



## ***Five Regions of the Future: Preparing Your Business for Tomorrow's Technology Revolution***

By Joel Arthur Barker and Scott W. Erickson  
Portfolio/The Penguin Group

Barker was the first person to popularize the concept of paradigm shifts for the corporate world. He began his work in 1975 after spending a year on fellowship meeting and working with visionary thinkers in both North America and Europe. He discovered that the concept of paradigms, which at that time was sequestered within the scientific discussion, could explain revolutionary change in all areas of human endeavor. His previously published works include *Future Edge: Discovering the New Paradigms of Success* and *Paradigms: The Business of Discovering the Future*.

Those who have read either of them already know that Barker is one of the most insightful and eloquent business thinkers in our time. Years ago, Peter Drucker suggested that one of the greatest challenges for any organization is to manage the consequences and implications of a future which has already occurred. However, Barker suggests that it is possible to recognize what he calls a "paradigm shift": a major change of the rules and regulations that establish or define boundaries, a change which suggests that new behavior will be required within those redefined boundaries. In *Five Regions of the Future* which Barker co-authored with Scott Erickson, the focus is on "a geography of technology so that we can better map our future. Just like locating our towns and cities on a physical map of the world, we need to locate, on some kind of conceptual map, the blizzard of new products and processes that are appearing [and will continue to appear] so we can better understand this 'brave new world' of technology." The reference to a "conceptual map" is especially appropriate because Barker and Erickson are introducing a new business discipline: cartology of paradynamic transformation. They carefully organize their material within six chapters as they provide and explain what they characterize as "a new paradigm for understanding the development of all technology" and identify five TechnEcologies which have evolved during the past 100 years since the advent of the mass production of automobiles and steel. What are TechnEcologies? They are "the inevitable result of accumulating discoveries, inventions, and innovations of human beings." Each is a complex ecosystem of technology made up of the tools and techniques invented by humans "that interact in both mutualistic and competitive manners to increase the variety of technologies and the complexity of interaction." The nature of each of the five is revealed by the answers to these four value questions:

1. What is the region's attitude toward material wealth?
2. What is the region's view of science and technology?
3. How does the region view its relationship with nature?
4. Finally, what is the region's view of work and leisure?

Barker and Erickson seem to see themselves as 21st century explorers who are attempting to define the future of technology just as Lewis and Clark once set out to define the vast and uncertain land west of the Mississippi River. "In the twenty-first century, we need a more sophisticated way to catalog and describe our technology. We think the five regions offer that. As citizens of this new world, we all need to begin to think more systematically. The five regions methodology invites that. Our technologies are bigger than our nations. We need to understand the consequences of that." 