

## **Strategy and Business Process Management: Techniques for Improving Execution, Adaptability and Consistency**

**Carl F. Lehmann**

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### **Reviewed by Paul Harmon**

Every two years BPTrends undertakes a major survey on the nature, size and activities of the business process market. For eight years readers have indicated that one of their major concerns was with how to tie corporate strategy together with BPM. Carl Lehmann's book provides a good overview of how to define and align your business strategy with your business processes.

Carl Lehmann is a good person to write such a book. He began by working for companies like AT&T and DEC, both companies that have faced major challenges that have involved defining strategies and then working to align their processes to support their strategies. Later, Lehmann was a research vice president and business analyst for Gartner and then META Group, where he developed a good overview of how organizations succeed or fail to implement IT strategies. And, recently, he has run his own consulting firm, BPMMethods, where he has focused specifically on the problems of tying together business strategies and business processes.

Strategy and Business Process Management is not an innovative book – it doesn't break much new ground. Instead, it focuses on basics, describes the core literature of business strategy and shows how it relates to the ongoing management of an organization's business processes. This is a great book for those who are new to strategy considerations, or who want to review the basics and think how it all ties together.

Lehmann puts his emphasis, as I said, on the classics of business strategy. He begins with a review of the work of Michael E. Porter, describing Porter's concepts from both *Competitive Strategy* (the Five Forces Model) and *Competitive Advantage* (the Value Chain). This lays the groundwork by defining how one examines an environment to determine the competitive forces a strategy must deal with.

He moves on to *The Discipline of Market Leaders*, a book by Michael Treacy and Fred Wiersema that describes how one can organize the capabilities of a given organization to respond to environmental challenges. In essence, Treacy and Wiersema would have us focus on being efficient, being customer friendly, or offering exciting new products or

services.

Lehmann moves on to review the work of Robert S. Kaplan and David P. Norton, beginning with the approach to the strategic organization of measures, described first in their book *Balanced Scorecard*, and then elaborated in their book on *Strategy Maps*. Once again, Lehmann provides a good summary of the concepts and then shows how it builds on core ideas and ties them to business processes.

Finally, least the reader should think one can define strategies and link them to processes in an overly mechanical way, Lehmann considers Stephan H. Haeckel's book, the *Adaptive Enterprise*. Haeckel was a long time IBM strategist and has lots of examples that demonstrate that an organization can never rest on one solution, but must constantly cycle back and renew its strategies and the processes that implement them. The world keeps changing and organizations that survive keep changing with it. Indeed, the best organizations build adaptation right into their culture so it becomes second nature to expect to change yet again.

In each case, Lehmann has not only provided a good, detailed description of the book he is considering, but has gone on to create checklists that readers can use in applying the concepts being discussed to a specific organization.

I like the Figure (shown as Figure 1 below) that Lehmann uses to summarize and integrate all of the work he has discussed.

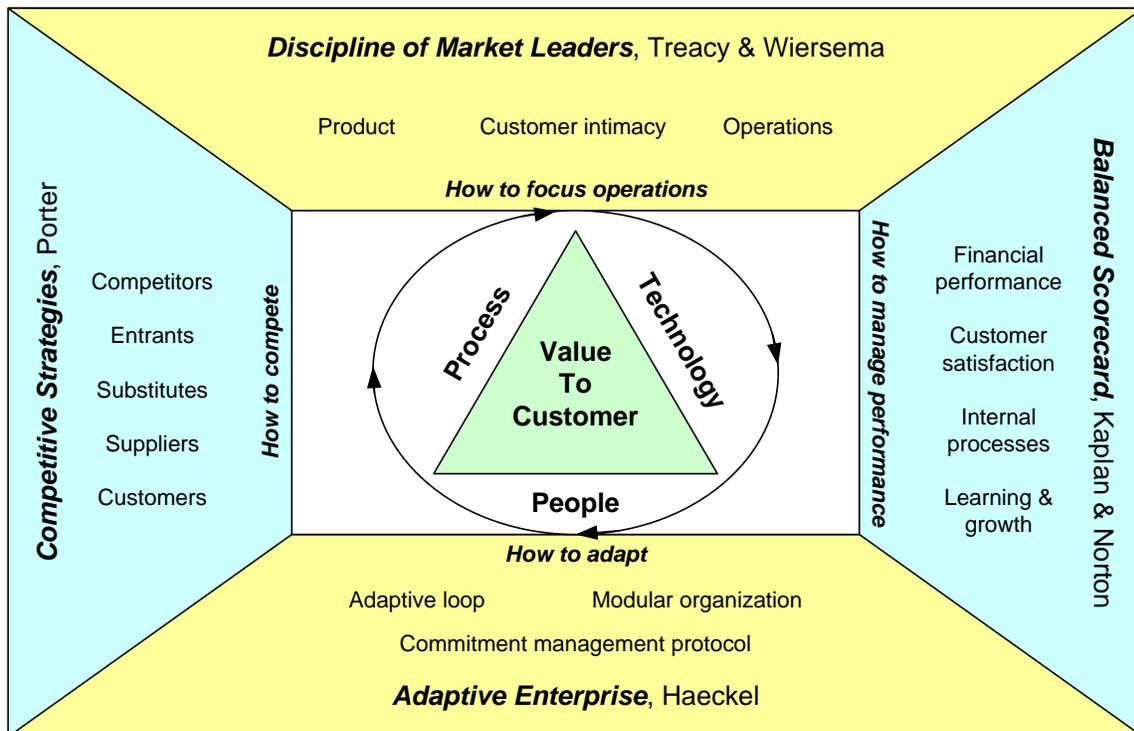


Figure 1. Collective best practices used in strategic planning. (After Lehmann)

In essence, Lehmann has described four well-known approaches to strategy and organization management and suggested how it could all be brought together. I could easily complain about one or another element of this approach. I don't think, for example, that he pays enough attention to the problems of establishing process management in an organization, a prerequisite for some of the practices he advocates, nor, in fact, do I think he spends enough time on processes analysis and the technical details of how you map specific goals and measures to specific activities within given processes. And I really wish he had spent more time considering how this all works in an organization that has two or more value chains. But these are all a quibble, or, more to the point, material that ought to go into an advanced book on this same subject. Lehmann has not written an advanced book – he has written an outstanding introduction to the subject. And, when you consider that most organizations are just beginning to consider how to link strategy and process, this is exactly what the market needs. In the future, when people ask how one thinks about aligning strategy and business process management, I am going to be recommending this as the place they ought to begin.

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