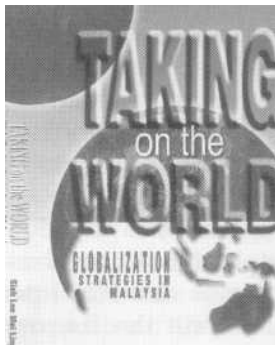


BOOK REVIEWS

Choosing Books and Book Reviewers

On a typical day we receive between two and five books from publishers and authors hoping that we will review their work for our readers. After thoughtful consideration, we select the ones which we feel have the greatest potential to provide useful information and ideas to practicing executives. We think you will find our selections to be both interesting and worth your time to read. If you would like to suggest books for us to review or are interested in writing reviews, please contact Jeff Katz, Book Review Editor, at ikatz@ksu.edu.

Taking on the World: Globalization Strategies in Malaysia



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By Sieh Lee Mei Ling,
Malaysia. McGraw-
Hill, 2000. 300 pages,
hard cover, RM 79.90/
US \$23.00.

Reviewed by Mahfooz A. Ansari, University Science
Malaysia

In *Taking on the World: Globalization Strategies in Malaysia*, Professor Sieh Lee Mei Ling candidly focuses on the changes that have been taking place within Malaysian corporations because of long-term global business strategies. Her principal thrust is to emphasize "the role of Malaysia as a host country for multinational companies engaged in real productive activities and in the trade as part of their international operations." Stated differently, she investigates the role of Malaysian companies-at home as well as abroad-as partners with multinational corporations operating in Malaysia. She takes a futurist orientation as she deals with "what is to come." In particular, focusing on the last decade of the twentieth century, she evaluates five key globalization issues:

- With globalization, foreign direct investment (FDI) inflows into Malaysia are increasingly motivated by factors different from those of earlier periods.
- The link between FDI and international trade in goods and services is enlarging.

- Even after foreign investors decided to go overseas, what were the factors leading them to choose Malaysia?
- To what extent have Malaysian companies been successful in collaborating with foreign investors, given the many differences between them-particularly as joint-venture partners?
- In view of the recent trends, what can be predicted for Malaysia?

In order to address the above issues effectively, the author collected data from multiple sources-which she calls a three-pronged approach-to help us better understand the topic. The author:

Conducted an extensive literature search to examine how Malaysia has been used to help achieve corporate goals and business objectives of foreign companies.

- Gathered and analyzed statistical data fitting her broad research objectives. In other words, she used all available macro-level evidence to demonstrate the part played by Malaysia in the global strategies and international business operations of companies.
- Collected company-level data, from multinationals and domestic Malaysian companies alike, by holding lengthy discussions with about 30 senior government officials from the Malaysian Industrial Development Authority and the Ministry of International Trade and Industry as well as other relevant ministries and departments, senior managers of MNCs, and large Malaysian companies operating in five industry sub-sectors.

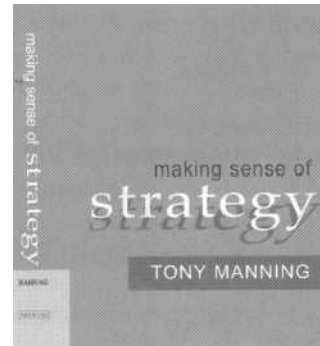
Using three terms-multinational, transnational, and global companies-interchangeably, the author discusses the contribution of "the Malaysian economy to corporations as they cast their horizons not just internationally as before, but in a highly integrated fashion through unprecedented multidimensionally tight business relationships."

One of the best parts of the book is the richness of the data in terms of qualitative analysis of selected interesting industry-specific cases. In total, the author chose five specific industry sub-sectors for in-depth analysis: electronics, automobiles, food, textiles and apparel, and financial services. Each industry-case has been arranged in the following sequence: An Industry Overview, Malaysia's Role in Global Strategies, Emerging Globalization Strategies, Implications of Globalization, and Future of Malaysia's Global Linkages. The analysis of these five industry-cases indicates that Malaysian investors are at different stages of involvement in different industries. The role of the various industries is contingent on several factors such as age and history of the specific company, the adoption of advanced technology, the degree of modernization, capital intensity, local content and target market, and the quality of human resources available within the economy.

Although the author warns of the potentially adverse impact of globalization, she is optimistic about this phenomenon in the Malaysian context. She is positive because Malaysia was successful in arresting past problems of economic downturn through fundamental policy adjustments and the political strength of the Barisan Nasional (National Front) government—both in the 1980s and in 1997–98. She concludes, "Globalization will be almost irreversible as it widens and deepens. The resultant pan-global power that can cause sharp changes with lightning speed may become a potential source of great harm to mankind if globalization fails due to indiscipline or sheer immensity of corporate power."

Overall, *Taking on the World: Globalization Strategies in Malaysia* offers a rich source of information, insights, and suggestions both for managers and for organizational leaders who wish to understand globalization and globalization strategies in Malaysia. The book is a result of Professor Sieh's four years of active research and reflection on the subject. The perspective she brings to this book is certainly unique. The book should be read by managers who truly want to encourage globalization and are willing to make the changes necessary for that to happen. In addition, the book is recommended for graduate courses such as international marketing management, international business management, and international human resource management. Finally, this book will be interesting to anyone wishing more information about globalization.

Making Sense of Strategy



By Tony Manning. New York: AMACOM, 2002. 98 pages, hardcover, \$19.95.

Reviewed by Jeffrey P. Katz, Kansas State University

Is it possible to write a complete and useful book about business in 98 pages? How often have you read a book about strategic management in less than an hour and felt that you have "everything you need to know"? The answers: Yes and probably never.

In *Making Sense of Strategy*, author Tony Manning promises to give us useful information about a business subject that captivates and frustrates most managers—strategy. "Let's cut the b.s. and cut straight to the chase. Strategy is not rocket science. It's about listening to customers, asking some pretty simple questions, making some choices, and getting people to support your ideas." Pretty heady stuff, indeed!

In many ways, reading *Making Sense of Strategy* is like carrying on a conversation while jogging with a friend. Only a few words are used to convey much information. While promising that his book may be the last business book we will need to read, Tony Manning suggests it should probably be the first. In three chapters covering Content, Concepts, and Process, the book attempts to present a holistic view of management. Manning is the former chairman and CEO of McCann-Erickson in South Africa and a former senior marketing executive with Coca-Cola. His experiences and practical view of business combine to make an interesting and thought-provoking discussion of strategic management. The result is a book that focuses on simple explanations and a bias for implementation.

Manning argues that the context of each business is a series of managed conversations. That is, people in organizations spend a huge amount of time talking with each other, suppliers, customers, and other key stakeholders. In order to shape these conversations to be positive and productive, strategic managers must: (1) make choices, (2) win

"votes," and (3) build capacity. In regard to the first, managers must make decisions on which markets and customers to solicit. "Winning" votes means persuading your stakeholders to participate actively in implementing your choices. Building capacity focuses on developing your organization to compete creatively and adjust to changes quickly in a dynamic business environment. According to Manning, there are two important things to know and not forget: "You have to be exceptionally good at something" and "You don't have to know everything." He takes these two simple statements and then explores industry life cycles, S curves, and the outside-in versus the inside-out schools of strategic thinking. The result is a simple equation for success: "Information + imagination + inspiration + action = results."

Given the above content issues, Manning examines the concepts of strategy. At the top of the list is the need to maintain growth because it encourages organizational fitness, excites employees, grabs the attention of customers, and makes investors happy. Of course, growth cannot occur according to Manning unless you are able to focus resources, enhance customer value, and lower cost—all at the same time. The author says it simply and best: "If you don't make a difference, you don't matter!"

Perhaps one of the most useful discussions in *Making Sense of Strategy* is the link between strategy formulation (thinking) and execution (doing). "As long as strategy and change management are kept in different boxes, there will be a costly disconnect between them. But you can close the gap by thinking of strategy as change management." In his four-step process for linking strategy and change management, Manning states that to treat the two concepts as "separate activities is to set yourself up for failure."

Oftentimes the strategy literature discusses changing the organizational culture as part of the change-management process. Manning acknowledges the importance of culture change but suggests that changing behavior, rather than attitude, is the first consideration in getting workers to think differently. "Your priority should be to change not what people think but what they do. That way, they'll discover that 'the way we do things around here' is not cast in stone and that other ways work better. And, over time, your organization's culture will change."

The final section of the book covers the process of strategy, what Manning describes as a process of questioning. In this regard, he argues that one question should be the foundation of all strategic questioning in the company: On what assumptions

are your key ideas based? That is, are you simply guessing about the underlying assumptions, or do you know for sure? For example, when we believe that our competition will not match our next initiative for any number of reasons, do we know this or do we hope this? The difference is the basis for either strategic success or failure.

Once the importance of underlying assumptions is understood, we are able to focus on Manning's systematic approach to planning. He suggests five building blocks to effective strategic management beginning with "Why do we exist?" (exploring organizational purpose), followed by questions designed to examine the business recipe, organizational character, goals/priorities/actions, and strategic conversations. Manning provides four questions in each of the "Big Five," thus concluding the book with 20 strategy questions that "embrace the vital issues and ensure that you think through your strategy in a methodical way. But equally important, they add up to a strategic conversation that will let you make a difference. Use them to analyze your current situation and to explore future possibilities."

Making Sense of Strategy is a brief but highly useful discussion of modern strategic management from the perspective of an experienced practitioner. Tony Manning is able to take many commonly held ideas in strategy and weave them into a simple, yet elegant tapestry for appreciating the art of management. His advice is direct, yet not overbearing. At the end of the book, serious managers will likely feel the same invigoration and excitement as that following a three-mile jog. The book is recommended for MBA programs, especially executive MBA programs, and all managers who doubt their impact on the long-term success of the firm. For anyone wishing to make an organization more effective, reading *Making Sense of Strategy* will be an hour well spent.

The Quest for Global Dominance: Transforming Global Presence into Global Competitive Advantage

Reviewed by Alan M. Rugman, Indiana University

The Quest for Global Dominance: Transforming Global Presence into Global Competitive Advantage by Vijay Govindarajan and Anil Gupta is a well-written managerial version of the authors' academic research on the currently popular topic of how to develop a global strategy. The main insights in the book come from their extensive analysis of the