

The Story of William Cook – and How Businesses can Succeed in a Hostile Environment

THIS IS not the whole story! It is only part of the story. But the story has meaning and significance for us all.

It is the of Andrew Cook, who, in the late 1970s and early 1980s transformed William Cook Ltd, an ailing, yet well-established family manufacturer of steel castings, into a market leader when all was against him.

At that time, the economy was dismal, dark and uninviting. Output in the industry had been falling for a number of years. Cook, on taking over the company, went completely against the trend and invested in increased efficiency, quality and capacity in the lowest-value segment – all at a time when capacity was double the volume of industry sales. Rivals thought he was mad. Indeed, conventional thinking would have dictated that Cook milk the business and leave the industry or go into a higher-value and differentiated niche.

Remember, too, that William Cook couldn't boast the reputation of a Mercedes or an IBM among its customers; neither was it a technological leader, nor did it possess some secret process to guarantee extra income. Nonetheless, Andrew Cook backed his intuition. In a few months, his efforts began to yield results.

His investment, within a hostile environment, transformed the business.

Within a few years, sales had risen by 10% against industry losses. He was the first to invest in BS5750. Within a couple of years, he had acquired two of his major competitors and by the 1990s, he had become the market leader.

“What did he do?” you ask. It's really quite straightforward. He got back to basics. He started with his customers. He recognised the value they wanted. His improvements saved customers money, which naturally increased demand for his product. Thus, Cook generated a double advantage – higher value and lower cost.

When others saw what he had achieved, they changed too. They sought to catch up and invoked intense battles... but that's another story.

This is an outstanding story for a variety of reasons! But what is the worth of its telling?

True, there are talks of downturn as I write. Indeed, Andrew Cook provides us with insights into how to manage in such times: concentrate on the core business, customers and value-differentiating activities. Whatever else, we can be sure that Andrew Cook acted with tremendous tenacity and courage to save his company and give it primacy in his industry. His actions reflect capabilities not often mentioned in boardrooms or training rooms – the hidden hallmarks of persistence, determination and sincerity of action, which are often overlooked when eager imitators review pioneers' strategic innovations and successes.

Cook himself said; “Press on. Nothing in the world can take the place of persistence. Talent will not; nothing is more common than unsuccessful men with talent. Genius will not; unrewarded genius is almost a proverb. Education will not; the world is full of educated derelicts.”

But are the great qualities of persistence and determination alone omnipotent? I think not, even though they are the stuff of legend.

There is more. This book forms the subject of another vital element of formulating and exploiting a superior strategy. It takes on the perspective of a senior manager, like Andrew Cook, about to develop a new strategy, or improve the current one. It asks how a manager should think about strategy and what he or she should address. What is involved in making a good strategy? And what is involved in implementing one?

The focus of this work is strategic management and the result of my own research and study, and indeed business experience, of the past 20 years or so. In seeking to establish why some business strategies are more successful than others, my own observations show that successful strategies share the same fundamental principles. Thus, Andrew Cook's strategy shares the same principles that enabled Apple to succeed in revolutionising the way we listen to music.

To read more about strategies to grow your business click [here](#)

Best wishes,



Andrew Pearson
Managing Director
Unique Business Strategies

Something about us

Andrew M Pearson is widely considered to be a leading expert in the fields of **strategy**,

marketing and business-development coaching.

Trained in sales and marketing at J Bibby, the oils and animal-feed business, Andrew set up his first business aged 25 and steered it to market leadership and a turnover of £11m in 6 years. Since then, he's held senior management and professorial posts at a number of UK firms, including 4 years with Cargill, when he founded pioneering strategies for business development in Eastern Europe.

He now regularly works with top managers and business owners in the UK and overseas, helping them to create and exploit superior strategies and business solutions.

Those who have submitted testimonials for his coaching, training and consultancy services are like a who's who in business development...

- John Adams: Fowler Welch
- Rob Keene: Over Farm Market
- Andrew May: Mainland Marketing
- Paul Smith: Due Diligence
- Don Burgess: Freeminor Brewery
- Simon Harvey: Mack International
- Graeme Kemsley: Business Link
- David Neil: Andersons Consulting
- Brian Redrup: Velcourt
- Ann Louise and Bill Hartley: Hartley's Nurseries
- Paul Hebblethwaite: Cadburys

... to name but a few.

Coaching and Workshops

The content of this book and its sister publication, *How to Create Breakthrough Strategies for*

The Strategist's Choice

Your Business forms the basis for coaching and workshop events for executives wanting to develop breakthrough strategies for their businesses.

These learning events are available in a variety of formats from a [short talk](#), one or two day [workshop](#) to extended [coaching](#) support.

The next one day [open course](#) will be held at Whittlebury Hall Buckinghamshire.
