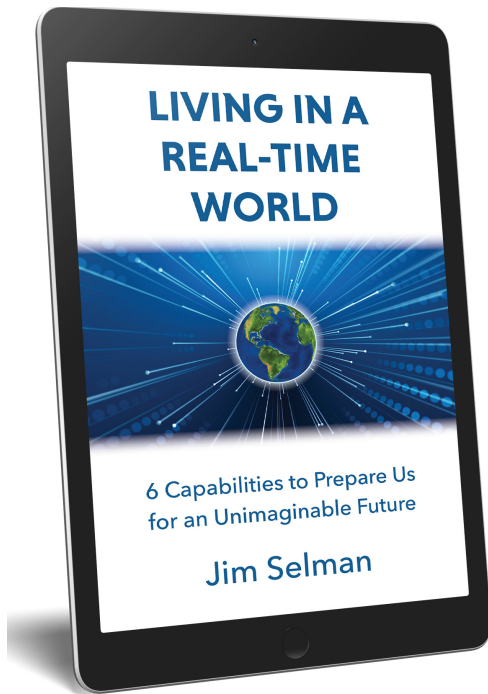


*Excerpts from*



# LIVING IN A REAL-TIME WORLD:

Six Capabilities to Prepare Us  
for an Unimaginable Future

Written by Jim Selman

Where to buy:

<https://store.bookbaby.com/book/Living-in-a-Real-Time-World>

## Existential Confidence

Because we can't predict the future or trust our past to guide us, it's important that we have confidence in ourselves to believe that we are equal and sufficient to whatever is emerging. We call this "existential confidence", or self-trust in our way of being. Confidence in who we are.

This is about having enough confidence in myself and my way of being in the world that I can make unpredictable and unreasonable promises and trust I will be able to deliver—even if I don't know how and have never made or kept such a promise before. This existential confidence shows up as an authentic belief that I am sufficient to create whatever is necessary to deliver promises that are outside of what I have delivered in the past.

Confidence is an expression of my relationship with myself. Confidence in my way of being is distinct from other confidences I may have about myself. I may, for example, be confident in my skills—everything from golfing and driving to solving problems and speaking in public. I may be confident in my ability to earn and manage money. Or confident in the efficacy of my work relationships. But confidence in my way of being is neither a skill nor an ability I can "acquire".

Being existentially confident is about moving in the world with intentionality and a sense of personal agency. It shows up in how I comport myself when I enter a conversation, how I stay centered in chaos, how I meet uncertainty with calm. It is reflected in my capacity to commit to a possibility before there is any evidence that it is possible and in my willingness to be open and vulnerable while I courageously put myself and my identity on the line as I make big promises and take big risks.

This way of being in relationship—confident, calm, open, centered, courageous—works for pioneers and innovators, engineers and artists, leaders and followers. Existential confidence, combined with committed action, makes the difference between just having a good idea and succeeding in the face of extraordinary challenges. It is, therefore, important in any field of human endeavor in our real-time world.

## An Emerging Learning Style

Conventional styles of learning focus on knowledge acquisition. For the most part, conventional learning focuses on systematically acquiring know-how and mastering skills for the purpose of applying it to earning a living. When it comes to developing competencies, this systematic learning, which gives value and weight to understanding content, is still necessary and valuable in a real-time world. However, studying “classical” knowledge, memorizing data, and embodying practices are, in and of themselves, insufficient to the challenges we are encountering in real time.

A new style of learning is emerging. A style that is always connected to action. A style with a goal of *orientation*, rather than *understanding*.

Appropriation is about *seeing* what others are learning, as distinct from *understanding* what they are saying about what they are learning. To appropriate is to stand in another person’s shoes and, rather than bring their concepts inside our already existing interpretations, see things the way they see them in order to orient ourselves. Far from being disrespectful, this “borrowing” enriches our lives and helps expand our foundation for relating to a world in which knowledge can become obsolete even before we learn it.

Appropriation as a learning style allows us to navigate real-time situations inside of our commitments, intentions, concerns, and needs. In this sense, appropriation is not an alternative to learning. It is a way of *curating* and *selecting* knowledge appropriate to our specific “now”.

Appropriation allows us to be more intentional, more purposeful, more selective in our learning and to choose which interpretation we want to use to navigate in each situation. Rather than acquire knowledge, know-how, or skills, we curate various interpretations. In many cases where we are entering totally new territory, there may not even be new interpretations available yet. In other cases, the game may have changed so significantly that the interpretations we have may be wrong or counter-productive.

Instead of trying to capture and hold onto a comprehensive set of data or a standard interpretation, we follow a line of interest, connecting the dots across various sources of information, reviewing multiple commentaries, looking into reviews on the pros and cons of these particular points of view. Understanding that knowledge is impermanent and historical, we can use “classical” knowledge as a resource, rather than as a prerequisite for navigation, when needed. If we intend to open a manufacturing

business in Italy, for instance, rather than reading all of *The Story of Civilization* (the entire 11 volumes of Will and Ariel Durants' history of Western civilization), we can selectively acquire just what we need to know right in this moment. We don't need to read through the entire Durant series to understand how the country has evolved as a nation and a culture over the centuries. To participate in that culture without spending a lot of time on academic "book" learning, we can, if we wish, dip into the fifth volume of the Durant series on the Italian Renaissance, go online and read commentaries about it, and read reviews of the commentaries. We can also look at statistics from the World Bank on doing business in Italy, as well as more recently published books, articles, and papers to acquire multiple other interpretations and perspectives on certain aspects of manufacturing businesses in Italy. We can appreciate the "big" questions that the experts and scholars have asked and are still asking about the influence of Italy's biggest business, the mafia, on the nation's economy.

All this to discover what we might learn from the past and the present that is both appropriate and relevant to whatever it is we are navigating today.