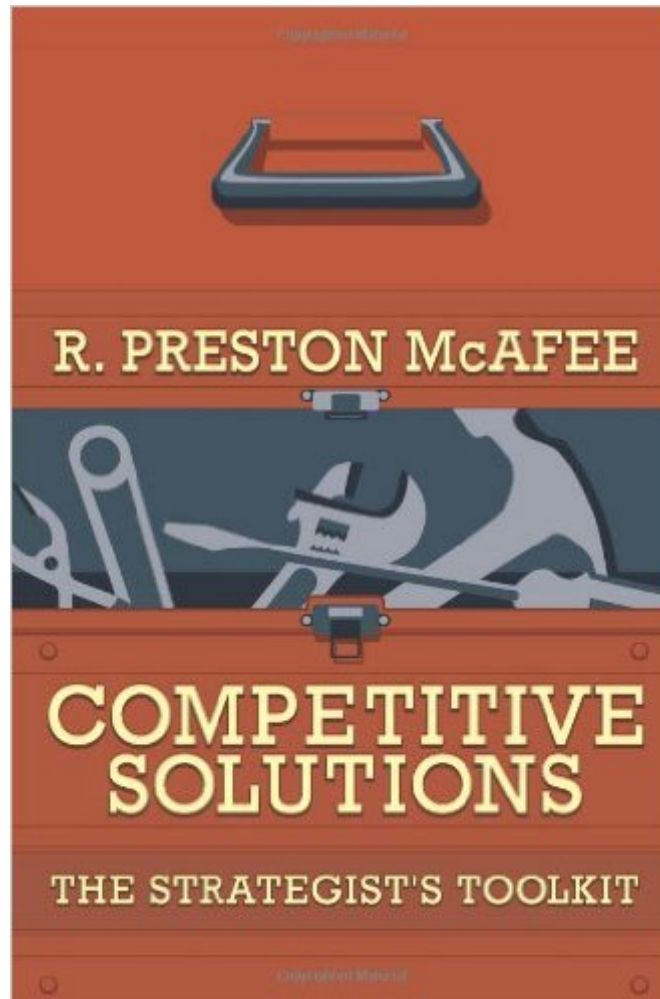


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# Competitive Solutions: The Strategist's Toolkit



## **Synopsis**

Competitive Solutions is an entertaining and wideranging introduction to successful business methods applied to a variety of real-world situations. Rejecting the one-size-fits-all premise that underlies so many guides to business strategy, Preston McAfee develops the intellectual tools and insights needed to confront many marketplace problems. Drawing on his broad experience as a consultant for major U.S. companies, as well as extensive research, McAfee emphasizes cooperation, pricing, litigation, and antitrust as vital to a firm's competitive posture--and focuses more attention on these elements than do most business strategy accounts. McAfee begins by considering strategy as successfully applied by America OnLine, an example that introduces many of the tools discussed in greater depth throughout the book. From here he moves to industry analysis: By examining the context for developing a strategy, he points out uses of positioning and differentiation that enable a firm to weaken price competition and deter rivals from stealing customers. McAfee's exploration of a product's life cycle proves an invaluable guide to positioning new technology in order to maximize the potential for future customers. In the centerpiece of the book, McAfee lays out a how-to manual for cooperation, providing tactics crucial for setting standards, lobbying the government, and fostering industry growth. Writing in a conversational manner, McAfee also addresses such deep topics as organizational design and employee compensation and incentives. More detailed discussions examine antitrust enforcement, which is an increasingly important constraint on strategy, as well as strategies for pricing, bidding, signaling, and bargaining. This book is a fascinating examination of modern business strategy and its application in many different settings. Students of business and economics--as well as executives and managers--will recognize Competitive Solutions as an indispensable resource as well as a definitive vision of the strategic firm: one in which each element of company strategy reinforces the other elements.

## **Book Information**

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## Customer Reviews

The best description I can come up with is "MBA in a book." However I think that title has been applied to many books of much less quality so I need something better. McAfee provides an "in-depth introduction" to business economics, including competition (as the name implies), pricing strategy, statistics, industry analysis, organizational design, incentives, and more. For anyone looking to get their feet wet in business, or just to understand what the marketing and business guys are talking about (or think they're talking about), this book is excellent! If you're looking for a fluffly book with executive summaries, this is not the book for you. If you want a book packed with content that will improve your nascent business acumen, this is it.

McAfee's book arose out of teaching and his consulting work. He believes strategy normally does not receive enough emphasis on pricing, litigation/antitrust, and the need for a company's vision to be unique. The book is an attempt to replace Porter's seminal work, but doesn't accomplish that. Moreover, some of his examples are badly dated - eg. the excessive praise for AOL in its opening chapter.

Preston was one of my professors way back at the University of Western Ontario. I admired his work then and I see he has maintained and exceeded that high level since. From an economist's world view looking at the business literature much of what I read does not speak to me in terms that are immediately obvious. Preston's work resonates with me because he is coming from a game theory, mathematical, statistical and economic world view. As a current executive MBA student I have found Preston's telling of the core concepts easy to digest and sensible. I recommend this book, well done Preston.

I'm an entrepreneur and engineering exploring management consulting at the moment. I can only think of good things to say. You will at the very least get ideas about improving your business if you read this book. The book is packed with insights. I'd say this book is something to read and keep on

the bookshelf for future reference.

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