

Obituary

Igor Ansoff, the father of strategic management

Dr Igor Ansoff, 83, known affectionately as the father of strategic management, died of complications from pneumonia in San Diego, California, on 14 July 2002.

Following a career that took him all round the world, he taught for 17 years at the US International University in San Diego before retiring two years ago as a Distinguished Professor Emeritus. Known for coining the term '*strategic management*', he was acclaimed for his management theories. An applied mathematician, he shifted his emphasis in the 1950s while employed by the Rand Corporation. In 1956, he was employed as planning specialist for Lockheed Aircraft Corporation where he gained practical experience in analysing the complexities of a business environment. At Lockheed he became Vice President of Planning and Director of Diversification.

'Through strategic management, Dr Ansoff transformed revolutionary concepts of discontinuous change, turbulence and uncertainty into tools that offer success and prosperity to organizations throughout the world', stated Dr Peter Antoniou, Principal of Ansoff Associates who also lectures at Mount St Mary's College in Los Angeles.

Born in Vladivostok, Russia, in 1918 amid the chaos of the Russian Revolution, Ansoff emigrated to the United States with his family. In New York, he attended Stuyvesant High School, majoring in science. He studied General Engineering at the Stevens Institute of Technology and received his Master of Science degree. Following Stevens Institute, he studied at Brown University where he received a Masters degree in applied mathematics. After moving to California he joined UCLA in the Senior Executive Program. During World War II and into 1946, he was a member of the US Naval Reserve, and served as a liaison with the Russian Navy and as an instructor in physics at the US Naval Academy.

Professionally, Ansoff is known worldwide for his research in three specific areas: the concept of environmental turbulence, the contingent strategic success paradigm, and real-time strategic management. He created a network of students and contacts at

major corporations over the years to validate his research. He consulted with many multinational corporations including Philips, General Electric, Gulf, IBM, Sterling Europa, Westinghouse, and KBB in the Netherlands.

In a published article, Ansoff simplified his management thinking about strategy into two sentences:

The key to strategy is recognizing that if a company is functioning, it is part of the environment. . . . when a Manager understands the environment and recognizing that the environment is constantly changing, then the manager can make the correct decisions in leading the organizations into the future.

Ansoff theorized that if a company becomes purely self-serving, it soon loses track of its direction and dies. He believed in long-term profitability results from a commitment to understanding the political and social fabric of a community.

His written works include *Corporate Strategy* published in 1965; *Business Strategy* in 1969; *Strategic Management* in 1984; *The Firm: Meeting the Legacy Challenge* in 1986; *The New Corporate Strategy* in 1989, and more than 120 other published papers and articles translated into eight languages. Ansoff was the principal contributing author to this journal in its first year of publication.

To honour his body of work Coopers and Lybrand (now Price-WaterhouseCoopers) established the prestigious 'Igor Ansoff Award' in 1981 in The Netherlands. It is given for research and management in the study of Strategic Planning and Management. The Japan Strategic Management Society has also established an annual award in his name and Vanderbilt University has established an Ansoff MBA scholarship.

The Ansoff Institute was founded in 2002 to continue his work in the field of strategic management in developing and translating strategic management technologies into practical applications.