

BUSINESS CASES FOR INFO PROS: HERE'S WHY, HERE'S HOW

Ulla de Stricker, *Information Today, Inc.*, 2008, ISBN 978-1-57387-335-2

reviewed by John Azzolini, Clifford Chance LLP, New York, NY

Increasingly, librarians have been grappling with the question of business legitimacy. Confronted with cost-cutting across institutions, changing client expectations about the availability and use of information, and the specter of outsourcing, they are understandably seeking justification for their budgets as well as their own value to their parent organizations. They struggle against the image that the library is not much more than a cost center. They feel the necessity to talk the business talk if they are to advance in an evolving occupational world. However, many librarians are inexperienced with this approach. They usually are not called on to use it in a formal manner, so they are unfamiliar with its vocabulary and underlying dynamics.

With her *Business Cases for Info Pros: Here's Why, Here's How*, Ulla de Stricker offers a means to engage this untried situation with foresight and well-versed methods. It's a highly practical primer on the whys and hows of applying a business case document in the pursuit of approval for proposed projects and new purchases. Even before the current financial crisis, I would have found this book to be extremely valuable. Now it seems an essential resource to lead one forward through the hard times, where the bottom line and a solid business sense determine organizational priorities.

The author distills her knowledge as an established consultant to the information industry to give the reader concentrated insights and caveats. The book is short (102 pages) and relies heavily on charts and bullet points, but like a good business case document itself, it makes effective use of space. It's succinct and well-informed and keeps the reading eye moving effortlessly. While perusing the guide's eight chapters, I couldn't help but feel that de Stricker knows what she's talking about, and that making this purchase for my bookshelf was an excellent investment.

The Introduction sets down key observations the author has garnered while working with information professionals who sought approval for new outlays. She establishes the reasoning behind the book's coming into being: to assist knowledge workers in making "a convincing case and an attention-getting presentation" so that this will "assure decision makers of the return—financial or otherwise—that they will realize on their approval and investment" (p.viii).

Chapter 1 addresses the decision-making context. De Stricker puts forth a definition of a business case, making it clear that she refers to the document or instrument behind the justification, rather than the justification itself. She explores the why behind the creation of such a document by usefully distinguishing between decisions able to be made by ourselves and those to be made by

others, thereby necessitating the crafting of a proposal for approval. As the author emphasizes, when creating a business case for your bosses, you have to pay close attention to the integral WIIFT factor. That is, "What's In It For Them?" How do you get the decision-makers to jump on board? How do you persuade them that your proposal is in the best interests of the organization?

The significance of rationales when making financial investments is touched upon in Chapter 2, "Thinking About Money." The author cogently uses the scenarios of purchasing a new car and of licensing new information content to underscore the questions and justifications that are implicated when making a non-trivial investment.

In Chapter 3, de Stricker introduces a general approach to the business case. She briefly examines its elements, the overall process, the importance of input from relevant stakeholders, and guiding suggestions that will keep the document's intended audience "comfortable, secure, and oriented every step of the way" (p.25). Chapter 4 offers the marrow of the book, the actual segments of the business case document, from executive summary through appendices. In table format, each section contains key points to include and comments and examples. Here, the book's pragmatic core is evident. De Stricker stresses the importance of paying heed to your organization's distinct culture. A document's style and content will be strongly shaped by the norms, expectations, and complexity of one's specific company. It's also vital to compellingly set down your proposal's drivers - its PNO's - "the problem to be resolved, the need to be filled, or the opportunity to be pursued" (p.31). If your organizational culture is more amenable to shorter formats, Chapter 5 covers the business case memorandum.

Chapter 6 presents three case studies that will be familiar to many readers. In forty pages, the author soundly demonstrates the practical application of her framework. The situations of hiring an outside consultant, hiring a new librarian, acquiring key content, and licensing a news monitoring service are convincingly portrayed to bring out the many operational facets of standard business proposals in the information management context.

Two short concluding chapters offer recommendations for successful business presentations and highlight the sometimes forgotten significance of a document's visual appearance (i.e., its strategic use of fonts, spacing, special effects, and color).

The library literature seems to be growing with exhortations to embrace quantitative measures of worth. Such articles do extend relevant advice, at least as it

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ISSUES IN COMPETITION LAW AND POLICY

Wayne Dale Collins, Editor-in-Chief, American Bar Association Section of Antitrust Law, 2008, ISBN 978-1-60442-044-9

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Billed as the companion to both *Antitrust Law Developments* (6th edition) and *State Antitrust Practice and Statutes* (3rd edition), the three-volume set *Issues in Competition Law and Policy* provides both a comprehensive and complementary balance to the statutory and legal material included in those titles. Publication of this book was delayed by almost two years because it grew from one volume to three, which heightened the anticipation by those attorneys and economists who were aware of its upcoming release. Kathryn Fenton, Chair of the Section of Antitrust Law, American Bar Association, underscores the importance of the inclusion of a wide-range of viewpoints, and notes that the book “reflects a variety of perspectives and approaches — the authors include policy makers, academics, economists, and lawyers.”

The framework of the three-volume set is organized to address the major areas of antitrust law and its evolution as perceived by the editor and authors. The articles address various questions about antitrust law and are categorized under broader themes. The focus of Volume I is jurisprudence and economic foundations of antitrust law. Its articles explore burden and standards of proof, the ideological origins and goals of antitrust, and competition policy. Market definition, structure and power, and the economics of monopsony, price discrimination, and barriers to entry are also discussed. Volume II investigates single firm conduct, cooperation among competitors, and mergers and acquisitions. Proving anticompetitive effects, market power and dominance, collusion, international

cartels, and the effects of horizontal, vertical, and conglomerate mergers are explored in-depth by the contributors. Finally, Volume III delves into the fundamentals of distribution, the intellectual property-antitrust law interface, and enforcement issues. While most of the authors concentrate on domestic issues, an examination of international antitrust policies is also included.

While the fundamentals of antitrust issues are deftly and thoroughly covered, there is also a richer social sciences and public policy context in which to read these articles. This title is more compelling and infinitely more readable than other purely technical books that only cover the nuts and bolts of antitrust law, because of the breadth of issues it covers, the wide audience for which it is intended, and the varying backgrounds and expertise of the authors who contributed to the compilation. Collins, the editor-in-chief, should be commended for selecting the right balance of issues and choosing authors whose in-depth knowledge of the subject matter is so well-regarded in their respective fields that the reader has confidence and trust in their interpretations. This title, like *Antitrust Law Developments*, is destined to evolve into future editions, as its target audience will be eager for more antitrust issues and policies to be addressed in the same thoughtful and insightful manner. This set should be included in the collection of any law firm with an antitrust practice.

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pertains to limited work settings. However, Ulla de Stricker’s *Business Cases for Info Pros* goes beyond this, not merely in length, but in applicability and versatility. Its observations and language are flexible enough to be spot-on for most professionals looking for budgetary or investment justification. As a publication centering on “the business case,” one might think it is meant primarily for librarians in the for-profit sector. This would be a mistaken assumption. I highly recommend it as a basic strategic asset for all information pros.