're having difficulty tapping into those moments, reach out to friends or family or your coach. They will help you explore your own stories and find the courage within you.

Another way to explore your crucible moments came from Roz Savage, one of our interviewees. Roz is the first woman to row solo across three oceans: the Atlantic, Pacific, and Indian. "What really made me see what I needed to do," she said, describing her Aha moment, "was when I wrote two versions of my own obituary. At 33, I imagined I was at the end of my

life, looking back. The first version was the one that I wanted and the second one was where I was headed for. I wanted a life of meaning and adventure and personal challenge, but what I was headed for was a life of quiet desperation. Secure, but being stifled by that security.”

The Obituary Exercise:

So sad. Sorry to see you go. Time to write your three-paragraph obit. Twice...

My Obit If I Died Today

The Obit I Want

Compare the two. What’s different? As you explore the difference, you will uncover the things you really want and need in your future and the times in your past when you had the courage to tackle unbelievably difficult challenges.

Tap into your past strengths to tackle your future. Because, while you whipsaw back and forth between “Hey, I’m on top of the world!” and “Oh, shit...How the hell am I going to do this?!” the one thing that will give you the courage to leap from your comfort zone is realizing you’ve done it before—just differently.

CHOICE 2: SOUL ON FIRE

Who will you choose to become?

While your passion is crucial (this is SOUL ON FIRE after all), most people misinterpret that idea to be mostly about blissfully following your bliss. The two things most miss are:

- That passion must be a call to adventure that is so strong, it will not be denied. That pursuing that adventure is the very air you breathe...it is a life force that sustains you. And...
- Pursuing one's passion and who you have chosen to become is hard work. Possibly the hardest thing you will ever do. Being future strong is being the you that you have chosen to become, today and every day. That takes grit, drive, relentlessness, determination, and true dedication to your personal vision for the future.

Being future strong is living at the intersection of today and tomorrow: where living in the moment and who you have chosen to become dance together as one. Your soul on fire becomes your one thing—the thing that always centers and focuses you, no matter how chaotic and crazed things get.

WHY IS YOUR ONE THING SO CRUCIAL TO YOUR FUTURE?

Because...

The biggest, toughest competition in the future will be the battle for your time and attention.

Your one thing will always focus your time and attention where it needs to be.

Most every successful person, ever, leveraged their one thing when creating new futures.

Still, I've learned that many (most?) people find it very difficult to uncover that one thing.

Social media guru Chris Brogan created a great approach that keeps things simple and focused, but allows for changes every year, and allows for more than one thing.

Three Words = Your Yearly Plan

Every year, reevaluate what needs to be done to keep you future strong. Then keep simplifying the list until everything is represented by just three words.

For example:

- Courage could represent all the things you need to do in the coming year that are outside of your comfort zone.
- Relationships could represent the constant reminder that you're not in this alone, and that you'll need help to achieve this year's goals and that you'll need to be there for others.
- Create could represent all the innovations you will need to launch in order to be future strong next year.

The magic is not in finding the perfect buzzwords. It is in finding three words that are so deeply meaningful to you that this simple three-word mantra will keep you thoroughly focused all year, and keep you traveling your Soul On Fire path...no matter what.

CHOICE 3: HUMBLE SELF

How will you choose to be vulnerable?

No one ever discovered their future, or any future, without venturing beyond what is known... without taking a chance, without being vulnerable. And yet what's the one thing that most people try to avoid and/or manage to death when it comes to the future? Yup. Personal vulnerability. "Oh, I can't do that. What would people think? How will I be perceived if I take that risk? What if my risk doesn't work out?"

During our interviews, we found that the people who had the best shots at future successes chose to be vulnerable.

The Big V: Heroic vs. Wimpy:

Vul•ner•able: Susceptible to harm; In need of care; Wimpy.

Em•brac•ing One's Vul•ner•abil•ity: Heroic; Leaping without fear; Letting go of what was; Creating space for the impossible to become possible; (Everybody sing...) "Let it go, let it go,

Can't hold it back anymore, Let it go, let it go, Turn away and slam the door!"

—"Let It Go," *Frozen*

Chosen Vulnerability vs. Thrust-Upon Vulnerability:

The strong among us willingly choose when and how they will be vulnerable, as that allows them to take control of their transformation through a course of action of their choosing.

Do not wait for vulnerability to be thrust upon you. That is when you lose control of your own destiny—when you spend more energy reacting to everything thrown at you rather than focusing on what's within your control.

Choosing how and when you will be vulnerable is extremely crucial. Because massive amounts of thrust-upon-you transformations and vulnerabilities are coming your way. They will be pushed at you constantly from all directions.

Futurist and inventor Ray Kurzweil once said, "Technological change is exponential ... So we won't experience 100 years of progress in the 21st century—it will be more like 20,000 years of progress." That means, if you haven't already, you will soon be experiencing about 2,000 years of change every decade. That's a lot of thrust-upon-you change and vulnerability!

To jumpstart your thinking around vulnerabilities, here are **Ten Questions to Help You Stay Vulnerable**, excerpted from Marc and Angel Hack Life's *50 Questions That Will Free Your Mind*:

1. How old would you be if you didn't know how old you are?
2. Which is worse, failing or never trying?
3. If the average human lifespan was 40 years, how would you live your life differently?
4. Are you more worried about doing things right, or doing the right things?
5. Has your greatest fear ever come true?
6. At what time in your recent past have you felt most passionate and alive?
7. When was the last time you marched into the dark with only the soft glow of an idea you strongly believed in?
8. Is it possible to know the truth without challenging it first?
9. Are you holding onto something you need to let go of?
10. Five years from now, will you remember what you did or decided today?

CHOICE 4: SACRIFICE

What are the best hardships for your best future?

Many of the sacrifices you will be asked to make are NOT in your best interest. They are designed for someone else's best interests. Many of the sacrifices you will be asked to make will shackle your future, NOT make it stronger! The fourth choice you need to make to be future strong is in selecting the best hardships for your best future.

Do Not Sacrifice Your Dreams and Goals:

We found that less than 10% of the current mainstream workforce (9.8%) believe that they can achieve their dreams and goals where they currently work. Less than 10%! That's not future strong... 90% of us are making the wrong kinds of sacrifices!

Yes... Sacrifice for the common good.

Yes... Dedicate yourself to something bigger than yourself.

But don't ever—never, ever!!—sacrifice your future, your goals, your personal needs, your dreams.

Stay future strong. Here's one approach to finding the best sacrifices that most have found super useful...

Assessing Hardships:

Draw three columns on a page...

Hardship, Sacrifice I'm Facing	Thrust upon me by others or circumstances	I chose this to fulfill my dreams

In the first column:

List at least five hardships/sacrifices you're facing.

In the other columns:

Then put a check in the column that corresponds with who drove this hardship or sacrifice. Be honest. For most of us, precious few company-driven sacrifices, or work-life or economic sacrifices belong in the right column!

Results...	Driven By Others	Driven By Me
Future Strong	50% or less	50% or more
Future Passive	60%	40%
Future Shackled	more than 60%	less than 40%

If you scored Passive or Shackled: Reach out to a coach or mentor to discuss the sacrifices you are making for others and why they are not serving your future strong needs.

For most of us, most of the time... The worst choice about sacrifice and hardship is seeking short-term relief, or addressing other's needs while ignoring our own.

The superior choice: Values-driven and driven by you.

CHOICE 5: RELIANCE

Who will you choose to have your back?

The fifth and final choice in the circle of future strong choices, Reliance, is choosing who will have your back. This goes beyond great teamwork and beyond all the friending, community-ing, buddying, and cultural engagement that most of today's social and cultural gurus talk about. Reliance is a bond between a small group of people (two to sixteen) assisting each other in building their desired future.

Reliance is when your tribe is invested in your personal journey, your adventure—helping you become and stay future strong. And when you are invested in theirs.

Who Will Hold You Accountable?

Not to your job responsibilities. God, no... You already have enough people checking up on that! Who will help hold you accountable to your personal dreams and goals? Yes, that can be your manager, mentor, spouse, or best buddy. But if you are to remain future strong, you will need others. Someone close to your day-to-day pressures.

Ideally, on every team, on every project, find at least one person to be your “help me stay true to my dreams” partner. Share your long-term dreams with that person and ask him or her to firmly be there for you when you stray—in much the same way addicts have sponsors. Think of this person as your sponsor who keeps you from being addicted to morebetterfaster and becoming afflicted with Check It Off The List disease.

Create a Reliance Assessment Map:

To some, the following may feel cold and too analytical. Try it anyway. You’ll discover it will greatly speed things up. List your top 10, 20, 30 or more friends—in and out of work. (Privately; this is not to be shared.) Then assess each according to four criteria:

- Those who get me the most
- Those who will be brutally honest with me, for my own good
- Those whom I most admire and respect
- Those whom I am happiest to be with

Score those people according to those criteria. Keep it simple. Like...

1. Not so much **2.** Somewhat **3.** Lots.

The three to five people who scored the highest on all four criteria are most likely to be your best Reliance buddies.

Share Your Crucible Moments, Broadly:

One of the best and fastest ways to build a passionate Reliance network is to share your crucible moments publicly and often. (Reminder: These are deeply personal experiences that forged or tested how you view the world.) In written posts. In talks you give or in presentations. People who share your passions and values will seek you out. That common bond will fast-track and amplify the connections needed for you to possibly select each other as have-your-back buddies.

IMMEDIATE NEXT STEPS

Our tour guide, Bill Jensen, is done. Back to Future You...

I am your strong future.

Your choices are where future strong began.

Choosing me meant taking that first step... Now...

Right away.

Pick any one of the five choices and jump in.

It doesn't matter which. Most people find that Inner Truths is where everything begins.

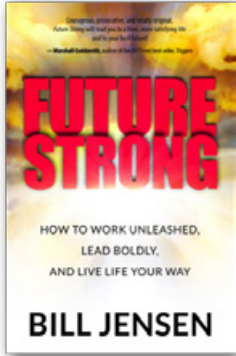
But if you feel more comfortable jumping into one of the other choices first, go for it!

What matters is getting started.

Because your strong future doesn't begin until you choose.

So choose now and enjoy the journey! Have a great future! 📍

Info



BUY THE BOOK | Get more details or buy a copy of [Future Strong](#).

ABOUT THE AUTHOR | Mr. Simplicity, Bill Jensen, makes it easier to do great work. He helps companies and teams double their productivity and pursue their passions. He has spent the past 25 years studying how work gets done. (Much of what he's found horrifies him.) He is CEO of The Jensen Group, a change consulting firm he founded in 1985.

His personal life fantasy: To bicycle around the globe via breweries.

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