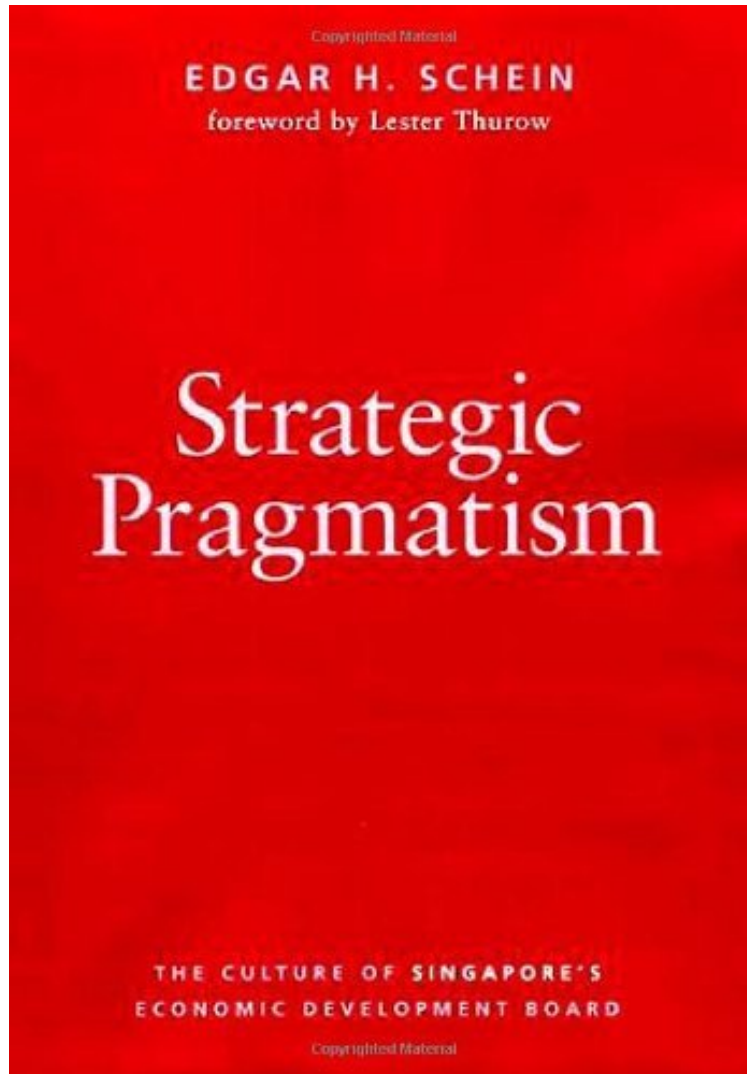


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# Strategic Pragmatism: The Culture of Singapore's Economics Development Board (Organization Studies)

*Edgar H. Schein*

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**Edgar H. Schein : Strategic Pragmatism: The Culture of Singapore's Economics Development Board (Organization Studies)** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Strategic Pragmatism: The Culture of Singapore's Economics Development Board (Organization Studies):

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Fantastic book! Would highly recommend it By patrick j. below Fantastic book! Would highly recommend it. 5 of 5 people found the following review helpful. The revelation for the first time how Singapore's leaders pick top brains to run the various government bodies, like the EDB! By Lee Say

## Keng STRATEGIC PRAGMATISM: THE CULTURE OF SINGAPORE'S ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

BOARD by Dr Edgar Schein This book documents the culture of Singapore's Economic Development Board (EDB), a quasi-government body set up in the early sixties to spearhead the country's attraction for foreign investment. It sheds light on how Singapore within the space of thirty-five years could be transformed from a fairly impoverished underdeveloped country with per capita of US\$500 into a modern city state that today stays at the forefront of the world's most competitive economies. Today, Singapore's per capita income exceeds US\$25,000. More precisely, this book tracks the creation development of the EDB, its leadership management structure, its human resource policies its influences over other organisations within the Singapore government. The book also intertwines the many perspectives of Singapore's leaders who created the board, the current former EDB board members, business-people who have dealt with the board, more importantly, the major investor clients from North America, Europe elsewhere. What strikes me most about this book, at the time when I read it during the mid-nineties, is the revelation for the first time how Singapore's leaders, specifically Lee Kuan Yew (Singapore's Prime Minister from the early sixties to early nineties) pick top brains to run the various government ministries as well as statutory bodies, like the EDB. EDB's top brains include the late Hon Sui Sen (whom Lee Kuan Yew reluctantly lent to Dr Goh Keng Swee to develop run the EDB in the early years), I F Tang, Chan Chin Bok, Ngiam Tong Dow, P Y Hwang Philip Yeo. (Philip Yeo masterminded the US\$4 billion Jurong Island complex, in which seven offshore islands were linked with imported landfill to form a huge new industrial area. Currently, as chairman of Singapore's National Science Technology Board, he is positioning Singapore to excel at what he believes is the next big thing: life sciences bioengineering.) From the book, I learned that Lee Kuan Yew (at the time the book was researched written, he was Senior Minister in the Singapore cabinet; currently, he is Minister Mentor to the Singapore cabinet) has used the H-A-I-R module to pick his candidates. He has adopted this human resource module from the Royal Dutch-Shell Group, a global energy petrochemical company that has also pioneered the application of scenario planning in long-term strategy formulation. (Shell is the world's second largest oil company after ExxonMobil owns the first oil refinery in Singapore. Today, Shell is acknowledged as Singapore' first 'Distinguished Partner in Progress'.) For the benefit of readers, here is the H-A-I-R module (Lee Kuan Yew has specifically pointed out that he has wanted all four qualities in the people who he selected, as follows): H = Helicopter ability: the ability to rise above the immediate scene see it from a total overall perspective; A = Analytical ability; I = Imagination: the ability to see things from new creative perspectives; R = Realism: having one's feet firmly placed on the ground; Furthermore, from the book, I also learned that Lee Kuan Yew has mandated that the entire civil service in Singapore adopt the HAIR module distribute the booklet describing the system in detail to every. He has even asked Shell to train people in the use of the system. Though EDB does not use the system explicitly, these qualities are sought in the recruits. The other interesting revelation by the book is the fact that EDB has embraced readily the concept of itself as a 'learning organisation' during the mid-nineties, drawing much inspiration from Peter Senge's systems thinking perspectives. On the whole, 'Strategic Pragmatism', has been an interesting inspirational read for me. [Readers who are interested to find out more about how EDB picked their 'road warriors' - EDB's international centre directors, who roamed the entire globe, more specifically North America Europe, to scout, cajole attract foreign investors to Singapore, their 'war stories' - should read Chan Chin Bok (former EDB Chairman)'s 'Heart Work: Singapore Economic Development Board EDB Society'. Another interesting inspirational read!] 9 of 9 people found the following review helpful. A case study by a world authority on organizational culture By Bill Godfrey A detailed case study of a unique experiment in development cooperation between a nation state and business, focused on the body at the centre of the development strategy. Written by a leading expert on organisational culture. It is of interest both to students of organisational culture and for its relevance to globalisation. Two groups of readers who will be interested in this 1997 study of Singapore's Economic Development Board (EDB). The EDB has been Singapore's chosen instrument for development and implementation of its policies to become a very successful player in a globalised world. Its strategies and practices are of more than passing interest to anyone interested in dealing successfully with globalisation. Both the discussion of the factors in the EDB's success and the discussion of the problems and issues that it - and by extension Singapore - faces make an extremely illuminating case study that, by virtue of EDB's role, incorporates national, governmental and enterprise perspectives. The book also makes an interesting case study of other criteria for successful globalisation identified by both Thurow: Building Wealth and Friedman: The Lexus and the Olive Tree. Second, students of organisational culture are offered a thorough and lucid account of how the person who is arguably the world's foremost authority on organisational culture went about studying a major organisation in the context of a wider societal culture with which he was not wholly familiar.

foreword by Lester Thurow Per capita income in Singapore has gone from \$500 to more than \$20,000 in a little over twenty-five years. Edgar Schein, a social psychologist with a long and celebrated research interest in organizational studies, examines the cultural history of the key institution that spawned this economic miracle. Through interviews and full access to Singapore's Economic Development Board (EDB), Schein shows how economic development was successfully promoted. He delves into the individual relationships and the overall structure that contributed to the EDB's effectiveness in propelling Singapore, one of Asia's "little dragons" into the modern era. In his foreword, Lester

Thurrow locates Schein's organizational and case-specific account within a larger economic and comparative framework. Over a period of two years, Schein studied how the EDB was created, the kind of leadership it provided, the management structure it used, the human resource policies it pursued, and how it influenced other organizations within the Singapore government. Schein sat in on EDB meetings and extensively interviewed current and former members of the board, Singapore's leaders who created the board, and businesspeople who have dealt with the board. His book intertwines the perspective of the board's members and its investor clients in an analysis that uses both organization and cross-cultural theory. Although there are currently studies of comparable Japanese and Korean organizations, this is the first detailed analysis of the internal structure and functioning of the economic development body of Singapore, a key player in the Asian and world markets.

"Schein's readers will find in this book a source of inspiration: the simple fact that good management works. In addition to its theoretical and practical strengths, Strategic Pragmatism is particularly relevant for cross-cultural understanding. Western business managers, corporate executives, government agencies and international organizations' officers have lacked books which clinically analyse the anatomy, physiology and psychology of Asian, non-Japanese organizations. This book clearly fills part of the gap." Philippe Lasserre, Professor of Strategy and Management, INSEAD Euro Asia Centre "Ed Schein's truly original book recreates the cultural history of a key institution which made possible the "miracle" of Singapore, one of East Asia's "little dragons." As far as I know, there is nothing to compare with what Schein has done in this study. Through detailed interviewing and full access to Singapore's Economic Development Board (EDB) records, Schein has vividly illuminated the workings of the organization which provided leadership in transforming Singapore into a dynamic industrial city and a financial center for the world economy." Lucian W. Pye, Professor of Political Science, MIT. About the Author Edgar H. Schein is Professor Emeritus and Senior Lecturer, the Sloan School of Management, Massachusetts Institute of Technology.