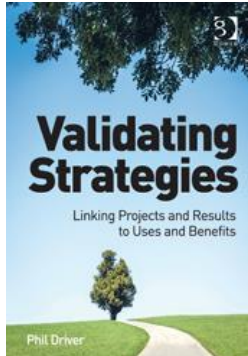

PM WORLD BOOK REVIEW



Book Title: ***Validating Strategies, Linking Projects and Results to Uses and Benefits***

Author: **Phil Driver**

Publisher: **Gower (UK)**

List Price: £70.00

Format: Hard cover; 273 pages

Publication Date: 2014

ISBN: 978-1-4724-2781-6

Reviewer: **Johnny Gan**

Review Date: July, 2014

Introduction to the Book

A strategy means a carefully devised plan of action to achieve a goal, or the art of developing or carrying out such a plan. Most companies have their business strategies, which provide the big picture that shows how all the individual activities are coordinated to achieve a desired end result. Whatever you do in your business, you have a strategy.

Strategy is so important because it is the source of long term profits; but most organizations continue to struggle with their strategies due to lack of knowledge on how to put together a formal strategic plan or how to hold effective strategy workshops.

Phil Driver, the author tries to bring you an effective strategy development and implementation system in this book.

Snowden and Boone segmented the world of strategic management into four broad categories:

- Simple (know knows);
- Complicated (unknown knows);
- Complex (unknown unknowns);
- Chaotic (unknowable);

(A Leaders' Framework for Decision-making, Harvard Business Review, Nov 2007)

If you want a strategy that can be validated and implemented, then it must be a simple one, since it is physically impossible to implement unknowns. So Phil applied OpenStrategies methodology in this book, which is going to help an organization to

develop a simple yet powerful strategy system. Beyond that, the book also guides the organization to validate and implement strategies.

Phil Driver is founder and CEO of Open Strategies Ltd. His background in science and engineering management led to his involvement in large-scale industry-sector strategies.

Overview of Book's Structure

This book uses a system called Open Strategies to diagnose traditional strategy statements and convincingly demonstrate their effectiveness or ineffectiveness. It then shows how to create and validate effective strategies, especially in large-scale multi-stakeholder environments.

The whole book includes 3 parts:

- ❖ Part 0 Introduction
 - 1 Introduction
 - 2 Projects, results, Uses and Benefits (PRUB) and OpenStrategies

- ❖ Part I Why Most Strategies Fail To Have Any Impact
 3. Strategy Language (Taxonomy)
 4. Strategy Structure (Syntax) and Meaning (Semantics)
 5. Working with Stakeholders

- ❖ Part II Creating and Validating Strategies
 6. PRUB-Validate
 7. Creating and Integrating SubStrategies into OpenStrategies
 8. Summary of Projects, Results, Uses and Benefits Sequence and OpenStrategies

Additional, the book has two practical appendixes:

Appendix 1 contains a glossary of the rigorously defined OpenStrategies terminology.

Appendix 2 summarizes the specifications for an ideal Integrated Strategic Information Management System.

Especially, in appendix 2, it provides a checklist of requirements for an integrated strategic information management system, very impressive.

Highlights: What's New in this Book?

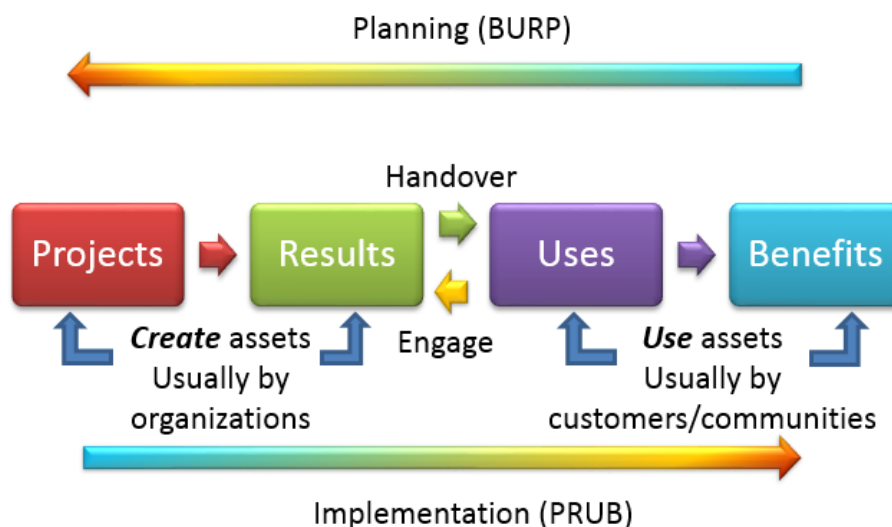
It's the first time I heard about OpenStrategies, although the author claimed the Open Strategies system has evolved through more than a decade of intense engagement with many public and private sector organizations. I think it's still kind of "new" to most readers.

The model at the heart of this book is Organizations run **P**rojects that produce **R**esults and enable people to **U**se them to create **B**enefits (**PRUB**). It offers an intuitive approach that links collaborative strategic planning and validation to project and program management so as to create, validate and implement strategies.

An OpenStrategy is a strategy that has been translated into PRUB items in the form of an interlinked suite of SubStrategies, audited for gaps, repetition, and so on, and then Validated using the PRUB-Validate process. There is no strict dividing line between a SubStrategy and an OpenStrategy other than that a SubStrategy is usually smaller and is focused on a single issue, whereas an OpenStrategy is more likely to address many interlinked themes.

Another new word is "**BURP**", which is used to denote the PRUB items in reverse order. It's nothing wrong about BURP, it's just defining an **organization** actually desire to start **B**enefits more than **P**rojects. So in most cases, use the BURP sequence for guiding the development of a strategy and use **PRUB** for implementing strategies.

The below figure shows the core OpenStrategy Building block



Highlights: What I liked!

“Orphan Results”, which means after a project, the organization delivered a result, but no one uses. We call such results “Orphan Results” because they have been lovingly created but then abandoned. It’s not a joke, it happens in almost all organizations!

The book points out that “Orphan Results” are a common phenomenon in an organization’s strategy development, especially in large companies or government departments. Too many people don’t know about the strategy, don’t understand it or can’t translate it into what it means for their role. This is the big problem that you have to solve during strategy development and validation. For example, a new strategy implies changes and that can make people feel that they have as much to lose as they do to gain, which caused a fear of change. People may have little incentive to consider preparing a new strategic plan, in this case, you have to clearly define the desired benefits, the sequence from inputs through results, and uses to outcomes.

“Orphan Results” are not mistaken results, nor unwanted results, so you have to work with stakeholders, gain their more engagement into the results, and make aspirational vision into grassroots-level operational sub-strategy, a simple, step-by-step strategy.

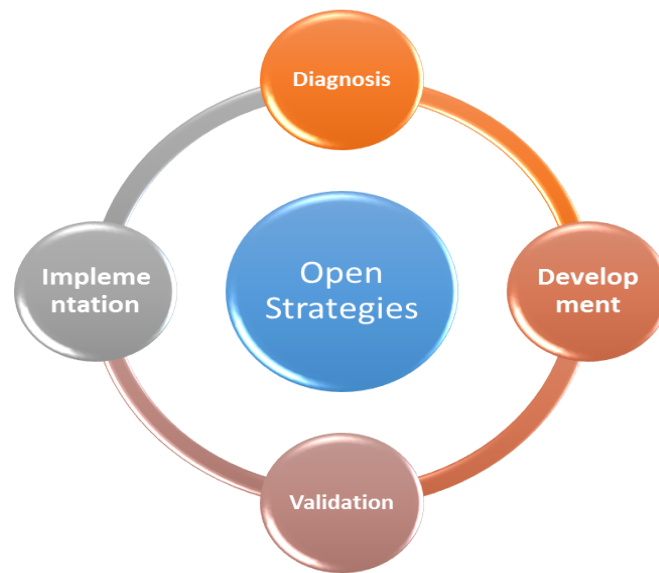
“Orphan Results” should be taken care more with some actions. As we mentioned at beginning, actions have to be involved into strategy. Without actions, strategies will become unrealistic dreams, or theories on the shelves.

Who might benefit from the Book?

OpenStrategies was not designed to be a sophisticated tool solely for academics and strategy experts. OpenStrategies is a tool for everyone wanting to engage in the process of developing and implementing strategies. As such, OpenStrategies and PRUB-Validate are a system and process which anyone can learn to use.

Strategies must be simple and clear so that large number of stakeholders can understand and implement it, this is very important for a large company.

Actually, the whole book repeats the key factors of OpenStrategies from the start to the end. It’s kind of like life cycle below:



Conclusion

People frequently report frustration at having to use many different tools for strategy development, action planning, risk management, performance management and for stakeholder and end-user engagement. They also report that the different tools are too complex for most of their needs.

In short words, the above case is because people start their strategy with so many unknowns, if you know knowns, then you will feel it's simple to you, at least not feel difficult. Start a single simple strategy system so people can improve their organization, meet stakeholders' and End-users' expectations and make the world a better place. Little and a little, day after day, once you keep doing this, you will see the big changes.

Validating Strategies is such a book that can guide you or your organization to make your strategies getting development or evolution better, and achieve more.

For more about this book, go to <http://www.gowerpublishing.com/isbn/9781472427816>

Editor's note: This book review was the result of cooperation between the publisher, the PM World Journal and the Dallas Chapter of the Project Management Institute (PMI Dallas Chapter – www.pmidallas.org). Publishers provide the books to PM World; books are delivered to the PMI Dallas Chapter, where they are offered free to PMI members to review; book reviews are published in the PM World Journal and PM World Library. PMI Dallas Chapter members are generally mid-career professionals, the audience for most project management books. If you are an author or publisher of a project management-related book, and would like the book reviewed through this program, please contact editor@pmworldjournal.net.

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Johnny Gan had many years of software R&D experience at [HRsmart.com](http://www.hrsmart.com) (<http://www.hrsmart.com/>), and was working as consultant at Yoh (<http://www.yoh.com/>) Company, which helped industry leading companies get superior value from their investments. Mr. Gan received his MS degree from Southern Methodist University in Dallas, Texas, USA, and is also certified by the Project Management Institute as a Project Management Professional (PMP®). He has been an active member of PMI for several years. Johnny can be contacted at qianggan@gmail.com.

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