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COMMENT ON OUR PROFESSION

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## Future Trend Analysis

"Age has nothing to do with it. You can be out of touch at any age." -- Coach Bear Bryant

About five years ago, someone described me as being out of touch. That was scary. What was said was that I was too old to understand. The fact may have been that I didn't understand; but it wasn't because I was too old – I was just not agreeing with the ideas and opinions expressed by a much younger person who found it convenient to describe my disagreement as that of a dinosaur who didn't understand today's problems and today's thinking.

I couldn't get too angry about this way of thinking because I remember thinking the same way years ago. If we can move this paradigm forward forty years, I'd like to hear my young critic's response to the next generation's allegations that he had become too old to understand the future.

What really is the future? Many of you have, as I have, studied the forecasting aspect necessary to predict the future. We know that we can't actually predict the future, but we can make educated trend analyses, and we can anticipate the consequences of certain actions and unexplained natural occurrences. If we couldn't use past events to help predict the future, we'd have no need to study history.

Future forecasting is all about probability. Is there a greater probability that this will occur, or that something else will occur? Cops know this scenario. Some just don't know what it is called. It is probability theory. We employ this theory every day, and often we don't even realize that we are future forecasting.

Future forecasting trends in criminal justice is a fascinating endeavor. In past years, many researchers have attempted to show relationships between variables to the extent that actual predictions can be made and plans prepared. The recent hurricanes in South Texas have given emergency managers across the country the recorded history to anticipate the consequences of large area natural disasters. Haiti will be studied and plans prepared. The future forecasting techniques are not limited only to natural occurrences. We can utilize probability theory every day on everyday occurrences.

Give yourself the skills to utilize this theory by learning more about the techniques of future trend analysis and how our history provides a window into the future.