



Review Briefs: October 2014

Broad introductions to the whole subject of strategy

The Trouble with Strategy: the brutal reality of why strategy doesn't work and what to do about it, Kim WARREN, Strategic Dynamics (2012), 185pp., £9.00 (paper). ebook £6.37.

An authoritative tour through the limitations of how strategy has been viewed, and used, in the past. Essential reading for anyone concerned with the subject in theory and/or practice.

Textbooks covering the whole subject of strategy

Multinational Management: A Strategic Approach, (International Edition), John B. CULLEN and K. Praveen PARBOTEACH, South Western Cengage Learning (2013, 6th edition), 736pp., £56.99.

A massive, thorough, textbook that covers the important issues in managing strategy in the increasingly global corporatist sector. Valuable, but the issues need to be studied alongside the limitations discussed in the Warren book mentioned above.

Various concepts of strategic management

The growth story: Successful Business Growth Strategies by Women Entrepreneurs, Sue STOCKDALE, bookshaker (2013), 240pp., £12.00.

A readable, and insightful, exploration of what it takes to inspire more women, as well as men, to start and grow businesses by sharing the different growth strategies revealed in the case study experiences of nine women entrepreneurs from the UK and North America. Essential reading for anyone thinking of embarking on this challenging 'career' option. In addition, those who have already started on this challenging road would also find the book contained much useful advice.

Analytical methods, tools and approaches

Competing Through ICT Capability: Innovation in Image Communication, Mitsuru KODAMA, Palgrave (2013), 279pp., £65.00.

Examines the components of ICT capabilities based on the result of surveys of ICT usage made at the global level. Considers four elements of ICT capability that promote knowledge creation activities through the particular modes of the use of video communication tools (ICT application capability, dialectical dialogue capability, context architect capability and boundaries consolidation capability) and the book also illustrates how the dynamic relationship of these four elements promotes the formation of business networks and the formation, maintenance, and development of knowledge communities, which can then lead to new knowledge creation. Partly reflecting a Japanese perspective, but essential reading for anyone seriously concerned with ICT applications, which rarely get the attention they deserve in strategic analysis.

New Developments in Goal Setting and Task Performance, Edited by Edwin A. LOCKE and Gary P. LATHAM, Routledge (2013), 664pp., £60.00.

Thirty seven (essentially academic) papers from 70 authors, organised into twelve parts: The Basics; Mediators & Moderators; Special Goals; Topics; Long-Term & Large Scale Goal Setting Programs and Studies; Goals in Groups and at a Macro Level; Goal Setting in Specific Domains; Cross Cultural Issues in Goal Setting; Goals and the Subconscious; Problems and Pitfalls; The Goal Setting Questionnaire; Goal Setting and Self Development; and Overview & Conclusions. Important issues, but the key messages will need to be repackaged for the 'busy manager' audience.

Adaptive Action: Leverage Uncertainty in Your Organization, Glenda H. EOYANG & Royce J. HOLLIDAY, Stanford Business School (2013), 253pp., \$85.00 (hard); \$27.95 (soft), ebook \$27.95.

Outlines a method that combines exploring three basic questions: What? So what? Now what? The first encourages careful observation; the second detailed consideration of options and implications; while the third focuses on effective action. Together the answers to these three questions (or even the process of attempting to answer them) produces a dynamic and creative interaction uncertainty. A serious study, with important messages, to help manage the relationship between simplicity and complexity.

The Success Equation: Untangling SKILL and LUCK in Business, Sports and Investing, Michael J. MAUBOUSSIN, Harvard Business Review Press (2012), 293pp., £17.99.

A practitioner who provides a framework that can help analyze the relative importance of luck and skill. Insightful and readable, a rare combination for books of this kind. Essential reading for all decision-takers. Covering some similar issues, but from a different direction which virtually ignores 'luck' is **Sidetracked: Why Our Decisions Get Derailed and How We can Stick to the Plan**. Francesca GINO, Harvard Business Review Press (2013), 260pp., £16.99. Based on research that finds there is often a mismatch between what we want and what we end up doing. Identifies the factors likely to influence our decisions in directions we did not initially intend. Also outlines what can be done to help us stay on course for our personal and professional goals. The importance of a moral framework is emphasised and that, ultimately, determines whether any change is being 'sidetracked', or not.

The laws of subtraction, Matthew E. MAY, McGraw-Hill (2013), 224pp., \$24.00.

'Subtraction' is defined simply as the art of removing anything excessive, confusing, wasteful, unnatural, hazardous, hard to use, or ugly ... or 'the discipline to refrain from adding it in the first place.' Develops six core *Laws of Subtraction*: What *isn't* there can often trump what *is*; The Simplest rules create the most effective experience; Limiting information engages the imagination; Creativity thrives under intelligent constraints; Break is the important part of *breakthrough*; Doing something *isn't* always better than doing nothing. Told through stories of breakthrough innovation distilled from 2,000 cases. Full of sound, readable, insights.

The Three Rules: How Exceptional Companies Think, Michael E. RAYNOR and Mumtaz AHMED, Portfolio/Penguin (2013), 370pp., \$29.95.

The authors, senior executives of Deloitte Consulting, have produced a detailed (academic) study based on a five-year programme that involved an analysis of the figures from almost 25,000 companies over a forty-five year operating period. Concludes that exceptional companies, when faced with tough choices, follow three basic rules: 1) Better before cheaper; they rarely compete on price. 2) Revenue before cost; they drive profits through price and volume, not thrift. 3) There are no other rules; apparently everything else is up for grabs, and they are willing to change anything to remain true to the first two rules!

Innovation Business as Usual: How to Help your People bring GREAT IDEAS to Life, Paddy MILLER and Thomas WEDELL-WELLSBORG, Harvard Business Review Press (2013), 218pp., \$25.00.

Argues that it is regular employees – in jobs like finance, marketing, sales, or operations – that are the key to 'innovation as usual', and these are the people who embed innovation that's both systemic and sustainable. Uses examples for a wide range of companies and focuses on the importance of '5+1 keystone behaviours': focus, connect, tweak, select, stealthstorm, (and the +1) persist. A readable, insightful, book that has important messages for us all.

Modern Research Methods for the Study of Behavior in Organizations, Edited by Jose M. CORTINA and Ronald S. LANDIS, Routledge (2013), 495pp., £60.00.

Important material for anyone involved in undertaking the increasingly complex nature of organizational research.

Measuring the Success of Coaching: A Step-by-Step Guide for Measuring Impact and Calculating ROI, Patricia Pulliam PHILLIPS, Jack J. PHILLIPS, and Lisa Ann Edwards, ASTD Press (2012), 228pp., £30.95.

Explains the concepts of ROI and outlines how it can be applied to coaching programmes, including case studies (Part I). The second part provides a conceptual framework and workable suggestions for development and implementation of such programmes. A useful resource for anyone involved with these activities. Also relevant is a related study, **Measuring ROI in Learning & Development: Case Studies from Global Organizations**, Edited by Patricia Pulliam PHILLIPS and Jack J. PHILLIPS, ASTD Press (2012), 406pp., £30.95.

Cluster Development: The Go-To Handbook: Building Competitiveness Through Smart Specialisation, Ifor FLOWCS-WILLIAMS, Cluster Navigators (2012), 289pp., £89.00.

Provides personal, and insightful, perspectives on the critical dimensions of cluster mobilization and management, based on the authors' two decades of experience in the field. Essential reading for anyone concerned with the theory or practice of the challenging area of effective cluster development. More on how the internet is changing what we mean by a 'cluster' would have made it even more useful, and pity no index.

The Simple Way: 52 Ideas to Find your Way Through our Complex World, Simon TYLER, Marshall Cavendish (2012), 184pp., £9.99.

A series of motivational tips and exercises designed to inspire and encourage more effective change. Also relevant **Winning Without Losing: 66 Strategies for succeeding in business while living a happy and balanced life**, Martin BJERGEGAARD & Jordan MILNE, Profile Books (2013), 290pp., £12.99, ebook £10.00. Based on the experience of entrepreneurs who manage to combine multi-million-dollar business at the same time as finding time to enjoy life. Full of Readable, inspiring, lessons. The importance of simplicity is also emphasised in **Simple: conquering the crisis of complexity**, Alan SIEGEL and Irene ETZKORN, Random House (2013), 237pp., £12.99. Useful, but surprising the role and importance of wisdom was not discussed, especially as it is such a valuable (and simple?) way of integrating our values into our much of our decision-making.

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