What is strategy, Reflections on Strategy and Strategy making

  Porter’s latest thinking on strategy. Underlines importance of a focussed strategy that does not attempt to do everything but fits with the firm’s capabilities.
- Richard Rumhelt, “Good Strategy, Bad Strategy”
  Reflections on a lifetime teaching and consulting in strategy. A useful read full of good ideas.
  Strategic management compared to the potter’s craft. A thought-provoking critique of overly analytical approaches to decision making. Old but still relevant.
  A history of the strategy “industry” and its evolving ideas. A good read
  A stimulating read and provides interesting ideas on collaborative strategies.

Strategic Analysis

  MBA text book providing a rigorous, applicable and up-to-date introduction to business strategy analysis. Not strong on the leadership or people side of strategy but a useful reference book.
  A practical guide to strategy making from a former consultant
  Introduces the simple framework of “Who, What, How” to explain how companies developed innovative strategies.

Industry Analysis, Industry Attractiveness, How industries evolve, How to adapt

  A recent article summarising Porters 5 forces – with a few practical tips on its use
  The original book on Industry analysis. A bit turgid – but the classic text. I confess that since my copy was eaten by termites I have not replaced it! Content is mostly covered in the article from 2008 and standard text books.
  Thoughtful book from a Porter acolyte.
  Stimulating article on “Agility and Resilience” as ways to survive turbulent markets.
- Clayton Christensen, “The Innovator’s Dilemma” or go to
www.claytonchristensen.com/disruptive_innovation.html for information and links to a number of books and articles about how disruptive innovations shape market and industry evolution.

  Emphasises importance of having the right “business design” (i.e. value chain and customer focus). Several good industry examples.

  I am a fan of Eisenhardt’s work in how strategy is constructed in fast moving environments such as Silicon Valley

Competitive Advantage

  Uses the value chain to lay down basic principles of competitive advantage. Most content is covered in standard strategy text books.

  Classic article which emphasised the role of Strategic Intent in driving advantage.

  A view of competition as a mix of competition and cooperation – based on game theory. Old but stimulating

- Geoffrey Moore, Dealing with Darwin, Portfolio Books, 2005
  A summary of his thinking about how to deal with fast moving (Silicon Valley) environments

Mission and Vision


  Results of a research programme into why some managers are committed to their companies and how companies use mission statements.

Generating and Evaluating Strategy options

  Popular book that includes the concept of the value curve and advises searching out new markets where competition is less intense (blue oceans).

  Article based on ASMC’s research into How corporate entities grow – and how to manage growth. A good antidote to over-optimistic thinking. The book from which the article is drawn, “The Growth Gamble”, is also a good read and provides an overview of other writers perspectives on growth.

Suggested Strategy Reading List (a very personal view!)

1997
Provides insights into how to develop new strategies.

   Thoughtful, practical consultant’s viewpoint.

Implementing strategy (a very partial list)

   A colleague’s powerful view of how to implement strategy in uncertain environments – based on military principles.

• Don Sull, “Why Good Companies go Bad”, HBR July/August 1999.
   Article explaining how companies can develop an inertia that prevents them from changing

Corporate Level Strategy

• Andrew Campbell, Michael Goold and Marcus Alexander, “Corporate Strategy: The Quest for Parenting Advantage”, HBR, March-April 1995, 120-132 or the book
   ASMC’s classic text on corporate strategy – which also provides an overview of other views of corporate strategy.

   Takes a resource-based view of strategy, particularly corporate-level strategy.

The Decision Making Process

   HBR article summarising the book, Think Again.

• Sydney Finkelstein, Jo Whitehead and Andrew Campbell, “Think Again: Why Good Leaders Make Bad Decisions and How to Keep it From Happening to You”, Harvard Business Press, 2009
   ASMC text on the causes of flawed decisions, which are traced to two factors: biases of individual decision makers and a weak decision process.

   Classic textbook describing decision making biases – although short on what to do about it.

   Useful tips on how to design a better decision process.
Competitive advantage, as the name implies, is an advantage that a company or market participant has over other competitor market participants in a given function or industry. Plainly stated, it concerns the ability of a company to better provide a value proposition to consumers than competitors who provide the same or a similar value proposition. A Little More on What is Competitive Advantage. Competitive Advantage can be divided into two based on an analysis by Michael Porter.