

INSIDE

What's Got our Attention

Stories and prompts from each dimension of SCAN.

Embracing Uncertainty

A simulation-based learning experience that teaches leaders and teams how to SCAN.

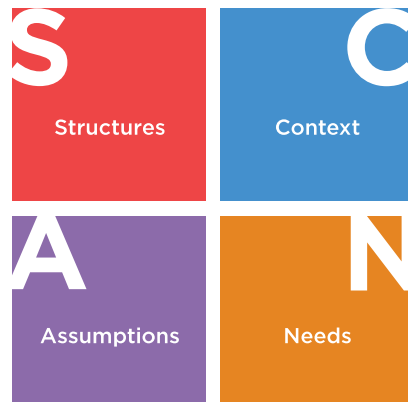
Community Spotlight

News about community members making the world more creative and compassionate.



About SCAN

The Quarterly SCAN is a publication of Unstuck Minds. Each quarter, Unstuck Minds and our [Network Partners](#) pause to set aside our expertise and adopt a beginner's mind. This report highlights insightful and provocative ideas hiding in our turbulent and uncertain world.



SCAN is an all-purpose thinking tool for reducing the risk of missing something important.



[SCAN explainer video](#) (3:30)

To learn more and get your FREE SCAN Profile, visit www.unstuckminds.com/scan



Structures—

Norms, habits, systems, and processes that create stability and consistency

Structures hold things in place. Disruptive change exposes the assumptions that created the structures in the first place. A pandemic forces us to reimagine the role of classrooms and workspaces. Social movements shine a light on structures of privilege and inequality. A technological breakthrough creates new norms of information exchange, influence, and authority.

When a comfortable structure has been disrupted, our threat detection system goes on high alert. Our reflex is to protect the structure like a fortress under attack. We use other norms to mitigate the danger. For example, The New York Times has sued Open AI and Microsoft for copyright infringement because their large language models are trained on New York Times' articles.

The current structures that dictate the ownership of intellectual property don't account for non-humans consuming and regurgitating (sorry, but it's an apt metaphor) the works of humans. When it comes to creative output, is "property" the right framework?

Into the fray enters [Holly+](#). The artist, Holly Herndon has trained an AI assistant on her voice. At Holly+, you can upload an audio file and have it "covered" by Holly Herndon's avatar. If this feels completely baffling, watch her [TEDTalk](#) to learn more. Herndon invites us to reconceptualize intellectual property. Rather than building fences, Herndon is building bridges.

We cling to structures for good reason. Structures bring order and predictability. When structures are threatened, it's helpful to keep in mind why they were created and who they serve. That way, we don't fight to preserve a structure we no longer need.

How might we help people feel comfortable letting go of a counterproductive structure?

Structural Influences Getting our Attention

- It's unlikely that organizations will find a hybrid-work sweet spot until they come to terms with how much control managers need. Latest case in point, Dell Technologies' [new policy](#).
- [AI search](#) is upending the pay-for-attention business model many media companies count on. If I can get the information I need directly from the search engine, I don't need to click through to the publisher's site.
- What are job titles for anyway? Here's an [interesting reflection](#) from Anne-Laure Le Cunff the founder (ahem, Chief Invention Officer) of Ness Labs.
- [Five things](#) we can learn about organizational systems and structures from the downfall of Boeing.
- Structure nerds, make some noise! Witness the Excel Spreadsheet Championships. Actually just read this [article](#) about it, but if you must watch it, here's a [video](#).

Context—

Factors and trends in the external environment that signal disruptions and opportunities

When a magician gestures with a mesmerizing flourish, you can be sure something important is happening elsewhere. Currently, artificial intelligence (AI) has caught our attention and for good reason, but an unstuck mind must be alert to what else might be changing that matters. AI is a sexy topic. You know what aren't sexy topics: Global trade, protectionism, and supply chains.

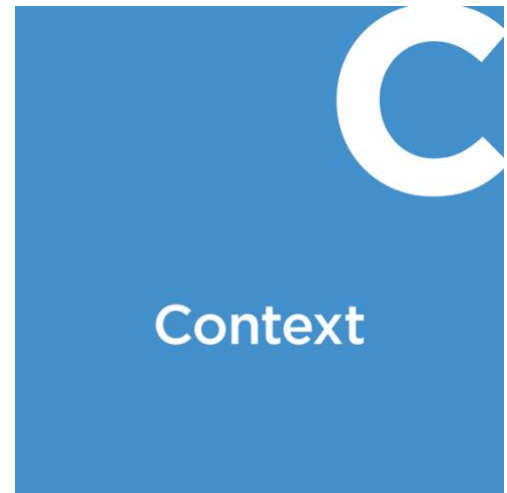
Still reading? We'll be brief and apolitical.

Global trade is the exchange of goods, services, and capital across international borders or territories. It creates a complex web of advantages and disadvantages, so it's impossible to characterize the pursuit of global trade as an overall "good" or "bad" objective. Whatever your view of global trade, The Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis [reports](#) that trade appears to have plateaued.

At the same time, the U.S. along with other industrialized nations have instituted more protectionist policies [\[IMF\]](#). Protectionist policies are designed to shield domestic industries and workers from foreign competition. Protectionist policies get tricky when products have complex supply chains and offshore manufacturing facilities. Your iPhone, for example contains components from [43 countries](#) and was probably assembled in China.

For the most part, ideas, information, and entertainment spread through technology have not been impacted by increased protectionism. And yet, a congress that can't seem to agree on anything voted to [ban Tik Tok](#). In early 2025 (notably, after the U.S. inauguration), Byte Dance must divest its ownership of Tik Tok's U.S. assets or U.S. operations will be shut down.

How might we balance caution and inventiveness when setting policy and passing laws?



Contextual Influences Getting our Attention

- What will Walmart stores soon have in common with gas stations? [Digital pricing displays](#) replacing printed shelf labels.
- The AI company, Anthropic published [interpretability research](#) on its Claude model by making it believe that it was the Golden Gate Bridge. By giving it constrained training conditions Anthropic could watch what was happening in the same way an fMRI helps us notice which external conditions "light up" which of our neurons.
- Test your knowledge and reasoning against a large language model. [Play](#) "Are you Smarter than an LLM?"
- [Network partner](#) and SCAN pro, Kristin Leydig Bryant called our attention to a social media anti-trend: [#deinfluence](#). A backlash against hype and commercialism. Thanks, KLB.



Assumptions—

Beliefs, values, and worldviews that orient our attention, judgements, and priorities

Learning to notice and challenge your assumptions can be enlightening, even disorienting. Maybe you've had the experience of assuming a life-long friend loves a certain food only to discover that you're mistaken or their tastes have changed. You might start reviewing your other assumptions about your friend. The more we strive to encounter disorienting information, the more we train our ourselves to hold our assumptions lightly.

In addition to holding assumptions lightly, challenging our assumptions can also condition our intuitions. Intuition develops through an alchemy of experience and belief. Statisticians have better intuitions about winning lotteries than the rest of us. Physicists have better intuitions about what comprises the stuff of the universe.

For a mind-bending re-wiring of our basic intuitions about humanity and its place in the universe, consider Matt Strassler's new book, [Waves in an Impossible Sea: How Everyday Life Emerges From the Cosmic Ocean](#). Strassler is a theoretical physicist and world-class explainer. In an [interview](#) with Isaac Shchultz of Gizmodo, Strassler said that his goal in writing the book is to change our perspectives.

Strassler wants to unravel our intuition that there's a difference between an inner-ness we conceptualize about humans as individuals and what we used to refer to as outer space. He wants us to understand that it's a false dichotomy. We don't live in the universe, in a sense we're made from the universe. Also, we're not a specialized collection of particles, we're ripples (waves) in the fields of the universe. If it feels unsettling when you try to wrap your head around these concepts...good.

How might we learn to notice commonalities as clearly as we notice differences?

Influential Assumptions Worth Challenging

- [Apparently](#), elephants have names. What else do we assume is uniquely human?
- Most of the organizational interest in trust centers on behaviors that foster or diminish trustworthiness. [New research](#) shifts the focus to what makes someone more willing to trust. Turns out, genetics play a role.
- Non-human animals seem to make assumptions too, but not always in the way humans do. This became clear when [researchers performed magic tricks](#) for different animals.
- An [NPR-PBS-Marist poll](#) of over 1,000 adults found stark differences in the values Democrats and Republicans want to teach children. Democrats prioritized "The Golden Rule" and education. Republicans prioritized instilling faith in God and teaching kids that hard work and discipline pay off.

Needs—

Desires, fears, preferences, and social processes that motivate behavior

[Luke Burgis](#) has a pretty good idea about why we want what we want. Check out Burgis' [overview](#) of his thesis on YouTube (5:07). Burgis offers a modern take on what French philosopher and anthropologist René Girard called the mimetic theory of desire.

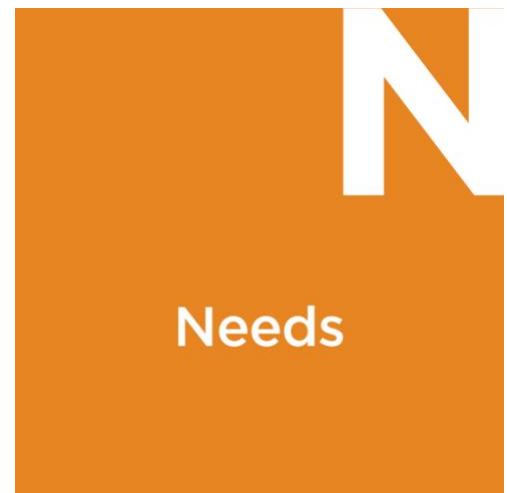
Mimetic theory states that human desires are not innate but imitated from others. We desire things because we see others desiring them. It is our need for inclusion and social connection that organize our yearnings. We feel as though our desires are rational and an expression of our free will. Girard in the 1960's and now Burgis believe that we're deluding ourselves.

The dark side of mimetic desire is that it can spawn conflict and rivalries. Burgis applies the lens of mimetic desire to a wide variety of current events: From social media influencers to the [billionaire space race](#) between Richard Branson and Jeff Bezos.

In *Wanting: The Power of Mimetic Desire in Everyday Life*, Burgis describes celebrity endorsements as a form of mimetic manipulation. He also suggests that leaders can tap into what he calls transcendent desire – a desire that expands people's horizons beyond existing paradigms.

When we teach leaders about the power of sharing an inspiring vision, we focus on what to say and how to say it. For Burgis, turning inspiration into desire is less about the vision and more about the leader. If we feel connected to a leader, we model our desires on what the leader desires. Maybe mimetic theory explains why a great vision inauthentically performed by a talented presenter fails to motivate us.

[If no one notices my strivings and achievements, how would it change my desires?](#)



Perspectives on Needs Getting our Attention

- There are nearly 60,000 members of the [Dumbphone subreddit](#). The moderator invites you to join the revolution and enjoy the simple life.
- A Korn Ferry [article](#) cites a LinkedIn survey: 40% of workers over 55 haven't spoken to a Gen Zer at work in a year. One in five Gen Zers haven't spoken to someone over fifty.
- Humans are hardwired for generosity. Maybe competition isn't the only path to organizational success. Pair this [article](#) from PwC with this [TEDTalk](#) from the head of TED, Chris Anderson, about his new book, *Infectious Generosity: The Ultimate Idea worth Spreading*.
- Here's how the unstuck minds at Patagonia do marketing and PR. An entertaining and irreverent video about the age of cheap crap: [The Shit-Thropocene](#).
- Oliver Burkeman's [take](#) on what's missing in all the AI hubbub. There's more to human connection than what it produces.



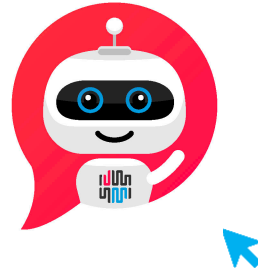
Embracing Uncertainty

Four keys to unlocking hidden opportunities

Unstuck Minds and the award-winning business simulation designers at **Insight Experience** introduce an [immersive learning experience](#) to help leaders and teams break free of status-quo thinking. For information: lisa@unstuckminds.com.



Meet SCAN Bot



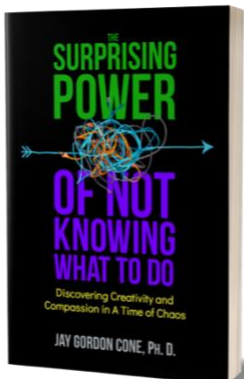
SCAN Bot is an AI assistant who can answer questions and offer advice using the SCAN framework.

Readers of our newsletter can try out SCAN Bot for a limited time by clicking the icon above and entering the password: **Newsletter**.

Community Spotlight



Each quarter we shine a light on a client, network partner, or organization doing inspiring work that helps the world become more creative and compassionate.



Being at a loss for what to do is an opportunity, not a problem.

available at
amazon

We help people **think better** and **connect better** so the world becomes more **creative** and **compassionate**

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