



## US News & World Report Interviews Dr. James Canton Futurist James Canton Looks Ahead

Every Friday, I post a new E-mail chat with a forward-looking thinker about the road ahead. Today, our prescient Friday Forward prognosticator is James Canton, CEO of the [Institute for Global Futures](#), a San Francisco-based think tank. Canton is also the author of *Technofutures: How Leading-Edge Technology Will Transform Business in the 21st Century*. A former adviser to the White House Office of Science and Technology, he currently sits on the advisory board of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology's [Media Lab Europe](#).

**Next News:** What trends do you see developing over the next 10 to 25 years that the average person today has little awareness of?

**Canton:** The major future trend that will affect everyone in business in the future is the emergence of the innovation economy. Innovation will be the currency of the future marketplace, offsetting the outsourcing trend. Those that know how to use tech innovations to create customer value will win. The fastest innovation will be driven by the convergence of four power tools—nanotech, biotech, infotech, and cognitive science. They will offer a new gold rush of opportunity. Leveraging the new building blocks of innovation comprised of bits, atoms, genes, and neurons will be essential for future leaders . . .

The real sleeper trend is neurodrugs for enhancing human cognition, augmenting memory, and increasing intelligence. Human and health enhancement will be the largest marketplace in the 21st century, driven by the aging and affluent baby boomers who will want to invest in their own longevity—"live long and prosper."

. . . The chief target for terrorists in the future will be the integrated global business network, [which is] yet to be built. As more things get connected—banks, telecom, governments, businesses, supply chains—into one robust global network, this will become the most vulnerable pressure point for attacking modern society. . . . There is a talent war coming. Corporations will be hotly competing for qualified talent. The U.S. workforce by 2015 will be short over 15 million people for staff jobs. European countries and especially Japan will also see a reduction in quality of life and global competitiveness due to labor shortages.

**Next News:** What trends do you often hear talked about but think may not play out the way people expect—if at all?

**Canton:** Outsourcing every job to India is a much-feared trend. The reality is that will not happen. Outsourcing will force a dramatic transformation of work, leading to a vibrant and innovative service and entrepreneurial sector—if people and businesses are willing to adapt. . . . Our desire for energy independence may backfire. We may be laying the foundation for increased terrorism, as we become less oil hungry in the future. As western nations . . . move away from oil usage, OPEC nations' economies may crash over time, further encouraging animosity towards the West. . . . Tinkering with human evolution by cloning a person will become a reality in the future, challenging our social and legal values as a civilization. But mass cloning offered to

the mainstream marketplace will not happen. This is due to expense and a [limited] desire cultivated by infertile parents and the occasional deranged dictator. Nobody really wants another one of you. . . . The protection of individual privacy will not continue to be a right that society facing the global war on terrorism can offer in the same way as now. We will increasingly trade our privacy for security.

**Next News:** What kind of computer do you have?

**Canton:** A supercharged light multimedia PC with DVD and wireless Internet networking capabilities.

**Next News:** What is the most recent electronic device that you have purchased?

**Canton:** PVR, a personal video recorder that is very small and records short video, music, and pictures.

**Next News:** What magazines or Web sites do you read that the average person may not have heard of?

**Canton:** I get [Issues in Science and Technology](#). . . . I subscribe to the [NeuroSociety Online Blog](#) by Zack Lynch. . . . I get [NASA's Astrobiology](#) newsletter.

**Next News:** What is the last book you read that you gave you some insight into the road ahead and why?

**Canton:** *Strange Matters* by Tom Siegfried, which challenged me to consider frontier ideas about space and time such as dark matter, parallel worlds, and time travel. I get my inspiration for trend forecasting from ideas that are off the wall. These weird ideas often translate into value for my business clients, who are looking for me to help them harness the impossible.