

**INTERVIEW
WITH
THE AUTHOR**





An interview with author Marcel Bullinga about *Welcome to the Future Cloud*.

In this chapter, he gives a more personal view of the Cloud.

Why pick such a strange word for a title?

Look out of your window. What do you see? Clouds. They are everywhere, but you don't really notice them, do you? Only sometimes, on special occasions, do you admire their beauty. Perhaps when walking on the beach with your lover. Clouds travel all over the world and connect every country. They are truly global and extremely mobile. And yet harmless. Clouds are clean, pure nature, innocent and powerful. The best of two worlds. A Cloud is a future poem.

After I registered the title, I heard about some other Cloud. The virtual sphere built in London to celebrate the 2012 Olympic Games. It's a very sweet picture.

You predict books will vanish into thin screens, and yet this book is another paper book.

I don't like it either. Publishing a book is a truly ridiculous thing. About 10 times I went to my agent in Rotterdam for the design of the book. I had to sit next to the art director to properly do the page layout. 10 times of spending useless time and money, causing unnecessary congestion on the road and in the train. In the Cloud, I would have cooperated at a distance through a screen. No travel costs, no congestion. The software between me and the designer did not match, which took days of repairing. Having only a screen book would not do, so I needed a paper version as well. A tragedy in view of the Cloud. I had to pay a printer. Very costly, very difficult. Then I faced the current virtual monopolists, Amazon and the Apple iBook store, that charge an extraordinary high fee for distribution.

I really would have loved to create a serious game instead of a book. That, alas, was too complex and too costly. Maybe next time. Hey, what can you do about it? Born too late, born too early... I wish it was 2025 already. Along with the book, I wrote more than a thousand PowerPoint slides, made a video, and created the interactive part (the free quizzes). Truly cross media!

You included many examples of what you call 'seeds of the future'.

Those seeds are current, world class innovations that represent the future. Tokens of the new systems. Based on the latest scientific research. I do not predict those seeds of the future to be commercially available. I don't know. Some of them will die in beauty, but then other companies will take up. Relevant is the concept that is hidden in these innovations.

Are you part of the Zeitgeist?

I think so... At the very same time I wrote the book, an essay was published called Cloud Culture (by an innovation author, UK Charles Leadbeater)... No coincidence!

Did it take you long to write all that?

In two years, I wrote three books to achieve just this one. First, I wrote 300 pages in Dutch. Then I discovered I was way more creative in my thinking in English, so I wrote 200 English pages. Then I discovered I was missing the point entirely. I lacked that one special word. The word that linked all those separate pieces of information together into one vision. One day, jogging on the moor near my holiday cottage (I have one in the eastern Dutch woods), I was struck by lightning (not literally, thanks goodness). *The Cloud!* That was the missing word. I rewrote everything according to the Cloud concept, and here we are.



What sources did you use?

The inspiration from my now favourite communities, Shaping Tomorrow, LinkedIn and Techcast. My gut feeling. Plus as much scientific and futures research as I could handle. I still have about 50 unread research reports on my laptop. I wanted to add them as well, but my agent said: stop now!

There are an awful lot of brilliant books out there. What makes your book special?

Apart from the sweet reading robot on the cover? I guess the quizzes. It is the first book (I think) that asks its readers to rate the content and thus provide feedback. The Cloud is complex and our thinking needs constant updating. I hope that you, the Crowd in the Cloud, will help me there.

Marketing wise, I tried something new — in order to maximise the impression the book makes on you, I fed the title into a machine, a so-called Headline Analyser,²⁸⁰ that calculates the emotional impact on you, my dear reader. Ain't it scary? ☺

The title gets a score of 40% Emotional Marketing Value. To put that in perspective, the English language contains approximately 20% EMV words, and most professional copywriters will have 30%-40% EMV words in their headlines. This makes me a professional copywriter, but not a gifted one, alas: The most gifted copywriters will have 50%-75% EMV words.

OK, so I am not a gifted copywriter. However, I never applied for gifted copywriter in the first place; I applied for gifted futurist!

The machine also gave me the 'predominant emotion classification' of the title. It is — embrace yourselves! — *spiritual*. I was flabbergasted.

Spiritual

Your headline carries words that have a predominantly Spiritual appeal. Words that resonate with Spiritual impact are the smallest number of words in the language. AMI research has found that Spiritual impact words carry the strongest potential for influence and often appeal to people at a very deep emotional level.

Words with Spiritual impact are best used with people and businesses desiring to make an appeal to some aspect of spirituality. This does not mean religion specifically, but any product or service that resonates with 'spirituality' oriented markets are appropriate. The clergy, new age, health food and related markets all respond favourably to sales copy heavy with Spiritual impact content. Women and children also respond strongly to words in the Spiritual sphere. Marketing documents with strong Spiritual impact content can make for the most powerful presentations in the marketplace but must be used with considerable skill.





...Expert Social Gaming Sid van Wijk: tweak the future...

What is your education?

Autodidact. Did it by myself. It's my style of working. Do it yourself.

Did you write the book in a Cloudy way?

Sure. I used the Cloud's crowd. I engaged in discussions on LinkedIn about all sorts of topics, ranging from green energy to enhanced government to bored fat western multimedia youth. I posted draft versions of different chapters (without anyone knowing I drafted a chapter). The feedback I received from all those professionals sharpened my thinking. The title could as easily have been *Welcome to the Future Crowd*. Cross-fertilising is not only fun, it is absolutely necessary.

Luckily, I had a personal assistant, both high on social skills and creativity. Sid van Wijk, 21 years old, is a former gamer. He taught me the meaning of the word 'tweak'. Gamers tweak everything: slightly add, improve a bit, enhance, alter softly... From now on, *I always tweak the future*. ☺

You use a question and answer format. Why?

I give better answers when I am asked a question. Dialogue works better for me than monologue. I always try to involve my audience in my presentations as well, and I thought, well, maybe I should try it in the book. Hope you like it.

Are you a gadget freak?

Not at all. I don't care the least bit about the latest and hottest. However, I am curious about what makes people tick, and how we astonish the world repeatedly with the creative powers behind human technology.

I am as average as they come. Holiday cottage, partner, sweet child, small dog. I lead a small and happy life in a small and happy country (I am Dutch, you know). I do not watch TV, do not listen to radio. I skip all news about celebrities and don't buy products with a celebrity's name on it. I like to do honest business. I truly despise managers and bankers with perverse bonuses. I witnessed the growth in rudeness and aggression in the last decade with disgust.

I am not really a guy for networking parties (except when I am the leader of the pack in a congress hall). I guess half of my life I spend sporting, the other half with family and friends. Leaves little time for giving presentations and writing this book, but somehow I managed.

Why did you self publish the book?

Self publishing is the future. It gives the author control over his work. Very satisfying. Of course, in the Cloud, ten to fifteen years from now, self publishing is easy easy super easy! Publishing models are in favour of the author. Powerful and yet cheap high quality tools available for the author. Right now, it is a blurry mess. Hey, what can you do about it? Born too late, born too early... It is fun pioneering.

About predicting the future

What exactly is a futurist?

If you run anything — a company, a country or even your own life — then you are a futurist. Or you should become one. The need for futuring stems from the growing need for speed. In the Middle Ages, there was not much employment for futurists. We had only one, and he got world famous for crying nonsense. (You know the guy. His name was Nostradamus.)

What kind of futurist are you?

Other futurists have a specialisation, like media futurist or healthcare futurist, but I think I am a general futurist. In the U.S., they have this beautiful word for people like me: I am a *trends blender*. Love it. I am no expert in any of the topics I cover in this book, but I hope to add future insights into these topics. Every energy or financial or whatever professional knows way more about their topic than I ever will, but we both might profit from the blur between your professional knowledge and my knowledge about the future. Innovation is always about combining the best of two worlds.

Isn't it impossible to predict the future?

Agreed, but we can make educated guesses. The here and now is already incomprehensible, let alone the future. The more I know about it, the more I realise I know so very little. Not even a tip of the iceberg. A futurist is Mister One Eye in the kingdom of the blind.

Would you have written a different book if you were a Chinese futurist?

Entirely. One's perspective determines one's vision. Being a futurist in an islamic country is impossible. And in China, my book would probably not pass the censor. The largest future power on earth is a dictatorial state, remember... The Chinese government would ban the search tags Welcome, Cloud and Bullinga. SMS-s would never arrive. I mean, you've probably heard of the case with the Nobel Price of Peace awarded to a Chinese criminal — a harmless professor in literature who writes that he would like the Chinese Communist party to stick to the words of China's own Constitution. If you politely ask for freedom of expression in China, you end up in jail. Going on strike is a crime. China is a permanent member of the UN Safety Council and the UN Human Rights Council.

ASSESS THE FUTURE
TECHNOLOGICAL FUTURES
ENERGY FUTURES
DEMOGRAPHIC FUTURES
CULTURAL FUTURES
CLIMATE FUTURES
YOUR FUTURE

HOW EASY?
PIECE OF CAKE
BETWEEN EASY & TOUGH
TOUGH
TOUGH
IMPOSSIBLE
POSSIBLE — BUT ONLY BY YOURSELF

I encourage everything that enables freedom and wealth—all over this beautiful planet, but especially in Europe, since I live there. My interest lies in the defence of my lifestyle, free choice, equality of men and women, gay and straight alliances. Freedom and wealth are quite difficult to share, and quite easily destroyed.

How difficult is it to predict the future?

You never predict, you assess. And you never assess *the* future, you assess different futures. They vary in degree of easiness. In the end, only one future is delivered though — *your* future. That is the toughest nut to crack.

How accurate are your predictions?

My first hunch 15 years ago was accurate! Ask me again in 2025...

Seriously: there are few cases of validating forecasts. I am member of Techcast²⁸¹, a virtual think tank tracking technology innovations. For more than a decade, they have pooled the knowledge of 100 experts worldwide to forecast breakthroughs in all fields of science and technology and their social impact. Techcast conducts an annual analysis of the accuracy in the forecasts. Major conclusion: the typical TechCast forecast was about three years ahead of the actual arrival date. (Example: the forecast said 2007, the actual arrival date was 2010.) This tendency toward optimism is commonly understood to occur widely in technology forecasting. We systematically over estimate near future developments (say, the next five years) and under estimate long-term developments (the next 25 years).

What practical use do the predictions have?

I hope professionals use the predictions as a vehicle, as an innovation tool. ‘Suppose this prediction comes true, then what innovation could it create in my own field?’

About presenting the future

As a futurist, you have given hundreds of presentations for a wide variety of audiences. What crowds do you like most?

The active ones! I am like a bee buzzing from flower to flower, sharing the seeds of the previous crowd with the next one. When I ask the audience what is in and out in the future, or what symbol of the future they have, it is nice to compare the junior answers to the seniors. The difference is surprisingly small. The real divide is between optimists and pessimists. Not a generation thing.

You also give Masterclasses. What is the difference between a Masterclass and a presentation?

A presentation is a one-hour interactive brainstorm. In a masterclass, I go deeper and help the crowd to apply the trends and innovations to their own organisation. For example, create a TOP 3 OUT (products, services or cultures to get rid of) or a TOP 3 IN (the opposite).

Can be a company or a government; same thing. I always create a tailor made survey. That displays hidden patterns in the crowd.

...Entrepreneur Albert de Booy: be good...



I also act as chair, leading congresses on the future and innovation. Love it. Walking around and tapping the talent of the crowd is so rewarding.

What is the role of your agent?

My agent handles all my bookings, and does so in the most elegant way imaginable. Besides, the lovely ladies and galls from Sales strongly supported me in writing this book. Founder Albert de Booy²⁸², not only a wise person but also an ethical businessman, inspired me quite profoundly. He carries three mottos. In my own words: Go for max quality, no matter the costs in time or money. Do it yourself; you are good enough; you don't really need someone else. And: be good (which is an overall life lesson, I guess ☺)

You use 'PowerPoint'. Isn't that considered boring?

I use PowerPoint the way it was not supposed to be used. You cannot see it is a PowerPoint. I love flashy, speedy visuals. Go and see for yourself.

When you give a keynote presentation, what message do you deliver? The Cloud seems too complex for just one presentation.

That's right. Well, the basics are quite simply to understand. It only gets complex when we talk about innovation. How to get there. *How* to change the financial and emotional incentives that drive our consumption and investing decisions. How to change *ecosystems* rather than creating separate innovations.





Most audiences don't want to hear about technology or trends; that, they take for granted. It is much more about their desires for the future and about leadership. People want to hear small stories instead of big trends. Stories about real people struggling while creating innovations for the better. Change is about charisma and leadership, but above all about optimism. We can't all be charismatic leaders, but we can all be optimists.

Most reviews I get are on the positive side, but I have had my bad ratings as well. I learnt it is fully impossible to satisfy all crowds. Yet, someday in the future, I want to be a futurist DJ making crowds dance in ecstasy.

When will we see you in flesh and blood?

I have this burning ambition to speak to a global audience about the Cloud. I will come and visit you some time in the near future. Be prepared!

More about the Cloud and its consequences

What are the scientific elements of the Cloud?

Apart from the stats I have collected in the Intermezzo about Happy Countries & Mobile People, you could check out a listing of important research and professionals' expectations in many different fields of science. You can find it in the appendix of the fascinating report *The Shape of Jobs to Come*²⁸³, by

The future will be better than the past

the UK Ministry of Science and consultancy bureau Fast Future. They surveyed 486 people in 58 countries. I had the pleasure of contributing. To make this book no longer than necessary and avoid repeating existing knowledge, I refer to them. All research fits neatly into the Cloud concept. You may check out another future timeline as well, the Future Timeline.²⁸⁴ The Crowd at work!

By the way, one of the founding elements of the Cloud is the so-called Semantic Web.²⁸⁵ You know the developer Tim Berners Lee²⁸⁶ got a knighthood? Well deserved!

Is the Cloud a scenario?

That is correct. The Future Cloud is one single, very specific scenario — that I judge to be plausible. I researched major technological developments and imagined what we would use and design to give us more control.

Of course, we can also design it the opposite way — to give us *less* control. In that case, our patient records belong to insurance companies, the personal information in our dashboard belongs to global mediamonster GoogleApple, our messages are inspected by the Chinese government, and commerce has taken over entirely. Then, we see more fakes than truth, a massive loss of privacy and a massive theft of virtual products.

We must create incentives for the media industry and in government for data safety and personal data ownership. For shrink instead of growth. For self control instead of control. For checked trust instead of government control.

There is a point in doom and gloom. Shit happens, shit is for real. But I prefer to think about *solutions* to doom rather than dwelling on the doom itself.

So the Cloud is a single specific scenario. Did you consider the counter trends as well?

Sure. Every trend has its counter trend or is followed by a counter trend. Zeitgeist comes in flows. Power flows where it is needed. Up, down, and up again. We gain some power, we loose some power, back and forth.

Where I could find counter arguments, I wrote them down.

You are very optimistic about technology. But technology created the atom bomb.

Yes, and it created the TV and the aeroplane and the car and the internet and the Cloud. Technology is a major factor in creating a better world and a major factor in creating a doom world. I cannot help it, that is how it is. The positive impact of the Cloud is global — as is the negative impact.

All technology has unforeseen side effects, both negative and positive. All technology can be used in evil ways. It is not possible to develop and use technology in such a way that it has no negative effect whatsoever. Side effects will always occur and we will have to deal with them when the time comes.

There is not one future, there are many thousands.

Yet, only one future will actually be delivered:

your future

The Cloud in itself is not ethical?

No, we humans are. But the Cloud does offer new opportunities for ethics and regulation. Ethics embedded in technology. Ethics embedded in your insurance. Regulation embedded in your car. Remember: the Cloud is self-healing and self-cleaning. It contains numerous ecosystems — financial, cultural, energy, reproductive — that will clean itself from time to time.

Don't you over estimate the importance of information, of ratio? Humans are emotional beings. We simply cannot make rational choices. 90% of our behaviour is automatic and intuitive. We are primitive beings. We are the same barbarians as our ancestors. They still live inside us.

Well *there* you have a point. I always believed rational information leads to better decisions and hence to a better world. Never was I more wrong. Rationality works, but only in a very indirect and time consuming way. Our body simply refuses to take in information that it does not like. Our soul rejects information that is too complex, or sent to us at the wrong time, or by the wrong person.

A lot has to happen before all those little information Clouds start to influence our behaviour, but it does in the end. If only the little Clouds bear enough emotion value to make change happen.

Nevertheless, I admit it is the basic problem with information. It takes so much time to reach our heart! It is too complex, or it does not fit into your heart-felt beliefs — so you instinctively ignore the information you do not like. The only message that reaches us is the emotionally loaded message. I guess this book contents will take about five years to reach your heart. Please come back to me by then!

Did you anticipate the financial crisis?

Partly. For many years, I carried along slides of the U.S. debt and the year the U.S. presumably would go broke. After some time, I removed them. No one was interested. We don't want to hear doom stuff. We close our ears and eyes for bad news. The old fortune teller Cassandra was only valued *after* the crisis she predicted took place.

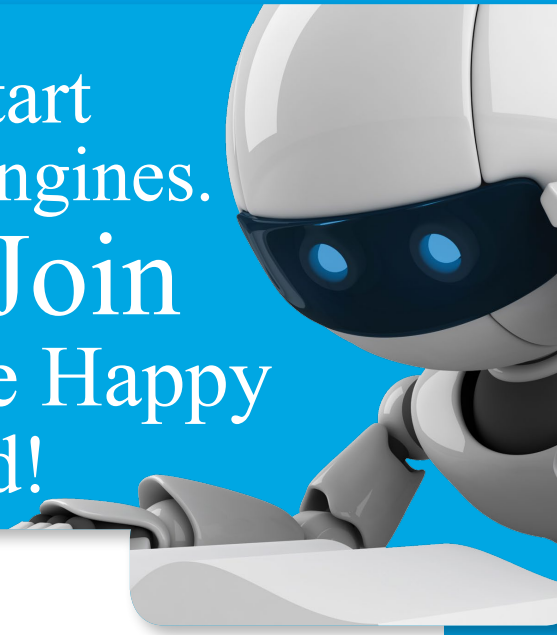
I did not anticipate the full impact of the crisis though, since I had no information about the income perversion going on inside the financial sector. If you don't have inside information, you cannot sense the future.

In the Cloud, are we better in predicting crises?

I think so. Remember, the Cloud is transparent. We have less hidden knowledge, and more knowledge that is trusted, of high quality —available at the very moment we need to make a decision. We are better in picking up signals for the next crisis. We are better in picking up signals for the next disaster (hurricanes and volcano eruptions) very early. The warning signs are there. We just have to see them.

Crises will probably be more intense — because of the global and realtime connections in the Cloud — but they will last not as long as before — due to the embedded resilience of the system, say: its self-cleaning nature.

Start your engines. Join the Happy Cloud!



You say the Cloud is green. But planned obsolescence (a new model car each year) is still at the heart of the current industrial business model. One cannot change that.

Of course we can! What's more, it is changing right now, under our nose. It is all a matter of incentives. Turn your business model upside down, start creating the other way around, innovate with your customers and competitors, find incentives for green profit instead of grey profit. Make planned obsolescence a profit destroyer and planned re-use a profit grower.

If a business model rewards waste and inefficiency, it will produce waste and inefficiency. If a business model rewards local production and self-sustainability, the outcome will be local products and self-sustainability.

What worries you?

In the past 15 years, we have witnessed peace in the West and a giant rise in material wealth all over the world. The West has a solid fundament for continued wealth and freedom in the future, but we have gone fatty. Spoilt. Arrogant. Too many holidays, too little hard work, no idea of the future changes.

The past 15 years showed a giant downturn in public politeness, the rise of the perverse bonus and a sea of debts, meaning that part of our wealth is completely fake. Unfortunately, there are lots of incentives for greed and corruption, and little for ethics and kindness. Freedom is under religious threat. The separation of church and state is under attack. That it is the one thing that is fundamental to wealth and freedom.

I live in one of the not so much countries with a high level of happiness and personal freedom. I want to keep it that way.

Are you optimistic or pessimistic?

Even if I am sometimes not, optimism is the First Commandment for the future.

So you are not a doom prophet, like Cassandra in the old age?

Oh no! More the hopeful advocate of the next step in human development.

What is the cultural change that we need the most?

Friendliness. Good manners.

What is the single most important tool for a happy future?

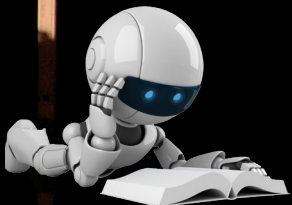
Eat together as a family at dinner time. It is a scientific fact: it gets us sweeter children and a better world. Less obesity, less criminality. Join the Happy Cloud!



Happy futuring!



MARCEL BULLINGA LIVE!





Futurist & keynote speaker Marcel Bullinga gives presentations and chairs meeting about the future & innovation. Strictly dynamic, highly interactive.

Marcel has given presentations for hundreds of renowned clients. Ranging from federal government and the European Union to city councils, multinational companies & research institutes. For experienced professionals & eager youngsters.

Marcel also chairs meetings about the future & innovation. 'Precision timing with a fine sense of humour', as a client said.

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