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Strategic Planning Implementation in Jordanian Publicly Quoted Companies

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Strategic Planning Implementation in Jordanian Publicly Quoted Companies

Abstract

Purpose

This paper aims to identify the problems associated with the implementation of strategic planning in Jordanian publicly quoted companies.

Design/Methodology/Approach

A review of the literature relating to both strategic planning and strategic planning implementation in both developed and less developed countries is provided.

The empirical research was conducted via a questionnaire survey of Jordanian publicly quoted companies in the financial, service and industrial sectors.

Findings

The main findings of this research are that the implementation problems which were identified in earlier studies were experienced by Jordanian companies but that these problems were not noticeably affected by organisational size or age or by sector.

Research limitations

The research and its results focus on “what” and “how”, rather than “why”, questions. Multiple participant, face to face interviews should be used in a subsequent study to explore the latter.

Practical Implications

The results lead to various recommendations about how strategic planning implementation may be improved in Jordan, particularly in relation to an enhanced role for line management.

Originality

It is the first study of the problems associated with the implementation of strategic planning in Jordan or in the Middle East in general. In this context, it provides empirical evidence in relation to the problems associated with the implementation of strategic planning and the nature of their relationship with certain organisational characteristics (size, age, and nature of business).

Research paper: strategic planning; implementation; Jordan; public companies.

Strategic Planning Implementation in Jordanian Publicly Quoted Companies

1 Introduction

Most surveys of strategic management have been carried out in the context of developed countries and have paid more attention to the formulation aspects of strategy than the implementation aspects (Bruton *et al*, 2004). The same has been the case in relation to the smaller number of studies which have been undertaken in less developed countries (Brenes *et al*, 2008).

Surveys by Al-Shaikh and Hamami (1994) and Hamami and Al-Shaikh (1995) emphasised that Jordanian companies made considerable efforts to formulate their strategies. However, they did not clarify what happened when these companies put the strategies into effect. Consequently, the aim of this paper is to review the problems associated with the implementation of strategic planning in Jordanian publicly quoted companies. Jordan is considered to be typical of many developing countries, particularly those in the Middle East (EIU, 2004).

2 Strategic planning

Although there are several definitions of strategic planning, there is no commonly accepted and universal definition of it (Quinn, 1980; Brews and Purohit, 2007).

For the purpose of this paper strategic planning will be defined as “the devising and formulation of organisational level plans which set the broad and flexible objectives, strategies and policies of a business, driving the organisation towards its vision of the future” (Stonehouse and Pemberton, 2002, p. 854).

The elements of the strategic planning process include external and internal environmental scanning (Ngamkoreckjoti and Johri, 2001; Costa and Teare, 2000; Fahey and King, 1977; Jain, 1984; Costa 1995, p. 5); defining a company’s mission statement (Klemm, 1991; Bartkus, 2004) specifying objectives (Vilà and Canales, 2008) and evaluating and selecting a suitable strategy for implementation (Crittenden and Crittenden, 2008).

The benefits of strategic planning, can be summarised as: enhancing co-ordination (e.g. bringing together all business unit strategies within an overall corporate strategy); controlling by reviewing performance and progress toward objectives; identifying and exploiting future marketing opportunities; enhancing internal communication between personnel; encouraging personnel in a favourable attitude to change and improving the corporate performance of companies (Greenley, 1986; Koufopolous and Morgan, 1994).

The extent to which strategic planning contributes to improvement of corporate performance is a matter of controversy because of the mixed results which are found in empirical studies. For example, Armstrong (1982) reviewed twelve strategic planning and performance studies; the study found that strategic planning was performance enhancing overall. In a comprehensive

review of over sixty studies, Shrader *et al.*, (1984) found no apparent systemic relationship between strategic planning and performance. Schwenk and Shrader (1993), in a review of twenty-six studies of small businesses, found a positive relationship overall between strategic planning and performance. Fossen *et al.* (2006), in a review of eighty-five studies, found that strategic planning had a small but significant relationship with performance.

In the 1980s strategic planning was criticised in terms of its effectiveness at a conceptual level (e.g. Mintzberg 1990, 1994). However these criticisms did have an operational dimension too. The main operational criticisms were as follows: management creativity will be affected negatively by 'rigid' strategic planning; planning is often performed by planners instead of by managers who would be affected by the result of the plans; planners and top management take charge and isolate the planning process from the people whose commitment is needed to carry it through; strategic planning processes are bureaucratic and rigid activities, used for financial control and do not encourage the setting of new strategic directions; and strategic planning inhibits strategic thinking (Bonn and Christodoulou, 1996).

Partly as a result of these contributions, strategic planning has undergone substantial changes since the 1980s (Clarke, 1997; Taylor, 1997; Bonn and Christodoulou, 1996; Wilson, 1994). There is now: less bureaucracy with more emphasis on implementation and innovation; a reduction in the number of staff planners with more participation of line managers and teams of employees; more sophisticated planning techniques such as scenario planning; and increased attention to changing markets, and competitive and technological trends .

3 Strategic planning implementation

Strategic planning can be successful only if there is effective implementation of the strategy (Sinha, 1990; Veliyath and Shortell, 1993). According to O'Regan and Ghobadian (2002), almost eight out of ten companies fail to implement their strategies effectively. Kargar and Blumenthal (1994, p.14) defined the implementation problem as "an operational obstacle to goal achievement which either existed before implementation began and was not recognized or arose as a systemic reaction to conditions of the implementation effort due to poor preparation or systemic failure". The implementation problem is also used to "describe any unanticipated and uncontrollable external environmental phenomenon" (Kargar and Blumenthal, 1994, p. 15).

There are a number of potential external and internal barriers to effective strategic planning implementation. Beer and Eisenstat (2000) conducted a study of senior US managers to identify the barriers or the 'silent killers' as the authors called them. The study identified six major barriers to strategy implementation. These barriers were: top down or laissez-faire senior management style; unclear strategy and conflicting priorities; an ineffective senior management team; poor vertical communication; poor co-ordination across functions, business or borders; and inadequate down-the-line leadership skills and development.

O'Regan and Ghobadian (2002) studied the problems that face strategic planning implementation in UK small and medium sized firms. They examined eight main barriers - five of them internal and three of them external: inadequate communication; implementation takes longer than anticipated; a shortfall in employee capabilities; overall goals of strategy not well enough understood by staff; co-ordination of implementation not effective enough; crises distract

attention from implementation; unanticipated major external problems arose; external factors impact on implementation. The major factors which they identified were: implementation took longer than anticipated; followed by unanticipated problems and external factors. Inadequate communication and lack of clarity of strategic goals were of less importance.

Heide *et al.* (2002) conducted a case study on a Norwegian ferry-cruise company to identify the barriers to strategy implementation. The study focused on a number of categories. These categories were information systems, learning, allocation of resources, formal organisational structure, including control systems, personnel management, political factors and organisational culture. This study reported on 174 barriers grouped in these seven categories. The frequency with which the reported implementation barriers were found were as follows: communication barriers (123); organisational structure barriers(19);learning barriers (13);personnel management barriers(8);culture barriers (8); political barriers (3);resource barriers (0).

Al-Ghamdi (1998) studied the problems that faced strategic planning implementation in companies located in the Bradford area, UK. He found that six implementation problems occurred for at least 70 per cent of the companies sampled. These problems were: implementation took more time than originally allocated in 92 per cent of the companies; major problems surfaced which had not been identified earlier in 88 per cent of the companies ; coordination of implementation activities was not effective enough in 75 per cent of the companies; competing activities distracted attention from implementing this decision in 83 per cent of the companies; key implementation tasks and activities were not sufficiently defined in 71 per cent of the companies; and information systems used to monitor implementation were inadequate in 71 per cent of the companies.

Alexander (1985) studied the problems of strategy implementation in medium sized and large US firms to determine the problems that occurred most frequently when the strategy was put into effect. The study found that the most frequently occurring strategy implementation problems were: implementation required more time than originally allocated; major problems were unanticipated; ineffective co-ordination of activities; crises distract attention from implementation; uncontrollable external environmental factors; inadequate information systems were used to monitor implementation; insufficient employee capabilities; key implementation activities and tasks were not defined enough; inadequate employee training and instruction; and leadership and direction provided by managers was not adequate.

Kargar and Blumenthal (1994) studied the problems of strategy implementation in small North Carolina banks. They found that the ten problems which had been identified by Alexander (1985) and which occurred frequently during the strategy implementation process in large companies were also experienced by small banks, but to a lesser extent. These problems were as follows: more time needed than originally intended; inadequate training and instruction; uncontrollable external environmental factors; crises that distracted attention; unanticipated major problems; poor definition of key implementation tasks; ineffective co-ordination of activities; insufficient capabilities of employees; inadequate leadership and direction by managers; inadequate monitoring by information systems; responsibilities not clearly defined; unclear statements of overall goals.

4 Previous studies of strategic planning in Jordan

Little is known about the practice of strategic planning in Jordan. The limited knowledge of the practice of strategic planning is due partly to the fact that it is not taken seriously in many companies but also because relatively little has been researched or reported in Jordan. In fact only two empirical studies have been conducted which shed any light on strategic planning in Jordanian companies. The first study was by Al-Shaikh and Hamami (1994) and the other by Hamami and Al-Shaikh (1995).

These studies attempted to explore the meaning of strategic planning for Jordanian managers, their attitude towards strategic planning and the main components of their strategic plans. The most important results that emerged from these studies were:

1. strategic planning is not a new phenomenon in Jordanian companies;
2. 65 per cent of companies had a written plan;
3. 59 per cent of Jordanian companies' managers were aware of the meaning of strategic planning, as defined in this study;
4. managers of Jordanian companies had a positive attitude towards strategic planning.

However, these studies are not sufficient to provide a full picture about the extent of the practice of strategic planning in Jordanian companies. In particular, no studies at all have been undertaken of strategic planning implementation in Jordan.

5 Hypotheses, research population and respondents

The discussion in section 3 indicates that strategic planning can be successful only if there is effective implementation of the strategic plan (Sinha, 1990; Veliyath and Shortell, 1993). The literature suggests some potential external and internal problems, which are also called barriers, that face strategic planning implementation (Alexander, 1985; Beer and Eisenstat, 2000; O'Regan and Ghobadian, 2002). This study therefore examined various strategic planning implementation problems. However, studying the implementation of strategic planning itself was beyond the scope of the research.

The following research question was investigated:

- > To what extent do Jordanian companies experience problems during their implementation of strategic planning?

To allow analysis of this question the following hypotheses were tested:

- > Organisational characteristics have a significantly differential impact in relation to the extent of the experience of strategic planning implementation problems in Jordanian companies.
 - Sub-Hypothesis 1: there are significant differences in the extent of strategic planning implementation problems experienced by firms of different sizes.
 - Sub-Hypothesis 2: there are significant differences in the extent of strategic planning implementation problems experienced by firms of different ages.
 - Sub-Hypothesis 3: there are significant differences in the extent of strategic planning implementation problems experienced by different sectors of business.

The population of this research was all companies, that were registered on the Amman Stock Exchange (ASE), according to its guide of Jordanian shareholding (publicly quoted) companies. The categorisation of these companies, according to the ASE, was:

- 52 financial companies (banks, financial and insurance companies),

- 64 service companies,
- 87 industrial companies.

This study followed the same categorisation as that adopted by the ASE. The rationale for choosing the companies listed by the ASE was that these companies contributed more than 75 per cent of Jordan's GDP and also the absence of a database for the companies that were not classified in this market. The data collection instrument was sent to the whole population in view of its size.

Questionnaires were sent to the chief executive or general manager of each company, since it was believed that this would be the most appropriate person to provide a valid response to questions related to strategy (Bart *et al.*, 2001; Conant, *et al.*, 1990). After data were obtained via the questionnaire, they were edited, coded and categorised.

Although the English language is widely spoken in the business sector in Jordan, the decision was made to distribute the questionnaire in both English and Arabic (Akroush, 2003). This method was used also by Koufopoulos and Morgan (1994). The parallel method was adopted for translation of this research questionnaire (Saunders *et al.*, 2003).

The questionnaires were distributed and collected by hand. The rationale for selecting this method is that the response rate for mail survey studies in Jordan is very low – typically less than 13 per cent (Hajjat, 1998; Al-Rashid and Samardli, 2000).

A total of 203 questionnaires were distributed to the population of 203 companies and 83 valid responses were received – the response rate was, therefore, 40.9 per cent which is considered a good one compared to other similar studies. When questionnaires are delivered and collected the response rate is likely to be between 30 per cent and 50 per cent (Saunders *et al.*, 2003).

The characteristics of the responding managers were classified into five groups: age, gender, education level, experience in current position and total working experience.

Table 1 shows that 44.5 per cent of the 83 respondents were under 40 years of age and that 100 per cent of the respondents were male. 79.6 per cent of respondents had a Bachelor's degree or above. 91.6 per cent of respondents had a total experience of more than ten years in their current position. 14.4 per cent of the respondents had less than five years experience.

Table 1 Characteristics of responding managers

Age	Frequency	Percent
Under 30	7	8.4
30-40	30	36.1

41-50	31	37.3	
51-60	13	15.7	
61-over	2	2.4	
Gender			
Male	83	100	
Female	0	0	
Education level			
College degree	12	8.4	
Bachelor's degree	52	62.7	
Postgraduate degree	14	16.9	
Others	5	6	
Experience in current position			
Under 5 years	12	14.5	
5-10	41	49.4	
11-15	19	22.9	
16-20	7	8.4	
21-over	4	4.8	
Total working experience			
Under 5 years	7	8.4	
5-10	17	20.5	
11-15	31	37.3	
16-20	12	14.5	
21-over	16	19.3	

Table 2 classifies the characteristics of responding companies into three groups: nature of business, age of company and size of company. It shows that 61.4 per cent of the respondents and 57.1 per cent of the whole population represented both the service and financial sectors, which reflects the fact that Jordan's economy is mainly service oriented. However, the fact that 38.6 per cent of respondents and 42.8 per cent of the whole population were in the industrial sector emphasises that Jordan has been increasingly focusing on manufacturing industries due to its lack of natural resources. 73.5 per cent of responding companies had been established after 1975.

In this period two events could have been influential in the establishment of many new companies. The first was the benefit from increased Arab aid during the oil boom of the late 1970s to mid-1980s; this period was considered as a rapid economic growth period. The second was an economic reform programme, which started in 1999 and which aims to liberalise and modernise the Jordanian economy (Knowles, 2005).

Table 2 shows that 60.2 per cent of the respondents' companies and 71 per cent of the whole population had less than 200 employees. The companies' size is probably affected by the fact that Jordan is a small country with a population of only 6.2 million (Business Monitor International, 2008).

Table 2 Characteristics of responding companies

Nature of business

Nature of business	Population	Surveyed	Responded
Financial	52	22** (42.3%)	26.5***
Industrial	87 (42.8%)	32 (36.8%)	38.6

Service	64 (31.5%)	29 (45.3%)	34.9	
Total	203	83	100	

Age of company

Age of company	Population	Surveyed	Responded	
1990-After	104	33	39.8***	
	*(51.2%)	**(31.7%)		
1975-89	52 (25.6%)	28 (53.8%)	33.7	
Before 1975	47 (23.2%)	22 (46.8%)	26.5	
Total	203	83	100	

Size of company

Size of company	Population	Surveyed	Responded	
Less than 50 employees	74	23** (31%)	27.7***	
51-200 employees	70 (34.5%)	27 (38.5%)	32.5	
More than 200 employees	59 (29%)	33 (55.9%)	39.8	
Total	203	83	100	

*Percentage of number of companies in each sector, age or size to number of whole population.

**Percentage of respondents relative to number of the same sector, age or size.

*** Percentage of respondents relative to number of companies surveyed.

The respondents were asked, on a scale rating from 1= no problem at all to 5= severe problem, to indicate how problematic strategic planning implementation had been in their companies.

6 Problems associated with the implementation of strategic planning: results

Table 3 shows that all the implementation problems identified earlier were experienced by Jordanian companies. However, some problems were experienced somewhat more than others. The highest score was given to “unanticipated major problems arose”, then “implementation required more time than was planned”, followed by “crises distracted attention from implementation”. However, the three implementation problems which were experienced least by these companies were “unclear statements of overall goals”, then “advocates having left the firm during implementation”, followed by “insufficient information systems for control of activities”. In general, these results indicate that Jordanian companies had put little emphasis on the implementation process.

Table 3 Problems associated with the implementation of strategic planning

Problems	Rank	Mean	
Implementation required more time than was planned	2	3.87	
Crises distracted attention from implementation	3	3.85	
Uncontrollable external environmental factors	5	3.60	
Inadequate leadership and direction by departmental managers	7	3.44	
Inadequate definition of key implementation	8	3.43	

tasks		
Co-ordination of implementation not effective enough	11	3.02
Insufficient capabilities of the involved employees	6	3.50
Inadequate training and instruction of employees	4	3.62
Insufficient information systems for control of activities	13	2.95
Advocates having left the firm during implementation	14	2.84
Unclear statements of overall goals	15	2.78
Responsibilities not being clearly defined	12	3.01
Unanticipated major problems arose	1	3.96
Inactive role of key formulators in implementation	10	3.06
Top management's slow communication	9	3.07

Spearman's correlation was conducted to assess the relationships between the size and the age of company and the problems associated with the implementation of strategic planning. In the case of company size the test was performed for each of the fifteen problems. Table 4 shows a negative statistical significance for one problem; namely, unclear statement of overall goals analysis (correlation -.217 at .05 level) and no statistical significance between the age of the company and the problems associated with strategic planning implementation.

Table 4 The correlation between size of company and problems associated with implementation of strategic planning and age of company and problems associated with the implementation of strategic planning

Problems	Size of Firm	Age of firm
Implementation required more time than was planned	.094	-.162
Crises distracted attention from implementation	.198	.072
Uncontrollable external environmental factors	.018	.106
Inadequate leadership and direction by departmental managers	.435	.171
Inadequate definition of key implementation tasks	.119	.040
Co-ordination of implementation not effective enough	.142	.361
Insufficient capabilities of the involved employees	-.113	.106
Inadequate training and instruction of employees	.155	.171
Insufficient information systems for control of activities	-.079	.107
Advocates having left the firm during implementation	.240	.169
Unclear statements of overall goals	-.046	.101
	.338	.183
	-.113	.024
	.155	.415
	.016	.046
	.442	.339
	-.083	.104
	.227	.175
	.130	.108
	.121	.166
	-.217*	-.091
	.024	.206

Responsibilities not being	-.014	.109	
clearly defined	.451	.163	
Unanticipated major problems	-.007	-.007	
arose	.473	.476	
Inactive role of key	-.076	.034	
formulators in implementation	.246	.381	
Top management's slow	-.018	.135	
communication	.436	.112	

*Correlation is significant at the .05 level (1- tailed).

An analysis of variance (ANOVA) test was conducted to determine whether any significant differences existed between the three sectors (industrial, service, financial) regarding the problems associated with strategy implementation. The test was performed for each of the fifteen problems. The results of this test found no statistically significant differences between the three sectors for all problems.

The respondents were asked, on a scale rating from 1= no commitment to 5= full commitment, to indicate the degree of commitment to strategic activities. Table 5 shows that the mean for all activities was over three, which indicates a relatively high level of commitment to each activity. The table also shows a very small difference in the mean between these activities which indicates that these companies have the same commitment to the formulation and implementation, as well as evaluation, aspects of strategy.

Table 5 Commitment to strategic activities* (n=81)

Strategic activities	Rank	Mean**	
Specification of business objectives/ aims	1	3.50	
Specification of corporate objectives/ aims	3	3.44	
Seeking commitment to plans from	6	3.39	
organisational members			
Generation of strategy	4	3.42	
Fostering of a supportive climate/atmosphere	6	3.39	
Monitoring of results against strategic	2	3.46	
plans			
Evaluation of strategy	5	3.41	

*The scale adopted from Glaister and Falshaw (1999, p. 111)

**The mean is an average of scale of 1= commitment to 5= full commitment

Spearman's correlation was conducted to assess the relationships between the size and the age of the company and commitment to strategic activities. The test was performed for each of the seven activities. The results of the correlation test (Table 6) show that no statistically significant relationship existed between the size of the company and its commitment to strategic activities. In addition, Table 6 shows no statistically significant relationship between the age of the company and the commitment to strategic activities.

Table 6 The correlation between size of company and commitment to strategic activities and age of company and commitment to strategic activities (n=81)

Commitment to Strategic Activities	Size of Firm	Age of Firm
Item 1: Correlation Coefficient	-.023 .417	.032 .389
Sig. (1- tailed)		
Item 2: Correlation Coefficient	-.102 .181	.046 .341
Sig. (1- tailed)		
Item 3: Correlation Coefficient	-.097 .242	-.013 .454
Sig. (1- tailed)		
Item 4: Correlation Coefficient	-.064 .283	.000 .499
Sig. (1- tailed)		
Item 5: Correlation Coefficient	-.044 .348	.080 .237
Sig. (1- tailed)		
Item 6: Correlation Coefficient	-.006 .480	.041 .357
Sig. (1- tailed)		
Item 7: Correlation Coefficient	-.179 .054	-.059 .299
Sig. (1- tailed)		

An analysis of variance (ANOVA) test was conducted to determine whether any significant differences existed between the three sectors (industrial, service, financial) regarding the commitment to strategic activities. The test was performed for each of the seven activities. The results of the analysis indicate no statistically significant differences between the three sectors for all activities.

7 Problems associated with the implementation of strategic planning: discussion

The research findings indicate that all the implementation problems which had been identified by previous research were experienced by Jordanian companies. However, some problems were experienced somewhat more than others. For example, the highest ranking was related to “unanticipated major problems which arose”, while the lowest ranking was related to “the unclear statements of overall goals”. These results indicate that the companies sampled had given less emphasis to the implementation process, than to the formulation process.

However, a relatively high degree of commitment towards the implementation aspects of strategic planning was found. Therefore, these results give rise to a question about the effort which has been made to reduce these problems. They also give rise to a question about the nature and the content of the training given to employees to enhance their abilities to participate in the implementation of the strategic plan. These results are consistent with the findings of earlier studies (e.g. Alexander, 1985; Al-Ghamdi, 1998; Kargar and Blumenthal, 1994; O’Regan and Ghobadian, 2002).

Alexander’s (1985) study identified the ten most commonly occurring strategic planning implementation processes experienced by medium- sized and large companies. Kargar and

Blumenthal (1994) found that the ten problems that were identified by Alexander (1985) and which occurred frequently during the strategy implementation process in large companies were also experienced by small banks. The authors suggest that their results could also be applied to small businesses because of the similarity of the strategic goals of banks and small businesses and further research to test this point. The current study controlled company size in relation to the problems associated with strategic planning implementation and found almost no relationship between the size of company and the problems associated with the implementation of strategic planning, which supports Kargar and Blumenthal's (1994) suggestion.

The critical finding is that all the implementation problems, which had been identified in earlier studies, were experienced by Jordanian companies. This tends to suggest that although the adoption of strategic planning may be related to the nature of the business, the company age and/or company size, strategy implementation difficulties are equally likely to be found in all types of organisations in Jordan.

The results indicate that organisational characteristics have not noticeably affected the problems associated with the implementation of strategy in these companies. Therefore sub hypotheses 1, 2 and 3 were rejected.

8 Conclusions

This paper provides a number of contributions to the literature on strategic planning implementation.

It is the first study of the problems associated with the implementation of strategic planning in Jordan or in the Middle East in general. In this context, it provides empirical evidence in relation to the problems associated with the implementation of strategic planning and the nature of their relationship with certain organisational characteristics (size, age, and nature of business).

An attempt has been made to ensure that the findings of the research reported on in this paper have some generality. However, it is important to clarify a number of its limitations.

First of all this research is descriptive and the method used is a cross-sectional survey. This choice made it difficult for the researchers to explore in depth some areas related to the implementation of strategic planning in the sampled companies since most respondents agreed to complete the questionnaire but did not agree to be interviewed. Nevertheless, future research should be undertaken on a small number of these companies by using an in-depth, and possibly longitudinal, investigation.

Secondly, this research used a questionnaire as the data collection method. There are some disadvantages associated with using this method. To overcome these disadvantages some procedures were undertaken such as: the questionnaires were distributed and collected by hand; the researcher sent the questionnaire directly to the general managers. In addition, this research focused on "what" and "how" questions and did not explore "why", via face to face interview or focus groups. Nevertheless, future research should take these methods into account in an attempt to answer the "why" question.

Thirdly, single, rather than multiple, respondents participated in this research. The researchers were not able to get multiple respondents because of the wishes of some companies to receive just one questionnaire. Nevertheless, future research should include line managers, such as marketing, financial, planning and administrative managers, to get a clearer picture about the situation inside the company.

Regardless of these limitations, this paper does provide findings which help to understand the extent of the practice of strategic planning in Jordanian companies. However, a number of questions have arisen as a result of this research which need further clarification.

First of all, the results regarding the extent of the practice of the implementation of strategic planning show that there is a need for further research in relation to the role of line managers in improving strategic planning implementation in companies.

Secondly, the study of the problems associated with strategy implementation does not attract enough interest from strategy authors in general, and in developing countries in particular. However, it is important for further research, particularly in developing countries, to answer a number of questions, such as: to what extent are the problems associated with the implementation of strategic planning experienced by highly successful companies and less successful companies? In addition, is there any difference between the companies which plan formally and those which plan informally in the extent to which they experience the problems associated with the implementation of strategic planning?

The findings of this paper lead to a number of recommendations which can be used to improve strategic planning implementation in Jordanian companies. In particular, companies could enhance strategic planning by allowing suitable time for its implementation; by improving the quality of the training of their employees; by undertaking an in-depth analysis to be aware of the unexpected problems that appear during implementation; by enhancing the communication between top management; and by increasing the involvement of line managers.

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