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First Page of Summary...

Strategic Planning Made Simple—10 Easy Steps

Over the years I have read many books written on the subject of strategic planning, with Michael Porter revered as one of the greatest thought leaders of our time. Utilizing the same underlying foundation, many lesser known authors have further defined the strategic planning process into countless models and theories covering hundreds of pages. Bound within the lengthy manuscript are numerous pages of research data and antidotal stories obtained during consulting assignments with some of the top iconic companies of the last century, providing additional illustration and validation of their strategy planning models.

With such an abundance of resources available and the acknowledged importance of the strategic planning process, one would assume that most business leaders incorporate strategic planning into their yearly activities. An assumption but not necessarily a reality; during my 20 years of consulting with small and mid-sized business, I have seen very few employ even an informal strategic planning process. Given the excessive number of excellent strategy books available, why are the small to mid-sized companies not utilizing this important tool? It is my belief that it is due to the complexity of even the simplest book written on the subject and the time constraints of the busy executive to absorb the detailed information.

Entrepreneurs are juggling an inordinate amount of activities. Most business leaders are consumed during the day with operations and in the evening with follow-up activities and reading industry related literature. Just scanning the first chapter of many of the strategy books can be overwhelming, causing the reader to set the book aside for a later date when they have more time to absorb its contents. A date that rarely ever arrives, especially given the amount of other pending issues that are vying for attention. In this lies a great loss, for the strategic planning process is a crucial component to a company's long-term success.

This *Simply Put* summary does not strive to map the entire process in full detail or provide pages of case studies and other supporting data. Rather it is written from the perspective that a simplified action-oriented approach, implemented, even if lacking depth and detail, is more beneficial to the business leader than the most elaborate comprehensive manuscript sitting on a bookshelf, unused. This is not to say that this summary is void of the fundamentals. More accurately it is condensed, extracting from the elaborate models only those elements that are absolutely fundamental to the process. Furthermore the discussion and approach is simplified, so that it can be read today and implemented tomorrow. Lastly, and perhaps more importantly, it has been derived from years of facilitating strategic planning session for the small to mid-sized companies and contains original thought-processes.