

THE AUSTRALIAN FINANCIAL REVIEW

TUESDAY, JULY 7, 1987

Sydney 282 2833, Editorial 282 2822, Melbourne 604 3666, Perth 481 5888, Canberra 73 1445, Adelaide 212 1212, Brisbane 221 6266

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Aust management: is it good enough?

The answer? Well, we're learning — slowly.

The search for "excellence", and other management fads of the 1970s and early 1980s, are past. These days Australian managers are being forced by tough times at home and their moves offshore to get down to the real issues of establishing and implementing strategy.

The Australian Financial Review has investigated the way Australian companies formulate their strategic plans

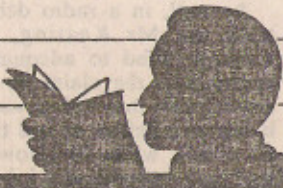
and has found some major changes.

The focus of business is switching to what happens outside the organisation, in its markets, to its competitors and with government regulation.

Just 10 years ago only the really large Australian organisations, like BHP, or the local branches of multinationals developed a corporate strategy.

And then it was mostly

IN SEARCH OF COMPETENCE



A three-part series on Australian management
by JOHN TILSTON. Starts today on page 34

restricted to "dog and pony shows", where groups of senior staff managers respon-

sible for planning trotted out a series of platitudes about the environment and where the

company was going.

Life was easier then. But since the Whitlam Government removed the first bricks from the protective wall which shielded Australian industry from world competition, the need for a clear sense of direction and a notion of how to get there has been steadily growing.

It has focused Australian executives' minds on real management issues, establishing clear and definitive strate-

gies, rather than following international fashions.

In the process Australians are coming up with their management styles, which in many cases, stand up with the best run companies in the world. Unfortunately, though, many other Australian corporations are still found wanting, living in a past when it didn't matter so much.

These days, Australia will only be the lucky country if it is well managed.