

Strategy in Practice

Module outline and aims

This module examines the elements, processes and techniques involved in the development and implementation of organisational strategy. As part of the senior management team, Chartered Secretaries have an important role to play in ensuring that strategy fits organisational purpose, is acceptable in terms of risk, and is consistent with good governance as well as with stakeholder requirements and concerns.

The module assesses the critical role played by Chartered Secretaries as part of the senior management team: ensuring the integrity of the policies, systems and processes that deliver the organisation's strategic purpose and objectives. The obligations of directors, officers and senior employees in the strategic planning and delivery of corporate responsibility are also considered. The module will also require you to understand the ethical considerations raised by the development and implementation of strategy and its impact on reputation.

Learning outcomes

On successful completion of this module, you will be able to:

- Analyse and evaluate an organisation's environment and identify global and local opportunities and threats, taking into account the organisation's internal capabilities and resources and the context in which the organisation operates.
- Advise the governing body on the appropriate policies, systems, processes and risk strategies, within a changing context, to meet stakeholder interests, organisational purpose and safeguard organisational reputation.
- Advise on the roles of directors, officers and senior employees in developing and implementing strategy.
- Advise on the resource management issues that contribute to strategic success.
- Advise the management board on systems and processes needed to deliver strategic objectives and address reputational risk.
- Critically review the nature of organisational ethics in strategy development.

Syllabus content

Introduction

As the pace and volume of change in the environment affecting organisations in the private, public and not-for-profit sectors increases, Chartered Secretaries and other senior administrators must seek to understand what is happening and play their part in determining the organisation's response. All organisations are faced with the challenge of strategic direction either to grasp new opportunities or to overcome significant problems.

This field of study is potentially vast and it is all too easy to be seduced by the range of frameworks, tools and techniques that abound. They are important, but only in the political and cultural context of the organisation and as a response to the need for practical responses to day-to-day problems with which managers have to grapple. The aim of the syllabus is to focus on those components of corporate strategy most relevant to the practice of a Chartered Secretary.

Syllabus overview

The aim of the Strategy in Practice module is to enable the Chartered Secretary to apply the concepts and principles of strategic management to organisations in order to protect their reputation and promote good governance and accountability to stakeholders.

There are four main areas in the syllabus:

- Key strategy concepts
- Applied strategic analysis
- Strategic purpose
- Implementing strategy

To give an insight into the level of understanding and competence required, this section describes in more detail the content of each.

Key strategy concepts – weighting 15%

'The nature of strategy and planning' is concerned with whether students are able to:

- Explain the characteristics of strategic decisions
- Explain what is meant by strategy and strategic management and planning
- Identify levels of strategy and how and why these vary
- Critically review the rational planning model and a range of other models
- Apply a strategic approach to different types of organisation
- Understand how strategy and planning reflect the values and expectations of stakeholders

'The role of the Chartered Secretary in strategy and planning' is concerned with whether students are able to:

- Understand the role of the key people involved in the strategy-making process
- Advise on the systems, processes and frameworks underpinning strategy and planning: ‘strategising’, business cases, strategy projects, and communication
- Define and understand the interaction of ‘risk’, ‘reputation’ and ‘sustainability’ within the context of organisational strategy

Applied strategic analysis – weighting 25%

‘Analysing the external environment’ is concerned with whether students are able to:

- Analyse the ‘far’ environment of organisations using PESTEL and systems maps
- Construct alternative scenarios based on key drivers in the environment
- Assess the attractiveness of industries and sectors and their potential for investment and change
- Recognise strategic opportunities by identifying market segments, strategic groups and critical success factors

‘The analysis of capability and competences’ is concerned with whether students are able to:

- Distinguish the components of strategic capability including resources, core competences and dynamic capabilities
- Recognise how strategic capabilities provide sustainable competitive advantage
- Assess strategic capability using value chain analysis, benchmarking, and activity mapping
- Advise on the contribution of organisational knowledge to strategic capability

‘Strategy and organisational culture’ is concerned with whether students are able to:

- Analyse how culture influences the strategic position of organisations
- Advise on the implications of strategic drift
- Analyse the influence of an organisation’s culture on its strategy using a range of frameworks
- Understand the relationship between organisational and international cultures

Strategic purpose – weighting 30%

‘The governing body’s influence over strategy’ is concerned with whether students are able to:

- Apply the concept of the governance chain to organisations
- Understand the relationship between stakeholders and governance

'Stakeholder expectations and management' is concerned with whether students are able to:

- Recognise the importance of determining, challenging and balancing conflict in the risk appetite of differing stakeholders
- Apply the outcomes of stakeholder analysis to manage the influence of different stakeholders and stakeholder groups

'Expressing organisational purpose' is concerned with whether students are able to:

- Advise on appropriate ways to express the strategic purpose of an organisation: values, vision, strategic intent, mission and objectives

'Business ethics and social responsibility' is concerned with whether students are able to:

- Define ethics and take an ethical perspective in strategy development
- Critically review the role of ethics in the organisation
- Understand the different ethical stances taken by organisations
- Advise on ethical decision-making and conflicts of interest amongst stakeholders
- Advise on the link between sustainability and strategy

'Protecting and enhancing the reputation of the organisation' is concerned with whether students are able to:

- Understand the nature and sources of reputation
- Advise on ensuring a coherent approach to reputation and risk

Implementing strategy – weighting 30%

'Strategy development' is concerned with whether students are able to:

- Understand how both emergent and planned strategy development may be found in different organisational contexts
- Understand the elements of strategic leadership that are required in uncertain and complex conditions

'Strategic choice' is concerned with whether students are able to:

- Critically review the range of methods by which strategy might be pursued: organic development, mergers and acquisition, strategic alliances
- Identify alternative directions for strategy, including market penetration or consolidation, product development, market development and diversification, employing a range of techniques for evaluating strategic options
- Apply portfolio management to create value through corporate level strategy

- Assess the extent to which strategic business units can provide sustainable competitive advantage
- Identify sources of competitive advantage in international strategy: Porter's Diamond

'Organising for success' is concerned with whether students are able to:

- Assess the strengths and limitations of the main structural forms
- Recognise the role of control processes and relationships, including performance management and evaluation, technical control, and administrative control

'Managing strategic change' is concerned with whether students are able to:

- Distinguish the nature and significance of strategic change
- Advise on roles in managing change including managers and change agents
- Assess the value of change levers and tactics including political and symbolic processes
- Advise on managing the effects of change on people
- Identify the issues involved in designing and managing strategic change programmes

Understand why change may be resisted and how this can be overcome