

Platform Leadership: How Intel, Microsoft, and Cisco Drive Industry Innovation

by Annabelle Gawer and Michael A. Cusumano

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Breadth of Audience: 2.50 (Fair)

Topical Utility: 3.33 (Good)

Content Applicable: 3.25 (Good)

Writing Quality: 3.44 (Good)

Overall: 3.13 (Good)

COMMENTS FROM THE REVIEWERS:

1. A very good attempt to summarize the important issues in IT platform leadership—a very broad and strategic subject. It is clear that the book is a result of many detailed researches on the evolution of those platform leaders, particularly Intel. The four levers framework was well set and has been consistently used throughout the various case studies. The book is also technologically just right and up-to-date.

The only minor comments: First, a stronger financial perspective to the case studies would help to complete the scope of the book—how platform leadership affects the various decisions made during the evolution, what it means from financial angles, how it affects share price, etc.

Second, for a book of 300 pages, there are only ten tables and lists (in Chapters 3, 5, and 6) describing the facts and figures of the companies discussed. It would also help to have more figures (such as Mind-Maps, etc.) to explain various conceptual and strategy issues involved in achieving platform leadership.

2. This is another beautiful book that Michael Cusumano gives to us, this time working together with Annabelle Gawer. Scholars make an in-depth analysis of what is happening in some high tech industries to find variables that explain the success of firms that are platform leaders. In simple words, a high-tech platform is an evolving system made of interdependent pieces that can be innovated upon. From a long, rich on-site research at INTEL, the authors are able to identify four levers that allowed the firm to achieve platform leadership: scope of the firm, product technology, relationships with external complementors, and internal organizational structures.

Firms that are successful platform leaders can exert a strong influence in orchestrating innovation not only inside their own industries, but also in the industries of firms that produce and use complementary products. Not all industries offer the possibility to implement platform leadership strategies to the firms. What should occur is that a product has a limited value if used alone, but it becomes more valuable if used together with complementary products.

Academics, students, executives, professional consultants, and entrepreneurs in high-tech arenas would benefit from this book. This work sheds light on how competition is evolving in many high-tech arenas and gives insights about how firms can drive technological and business innovation, shaping their business environment in interconnected industries. Platform leadership and complementary innovation are not things that happen spontaneously in an industry, according to the authors, but managers make them happen, if they know what to do and how to do it.

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