

BOOK REVIEWS

Managing Strategy Implementation

Edited by Patrick Flood; Tony Dromgoole, Stephen J. Carroll and Liam Gorman, Basil Blackwell, 2000.

Reviewed by Pat Gibbons, Department of Business Administration, University College Dublin.

This book fills an important void in the relatively sparse literature on implementation. The book reflects the contributions to a conference on implementation funded and sponsored by the Irish Management Institute and the University of Limerick. While the 16 chapters of the book cover a wide area, with varying degrees of success, the overall contribution is significant. Moreover, the chapters are all highly readable and are accessible to both academic and practitioner audiences.

There is a broad mix of empirical, reflective and conceptual articles dealing with the theme. The editors have grouped the papers into a number of themes. These include New Perspectives; Behavioural Barriers; Key roles and Barriers and Enablers. While the grouping is useful, given the range of topics covered there is still understandable overlap across the sections.

Among the highlights of the book are Carroll's (Ch. 2) review of Management By Objectives (MBO) programmes. In the review he overviews the empirical literature on MBO and integrates it with perspectives on MBO programmes at GE and ABB. In addition the piece by Dromgoole and Gorman reviewing the National Action Learning Programme and the piece by Saul on the change programme at Waterford Glass were particularly instructive. Each of these pieces draws on empirical results to justify the assertions made. Other contributions which impressed me were the assessment of the impacts of consultants on implementation (Ch. 9, Morris) and the role of the middle manager in the implementation and change process (Ch. 11, Fenton-O'Creevy and Ch. 12, Stiles).

Overall, there is an eclectic mix of perspectives on the implementation process. These range in units of analysis from the individual's psychological orientation through organisational case studies of change and implementation programmes to interventions at a multi-organisational level such as the National Action Learning Programme. Another dimension of difference is the theoretical approach used ranging from interpretative case studies, through to large sample studies.

One weakness of the book is the lack of historical perspective on the literature. I would have liked to have seen a chapter commissioned on what we know about strategy implementation. In reviewing the Index I was disappointed not to see references to the works of Bourgeois and Wildavsky in the area. I think such a chapter would have highlighted the contributions which many of the Chapters in this book seek to make.

I recommend this book to academics on the basis that it provides a broad-based introduction to a much under-researched topic. As firms are challenged to compete in "hypercompetitive" markets the quality of both strategic thinking and strategy implementation become critical. Further research into the quality of strategy implementation is called for and this book would suitably inform such research. I recommend the book to practitioners because of the direct style of the writing, the quality of the contributions made and the insights generated by the contributors. The book provides rich material to inform the practitioner about the range of individual, group and organisational challenges posed in considering implementation issues.

Competitiveness and the Value of Intangible Assets

Editors: Pierre Buigues, Alexis Jacquemin, and Jean-Francois Marchipont, Edward Elgar Publishing Limited, UK 2000.

Reviewed by Bakr Alserhan, University College Dublin.

This book documents the proceedings of the conference on "intangible assets and the competitiveness of the European community" held in the catholic university, Louvian, April 1999. It also attempts to present some policy recommendations from the proceeding discussions.

It is divided into three parts, each part is made of a number of papers that deal with a certain dimension of the relationship between the so-called "intangible assets" and competitiveness. It is composed of 12 papers and case studies in addition to three chapters for discus-

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