

## Book Review

### **Cases in Strategy & Management**

**By Leanne Catcher& Nick Wails**

Teaching strategic management to students is extremely difficult, unless the abstract concepts can be made to come alive through real life case studies of organizations & situations with which they are already familiar. The book under review, “Cases in Strategy & Management” By Leanne Catcher& Nick Wails fills a big void in this area by providing a set of 8 brand new cases.

The cases cover a wide range of organizations (both business & not for profit) and industries (manufacturing as well as services). They illustrate a wide range of strategic management concepts (though the focus is on the “resource –based view” of the firm).

The cases are simple enough to be used at the introductory level of management courses, yet rich enough to be adapted to a post-graduate level. As the book mainly consists of cases, it will need to be coupled with a standard textbook on the subject for use in a strategic management course. The editors are aware of this limitation & provide references to relevant sections in one such standard textbook (Strategic Management: Creating Competitive Advantages, by Dress and Lumpkin,) for each case. However, the book may also be used as a stand- alone resource for various other specialized courses (such as Strategic Marketing, Operations strategy etc. by appropriately selecting cases. This is due to the wide ranging concepts covered by the cases such as market entry strategy, environment & industry analysis, knowledge management, strategic leadership etc.

Each case focuses on a particular management challenge faced by an organisation. These cases encourage students to consider how theory and innovation may combine to create successful outcomes. The book starts with an introductory chapter as Part I which provides advice on how to analyse cases effectively incorporating the experience of the editors in using case studies in their own teaching. The book also has a very helpful brief guide to the cases that summarizes their main aspects & indicates the issues that they illustrate. In addition, the cases themselves include a brief discussion of the relevant theory as well as discussion questions and suggestions for further reading. The cases are all written by illustrious contributors, each an expert in his/her respective field.

The cases are imaginatively named so as to both arouse curiosity as well as hint at the situation or issues being discussed for example, “Stuck in Neutral?” for the Australian Automotive Industry case.

The first case (Bendigo Bank) focuses on the bank’s differentiation strategy of expansion through a community bank model, which resulted in significant gains in profitability & market share. Customer & worker insights were key strategic resources responsible for this success in a highly competitive market. The Plum Financial Services case deals with the strategic choice of opportunity exploitation through own resources versus a joint venture approach. The case focuses on the issue of market entry strategy & highlights the concept of core competence.

Country Road’s case is of venturing into highly competitive global markets on the back of domestic success & the risks associated with the same. The dynamic nature of markets with specific reference to the retail sector is well illustrated through the case along with the strategic challenges faced by firms operating in such markets.

Credit Unions is case of not for profit organizations in the financial services sector, an area in which there is a severe dearth of good teaching material. It is a unique case illustrating issues faced by such non-profit organizations in competing with their for- profit counterparts. The Australian Automotive Industry case examines the impact of global production on local strategy through a comparison of two manufacturers who have responded in very different ways.

Accenture Australia is essentially a Knowledge Management case. It illustrates how a firm with knowledge as its critical (if not only) resource, can leverage the same to maintain & enhance its competitiveness. The Sydney Real Estate Market case gives great insights into the nature of dynamic capabilities & their relationship to the resource based view of the firm (a major goal of the book).

ATP Innovations is another major contribution to an area facing severe shortage of cases i.e. innovation. It provides a good example of the importance of vision & leadership in shaping strategic direction.

The biggest drawback of the book is that all cases pertain to organizations based in Australia. This limits its utility to students in other geographies. One wishes that the editors had widened the scope to the Asia

Pacific region as that would have been a great contribution to reducing the dependence on us& west Europe based cases by management institutes in this region.

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