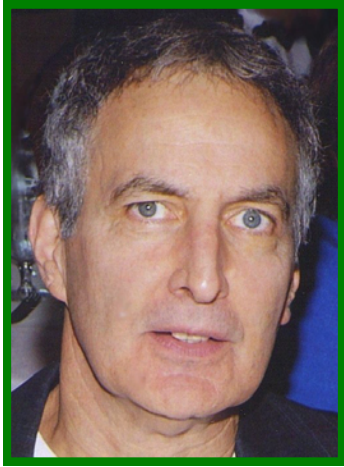


## Spot Trends, Reduce Information Overload

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Being overloaded by information and communication every day is frustrating but not inevitable. If you're adept at spotting the significant industry trends, you can cut down on the amount of extraneous information that otherwise competes for your attention. How so?

Most of what reaches us today in terms of information and communication is not critical to our effective functioning, professionally or personally. Much of what we're exposed to, even within dietetics, often represents heightened trivia or passing fancies. Long-term, significant trends, though, are relatively easy to spot and monitor, with a few simple guidelines.

### Years in the Making

Significant trends are usually long-term developments, such as the U.S. population's propensity towards being overweight and obese, a trend now 30 years in the making, discernible in the early 1980s as are others such as increased world travel and the miniaturization of technology.

When you identify a verifiable trend, whether it's global, national, social, or specific to dietetics and nutrition, consider how this trend will impact the industry – specifically in terms of how:

- businesses or organizations operate
- executives and managers lead
- supervisors will be impacted
- front line workers will be impacted
- costs and operations might change

### How About Me?

Consider as well economic or financial implications that might result, new opportunities that might arise, and new risks that could emerge. On an individual level, ask yourself:

- Acknowledging what I believe will occur, what are my optimal action steps?

- How can I capitalize on my understanding of this trend?
- What benefits can I bring to my organization, department, boss, and team?
- In what capacity can I serve?
- Should I act as harbinger to others?
- Can I provide training or instruction?

### Scenario Thinking

Ask yourself what courses of action are worth taking, given that 1) the trend proceeds as I currently envision it, 2) it proceeds with greater rapidity or vehemence, or 3) it proceeds with less impact or at a slower pace than currently seems likely? As such, you can engage in scenario thinking whereby you plot three different paths based on the overall length, strength, and impact that the trend will have. Devising such scenarios will better prepare you to embark upon a course of action as time marches forward and the nature and impact of the trend becomes more evident.

Consider what else will be impacted and the downstream effects of the trend. In other words, given that XYZ will occur in full bloom over the next two years, what other trends could be set in motion? How might your organization, department, boss, team, and coworkers be further impacted by the off shooting trends from the original trend you were tracking? Yes, your inquiry will involve some conjecture. You will be better off, nevertheless, than if you don't consider the ramifications. Forewarned is forearmed.

### Avoid the "Sensation de Jour"

Keeping tabs on significant and long-term trends helps you filter your personal information intake. Rather than be buffeted by the sensation de jour – the ceaseless media attempts to make something out of nothing, you'll find yourself relying more on high quality industry and news sources, as well as on a handful of knowledgeable others with whom you can regularly share information.

It is possible to largely avoid being buffeted by the merry-go-round of headlines and information to which you're exposed. The best and the brightest in the industry have already developed systems for identifying what's truly important and what is best left by the curbside.

Jeff Davidson, on the web at [www.BreathingSpace.com](http://www.BreathingSpace.com), holds the registered trademark as "The WorkLife Balance Expert®." Jeff is the leading personal brand in speaking, writing, and reflecting on work-life balance issues and has a passion for speaking to organizations who want to help their employees make rapid progress in this arena. Jeff is the author of "Simpler Living," "Breathing Space," "The 60 Second Self-Starter," "The 60 Second Organizer," "The 10 Minute Guide to Managing Your Time," and "The 10 Minute Guide to Managing Stress," as well as 24 iPhone apps in his "Work-Life Guide" series on iTunes. Jeff's books have been published in 18 languages including Arabic, Chinese, Japanese, Malay, Turkish, and Russian.