

Strategic Planning in Small Businesses:

Process and Content Realities

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Abstract

Research on small firm planning has established that small firms do plan and has generally indicated that planning has value. However, most strategic plan content research focuses on the development of a written plan; little seems to be known about the planning processes of small firm owners and their management teams. This study examines what activities are included in the planning process and various aspects of the plan itself.

Introduction

Numerous studies concerning strategic planning in small firms have been published since the extensive review of the literature by Robinson and Pearce (1984). Prior to that date, research found planning levels in small firms to be “anemic” (Sexton and van Auken, 1982), a situation Curtis (1983) attributed to barriers such as time pressures, lack of knowledge about the true nature of the business and the environment, and insecurity and low self-confidence on the part of the owner. Robinson and Pearce (1984) identified similar reasons for the lack of strategic planning within these firms: time scarcity, lack of knowledge, lack of expertise, and lack of trust and openness.

Robinson and Pearce (1984) suggested four thrusts for future researchers of small business to pursue. These four thrusts were: (1) to empirically confirm the presence or absence of strategic planning practices; (2) to provide empirical evidence of the value of strategic planning; (3) to examine the appropriateness of specific features of the planning process; and (4) to empirically examine the content of the strategies of small firms. Since that time numerous studies have been published following those prescriptions. However, it appears that the majority of research has focused on the first two issues.

Literature Review

Several researchers have demonstrated Robinson and Pearce's first concern, the prevalence of planning. For example, Lyles, Baird, Orris, and Kuratko (1993) found that 71 out of 188 small firm owners had planning processes that included a written plan for at least three years into the future. In their study, Naffziger and Kuratko (1991) found that 96 out of 115 small business owners formally set aside time to plan and, as part of the planning process, these owners set goals in areas such as sales and sales growth, profit, and internal operating efficiency. Other studies, such as Ibrahim (1993) and Watts and Ormsby (1990), have shown the existence of planning as they investigated its relation with performance. Since, the Robinson and Pearce

(1984) review it appears that most researchers assume that small firm owners plan; researchers seem to have moved on to investigating others areas of the subject.

The jury seems to be mixed regarding the value of strategic planning, Pearce and Robinson's (1984) second issue. Underlying many studies is an apparent belief that while it may be difficult to establish a strong empirical connection between strategic planning and firm performance, the planning process must have value. Ibrahim (1993) did find an empirical relation between strategic types and firm performance using Porter's (1980) generic strategy typology of niche, differentiation, and low cost producer, and the Miles and Snow (1978) types of defender, prospector, and analyzer. His results indicated that the niche strategy was "by far the most effective strategy for small business" (1993: 20). Differentiation strategies also appeared to be quite effective, supporting an earlier study by Cooper, Gary, and Woo (1986) that found differentiation was an effective strategy for small firms, and Chaganti (1987) who found differentiation was more effective for small firms during industry decline.

Supporting earlier findings of Robinson, Salem, Logan, and Pearce (1986), Watts and Ormsby's (1990) study of the value of formal strategic and operational planning on firm performance concluded that firms could no longer be advised to simply pursue informal planning with some outsider input and expect it to make a significant difference. They found that strategic planning had the greater impact of the two but that together, they advanced performance even further. Strategic planning was defined to include such activities as identifying a firm's strategic position, its relevant opportunities and threats, its important resources and skills, and most importantly, the strategic issues it must address.

Results of several studies (e.g., Robinson and Pearce, 1984; Lyles et al., 1993; Orpen, 1985) strongly suggest that simply engaging in a formal planning process seems to be beneficial as it leads to a better understanding of the business. Lyles et al. (1993) found strategic planning led to the development of a wider range of strategic alternatives that they hypothesized would lead to better firm performance. In the final analysis, however, Schwenk and Shrader concluded from a meta-analysis of 14 studies that they could "provide straightforward support for the general assertion that strategic planning does have a significant positive association with performance across studies" (1993: 60).

Most recent research into the process of strategic planning in small firms seems to deal in generalities, using some measure of "formality" to define the strategic planning process. Bracker and Pearson (1985) identified eight formal planning components, such as objective setting, environmental and SWOT analyses, and financial projections, to place firms on a continuum of "planning sophistication". Robinson and Pearce (1983) measured planning sophistication by looking at whether firms had three year-plus plans; written plans that included objectives, strategies, and resource needs; and written plans that contained control measures and external environmental information. Naffziger and Kuratko (1991) delved more deeply into the actual planning process to determine the amount of time managers spent on plan development, whether goals were set and in what areas, and what kind of activities were included in the planning process such as environmental scanning and the level of planning activity in small firms. Lyles et al. (1993) used a variant of the Pearce and Robinson definition to measure formality, and Olson and Bokor (1995) simply looked at whether a plan existed, whether a partial plan had been developed, or whether a complete formal plan had been devised.

While several studies have investigated the level of formality of the strategic planning process in small firms since the review by Robinson and Pearce (1984), little research exists on the final thrust, the actual content of the strategies. Olson and Bokor (1995) did examine the effect of the interaction between strategy content and process, though they cited no literature dealing specifically with the content of small firm strategies, and Kotey and Meredith (1997) found a relationship between owner personal values and strategic choices. Other researchers have investigated a variety of additional issues concerning small business planning, such as owner receptivity to the use of planning tools (Pelham and Clayson, 1988), models of strategic choice (Variyam and Kraybill, 1993), and the effect of perceived environmental uncertainty on planning (Matthews and Scott, 1995; Shrader, Mulford, and Blackburn, 1989).

It appears that research needs to continue along Robinson and Pearce's (1984) proposed thrusts three (the strategic planning process) and four (strategic plan content). With that in mind, this study investigated the process of strategic planning beyond the mere question of the presence, value, or formality of the process. Specifically, this study sought to provide insight on the following questions: (1) What do small firm owners do (or claim they do) during the strategic planning process? (2) Who is involved in the planning process beyond the owner? (3) What tools do planners use when planning? (4) Do they establish a formal mission or vision for their businesses? (5) What goals do they set? And, (6) Where do they plan?

The remainder of this paper is organized as follows. First, the methodology used is described, followed by the results of the data analysis. Next is a discussion of the findings. Finally, limitations of this study are discussed, along with conclusions and implications for future research.

Method

Sample and Data Collection Procedures

The sample consisted of 71 small firm owners and managers in the Midwest U.S. Small firms were defined as having fewer than 500 employees. Respondents were contacted via telephone and requested to participate in an ongoing university effort to study small businesses, their owners, and the strategic planning processes used in their companies. Contacts were informed that participation was voluntary and all responses would be kept confidential; few refused to participate in the study. Graduate research assistants were used to personally deliver surveys to participants and ensure their completion. A cover letter restating the purpose of the study and complete confidentiality was attached. The research assistants collected business cards from participants so that any necessary follow-up information could be collected and matched to the original surveys. This format has been utilized in similar studies of small firms (e.g., Hornsby and Kuratko, 1990; McEvoy, 1984).

Instrumentation

Data were gathered by means of a 44-item questionnaire. Ten items investigated the demographic characteristics of the respondents and their firms. Thirty-four items focused on the strategic planning process used in the respondents' respective firms, the content of the strategic plan, and methods used to implement the plan. The latter group of questions was developed based on the literature review of Pearce and Robinson (1984). The items relating to process were used to investigate what actually constituted the strategic planning process in the sample firms, such as which managers were involved, how much time it consumed, how the plan was communicated to other employees, where it was developed, and whether meetings were used. The content items investigated what the plan consisted of once completed, such as a mission, goals, and outcome measures to monitor progress. The implementation items investigated the use of performance evaluation measures and strategy-based reward systems.

When responding, subjects either indicated whether a survey item pertained to their firm's planning process, such as whether goals were established as part of strategic planning, or the extent to which certain activities were included in their planning. Questions of the latter nature used a seven-point Likert scale with a response of 1 indicating that an item was included "not at all" in their planning process, 4 indicating "some but not a lot," and 7 indicating that an item was included "a great deal."

Results

Frequency analysis was used to examine the sample demographics to determine whether the sample of small firms included in the study were representative of the greater population. Frequency analysis was also used to investigate the research questions at hand, namely the nature and the use of the strategic planning process in smaller firms.

Sample Demographics

The demographic profile of the final sample of 71 firms is presented in Table 1. Fifty-two respondents (77.6%) were the owners of their firm, and 39 (56.5%) were over 45 years old. Sixty-two (92.5%) were male, and 48 (71.0%) possessed college degrees or higher. Only one (1.4%) firm had annual sales under \$1,000,000, with the median between \$5 million and \$10 million. Thirty-two (45.1%) firms employed 50 or fewer employees, and the largest firm in the sample had approximately 500 employees. Thirty-five (49.3%) firms had been in business for over 20 years.

Table 1
Sample Demographics

Respondent Title:	Owners	77.6%
	Other managers	22.4
Gender:	Male	92.5%
	Female	7.5
Age:	35 and under	12.9%
	36-45	27.6
	46-55	33.3
	56 and over	23.2
College Graduate:	Yes	71.0%
	No	29.0
Annual Sales:	less than \$500,000	1.4%
	\$500,001 - \$1,000,000	0.0
	\$1,000,001 - \$5,000,000	28.6
	\$5,000,001 - \$10,000,000	20.6
	\$10,000,001 and higher	52.4
Number of Employees:	fewer than 20	12.7%
	20 to 50	32.4
	51 to 100	15.5
	more than 100	39.4
Years in Business:	5 years or less	14.1%
	6 to 10 years	12.7
	11 to 20 years	23.9
	21 years or more	49.3

The Strategic Planning Process

Table 2 presents statistics relating to strategic planning process (SPP) items. As expected, the CEO was the most frequently mentioned officer involved in strategic planning (n= 51, 71.8%). In firms where a second individual served as president, 28 (39.4%) identified that individual as also being involved. On the continuum measuring the extent of involvement of lower level managers in the SPP, where a score of seven indicated a great deal of involvement, the mean response was 3.72 with 46 (64.8%) reporting the mid-point of the scale (4) or less. Only seven (9.9%) indicated their firms used outside consultants during strategic planning. Fifty respondents (71.4%) reported that most planning activity takes place at their formal place of business, 16 (22.5%) reported planning was done primarily off-site, and four (5.7%) reported planning activities were done in both types of location.

Table 2
Strategic Planning Process Variables

Officer Involvement	Chief executive officer	71.8%
	President	39.4
	Chief financial officer	39.4
	Sales manager	33.8
	General manager	32.4
	Production/operations mgr.	32.4
	Chief operations manger	26.8
	Outside consultants	9.9
Place of Planning:	At the office	71.4%
	Off-site	22.5
Personal Time /Month:	10 hours or less	48.5%
	11 to 25 hours	22.1
	26 hours or more	29.4
Total Time /Month:	10 hours or less	17.1%
	11 to 25 hours	17.1
	26 hours or more	65.7
Plans Shared With:	Supervisory managers	70.4%
	Middle-level managers	67.6
	Hourly employees	46.5
Communication Methods:	Meetings	94.4%
	Written memos	45.1
	Formal reports	26.8
Formalized by Meetings:	3 or less	31.0%
	4	21.1
	5 or more	47.9
More Formal vs. 5 Years Ago:	3 or less	24.3%
	4	12.9
	5 or more	62.9
Cause of More Formal:	Business has grown	32.7%
	More competitive market	30.9
	Good employee training	14.5
	More accessible info	12.7
	More info available	9.1
Type of Info Gathered:	New product developments	78.9%
	Competitor profiles	76.1
	Technological advances	73.2
	Customer demographics	69.0
	Economic predictions	64.8
How Info is Gathered:	Brainstorming	88.7%
	From customers	87.3
	Watching competitors	78.9
	Trade journals	70.4
	Trade meetings	56.3
	From suppliers	47.9
	Internal MIS data	45.1
	Government reports	21.1
How Info is Stored:	On computers	54.9%
	By individuals in firm	49.3
	No formal method	31.0
	In manual retrieval systems	26.8

As expected, the time committed to the SPP varied among firms. Thirty-three (48.5%) respondents said they personally spent 10 or fewer hours per month in strategic planning, 15 (22.1%) said between 11 and 25 hours, and 18 (29.4%) said they spent more than 25 hours. Regarding the total time commitment of all organizational members involved in strategic planning each month, 12 (17.1%) estimated 10 or fewer hours, 12 (17.1%) indicated 11 to 25 hours, and 46 (65.7%) respondents indicated total time commitment to be more than 25 hours.

While the active involvement in strategic planning appeared to be mostly limited to upper-level managers, the strategic plans were communicated to lower level employees using a variety of methods. Forty-eight (67.6%) respondents reported that their respective firm's strategic plan was shared with middle-level managers, 50 (70.4%) with supervisors, and 33 (46.5%) with hourly employees. Differing methods were used to inform employees of the plan; 67 (94.4%) used meetings, 32 (45.1%) used written memos, and 19 (26.8%) used formal reports.

Using the seven-point Likert scale to indicate the degree that the SPP was formalized through the use of meetings in their firms, 37 (52.1%) indicated four or less, and 34 (47.9%) responded four or more, on the upper half of the continuum. Using the same response scale, respondents indicated the degree that strategic planning had become more formalized in their firms over the last five years. Responses of four or less from 26 (37.1%) firms suggested that the process has not become more formalized and responses of more than four from 45 (62.9%) respondents indicated that the SPP had become more formalized in their firms. Of the 45 firms that indicated planning had become more formal, 18 (32.7%) attributed it to the fact that their businesses had grown, 17 (30.9%) to a more competitive marketplace, eight (14.5%) to improved employee training, seven (12.7%) to more readily accessible information, and five (9.1%) to increased availability of information.

To facilitate the planning and decision-making process, several types of information were gathered. Fifty-six (78.9%) respondents reported that information was gathered on new product developments, 54 (76.1%) compiled information on competitor profiles, 52 (73.2%) on technical advances, 49 (69%) on customer demographics, and 46 (64.8%) on economic predictions. This information was gathered from a variety of sources; 63 (88.7%) used internal brainstorming, 62 (87.3%) used information from customers, 56 (78.9%) watched competitors, 50 (70.4%) read trade journals, and 40 (56.3%) attended trade meetings to gather information. Once collected, the information was stored within organizations in a variety of ways. Thirty-nine (54.9%) firms used computers, individuals in 35 (49.3%) firms were personally responsible, 19 (26.8%) used manual retrieval systems other than computers, and 22 (31.0%) used no formally defined method to store information related to strategic planning.

Strategic Content

Two survey items focused on mission statements. Thirty-eight (53.5) respondents indicated their firm has a "written mission/vision statement", while 33 (46.5%) indicated their firm does not. Individual items also inquired about the extent to which the strategic plan was driven by the mission statement. On the seven-point scale, 28 (44.4%) responded three or less,

seven (11.1%) indicated a four, "some but not a lot," and 28 (44.5%) indicated five or higher, the mission statement directly affected strategic planning in their firms. Table three shows statistics related to strategic content variables.

Table 3
Strategic Content Variables

Mission Statement (MS):	Have formal written MS	53.5%
	No formal written MS	46.5
MS drives plan:	3 or less	44.5%
	4	11.1
	5 or more	44.5
Goals drive plan:	3 or less	9.9%
	4	15.5
	5 or more	64.7
Types of Goals Established:	Sales	85.9%
	Profit	74.6
	Productivity	73.2
	Customer satisfaction	67.6
	Quality	54.9
	Market share	46.5
	Product development	39.4
	Return on investment	32.4
	Return on equity	26.8
How Goals Are Established:	Management team decision	78.9%
	CEO decision	50.7
	Supervisor/subordinate decision	28.2
	No formal goals established	2.8
Methods Used to Monitor Progress:	Goal achievement	67.6%
	Compare this year to last	49.3
	No formal method	1.4
Frequency of Monitoring:	Check several times a year	49.3%
	Annual checkup	7.0

Regarding the role that goals play, respondents were asked, "To what extent is the strategic plan goal-driven?" Sixty-four (90.1%) respondents indicated the midpoint of the seven-point response continuum or higher, and seven (9.9%) indicated less than "some but not a lot." Given several categories to choose from, the respondents were asked how organizational goals were established. Fifty-six (78.9%) indicated their respective top management team established organizational goals and in 36 (50.7%) firms, the CEO and/or President established goals. Sales levels (85.9%), profit (74.6%), productivity (73.2%), and Customer satisfaction (67.6%) were the most commonly established goals according to the sample while financial goals such as return on investment and return on equity (32.4% and 26.8% respectively) were the least commonly identified goals.

Implementing the Strategic Plan

The primary concern of this study in the area of implementation dealt with two issues. One was the motivation of organizational members to carry out the strategic plan, and the second with how progress toward goal achievement was monitored and measured. Respondents were asked the extent to which the reward system was used "to secure employee commitment toward carrying out the plan and accomplishing its goals." Fifty-four (77.1%) respondents indicated the mid-point or higher, and 16 (22.9%) indicated less than that. Bonuses were used by 61 (85.9%) of the firms, 46 (64.8%) used raises, and 33 (46.5%) said profit sharing was a commonly used reward, though others were used fairly often also. Table 4 presents statistics related to implementation issues.

Remembering that many owners indicated establishing a variety of goals, it is important to understand the process by which goal accomplishment is monitored. Many organizations apparently monitor goal accomplishment on a fairly informally basis. Only 48 (67.6%) indicated there was a "prescribed method for measuring progress toward strategic goal accomplishment"; 35 (49.3%) compared the current year's performance against performance in previous years. Thirty-five (49.3%) used mid-year reviews to monitor goal achievement and five (7.0%) conducted annual reviews.

Table 4
Implementation Variables

Rewards Used for Commitment:	3 or less	22.9%
	4	22.9
	5 or more	54.2
Types of Rewards Used:	Bonuses	85.9%
	Raises	64.8
	Profit sharing	46.5
	Promotions	40.8
	Public recognition	38.0
	Stock options	11.3
	Stock allocations	1.4
Goal Accomplishment:	Monitor goals	67.6%
	Use historical performance data	49.3
	Review annually	7.0
	Review more than annually	49.3
Outcome Measures of Plan Success	Sales increases	83.3%
	Profit increases	76.0
	Customer satisfaction	67.6
	Change in productivity	59.2
	Service/quality improvements	56.3
	Change in market share	40.8
	Change in ROI	32.4
Communication Used for Feedback:	Regularly scheduled meetings	78.9%
	Memos	38.0
	Internal MIS system	36.6
	Internal computer network	33.8
	Performance results posted	33.8
	Little exists	9.9
Frequency of Monitoring Success:	Monthly or more	52.1%
	Semi-annually or more	29.6
	Annually	14.1

Firms used several outcome measures to determine that their plans were successfully implemented. Fifty-nine (83.3%) indicated that sales increases was the most commonly used

measure, 54 (76.0%) use profit increases, and 48 (67.6%) indicated customer satisfaction. Changes in productivity (n=42, 59.2%) and service/quality improvements (n=40, 56.3%) were also frequently mentioned. The results of the monitoring process are communicated to employees in a variety of methods. Fifty-six (78.9%) firms used regularly scheduled meetings, 27 (38.0%) used memos to those involved, 26 (36.6%) used their MIS system, and 24 (33.8%) used their internal computer network. Finally, this sample appears to monitor progress using differing time frames. Thirty-seven (52.1%) evaluate progress monthly or more frequently, 21 (29.6%) check at least twice a year, and 10 (14.1%) appraise results annually.

Since the strategic planning and management process has generally been characterized as time consuming it was important to determine whether respondents are satisfied with the SPP their firms use and the outcomes. Two items addressed these separate but related issues. First, respondents were asked to what extent they were satisfied with the SPP in their firms. Fifty-five (77.5%) indicated they were satisfied with the process at the midpoint or higher of the 7-point scale, and 16 (22.5%) indicated they were less satisfied than that. Similar results were found for the second question, "How satisfied are you with the results of your strategic planning efforts?" Fifty-five (78.9%) were satisfied with the results at the midpoint or higher, and 15 (21.1%) were less satisfied. The correlation between the level of satisfaction with the process and satisfaction with the results was highly significant ($r = .858, p < .000$).

Discussion

This study attempted to add insight to strategic planning processes in small firms by following research thrusts suggested by Robinson and Pearce (1984). Those authors suggested a need to demonstrate the existence of planning in smaller firms, the value of that planning, the need to understand the planning process used by small firm owners, and to investigate strategic plan content. The results of this study clearly demonstrate the prevalence of strategic planning among firms in the sample. This supports work by Naffziger and Kuratko (1991), Lyles et al. (1993), and others, that the planning situation in today's smaller firms may no longer be as anemic as characterized by Sexton and van Auken (1982). While the present research does not examine the financial value of the planning done by owners or managers in the sample, it does indicate that the majority is generally satisfied with the results of their strategic planning efforts and the process by which they plan. In contrast to previous research on small business strategic planning, this study did not examine the nature of the strategic plans that were developed (i.e., Is the focus of the strategy market development or becoming a lower cost producer?). Since the strategic planning and management process has generally been characterized as time consuming and the results suggest that many respondents and their firms invested a fair amount of time on it, it is important to learn that members of this sample are satisfied with their firm's strategic management process and its results determine whether they are satisfied with the strategic management process used in their firms.

This survey did look deeper into the last two areas suggested by Robinson and Pearce (1984). Several conclusions can be drawn about the planning activities of the sample. First, while the top organizational official (generally the CEO, though some firms, especially partnerships and sole proprietorships, may not use that term) is very active, others, mainly upper

level officers, are also involved in the development of the plan. Plans are generally communicated to lower level managers, but less than half the respondents indicated communicating plans to non-supervisory workers. Meetings are the most common method of communicating the plan.

This group indicated spending a fair amount of time per month in the strategic planning process, and many reported total other employees dedicate time to the process as well. Information firms used in strategic planning was gathered from a wide variety of sources, such as trade journals, customers, and trade meetings. The most frequently reported type of information that was gathered were competitor profiles, new product developments, technological advances, customer demographics, and economic predictions. Approximately three-fourths of the respondents indicated that the majority of their firms' strategic planning is done on-site, at work.

As far as the content of the strategies developed, only about half of the firms reported having a formal written mission statement, and the mission is only moderately used to drive the strategic plan. No items addressed whether there may be an unwritten or "understood" mission or vision statement. Goals are very important to this group. It was not uncommon to see many levels of managerial personnel involved in the goal-setting process, not just the CEO. Goals were established in a wide variety of areas, most commonly for levels of sales, productivity, profit, and customer satisfaction. These goals were important in driving the strategic plan according to a large number of the respondents.

Finally, as far as implementation matters are concerned, most organizations seem to do some follow-up evaluation on the level of goal achievement, though it seems as though there is considerable room for improvement on this issue. Outcome measures such as service and quality improvement, changes in productivity, and market share are used by fifty percent or more of the sample firms to determine plan success. The reward system, mainly in the form of raises and bonuses, was commonly used to secure employee commitment to the plan. Overall, the owners seemed fairly satisfied with their strategic planning process and the results it has brought.

Conclusions

The business owners who participated in this study seem to have progressed considerably since Sexton and van Auken labeled small firm strategic planning activities anemic. Executives reported spending a considerable amount of time and involving other employees in the strategic planning process. Strategic management is becoming more formalized in these companies because of the increased complexity of their competitive environment and other reasons as well. Many of these organizations are mission- and goal-driven and rewards are widely used to motivate goal accomplishment.

There are some limitations inherent in the present study and suggestions for future research, which can be made. The sample size is not large but provides valuable insights when considered an exploratory study. In addition, the sample was from a particular geographic region in the U.S., which limits generalizability to small business in other parts of the country. The self-report data are subject to self-report bias, exaggeration (or underestimation), and simple

inaccuracy. The generalizability could be enhanced if the sample size were larger and included representative data from several industries.

Future research should take care to clearly define the term "strategic planning" in order to distinguish it from operational or other kinds of planning in organizations, though at the small firm-level perhaps these terms become inextricably entwined. Longitudinal research would give further insight into the strategic planning process of these firms, something no research appears to have done to date. The current, more behavioral line of research should also examine outcomes of other more outcome-focused research, such as Lyles et al., has done. In other words, comprehensive future research should examine the outcomes of strategic planning in the form of the development of a written strategic plan or similar product as well as financial success and process variables.

Finally future research should examine individual and firm differences to determine whether they have any influence on engaging in strategic management. Do younger owners or owners with higher levels of education plan more? Are they more satisfied with their results? Conversely, do older, more established owners and firms engage in planning more? Have they profited from time and been able to develop more elaborate and perhaps successful strategic planning techniques? These and similar issues are worthy of investigation.

In the increasingly fast paced, competitive world of business, firms must constantly seek tools that can give them the competitive edge in the marketplace. Strategic planning gives managers an opportunity to thoroughly examine their firms' internal and external environments in order to gain a clearer understanding of each and the competitive factors which influence success and failure. The process is well within the grasp of entrepreneurs and owners and as a competitive tool, though not a panacea, it should be incorporated into the routine of the firm.

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