WORKSHEET + WORKED EXAMPLE

Balance Today and Tomorrow

A three-horizon board with a realistic allocation of attention and different evidence for each horizon.

40 minutes | Three Horizons · Manage all three in the present

Use it in three moves

1. Identify current work, emerging opportunities, and more uncertain options. These are not simply this month, next month, and next year.

2. Allocate attention to all three now, within actual capacity. Make the trade-off explicit.

3. Choose evidence and review dates appropriate to each horizon. Move or stop work as the evidence changes.

What future are we preparing for?

Name the people you serve, the outcome you want to sustain, and the uncertainty that matters.

Horizon 1 · Sustain the current work

What is valuable now? What needs maintaining or improving? Name evidence of current performance.

Horizon 2 · Develop an emerging option

What has enough promise to develop? What capability or evidence would justify more support?

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YOUR WORKING NOTES / CONTINUED

Horizon 3 · Explore a future possibility

What uncertain option could matter later? Use small learning commitments and an explicit stop or continue question.

Allocate real attention across all three

Use one shared unit: hours, people-days, or budget. Include existing commitments and name what will stop. There is no universal ratio.

Review each horizon by the evidence it needs

Choose owners, dates, and separate continue/change/stop criteria. Do not judge an early option only by today's output metrics.

A question for me

What will we stop or reduce so the future work has a real place?

See one way through

FICTIONAL WORKED EXAMPLE / NOT THE ANSWER TO YOUR SITUATION

What future are we preparing for?

Keep customer support dependable while learning how to handle increasing demand without longer waits.

Horizon 1 · Sustain the current work

Protect response quality in the existing support service. Track time to a useful response and repeat contacts, not just tickets closed.

Horizon 2 · Develop an emerging option

Pilot a specialist triage rotation that has worked with one product group. Test it with a second group before expanding.

Horizon 3 · Explore a future possibility

Interview customers about problems they could resolve with better guidance. Test a rough guide before investing in a new service.

Allocate real attention across all three

For the next four weeks: 32 team-days for current support, 6 for the triage pilot, 2 for customer learning. Pause a low-use dashboard refresh to make this possible.

Review each horizon by the evidence it needs

Service lead reviews weekly support results. Pilot owner reviews repeat contacts after four weeks. Research owner brings evidence from six conversations and one guide test, including reasons not to proceed.

The thinking behind it

Future-facing work becomes credible when someone has time and permission to do it. A strategy that adds exploration without changing today's commitments quietly asks people to absorb the gap.

The Three Horizons framework, described by Mehrdad Baghai, Stephen Coley, and David White in The Alchemy of Growth, supports attention to current performance, emerging opportunities, and future options at the same time. Time horizons vary by context; the model does not prescribe a universal allocation ratio.

McKinsey · The three horizons of growth

Read You Have a Culture Problem by Nic Payne