

Book summary “Strategic Intelligence in Future Perspectives 2.0” - July 2018

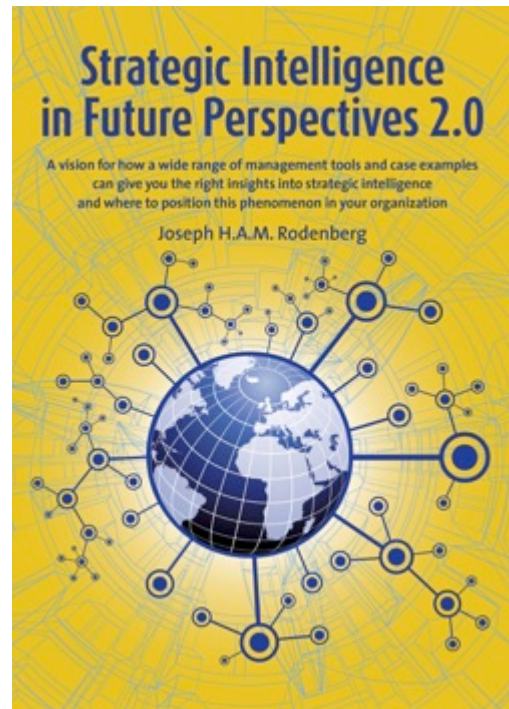
It is always surprising to see that not that many companies are active in competitive and strategic intelligence. Management in these companies still believe that it is sufficient to have departments of marketing, market research, marketing services, market insights, customer insights and more. This is so naïve. Problem is that these departments never make it into the boardroom where the key decisions are made.

With strategic intelligence at its core, company leaders get intelligence about potential strategic risks, about business models that no longer seem to work or that have not adapted to changed market dynamics, about potential opportunities for future success, on surprises by grey swans and neglected gray rhinos. In strategic intelligence we are always amazed why large companies are so blind to see the new opportunities. We are amazed why so many large companies behave like ‘lame ducks’ when facing new disruptions, new business models, new competitors and why there are unable to react more rapidly? In essence, not much has changed within the business world, and most are still guided by inward-looking control mechanisms, which still is a key problem in the majority of companies.

In ‘Strategic Intelligence in Future perspectives 2.0’, author Joseph H.A.M. Rodenberg describes the outward-looking opportunity-mechanisms. These are the unique methodologies and techniques which enable management to align with the external business environment to get in control of the dynamics of change that our companies face. Examples are ‘strategy under uncertainty’, ‘strategy as active waiting’, ‘where-to-play and how-to-win’, ‘strategic war mapping’, ‘grey swan analysis’, ‘gray rhino analysis’, ‘technology-play-mapping’, ‘pre-mortem analysis’, company radar rooms and many more.

The author describes the pre-condition for long-term company survival by linking strategic intelligence with strategic management. He frequently asks the question: “who in the end is accountable?” Joseph Rodenberg introduces as the ultimate solution the ‘Tenth Man or Woman’, who leads the professional MI7, SEAL, SWAT, or RRT (Rapid Response Team) teams. These teams challenge the assumptions, lead with questions, deliver the necessary countervailing power and tell management the ‘brutal’ truth. Who else feels accountable? Ask yourself an honest question: how many of these outward-looking opportunity mechanisms do we ourselves use in our companies? Or do we continue to rely on SWOT-analyses and extrapolation?

The problem with most people is that they do not believe something can happen until it already has. This is not due to stupidity or weakness, however, it is simple human nature. If nine of us look at the same information and arrive at the same conclusion, it is the duty of the Tenth Man or Woman to disagree. No matter how improbable it may seem, the Tenth Man or Woman starts digging on the assumption that the other nine may be wrong. The Tenth man or Woman delivers a mix of insights, foresight and analysis, is able to develop strategies and is a strategic thinker. He or she and his/her intelligence team creates the core basis where decisions are made based on evidence rather than on



intuition. The challenge is to think differently from everybody else, because only this leads to future success.

The Tenth Man or Woman core activities are:

- Analysis of the competitive landscapes beyond the traditional sectors of industry, outward-in and looking 1-3 years ahead of the game
- Setting the strategy framework: where-to-play and how-to-win
- Unleashing collective knowledge, the insights and foresight of key people. Executing Quarterly Strategy Reviews
- Anticipating potential as well as existential risks
- Establishing a new place to share, to communicate and set the courses of action: the CRR, Company Radar Room

The strategic intelligence team is perfectly able to support top management by building forward-looking strategies. Boards still spend too much time looking in the rearview mirror, while they should be looking further out than everybody else in the company. Too often we see in the media that CEOs are the last ones to see change coming. What is needed is to encourage a forward-looking mindset of the board of management.

Joseph H.A.M. Rodenberg critically describes in his book 95 examples/cases how things can be improved in our companies. These wide variety of examples are listed at the pages 28 – 30 and concern strategic crises, black swans and grey swans, key predictive indicators, outthinking competition, analysis, disruption, postdictors and predictors, false decision making, banks, competing in arenas and not in sectors of industry, comfort zones, the corpocracy of companies, the ventriloquists of the elite, antifragility, biases, contextual intelligence, contrarians, strategic choices, black holes at the balance sheets of banks, the agile company, trust never returns, quantitative easing by Fed and ECB, ordinary versus dynamic capabilities, big boys big ego's and strategic intelligence, VUCA world, predictive indicators, ignorance of small changes, analysis-based decisions, forward-looking courses of action, EU and Silicon Wadi, believing the truth, early warning, Brexit, the mess in the financial world, failures in M&A, establishing special intelligence teams, the tenth man or woman, jobs-to-be-done, the future consequences of income inequality, the invisible man, grey swan analysis, the intellectual yet idiot, geopolitical tensions, the strategic five, the blue-ribbon list, credibility and reliability of information, company mortality rates, governments are corrupt to the bone, failures in strategic planning, telling management what they like to hear, exogenous factors drive growth, critical questions and challenging the assumptions, Macron and the EU, crucial questions in business today, end of company-life-cycles at multinationals, defense and offense data, six reasons why managers have it often wrong, testing your company strategy, lessons on leadership, black swans, grey swans, gray rhinos, hub firms, managing the present versus the future, five drivers of competitive readiness, inward-looking versus outward-look mechanisms and more.

A strategic intelligence team is perfectly able to support top management by building forward-looking strategies. What is needed is to encourage a forward-looking mindset of the board of management. Question is if these boards have the guts to do this. The author describes four ways how to do this.

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