

introduction to your course companion	



Whether you are aware of it or not, the purchase of this book is the result of your strategic plan! Most likely, you have considered the subject of business strategy and having reviewed some textbooks and perhaps attended a lecture or two, you have decided that you may need some additional help. You have considered the options and have made a decision to acquire an additional resource. Having concluded that the investment is small, and the risk of wasting your money even smaller, you have rightly convinced yourself that this SAGE Course Companion will help you to achieve your goal. In strategic terms, you have undertaken a rational approach to the strategic management process; you have had concerns, evaluated what they are, considered the options and acquired a resource to help you to achieve your objective.

An additional influence on your decision to purchase this book is the use of your prior knowledge, learning and experience. You have bought books before; you know what you are studying; you know how much you can afford to spend; you might have some information about other textbooks that you will use and how this Course Companion complements these. This learning experience can add 'flesh' to the 'bones' of the evaluation which provided a supporting framework for your strategic decision. Combining research and experience will optimise the chance of success and this is the basis of strategic management.

This SAGE Course Companion will help you to understand this evaluation and decision-making process by providing a route map of key themes and authors to guide you through what, at first sight, may appear to be a daunting subject. It does not intend to replace your textbook, or indeed your lecture notes, but it does aim to give you a different perspective in a conveniently sized, easily readable format. It will also save you time searching through large strategy books in order to get at the core concepts!

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Note

One of the great advantages of studying business strategy is the wealth of examples that are routinely discussed in newspapers and news reports. These provide an ideal opportunity to think about what you are studying and apply the theoretical concepts to the article. This means that when it comes to your examination, the availability of recent examples and the ability to extract the relevant information and make important connections will be second nature to you, and will help you to achieve the best marks.

How to use this book

Business strategy is such a broad subject that students often find it difficult to assimilate the key aspects of the study, especially with other subjects competing with their study time. The SAGE Course Companion has been designed with this in mind. It is a learning tool which will support your reflective study during your course and will also act as a revision guide towards the end of your undergraduate course. However, it is not intended as a short-cut to everything you need to know! You are strongly advised to use your textbooks and a wide range of other sources of material in order to gain a greater depth of understanding.

The textbooks referred to in this SAGE Course Companion include:

- Coulter, M. (2008) *Strategic Management in Action*. 4th edn.
Johnson, G., Scholes, K. and Whittington, R. (2008) *Exploring Corporate Strategy*. 8th edn.
Lynch, R. (2006) *Corporate Strategy*. 4th edn.
Thompson, J.L. and Martin, F. (2005) *Strategic Management: Awareness, Analysis and Change*. 5th edn.

The SAGE Course Companion will help you to make important connections between otherwise seemingly disjointed subject areas. It provides examples of examination questions and a guide to the answers that will be expected for each, and also attempts to identify many of the common mistakes that students make in their use of strategic tools and theories. A significant portion of the guide also provides a link between your theoretical study and learning styles, with hints and tips which will not only help you in your business strategy studies and examinations, but will also provide a useful framework for other undergraduate modules.

INTRODUCTION TO YOUR COURSE COMPANION | 3**Note**

Business strategy is not a good subject to cram at the last minute. It is better to slowly absorb and build your knowledge during your course, using this Course Companion as a guide during this process.

The book is helpfully subdivided into three sections.

The first Part in the book will provide the background to the study of business strategy. An awareness of the historical development of a subject often helps to provide the basis for the teaching of it, as it provides a chronological series of developments and a broader context to your studies.

The second section provides the bulk of the academic material which you will come across during your studies. You will be assessed on the correct use of this material!

The third section focuses on the learning and assessment aspects of your study. It deals with different approaches to learning and will help you to make the most of your education. It covers a wide range of concepts, such as case study analysis, structuring assignments, referencing, critical thinking and getting the most from your sessions with your tutors.

All three sections contain common features which include:

- a summary of the most commonly taught tools, frameworks and theories
- reminders of the key themes to highlight in your examinations or assignments
- important links between topics, which you can use to demonstrate a broad understanding of the subject
- examples of 'real world' scenarios to put the theory into practice; these might also be useful to put in your answers
- example examination/assignment questions which will give you an insight into what may be required
- common errors and omissions that students make when being assessed
- key terms and definitions that are highlighted and listed in the glossary
- notes and tips that act as important reminders and clarifications on the subject
- 'Taking it further' sections that look at the subject in-depth or from a critical perspective. These can be useful to demonstrate to your tutor that you have a deeper knowledge of the subject
- links to chapters in commonly used textbooks to provide further reading and development of your understanding.