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BOOK REVIEW



COMPETITIVE ENVIRONMENTAL STRATEGY: A Guide to the Changing Business Landscape by Andrew J. Hoffman, Island, 2000. 301 pp, £30.00 (pbk). ISBN 1-55963-772-2

This book is outstanding, and provides a thorough discussion of the principal issues involved in understanding the implications of environmental issues from a strategic management perspective. The book is in four parts. Part one, 'A new framework for business strategy', sets the context for the book and asks the important question 'What is the relationship between environmental protection and corporate competitiveness?'. In addressing this question the author outlines two schools of thought. The first is a 'win-win' perspective, and the second a 'win-lose' perspective. The 'win-win' perspective sees environmental issues as being a source of competitive advantage, and the 'win-lose' perspective argues that environmental issues are a drag on a firm's resources and opportunities. The author argues that the answer lies somewhere between these polarized views, and outlines a third perspective - a strategic competitive environmental perspective.

Part two, 'Drivers of environmental protection in a changing business context', critically examines the principal drivers for corporate environmental change and in doing so presents a competitive environment framework. The author breaks the drivers into five categories. Chapters two and three examine regulatory drivers and international environmental agreements. Chapter four reviews resource drivers, including buyers, suppliers, banks, shareholders, investors and insurance companies. The scope of the analysis is broadened in Chapter five and this discusses other market drivers including consumers, trade associations, competitors and consultants. The final chapter of part two expands the analysis further to include social drivers including-NGOs, the press, the courts, the community, academia and religious organizations.

Part three, 'New rules of the game', examines the corporate implications of these drivers and considers how they impact on competitive strategy (chapter eight) and organizational design (chapter nine). Chapter nine

broadens the discussion by investigating how institutions create both opportunities and threats for environmental protection. The important point is that corporate environmental strategy must be developed with an appreciation of the context in which it takes place, otherwise environmental initiatives will flounder. This is an approach that this reviewer has been advocating for some time.

Part four, 'Competitive environmental strategy', presents the book's conclusions, with chapter ten describing competitive environmental strategy within an institutional context. Two case studies are used to illustrate the institutional opportunities and barriers for strategic environmental innovation. This is an extremely interesting discussion and one, which clearly illustrates the challenge of managing institutional change. Chapter eleven concludes by providing a thorough discussion of the linkages between successful business strategy and the need to embrace sustainable development. This is an important chapter.

An editorial contribution throughout this book is the inclusion of a question and discussion section at the end of each chapter, along with further recommended reading sources. Overall, I found the question and discussion sections extremely stimulating and these helped me to focus on the important environmental challenges facing both business and society in the years to come. The recommended reading sources, which follow each chapter, also allow the reader to go beyond the parameters of the book. Issues covered by this reading include, for example, sustainable development, international trade and the environment and corporate environmental management tools and techniques. The book concludes with two appendices, with one providing a summary of important US environmental laws, and the other a list of environmental information resources. Overall, these were also helpful additions to the book.

To conclude, I found this a very enjoyable book to read and one that provides an important contribution to the business-environment literature. I look forward to reviewing Professor Hoffman's next book.

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