

Book Review

What I Didn't Learn in Business School How Strategy works in the Real World

Authors: Jay B. Barney and Trish Gorman Clifford

Publisher: Harvard Business Review Press

"An education is not how much you have committed to memory or even how much you know. It's being able to differentiate between what you know and what you don't".

- Anatole France

The work that empowers and enables firms to determine what customers they will serve, which markets they will participate in, and how they will create value is both intellectually engaging and enjoyable. The way of bringing strategy lessons to life by sharing the fun and frustration that are often a part of strategy making and cannot be easily conveyed in other kinds than books.

The book is not a broad based criticism of business education but the character in the book realizes that he is ultimately responsible for both what he did and did not learn in business school. The authors have made an attempt to identify some essential tools of strategic and organizational success accessible.

The book also tells both a thorough knowledge of the tools and detailed understanding of how they are used in real

organizations. The chapters help in discovering the strategy making as part of science, art, politics, change management, plain hard work.

The reader is introduced to the application of various strategic management tools throughout the book and then encounters the "real world" of corporate politics and prior arrangements. He learns that he needs to ask the right questions and challenge assumptions that are being used. He learns the value of a team as he works with the other consultants on the project. He learns to deal with criticism from his superiors.

The book's lessons are outside business school because it is meant to be a real world example Justin experiences real people acting irrationally, and changing their opinion over time. Business school (or school in general) teaches that there is a right answer. Justin learns there are shades of gray, and that

decisions are not made and forced on an organization just because the answer is obvious. Each chapter highlights the techniques that are used by the character. Chapters 1 to 4 speaks about the required strategies to work in a team like managing first impressions, scoping an engagement, identifying purchasing criteria, strategically applying 5 Forces, selecting and using appropriate tools, reacting to feedback, assessing potential synergies, evaluating make v. buy decisions and communicating effectively with team members.

The chapter 5 to 10 represents the situation where the main character realizes some of the tools like recognizing core competencies, receiving tough feedback, applying growth opportunity scans, assessing product extensions and realizing the potential of radical innovations, understanding organizational dynamics. The chapters 11 to 14 highlights some knowledge on how to

effectively in a team, work life balance, understanding the managers motive and preparing an organization for change and making high impact presentations in an organization. Though the book is a novel, it explores real-world application of education. At the conclusion of each chapter, the authors provide a series of reflection questions for the reader. Therefore, the novel, at times, becomes a textbook. The book allows the reader to gain knowledge and to reflect on the application of that knowledge. As with any good novel, the reader is left in suspense regarding the ending.

Reviewed by:

Prof. Prakruthi N. Udupa

She is an Assistant Professor at Department of MBA, PES University, Bangalore. She can be reached at prakruthinudupa@pes.edu