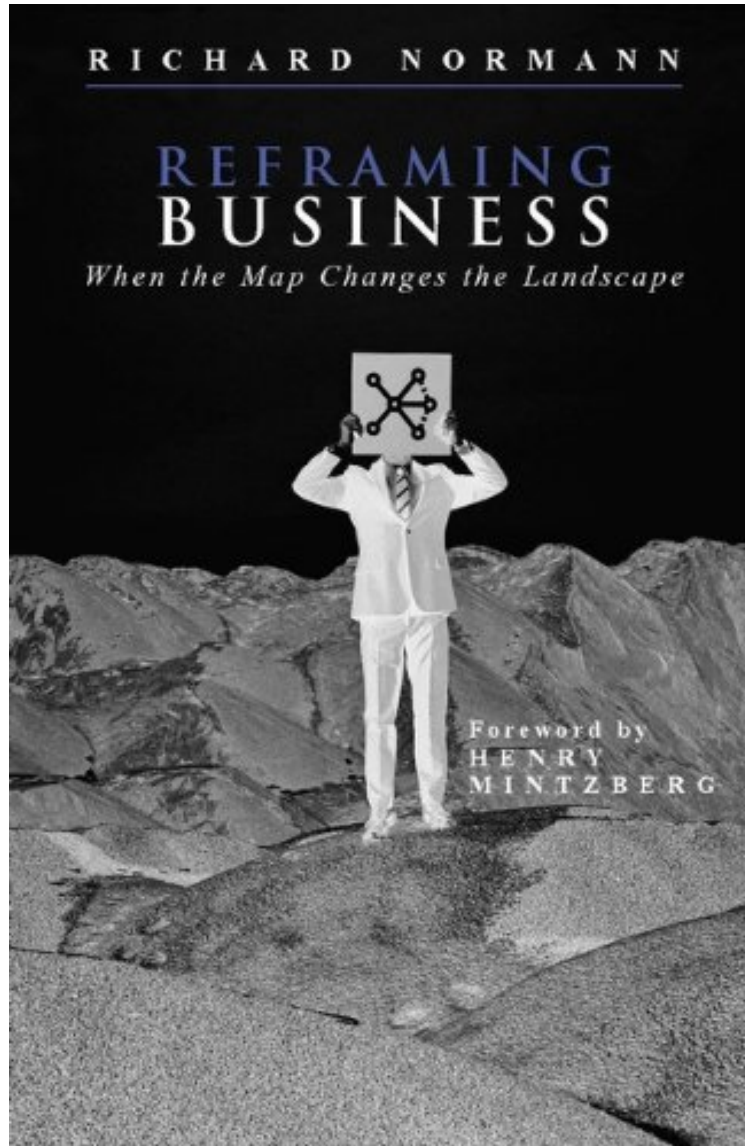


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## Reframing Business: When the Map Changes the Landscape

*Richard Normann*

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**Richard Normann : Reframing Business: When the Map Changes the Landscape** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Reframing Business: When the Map Changes the Landscape:

5 of 5 people found the following review helpful. Amazing head trip By R. Mutt I never thought I'd see myself writing these words, but this business book seriously changed my life. One other reviewer stated that he read the book multiple times, and I took the same approach with the following result: First time: I didn't get it. Richard uses a lot of jargon and has some very far out concepts. His ideas are sound but his approach is eccentric, which make me realize I

definitely needed to spend more time on it. Second time: I was getting it. Not quite, but the jargon made sense and the ideas were locking together in my head. Third time: I not only got it, but was reading each section in the context of the whole, with which I was now familiar with. Fourth time: I not only got it and saw the whole picture, but was now applying the concepts to my own world. I haven't read the book for almost seven years and I still use it every day. Reading and applying it was a most rewarding experience, to say the very least.

20 of 21 people found the following review helpful. An introduction to the art of 'landscaping' and 'mapping' By Philippe Vandebroek

A visit to the business book department usually is not a very uplifting experience. The unabashed shallowness of content and representation reveals the often questionable intellectual standards of those professionally engaged in the creation of economic value. A thoughtful book such as 'Reframing Business' is welcome oxygen for someone who finds this lack of discipline deeply troubling. For those in need of convenient shortcuts in dealing with strategic issues, Normann's book carries mixed messages. The good news is that shortcuts are indeed possible. The bad news is that this requires serious conceptual thinking and reformulation of the issues at a higher level of abstraction. The key word, therefore, is 'elegance' rather than 'simplification'. 'Reframing Business' talks about 'maps' and 'landscapes'. The landscape denotes the dominating logic of value creation that forms the backbone for a given configuration of business systems. Maps are a metaphor then for the symbolising processes of the mind, the conceptual frameworks we use to make sense of what happens in the business environment. Between these two lines of thought Normann posits a dialectical relationship: our strategic paradigms are shaped by the existing business context, which in turn is influenced by the mental frameworks we espouse to approach it. The co-evolution between business reconfiguration and mental reframing is the central theme of the book. Normann's approach is obviously indebted to systems theorists such as Maturana and Varela who introduced the idea of a fundamental interdependency between mind and world almost 30 years ago. This is not new and neither are the implications that Normann elaborates from these basic principles: the experience of the outside world as a dynamic continuum of opportunities and the need for an organisational infrastructure that supports recurrent purposeful emergence (autopoiesis) in order to thrive in it. This is the hard part of course for those seeking quick fixes in this book. As the author rightly points out, the ability to look at the world as a continuum of opportunities constitutes a fundamental choice. Normann believes that to a certain extent, this way of being in the world can be consciously learned and a large part of the book is in fact a very cerebral introduction to the sister disciplines of 'mapping' and 'landscaping'. The latter centers on the ability to recognise and shape the business offering as a tool for organising co-production between various players in the environment. 'Mapping' requires conscious 'upframing' of the strategic issues to higher levels of abstraction, which Normann undergirds with a rather generic thinking process. For those with sufficient conceptual agility, Normann's landscaping and mapping toolbox indeed constitutes a rich collection of 'shortcuts' for thinking through strategic issues. They will have no problems of buying into the argument, even if it is occasionally more suggestive than substantial. In fact, for these readers the book will fit snugly into their mental breast-pocket, ready to yield any of the numerous goodies hidden between its covers. However, those readers who have no feeling for the founding principles of this theory, will have a hard time in finding their way in what will seem a sprawling and arcane conceptual edifice. It is clear by now, I hope, that I worked through this book with considerable enthusiasm. However, to my mind it doesn't qualify for a five star rating, for two reasons. An important reservation concerns the kaleidoscopic variety of sources that is mobilised in order to substantiate the main argument. Normann dips into systems theory, cognition theory, social constructionism, complexity theory and much besides. Swiftly and imperceptibly, he crosses disciplinary borders and switches from metaphorical use of concepts into rigorous explanatory mode. I am convinced this methodological eclecticism obscures the argument. A focused and economical effort at integrating systems and management science would have yielded a more elegant and timeless contribution. Secondly, as indicated this work takes a conceptual angle in trying to come to grips with the issue of securing organisational viability in a complex environment. This is only part of the story and Normann knows it. In the final chapters on leadership, which I find amongst the weakest of the whole book, he discusses these issues only briefly. Groundedness, authenticity and humility are key aspects of the more spiritual side of leadership and they imperatively need to complement the more cerebral view of leaders as people with a strong capacity 'to perform the mental process of imagining and synthesising in the domain of the upframed conceptual future'. Margaret Wheatley has written eloquently on the 'softer' side of leadership in her books 'A Simpler Way' and 'Leadership and the New Science' but then, as a woman, she can probably afford to strike a more 'emotional' tone in the macho world of management and management science. The problem with Wheatley's book is also that they lack the conceptual incisiveness of Normann's approach. For a combination of intellectual rigour and humane wisdom we need to move out of management science altogether, with the exception, perhaps of Luc Hoebeker's 'Making Work Systems Better' (also published by Wiley) which in its systemic, sober, low-key approach to the discipline of human value creation does not fail to make a deep impression. Despite these reservations, I have no doubt that Richard Normann's book is a very valuable addition to the management science canon. It deserves to be recommended to thoughtful practitioners and managers.

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Probably the most valuable business book I've ever read. ... By Customer

Probably the most valuable business book I've ever read. When you need to understand how new value configurations and constellations are produced, consult this book. Normann has Benn The Prime Mover

explaining the most crucial logics behind the present platform economy. His thoughts are continuously present e.g. in our own innovation platform business.

In 1983 Richard Normann published the world's first book presenting an integrated framework on the management of service producing companies. Now he provides a new approach to strategy: an original way to think about organisations and create a different future. In this demanding but rewarding book he shows that providing organisations are prepared to rethink the way they do business they can occupy the competitive high ground of the future. To do this they must transform concepts and frameworks into action. \* Provides new business models. \* Shows companies how to reframe their business and take advantage of the opportunities created in the space of "unbundling and rebundling".

[an] insightful and illuminating book where complex theoretical issues and questions are integrated... -- International Journal of Service Industry Management, May 2004 "well worth reading" -- Long Range Planning "...[Normann] is provocative, original and bold. This is a book to be stimulated by." -- (Technovation) "hellip; [an] insightful and illuminating book where complex theoretical issues and questions are integrated..." (International Journal of Service Industry Management, May 2004) "...fine book..full of wisdom and experience, a beautifully written work., the business person who reads this book will not only be better at business but at life as well." (GNB Global Business Network, July 2001) "...[Normann] is provocative, original and bold. This is a book to be stimulated by (Technovation) "hellip;well worth readinghellip;";" (Long Range Planning) From the Inside Flap 'Globalization is truly feasible but rarely has there been such an enormous gap between what is possible and what is cultural reality. Ironically, the enormous opportunities that exist today, as well as the extraordinary possibilities of success or failure lie within this gap With the new technologies now available, almost anything is possible from an operational standpoint ( the limits lie solely in our consolidated habits, our mind sets and our culture). Truly extraordinary for the importance of its theme, no less than for its author, this book addresses the central challenge which leaders face today in terms of their ability \* to provide a valid vision of the future translated into precise objectives through the reframing of the business system and the creation of value in the new competitive context \* to assure a process of reframing the mind set of the company people necessary to translate this vision and these objectives into results and to bring about a new reality through this reframing effort' Alfredo Ambrosetti, Chairman Ambrosetti Group Recognized by his peers as one of the leading management thinkers of his time, Richard Normann takes a new approach to strategy and provides an original way to think about organizations and create a different future. In this demanding, but rewarding book, he shows that providing organizations are prepared to radically rethink the way they do business they can occupy the high ground of the future From the Back Cover 'If you are looking for a quick-fix solution, this is not the book for you. If you are looking for a light read, to rest your mind for a while, this is not the book for you. But if you are willing to think rigorously and seriously about how to help your organization imagine and realize its future, and if you are willing to be challenged so as to broaden your personal perspective and intellectual bandwidth then this is a book you cannot miss.' - Sumantra Ghoshal, Professor of Strategic and International Management, LBS 'A highly original scholar and consultant has written a book full of new ideas on the requirements for future organizations as they aspire to excellence. Normann writes with clarity and provides concrete illustrations about such important topics as leadership, strategy, measuring performance, and generating innovation.' - Chris Argyris, Harvard Business School, Monitor Company Group, L.P. 'Richard Normann has the astonishing ability to make you think quite differently about problems and issues that you thought you'd been entirely familiar with for years. His insights are exciting and eye-opening. A must for people who think about business.' - Wally Olins, Co-founder of Wolff Olins 'I personally know may leading figures both in the academic world and in the business community, but it would be hard for me to think of someone more capable than Richard Normann of dealing with an issue of vital importance in such a clear, profound, broad, interesting and illuminating approach.' - Alfredo Ambrosetti, Chairman, Ambrosetti Group 'Over the years Richard Normann has made major and fundamental contributions to the Strategy literature, based on years of experience over a broad spectrum of organizational situations. His unique insights have enabled him to become a keen observer of the business environment, pointing to weak signals that over the years have proved to be the early manifestations of major trend breaks. In this book he brings these strands together into a personal synthesis of his vast experience and insight. This book overviews the lifework of one of the foremost strategic thinkers of our time. Ignore at your peril.' - Kees van der Heijden, Professor of Strategic Management, Strathclyde University, Co-founder of GBN