The Soft Edge: Where Great Companies Find Lasting Success

By Rich Karlgaard

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How many times has it been asked if an initiative (e.g., a start-up, a new project, an audit, a security assessment) will be successful or, more generally, whether it would be possible to predict the future performance of a company?

According to the author of The Soft Edge: Where Great Companies Find Lasting Success, to be successful, an enterprise needs not only to be good at the strategic basis (understanding their market, customers and competitors) and the hard edge (the execution of the strategy), but also needs to be good at the human factor, the so-called soft edge. These are the three sides of the health triangle of an enterprise, which the author suggests could help predict the long-term success of a company, just as in biology the health triangle—composed of physical, social and mental/emotional sides—is used to predict the survival chances of an organism.

The Soft Edge will not give the reader advice on how to cope with the new security risk posed by virtualization technologies or the growing use of bring your own device (BYOD), nor will it provide an auditor with any insight on how to leverage big data analytical techniques to perform financial audits. Rather, this book will help readers understand why the soft side is so vitally important and how anyone, not just the gifted few, can leverage it to reach higher peaks of performance and better results. Moreover, even individuals can make use of the soft edge to improve their working performance.

The soft edge is composed of five pillars and each of them is analyzed in a dedicated chapter that guides readers to answer crucial questions including:

• What makes a product or a service appealing when compared to others available on the market? To achieve a successful product, an aesthetic and emotional engagement needs to be included.
• To advertise a product, should only its functionalities be focused on or would it be necessary to narrate a story that might trigger the emotional side of the listeners, be it a customer or an employee? How can stories be created and told that contribute to the success of a brand?

Throughout the book, readers begin to understand soft-edge factors and their impact on enterprises’ health and long-lasting success by reading real-life stories, well-formed arguments and references to external resources. Moreover, these stories come from different kinds of businesses (e.g., medical, technological, sports, logistics). The contribution of the new technology, such as data analytics, to build the soft edge is not neglected, and appropriate examples are provided.

Although the use of real enterprises’ success stories might be perceived by some as promotional for the companies mentioned, this book offers important information for managers and enterprise owners, as well as any kind of professional, including IT auditors and security experts. Indeed, business success cannot be achieved without taking into account the human factor, without which businesses are hampered in delivering good results as a team and, most important, in making those results accepted by stakeholders so as to really make a difference.

It is important to consider that to successfully harden IT systems, it might be necessary to fully understand the importance of the soft edge in the business.

EDITOR’S NOTE
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