

Preface

Deutsche Telekom Laboratories' internal organization is designed to stimulate a maximum flow of ideas and develop those that the company deems most relevant. Two main components identify the right topics and deal with them: First, the organizational structure, which is the result of the university–industry partnership, helps bring the best of the academic and business worlds together in a permanent situation of mutual intellectual exchange. Second, a set of non-formal and formal instruments used for corporate foresighting have been adapted to the requirements of practical innovation management. Instruments of corporate foresight now include the Deutsche Telekom Technology Radar, a tool that utilizes a global scouting network, the Product & Service Radar and various other tools for customer behavior and needs.

Deutsche Telekom Laboratories (T-Labs) has thus served both as an environment for the prototypical deployment of new methods and as the object of research providing data and indications for new hypotheses. René Rohrbeck's research has been instrumental in developing T-Labs' scouting and foresighting capabilities and exemplifies the value of close cooperation between industry and university.

Information and communication technology is currently radically changing and therefore challenges companies to continuously identify changes in the environment and act accordingly. Technological shifts can exceed the realm of R&D and it is not unusual for them to upset entire industries.

René Rohrbeck cites Kodak as an example to highlight how a globally dominant company can lose its competitive advantage due to technology shift. (In Kodak's case this was the result of the development of digital photography).

Other examples demonstrate how some companies are able to repeatedly reinvent their business. Nokia, for example, has undergone multiple transitions. Though they started as a pulp & paper industry, they successfully shifted to rubber boot and tire production and only later did they become the dominant manufacturer of mobile devices which we know today. Currently Nokia is undergoing another transition as it shifts its emphasis toward Internet-based services.

The work of René Rohrbeck benchmarks innovation techniques. In the second part of this book, René Rohrbeck describes the best practices that he has collected from 19 multinational companies and discusses their connection with corporate foresight ability.

Both the model and practice examples contained within make the book a worthwhile reference for companies seeking to enhance their ability to succeed in a changing environment. We are proud to have supported the effort and successful completion of this work.

Berlin, Germany

Peter Möckel, Heinrich Arnold



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Corporate Foresight

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a Firm

Rohrbeck, R.

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