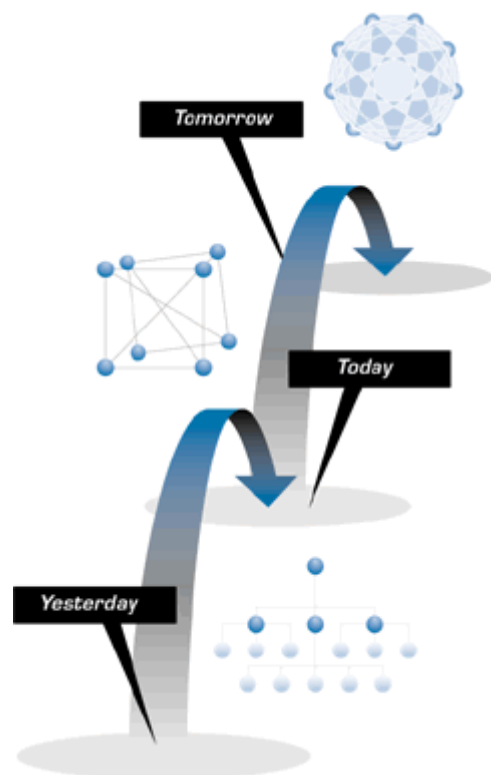


Sustaining Competitive Advantage through Core Competence Strategies



The New Economy has knowledge, creativity and innovation as its currency, whilst today's consumers are on the edge of being driven more by value and true performance than by brand. Today, more than ever, no one has a monopoly on innovation. The financial services industry is moving so rapidly that yesterday's hero can be today's failure. Fast-paced, knowledge-based industries have to find a new corporate structure which encourages people to think at the same level. A transparent platform for knowledge sharing, throughout the whole organisation, is a major ingredient.

But, how do you persuade people who may already feel under threat to give up their position of power (knowledge retention) and share their expertise? How can you ensure your knowledge workers stay and not take their valuable assets to your nearest competitor? How do you encourage innovation and get from concept to deliverable in a short space of time?

Unfortunately, many companies in our industry segregate by technical expertise. Individuals are, therefore, judged by their technical excellence, and not by their behaviour or value bias. They perform tremendously exacting work but find it difficult to deliver to the market on time. They can be too focused on the nuts and bolts of what has made them successful in the past. There is a need for an exchange of concepts to scintillate new trains of thought. There is a need to align the values of creative, knowledgeable individuals with corporate values and goals. When there is a divergence at the value level, however unconscious, innovation and creativity become inert.

Since the successful business model of the New Millennium focuses on Knowledge, Innovation and Information, the Human Dynamics of the organisation have become critical. Thus, this becomes also an issue of Culture. Many of today's leading companies have found that by focusing on values, core competencies, core capabilities, behaviour, and reward systems based on knowledge sharing and creativity, they have successfully re-designed their businesses, world-wide and with thousands of employees. Moreover, recent research has shown that working at the values level can transcend cultural differences.

What lessons can be learned and applied to our industry?

© Copyright Dr. Deborah Swallow (2007)

Dr. Swallow is Business Development Director for Corporate Training Partnership with special responsibility for the Business Management Academy and the Management Development Programmes of the company.