



Arup

Arup is a global firm of designers, engineers, planner and business consultants providing a diverse range of professional services to clients around the world. It was founded after the Second World War by Ove Arup, whose values of quality, honesty and employee stewardship still infuse the company culture today.

The background

Its unbroken record of success has seen growth rates achieve 30% a year. Nevertheless, the company is anything but complacent. So, in 2006, Stella Littlewood, its Vice President of Human Resources decided that it was important to stand back and think more strategically about the future in general and Arup's approach to human resources in particular. She had read Gill Ringland's book, *Scenario Planning* and decided that using scenario planning would offer the Human Resources Executive, which reports to the main board and which she chairs, a chance to have a structured conversation about possible futures.

SAMI's role: asking the right questions

SAMI Consulting was invited to run a workshop at one of the regular meetings of the HRX, to take advantage of the international members being in the UK. SAMI decided to use the Shell Global Scenarios to 2025 as a basis for the discussion since they offer three different views of the world:

- **Open Doors:** The world is run by 'people like us';
- **Flags:** The world is full of fractious nations;
- **Low Trust Globalisation:** The world is run by bureaucrats who make everything grind to a halt.

The meeting was split into three groups, with each given one of the scenarios to decide if the strategic plan would work in all three scenarios by answering the following questions;

- What are the challenges to our existing (and planned) business in this scenario?
- What are the implications for people?
- What are the new or increased opportunities in this scenario?

The outcome: adjusting perceptions

The ensuing discussion identified that the company's HR strategy was very much attuned to the benign scenario of 'the world is full of people like us'. The other two scenarios would demand different HR strategies, with staff packages having to be varied according to the country of origin and the country of current assignment.