

Book Reviews

John Naisbitt and Patricia Aburdence, *Megatrends 2000: Ten New Directions for the 1990's*. New York: William Morrow and Company, 1990. ISBN: 0-68807-224-0.

The predecessor to this book, *Megatrends* (NY: Warner, 1982) reflected an effort to predict changing emphasis in the United States by tracking changes in mass media publications, primarily newspapers. States and regions that were persistent leading indicators for the spread of societal changes, particularly those related to the popular culture, were considered indicators of the basic patterns or “megatrends” that would define the society of the future. This analysis emphasized a shift toward (1) the information society; (2) high tech/high touch; (3) world economy; (4) long term; (5) decentralization; (6) self-help; (7) participatory democracy; (8) networking; (9) the south (west); and (10) multiple options. The work reflected a feel-good, optimistic perspective that was consistent with most people’s image of how the world “should be.”

Many of the same features are presented in *Megatrends 2000*. The same feel-good optimism pervades every page, almost every paragraph. Again, the most significant changes in the modern world are presented as ten, largely unrelated trends. Each is worthy of one chapter: (1) Global Economic Boom of the 1990’s; (2) Renaissance in the Arts; (3) Emergence of Free-market Socialism; (4) Global Lifestyles and Cultural Nationalism; (5) Privatization of the Welfare State; (6) Rise of the Pacific Rim; (7) 1990’s: Decade of Women in Leadership; (8) Age of Biology; (9) Religious Revival of the Third Millennium; and (10) Triumph of the Individual. The fact that an informed person can predict the content of most chapters from the titles suggests that little new is provided in the analysis. The biggest change is the shift to the world, or the world of advanced societies, as the

frame of reference. Several are extensions of the trends in the earlier work — economic globalization, individualism — others reflect a different perspective on the same themes.

What is missing is any pretense of an empirical base. While *Megatrends* was presented as a summary of considerable experience with systematic study of changes in the context of mass media culture, *Megatrends 2000* is presented as informed social commentary. Most of the references are to current mass media publications one might find at an upscale newsstand or in other trade books. Other evidence is even more casual. “. . . Telluride has the world’s highest concentration of Apple and Macintosh computer users’, says Judi Kiernan, founding director of the local Macintosh Users Group” (p. 305). Clear evidence that “individuals” are able to work where they want to live, connected to the onerous urban world by electronic and transportation technological advances. Hence, the “Triumph of the Individual” megatrend is affirmed. To ensure their interpretations did not go astray, fifteen friends “critique” the work in groupthink sessions held at the author’s home/office in Telluride, Colorado, during the mornings of a February week of skiing; they were able to cover two chapters a day (pp. 7–8. . .).

The value of such a casual treatment of important issues — characterization of modern societies, the future — is hard to determine. None of the trends are presented with enough clarity to test with empirical data. None have the precision required for useful planning by government or business. The major world events since the book was published — the sudden, dramatic collapse of the many centrally planned economies and the abrupt emergence of the Gulf War — date a book presented as the cutting edge in predictions. More important, the work reflects a conception of events as a series of continuous, unrelated trends; most scholars would immediately pursue the interrela-

tions among these trends, even if satisfied that ten megatrends captured all significant aspects of societal change.

The book may provide some entrepreneurs with ideas for niches that remain to be filled in Wichita, Kansas, or Lyon, France or Brisbane, Australia, but its main attraction for serious scholars will be as a guide to the latest mass media conceptions of the contemporary world. The same rationale for skimming *Megatrends I*, *Search for Excellence*, *One Minute Manager* and other works that have oversimplified the complex and important for fun and profit.

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Karel J. Samson, *Scientists as Entrepreneurs, Organizational Performance in Scientist-Started New Ventures*. Boston, Dordrecht, London: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1990. Pp. 150, bibliography, index.

Small firms, in general, as well as technology-based firms, in particular, are contributing a far greater share of the overall growth of the economy than has been recognized. Research about small business and entrepreneurship, along with specialized studies of hightech firms has mushroomed during the last decade. However, after analyzing this literature, Karel J. Samson found that little or no research had been undertaken in either the entrepreneurial or management fields on the phenomenon of *science-started* ventures. With the increasing number of new, high-tech firms, the phenomenon of the scientist-turned-entrepreneur (STE) is extremely important. Therefore, Samson directed his attention to this special field of entrepreneurship — the venturing activities of scientists. The author hoped to develop, in his own words, “theoretical and practical frameworks for the study of the scientist-started new business venture” (p. 6). He aimed to identify and study the specific challenges and opportunities facing this kind of start-up companies and to suggest strategies for such new, scientist-initiated ventures.

Samson’s book, *Scientists and Entrepreneurs*, is based on a careful, empirical research that took place in the biomedical and medical fields. This book is written from the point of view of an insider. The author is active in research, teaching and business; his research and teaching activities focus on entrepreneurship and the application of science to industry. Currently he is president of Psychomedics Corporation, a scientist-started, biomedical venture. He is affiliated with different universities, schools and colleges in both The Netherlands and in the United States.

The study consists of eight (8) chapters, grouped into three (3) parts. The three parts are: “Introduction: Research and Methodology”; “Scientists as Entrepreneurs: the Field Studies”; and “Conclusions, Implications and Guidelines”. I shall examine each of the three parts.

Part I places this study in terms of the existing literature and applicable theoretical work. This part discusses the empirical research methodology to be employed and the design of the study. Part I is organized into three chapters. The introductory Chapter 1 is followed by some remarks about research problems and the organization of the study. The scientist-started business ventures are identified as a subgroup of the general category of entrepreneurial ventures.

The main purpose of Chapter 2 is to provide a review of the research literature in order to especially assist in exploring the STE. The author’s review of STE leads him to conclude that there is a need for special attention to the significant differences in the cultural and behavioral backgrounds between scientific-started ventures and other small firms. The author compares the sort of business organizations and professional training associated with STE. Next, the author formulates a theoretical framework and states some propositions to be tested in the empirical research.

Chapter 3 describes the qualitative research methodology adopted in the design, conduct and analysis of the field studies among no less than twenty-two scientist-started ventures in the biomedical and related fields. Overall, Part I gives an understandable introduction, and provides an overview of the book, setting out the author’s objectives.

Part II also is split into three chapters and examines new ventures in some detail. A total of

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