

## **Book Review**

**Senathiraja, R., Kapiyangoda, K., and Rajishtha De Alwis Seneviratne,**  
**Entrepreneurial and Strategic Behaviour of Award-Winning**  
**Entrepreneurs in Sri Lanka, 2020, Kumaran Book House, Sri Lanka,**  
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**S. Buvanendra\***

Department of Finance, University of Colombo

*\*Corresponding Author: bkshanthi@dfn.cmb.ac.lk*

### **Introduction**

Being an entrepreneur is a challenging task in the business world. For an aspiring entrepreneur who wishes to learn the secrets behind the successful entrepreneurs or great founders, the book on ‘Strategic Behaviour of Award-Winning Entrepreneurs in Sri Lanka’ is a brilliant compilation of five valuable stories. It is an essential book in this milieu since few books have been published on successful local entrepreneurs. Strategic Behaviour of Award-Winning Entrepreneurs has its uniqueness in its content, the way of presentation of cases, format and curious information provided in the selected cases. The book predominantly explains the own-stories of such great entrepreneurs and their journey to success and finally winning awards instead of restricting to general theories of entrepreneurship. The hands-on narration of each of the cases takes the reader along each step, some of which are strategies the businessman has taken in critical situations and thus the reader can have practical experience on how to face situations. Among the academics, it is these authors who have pioneered the exploration of the sense of business spirit and visionary approach in order to recognise the innovative thinking that has been established. Furthermore, the central message of the author is that the entrepreneurial culture as well as leadership qualities are vital for both the success and sustainability of the business entity.

## **Content**

This comprises two parts. Part 1 contains five stories of award-winning entrepreneurs in Sri Lanka, representing two cases from the manufacturing industry, two from the construction industry, and one in the software industry. It illustrates who they are, how they have become successful, their traits, strategies and implementation, challenges, and how they inculcated an innovative culture in their organizations. The five cases are carefully selected to support the strategic behaviors in their business journey of uplifting entrepreneurial culture in the context. Based on material collected through personal interviews, these stories depict the motivation for starting entrepreneurial ventures not limited to the need to supplement income but increasingly from fulfilling a need for creative expression and individual growth. Part 2 discusses the findings of cases under entrepreneurial leadership qualities, challenges and lessons learnt in order to give insights to scholars, entrepreneurs and policymakers. The review is structured taking into consideration each of the five cases researched. Each case is approached based on vision, mission, and values; historical background and turning points; development of the business and entrepreneurial culture; strategies and best business practices; lessons learn and sustainable growth. These are highlighted and discussed as critical areas specific to each case.

### **Case 1: Dr Nayana Dehigama (Epic Technology Group)**

The authors surprised me with a comprehensive illustration of Dr. Nayana Dehigama's distinctive ability to bring out the moment of failure in each of his seven attempts in his journey and how his decision to conquer the face-to-face failures catapulted his start-ups to highly successful enterprises on a global scale. The organization's strength has grown from four employees in 1998 to over 300 by the end of 2018, with international operations in Malaysia, Singapore, and Japan. Differentiation, innovation and internationalization are the key pillars of his victory.

### **Case 2: Mr Anurath Abeyratne (Korean SPA Packaging (Pvt) Ltd.)**

Mr A Abeyartane started with the ordinary beginning of his business, which grew to extraordinary accomplishments in his family-based business. He initially started this business with Rs. 500/= and had his father's support as well. His first business made Mr. Abeyratne a millionaire. However, this case is a perfect example of how an entrepreneur could overcome challenges and convert them into opportunities through his creative thinking and innovation in a more eco-friendly way, contributing to a more sustainable environment.

### **Case 3: Mr. Aelian Gunawardene (JAT Holdings (Pvt) Ltd)**

The story of Aelian Gunawardene has been genuinely inspirational since the age of twelve; his hard work, risk-taking ability, innovativeness, and entrepreneurial initiative turn his ideas into reality while facing many obstacles. Today, JAT is one of the leading private conglomerates in Sri Lanka. In the last five years, JAT has been recognized as Sayerlack's number-one distributor worldwide. The secret behind his success is retaining customers by ensuring the highest quality branded product. Good governance practices and good human resource management to build a strong culture towards an entrepreneurial mindset within the company augmented the business victory. This story is reassuring for all young and growing entrepreneurs worried about the potential risks of entrepreneurship on their family life.

### **Case 4: Mr. Shehan Seneviratne (SMS Holdings (Pvt) Ltd.)**

Mr. Shehan Seneviratne achieved long term success by taking small steps initially. He started SMS Holdings in 2001 and is now the Chairman and Managing Director of several companies he established under the SMS Holdings Group. His proactive thinking, entrepreneurial orientation and timely strategic implementation helped him become a leading company in the pavement sector of the construction industry. The priority for quality, customer-centric approach, team spirit, and employee trust are the stepping stones to becoming the market leader and even expanding to the South Asian region.

### **Case 5: Mr. Ruwan Edirisinghe (RN Constructions (Pvt) Ltd.)**

Mr. Ruwan Edirisinghe, a civil engineer by profession who faced financial difficulties in his family life throughout, as such that he had to earn money even for his schooling. The fact that he collected rubber waste, coconut leaves, and coconut shells and sold them to shops is unbelievable which was behind his real story as an award winning-businessman. He stated that a positive attitude and passion are necessary to become an entrepreneur. His success is underwritten by the fact that the company now employs more than 3,000 staff, including 400 technical personnel. They possess more than 400 machineries and equipment and operate in 10 factories. This case is an excellent example for the university students to establish their career paths.

### **Evaluation**

This book sends a very strong signal to all the stakeholders of small and medium enterprises, particularly to future, aspiring, budding, young and growing entrepreneurs. The entrepreneurial power of the book is sensed as a reader's inquisitiveness is rekindled as it unfolds into different perspectives leading to the success of the entrepreneurial process as the reader moves from one story to another. Indeed, it is not easy for the reader to take off eyes from the beginning to the end of this book. The crucial common desire identified in the cases is the extraordinary courage to overcome challenges and timely strategies over their journeys, as traversed by winning entrepreneurs featured in the book. The authors also give a comprehensive analysis and discuss the secrets behind the success, with their potential strategic behaviour aligned to the entrepreneurial mindset and positive thinking. Despite their entrepreneurial experiences, it is also promising that many of the strategies followed by these entrepreneurs are connected with the existing body of knowledge, which are compiled as real cases to learn and practice quickly. The authors are more than generous in their tribute to entrepreneurial awardees, and have made a few suggestions for improvement.

## **Conclusion**

This is an exciting book written in lucid language and compiled in a coherent manner. Greater emphasis is placed on the 'hands-on' entrepreneurial experiences. These could be used as blueprints to elicit the strategic behaviours which lead to the success of the businesses. This book will be undoubtedly enlightening to students, academics, scholars and later on the wider public. This is underwritten by a worthy contribution, pragmatism and insights into the success stories of these entrepreneurs. To sum it up. *'Truth is well said'*.

