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Ackoff R L. *A concept of corporate planning*.
New York: Wiley-Interscience, 1969. 158 p.
[University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA]

This book presents a way of planning that has some unique characteristics: (1) it involves *planning backwards* from an idealized redesign of the system planned for; (2) it provides opportunities for everyone who can be affected by a plan to *participate* in preparing it; (3) it requires *continuous* planning, incorporating feedback from experimental implementations of planning decisions; and (4) it requires planning for the whole organization and each of its parts *holistically*, in a coordinated and integrated way. [The *Social Sciences Citation Index*® (SSCI)® indicates that this book has been cited in over 250 publications.]

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My first opportunity to engage in planning occurred when I was still a graduate student. This opportunity was provided by Robert Mitchell, director, Philadelphia City Planning Commission. Robert was later to become a close friend, colleague, and collaborator. My first exposure to corporate planning came in 1953 when, as a member of the Operations Research Group at Case Institute of Technology, I worked with a task force of General Electric's Lamp Division at Nela Park, Cleveland, in preparing a long-range plan for its revitalization. This effort was coordinated by Fred Borch, who was later to become CEO of G.E. He was kind enough to carry me with him up the ladder of G.E. into progressively more comprehensive planning.

During the remainder of the 1950s and the first part of the 1960s, I engaged in a number of corporate planning projects as most people in Operations Research (OR) did: (1) trying to break the complex set of interacting threats

and opportunities that faced an organization down into smaller, more manageable parts, (2) dealing with them separately, and then (3) bringing them together into a cohesive whole. It became increasingly apparent to me that this approach left much to be desired. First, optimization of the parts taken separately did not add up to optimization of the whole because of the intense interactions of the parts. Second, OR could not deal effectively with the many very important qualitative aspects of planning. Third, the effectiveness of conventional planning depended critically on forecasts of the future, some of which inevitably turned out to be in serious error. Increasingly, it seemed to me, the task of planning was not to prepare for a forecasted future assumed to be out of our control but to bring under control as much of that future as possible. I wanted to build buildings in which the weather could be controlled rather than prepare for forecasts of it.

In the mid-1960s, Edward Vogel and August A. Busch III made it possible for me to develop and experiment with a new approach to corporate planning at Anheuser-Busch. *A Concept of Corporate Planning* was the result. After this book appeared, opportunities increased for employing the planning approach it set forth. As a result, this approach underwent considerable development, which is reflected in a series of subsequent books: *Redesigning the Future*,¹ which focused on the public sector, and *Creating the Corporate Future*,² which accumulated what had been learned after publication of *A Concept of...* a decade earlier. Then, in 1984, together with my colleagues Elsa Vergara Finnell and Jamshid Gharajedaghi, *A Guide to Controlling Your Corporation's Future*,³ a how-to-do-it book, was published.

A few weeks after this writing, I will retire from the University of Pennsylvania and, together with many of my colleagues in its Busch Center, initiate a not-for-profit Institute for Interactive Management called *INTERACT*. Here, we hope to continue to develop and apply our brand of planning and the more inclusive concept of management that has developed along with it.

1. Ackoff R L. *Redesigning the future: a systems approach to societal problems*. New York: Wiley, 1974. 260 p.

2. ———. *Creating the corporate future: plan or be planned for*. New York: Wiley, 1981. 297 p.

3. Ackoff R L, Gharajedaghi J & Finnell E V. *A guide to controlling your corporation's future*. New York: Wiley, 1984. 165 p.