



Business Book Review Section  
By Dan Beaulieu

The Art of the Strategist  
10 Essential Principles for Leading Your Company to Victory  
By: William A. Cohen

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I don't know how many books on strategy there are, but I have to say that there not enough and there are certainly not enough good ones. This is why The Art of the Strategist, by retired Major General William A. Cohen is such a welcomed addition to the genre; there are not many good ones. This book is a standout in a sea of mediocrity. Drawing from his forty plus year military career as well as his time as a management consultant that author takes us through a complete step-by step journey of developing our organizations search for a an effective strategy.

Just to highlight a couple of particularly hot spots in the book: the chapter called Seize the Initiative and Keep it for example is worth the twenty five bucks you'll pay for this one. In this chapter the author attacks what he (and the rest of us) call analysis paralysis by describing a personal story of his work with a major university where a committee tasked with finding out why enrollment was in steady decline and fixing the problem had been meeting for years, doing a survey every year and not moving forward until they had "the perfect plan". How many of us have come across this same kind of dilemma in our organizations? Cohen not only urges us to avoid this problem but he gives us some very good real life examples of companies that did the opposite, companies who proceeded boldly towards the future and succeeded brilliantly.

Prepare Multiple, Simultaneous Alternatives is another piece of critical advice discussed here. In short don't put all your eggs in one basket. Have a fallback position or two, or three. As the author points out,

things rarely go as planned, your competitors will try to thwart your efforts, your main plan may not work as well as planned, and obstacles will certainly fall in your way as you proceed, that's why it is important to pursue several plans at once, making sure that all of them will lead you to successfully meet your objectives.

Making his points from real life examples, using anecdotes from companies such as Wal-Mart, Harley Davison and Costco, Cohen shows us how to take our company forward with the élan and confidence of a great general taking his troops into battle.

At the end of the day the best way to get your point across to the reader is to write well, to be informative, interesting and entertaining and this book is all of those things. Don't let the title fool you...don't let the author's credentials throw you, this is not some dry recount of military battles and tactics, but rather a well paced, well diversified business book about strategic direction for all organizations from IBM to ICS, from non- profits to Microsoft, this book purveys tremendous value to all.

Find it, buy it, read it, study it, think about it and pass it along to your folks and you can quit looking for a good book on strategy for a long while.

Stonewood Corporate Center  
W175N11117 Suite 202  
Stonewood Drive  
Germantown, WI 53022

Dan Beaulieu, CME, CSE  
Don Dawson

Tel: 262.250.9653  
Fax: 262.250.0562  
e-mail: [dbmpcb@aol.com](mailto:dbmpcb@aol.com)  
[www.dbmpcb.com](http://www.dbmpcb.com)