

Future reading

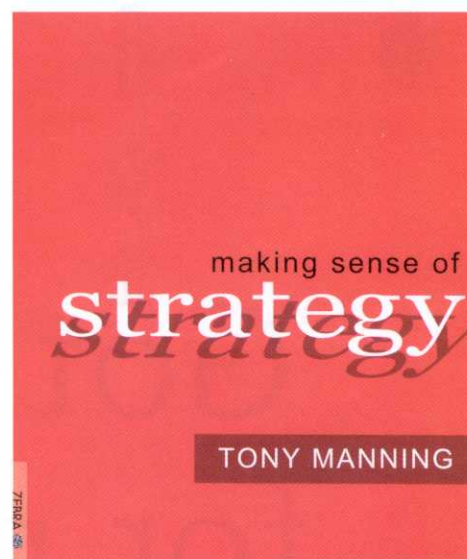
Making sense of strategy

By Tony Manning

Published by Zebra

ISBN 1-86872-353-4

Price: R72 (Exclusive Books)



Review by Chris Gibbons

"Let's cut the bullshit and cut straight to chase. Strategy is not rocket science."

The opening words of Tony Manning's new work, which, in its soft, scarlet cover, will become known as Tony's Little Red Book. You've read Manning in this magazine. In fact, a couple of the chapters in the book - strategy as a series of managed conversations, for example - flow from work already published here. You'll know that he is direct, to the point, and that he does 'cut straight to the chase.'

I have to declare an interest at this point. I've known Tony Manning for many years and, during the course of our acquaintance, have come to realise that we went to the same school. The motto of the school is "There's No Such Thing as a Silver Bullet." I found this out when I did an MBA - at the start of the process, I supposed that all answers to all business problems, particularly strategy, lay within the three magic letters. Halfway through the course, I realized that although I was being given a wonderful set of tools, I would still have to find my own answers.

Some years after that, I realise that not only are most of the questions absolutely standard, but so are most of the answers. Nor have they changed much in the last thousand years. Find out what people want. Design a product that gives it to them. At the right price and cost. Deliver it where and when they want. Work with people that can help you. Let them know what's going on. Don't forget to collect the money. Don't forget to say thank you. Look after customers and make sure that they come back.

I'm sure that you could add a couple of points that I've missed, but you understand the point. As Manning says, "it's not rocket science."

You don't need to have shelves full of complex, detailed business books. "Management writers have all been saying roughly the same things for a hell of a long time. They've invented the same old wheel over and over again. They have been remarkably uncreative and they seldom admit to their limitations," says Manning.

One of the reasons that reading "Making Sense of Strategy" is such a joy is that it's all there. Manning has taken his years of reading, coupled them to his years of experience as a business leader and consultant and from them, distilled the essence of strategy. "...There are a few things that every organisation must do, and you ignore them at your peril," he states, quite correctly.

He lists them, he writes lucidly and clearly about them. He offers some rock-solid diagrams and checklists. Now comes the difficult bit, because the thinking is up to you.

Exclusive Books top ten business bestsellers

1. Rich Dad Poor Dad
Kiyosaki, R
2. Making Sense of Strategy
Manning, T
3. Who Moved My Cheese
Johnson, S
4. 7 Habits of Highly Effective People
Covey, S
5. Paying Less Tax Made Simple
Metz, R
6. Basic Business Calculations
Zidel, D
7. Cashflow Quadrant
Kiyosaki, R
8. Banking on Change
Doherty, H
9. Open Society
Soros, G
10. Rich Dad's Guide to Investing
Kiyosaki, R