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## Media Review: *Non-Obvious: How to Think Different, Curate Ideas and Predict the Future*

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## MEDIA REVIEW

**NON-OBVIOUS: HOW TO THINK DIFFERENT, CURATE IDEAS AND PREDICT THE FUTURE, Rohit Bhargava, 2015.**

**Reviewed by Susan E. Ziel, BSN MPH JD**

**Key words:** future, ideas, discovery, inventions, innovation

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Since 2011, Rohit Bhargava has curated and annually published an online “*Non-Obvious Trend Report*” that continues to describe our world in new and interesting ways (<http://www.rohitbhargava.com/trends>). Simply sharing his annual reports was not enough so Bhargava decided to write an e-book to describe how he collects non-obvious trends, or “unique curated observations about the accelerating present” (Bhargava, 2015, p. 413). Unlike the obvious predictions, vague declarations, and buzzwords that are often published at the beginning or end of the year; a non-obvious trend transforms information overload and noise into meaning that is of great use, to both individuals and organizations. All in all, this book is an important tool for any individual or organization interested in detecting emerging new ideas, inventions, innovations, and discoveries that are likely to impact our world.

This book is divided into three parts.

**The Art of Curating Trends.** The first part includes important information about the power of thinking, the art of curating trends, the five essential habits of trend curators and a step-by-step description of Bhargava’s personal approach to curating trends, using his *Haystack Method*.

According to Bhargava, curators add meaning to isolated beautiful things. He writes, “Curation is only valuable if you follow the act of collecting information with enough moments of quiet contemplation to truly understand what you are seeing and collecting” (p. 465). Trend curation can be learned and practiced, using the following five essential habits:

- 1 Being curious - always ask why, take yourself out of your day-to-day world to explore the unfamiliar.
- 2 Being observant - see what others miss, put away your phone and pay attention.
- 3 Being fickle - learn to be nimble, capture ideas to be analyzed later, learn to move on.
- 4 Being thoughtful - take time to think, reflect, embrace the pause, share ideas in a considered way.
- 5 Being elegant - craft beautiful ideas, bring together disparate concepts in a simple and understandable way, much like poetry which takes words away, leaving only simplicity, beauty and meaning.

In describing his Haystack Method, Bhargava notes that trend curators don't seek needles in the haystack. Instead, they gather a myriad of stories and ideas (the hay) and then use them to identify a trend (the needle) that gives meaning to them all collectively (p 731). The Method has five components:

- 1 Gather: Save interesting ideas, start a folder, use an app to save important thoughts.
- 2 Aggregate: Curate into clusters, take individual ideas and disconnected thoughts and group together, often based on bigger ideas or questions. Span boundaries, stay away from demographics and industry categories.
- 3 Elevate: Identify broader or underlying themes below the surface.
- 4 Name: Create elegant descriptions using understandable, memorable words, combine words, use alliteration, give it a twist.

- 5 Prove: Validate without bias, compile examples and concrete research so the idea qualifies as a trend that truly describes the accelerating future.

According to Bhargava, the great trends, are those unique descriptions of a shift in culture, business or behavior that result in a change of behavior that continues well into the foreseeable future (p. 945).

**The 2015 Non-Obvious Trend Report.** The second part provides a complete copy of Bhargava's 2015 Non-Obvious Trend Report which lists and describes the 15 new ideas that were expected to shape business and behavior in the year 2015 (p. 1078-2362). The author always looks back and uses the prior year's reports to measure his proficiency in curating the trends.

**The Trend Action Guide.** The third part of this e-book provides many different tips on making trends actionable. Guides for four different types of workshops are included. Bhargava also discusses the method of "intersection thinking" which overlaps seemingly disconnected ideas in order to generate new solutions, directions and strategies (p. 2403).

Lastly, the e-book has several appendices, including the Non-Obvious Trend Reports for years, 2011-2014, as well as "longevity" ratings of how accurate these trends were in the year 2015.

This e-book is an important tool for any individual interested in "discovery", that process that "consists of seeing what everybody else has seen and thinking what nobody has thought" (Albert Szent-Gyorgyi. (n.d.). Whether around the board room table, in the executive suite or in the trenches, individuals will more effectively activate and revitalize their organization's culture, partnerships and priorities if they are nimble in detecting the many emerging new ideas, inventions, innovations, and discoveries that will continue to shape our world, now and in the future.

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Susan E. Ziel, BSN MPH JD, enjoys a health care coaching and consulting role with Integrity Health Strategies that allows her to use her 40+ years of experience as a registered nurse, nursing administrator, consultant and health care attorney. Susan's advises healthcare clients as they design (and re-design) of innovative and optimal healing environments and processes that not only comply with applicable requirements but which are also deliver on the Triple Aim's promise to provide better health care earlier, and for less, across an entire targeted population.

Susan recently completed the Health Care Design and Innovation Certificate Program at the University of Minnesota where she now serves as Affiliate Faculty with the School of Nursing and teaches the Health Care Law, Safety and Ethics course in the Health Services Management Program. She is also Board Member and Secretary for the Nursing Institute for Healthcare Design (NIHD).

Beyond her professional health care work, Susan is an aspiring maker/artist who designs handbags, tapestry and other creative fare as part of her online business, Wabi Creations, LLC, at [www.wabicreations.com](http://www.wabicreations.com).