

**"AN EMPIRICAL INVESTIGATION OF
MANUFACTURING STRATEGIES IN EUROPEAN
INDUSTRY"**

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IN EUROPEAN INDUSTRY**

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Abstract

The need for the development of a manufacturing strategy has been stressed greatly over the last decennium. Few authors have however attempted to define generic manufacturing strategies. Roth and Miller have proposed an empirical approach to determine manufacturing strategies on the basis of a North American sample. In this paper we apply their method on a European sample in order to determine the robustness of their results both over time and in different geographical regions. The proposed method proves to be useful, but does not lead to generic strategies for both Europe and North America. This may be explained by bias in the samples or by differences between the strategies of European and North American firms. For the European sample the results prove to be stable over time. We can distinguish three categories: high performance products manufacturers, manufacturing innovators and a marketing oriented group of manufacturers.

keywords : manufacturing strategy, generic strategies

1. Introduction

Over the last decade the strategic role of manufacturing has received more attention in the operations management literature. This increased attention is partly due to the mounting awareness that manufacturing has an important role to play in improving the sustainable competitive advantage of the company or the industry. A team from M.I.T. came recently to the conclusion, on the basis of eight industry studies (Derouzos et al, 1989), that the revival of the U.S. industry must come from a fresh look at the production system, a new industrial paradigm as they called it. If manufacturing has a strategic role to play, it is conceivable that a company goes beyond using manufacturing as a tool to implement a wider business strategy, and that it develops a manufacturing strategy proper.

The content of a manufacturing strategy was probably first defined by Skinner's seminal work (1966) and further refined by Buffa (1984), Schmenner (1982), Hill (1985), Wheelwright (1978, 1981). In particular Hayes, Wheelwright and Clark (Hayes and Wheelwright, 1984; Hayes, Wheelwright and Clark, 1988) have made an important contribution in analysing the role of manufacturing in relation to the other functions of the company and the determinants of what a manufacturing strategy consists of. Although most of this work is clear in defining the components of a manufacturing strategy, it does not attempt to (and probably does not intend to) explore whether one can define generic manufacturing strategies. Most of the work on manufacturing strategy discusses the need to make trade-offs between different capabilities (Skinner, 1978), the need for focus (Skinner, 1974), lists the categories of decisions and policies (Wheelwright, 1978; Schmenner, 1979; De Meyer and Ferdows, 1987), or emphasizes the change in manufacturing strategy according to the life-cycle (Hill, 1985). Few papers actually define the content of a manufacturing strategy, or take a position in determining which manufacturing strategies are superior.

Hayes and Wheelwright define four stages in the development of manufacturing's strategic role (1984). In their classification the third and fourth stages are the ones where manufacturing is either derived from a business strategy, or is aggressively used to build corporate competence. These two stages appear to be based on superior manufacturing strategies.

But what it precisely takes to be in stage three or four, and how one gets there is treated in a fairly general way in their papers.

Roth and Miller (1989) have attempted to determine whether generic manufacturing strategies exist and what their content is. They performed their analysis on the basis of the North American Manufacturing Futures Survey database. In this paper we intend to use their methodology to explore whether (i) we can derive some generic manufacturing strategies for the European manufacturing companies, (ii) to what extent these strategies are similar to the North American ones, and (iii) whether there is any indication about the success of these generic strategies.

2. Generic Manufacturing Strategies

From the onset of the study of manufacturing strategy practitioners have asked whether one could derive a set of internally coherent or generic manufacturing strategies, which could lead to successful performance. The existence of generic strategies, as proposed by Porter (1980) for the general business strategy of the firm has been doubted by some, and in particular scholars have developed an alternative view on the existence of across industry generic strategies (Dierickx and Cool, 1989). On the other hand Van Lommel and De Brabander (1983) or Jacquemin et al (1980) have shown that industry classifications do not matter in order to describe a company's performance, and that only the intrinsic characteristics and strategy of the firm can explain performance.

The manufacturing community has always more or less accepted the existence of differentiated manufacturing strategies. One of the many contributions made by Skinner (1969) is the idea of manufacturing missions. He asserts that companies can pursue different types of manufacturing missions such as quality, cost efficiency, flexibility or dependability. Although these missions are not mutually exclusive, Skinner indicated that a company cannot pursue these different missions with equal vigour in the same factory and that the company will have to choose with which priority and with which emphasis the different missions will be implemented. Miller (1983) proposed a set of seven missions, and argues basically the same case for making trade-offs. Consequently one could derive from this line of thought that in manufacturing, these different

missions could be the nucleus of generic manufacturing strategies: low cost manufacturing, high quality manufacturing, highly flexible manufacturing and highly dependable manufacturing.

The need to make trade-offs has come under some attack over the last decade. Practice has shown that some companies have pursued successfully combinations of these missions. It is generally accepted these days that low cost manufacturing and high quality manufacturing do not have to exclude each other, and that in contrast pursuing high quality is the basis for the creation of other strengths such as low costs or dependability (Ferdows et al, 1989). De Meyer et al (1989) have suggested that in addition in most recent years the combination of low cost and high flexibility manufacturing is vigorously developed by some of the world's excellent manufacturing companies.

A different approach to determining generic manufacturing strategies is based on the idea of technological life-cycles as proposed by Utterback and Abernathy (1975) and Abernathy (1978). Simplifying, one can say that this work leads to two types of approaches in manufacturing: one based on creating flexibility (in the earlier stages of the technological life-cycle), and one based on creating efficiency in the later stages of the technological life-cycle. Hill's (1985) life-cycle planning sees a shift from product to process to product focus in the plant design, which is somewhat similar to ideas of a technological life-cycle.

A third contribution to the determination of generic manufacturing strategies was made by Stobaugh and Telesio (1983) who derived on the basis of a review of 100 case studies, three groups of international manufacturers: cost, technology and market driven strategy groups.

Except for the last study most of the studies of manufacturing strategies were based on small sample case-based research. Roth and Miller (1989) have used the data collected in 1987 in the context of the American Manufacturing Futures project to empirically determine a taxonomy of manufacturing strategies, and this on a sample of 188 North-American companies. They follow Cool and Schendel's assertion (1987) that to determine strategic groups at the business level one should use two sets of elements: scope of the business and resource commitments.

In order to cluster the respondents' manufacturing strategies Roth and Miller used competitive priorities in manufacturing for the next five years, as expressed by senior manufacturing managers, as an operationalisation of scope. The relative emphasis placed on manufacturing action plans were used as an operationalisation of resource commitments. In their results they distinguish three groups, which they call caretakers, marketeers and innovators. Caretakers tend to compete on price and place relatively low emphasis on modern production improvement methods.

Marketeers seek to obtain broader distribution, to offer broader product lines, and to be responsive to changing volume requirements. These marketeers plan on strengthening their manufacturing operations through infra-structural changes, such as worker motivation programmes, job enlargement and enrichment, and intend to attack quality problems.

Innovators place emphasis on their ability to make quick changes in the product design, and focus as well on providing high performance products. To carry out their strategic orientations, the innovators' manufacturing strategy places more emphasis on CAD and developing new processes for new products. Roth and Miller found that though the taxonomy they propose is influenced by industry, it is not dominated by it, and applies to a broad number of competitive circumstances.

This work has the merit of proposing a method to determine generic manufacturing strategies in the framework suggested by Cool and Schendel. The groups they have derived coincide to a large extent with the groups proposed by Stobaugh and Telesio. But there is no guarantee or verification that the groups which they have determined are not the consequence of a bias in their sample, or of the particular economical situation of the year during which they have collected data. To check for some of these potential biases we propose to use their methodology and apply it to two sets of data collected through a similar survey administered in Europe.

3. Methods and Sample

The data for this study were obtained from the European Manufacturing Futures Survey (Ferdows and De Meyer, 1988; and De Meyer

and Ferdows,1990), (1). The questionnaire which is used to collect the data has three sections which are relevant to this analysis. The first set relates to the competitive priorities or capabilities which the respondents think will be important over the next five years to compete in their industry. The importance measures indicate the relative importance (on a seven point scale) attributed to each capability that the manufacturing firm chooses to emphasize in appealing to customers and competing in the market place. The nine capabilities are similar to those suggested by Buffa (1984), Skinner (1969, 1985) and Hayes and Wheelwright (1984), (see table 1).

The second set of data are demographic data about the business unit, such as investments in R&D, growth rates, profitability, etc. The third set of data are a closed list of 37 action plans (table 2). In both 1987 and 1988 we asked companies what was the relative emphasis that they had placed in the last year and would place on each of these action plans in the coming five years. The set of action plans is obviously non-exhaustive, but is the result of brainstorming by the researchers involved in the project. As such it is probably a satisfactory closed list of potential action programmes in manufacturing. The participants could indicate their relative priorities of emphasis for past and future action programmes in 1987 and future action programmes in 1988 on a seven point self-anchoring scale, where 1 indicates no importance and 7 indicates critically important. For the past action programmes for 1988, the respondent was simply asked to indicate whether or not a significant emphasis had been placed on the particular action programme.

Insert Table 1 about here

Insert Table 2 about here

Roth and Miller have proposed to use the competitive priorities to cluster the respondents in a limited number of groups. To interpret the groups, they use cluster results plus the differences in emphasis between the groups placed on the action programmes. In Cool and Schendel's

framework the scope of the business unit is thus used to do the initial clustering, while the scope and resource commitments are used to interpret the cluster results. This method assumes thus a certain hierarchy between scope and resource commitments. Although this is not completely in agreement with the strategic framework Roth and Miller have adopted, it follows the traditional Skinner framework that argues that the relation between manufacturing policies (i.e. the action plans) and the business strategy is a hierarchical one, with the manufacturing missions (i.e. the competitive priorities) as intervening variables (Skinner, 1969).

The European sample consists of 225 observations in 1987, of which 211 were used, and of 184 observations in 1988 of which 176 were used. Some of the questionnaires were excluded because of largely incomplete data. The original panel to whom the questionnaire was sent, consisted of the 100 largest companies in each of the four major European industrial countries and the 50 largest manufacturing companies in the other European countries.

The samples are definitely not representative for the European industry as a whole. They are not biased either towards industries or to particular countries. As such they provide an interesting cross-section of European industry. The sample is however biased towards large companies, and towards the more profitable ones (De Meyer and Ferdows, 1990). If we assume that manufacturing makes a difference to the performance of a company, this implies that the generic strategies we eventually will derive, form perhaps an incomplete set. Our subset is indeed biased towards the more successful manufacturing strategies.

The method used to determine the clusters was the SAS Fastclus procedure applied to a pooled within-cluster covariance matrix determined through SAS AceCLUS. The differences between groups were tested on the competitive priorities with a Scheffe test. The reader can consult Roth and Miller (1989) for more details on the particular part of the statistical analysis. We used however more strict significance limits than they did. The significance of the differences in action plans and demographic data between the groups was tested with an ANOVA procedure, followed by a Tukey range test.

4. Identifying the Generic Strategies

4.1. Clustering

Clustering requires the researcher to determine the number of clusters. To keep comparability with the North American results, a similar set of criteria was used to determine the optimal number of clusters. Three types of criteria were used:

- (1) Lehmann's suggestion to keep the number of clusters between $n/30$ and $n/60$ where n is the sample size.
- (2) pronounced increases in the tightness of the clusters as measured by the pseudo F-statistic.
- (3) managerial interpretability of the clusters on the basis of the differences between the centroids. In that way we obtain for both 1987 and 1988 three clusters. The resultant clusters are described in table 3.

Insert Table 3 about here

If we take a conservative attitude and keep the 1% level of significance as a criterion, then neither low prices, nor volume flexibility contribute to an overall separation of the clusters. In 1988 conformance, speed of delivery and speed of production changes have no separating power either.

To make a first effort to interpret the three clusters we will use the differences between the clusters as measured by a Scheffe-test, as well as the absolute ranking of the competitive priorities in each group. The differences between the three clusters in 1987 on the basis of a Scheffe-test (5% significance level) can be summarised as follows:

- (a) Companies in cluster 1 score on the average significantly higher than cluster 3 on conformance, delivery dependability and broad product line. They score significantly lower than cluster 3 on performance.

- (b) Cluster 2 scores significantly higher than Cluster 1 on speed of new product development and broad product line. It also scores significantly higher than cluster 3 on conformance and delivery speed.
- (c) In absolute terms cluster 1 puts conformance, delivery dependability, delivery speed and speed of production changes on top, while performance is the lowest competitive priority.
- (d) Cluster 2 puts conformance, performance, delivery dependability and delivery speed high on the list. Low prices comes only at the eighth place in the rank order.
- (e) Cluster 3 puts conformance and performance on top, as well as speed of production plan changes and speed of delivery.

It appears that the second cluster is relatively more responsive and reliable. Although speed of new product development is not high on its list, it scores significantly higher than for the other clusters. The first cluster emphasizes consistency in quality and delivery, but clearly not performance. The third cluster is performance oriented, and emphasizes, in absolute terms, speed of delivery and adaptation to the customers' requests. Although quality conformance is high on the list, this cluster scores significantly lower on this competitive priority than the other clusters.

When we compare these findings with the results of the North American survey, then we can detect some similarity between cluster 2 and what Roth and Miller call the innovators. It is however difficult to assimilate clusters 1 and 3 with the caretakers, or with the marketeers.

The same analysis on the 1988 data leads to the following conclusions:

- (a) Companies in cluster 1 score significantly higher than companies in cluster 2 on speed of production plan changes, but they score lower than cluster 2 on performance.
- (b) Cluster 1 scores higher than cluster 3 on speed of new product development, volume flexibility and delivery speed. But the companies in cluster 1 score lower on performance and delivery dependability.
- (c) Cluster 2 scores higher than cluster 3 on speed of new product development, performance delivery speed and broad product line.

- (d) In absolute terms cluster 1 emerges in the 1988 data as one where performance is not so important, but where conformance, and in particular speed is very important. Speed of delivery, speed of production plan changes and speed of new product development indeed score high. Although for new product development this is only on a comparative basis with other clusters, not on an absolute basis.
- (e) Cluster 2, which is again the largest group, scores high on conformance, performance, delivery dependability, and in comparison with cluster 3, on speed of new product development.
- (f) The third cluster stand out by its similarity with the second cluster, except for the very low emphasis on speed of new product development.

The comparison with the U.S. results does not become easier. While cluster 2, which forms the biggest group, can with some goodwill be identified with the U.S. group of innovators, it becomes more difficult to see a lot of commonality between the two other European clusters and the group of caretakers and marketeers. One of the reasons for this is that in the European sample the emphasis on low prices as a competitive priority seems to be low all the time, and does not have any power to distinguish between the groups.

The comparison between the two clusterings in Europe shows a high stability. The items about which the groups differ significantly change somewhat, but the general picture remains unchanged. Speed of new product development, performance, delivery speed and broad product line have in both cases separating power. The most important difference is that conformance has separating power in 1987, but not in 1988. Apart from some insignificant switches, the rank order of the competitive priorities remains unchanged (2). The two clusters 1 stand out by a low emphasis on performance, and a high emphasis on conformance and speed. The two clusters 2 have both the largest "membership" and have an identical ranking of the competitive priorities, except for broad product line. They seem to emphasize quality both in consistency, performance and dependability. And compared to the others they put relatively more emphasis on the speed with which new products are developed. The third cluster stands out by its emphasis on performance.

Here we see from 1987 to 1988 a strong increase in the emphasis on delivery dependability. Discounting for some noise due to the fact that we have two unidentical samples, one finds a high stability in the clustering. If we had found the opposite result, we would have had some doubts about the instrument used, because one can safely assume that manufacturing strategies do not change dramatically from one year to another. The irreversibility of some of the investments in manufacturing are one of the reasons why one would expect this stability. That does not mean of course that an individual company or business unit could not review its manufacturing strategy, but one would not expect drastic changes for a large group of companies given the relative stability of the external environment in 1987-1988.

4.2 Further analysis of the clusters

In order to better understand the characteristics of the clusters we will now analyse how the three groups, which were derived for the 1987 and 1988 samples, allocate their management efforts. An Anova was used to find the action variables which were significantly influenced by the categorisation into clusters, and a Tukey range test was then used to find the pairwise difference between the individual clusters. For the 1988 past action variables a chi-square test was used. The results of these tests are summarised in table 4.

Insert Table 4 about here

In 1987 cluster 1 turns out to be a cluster which scores lower on a wide range of items than either one or both of the other clusters, except for the current market share. With respect to action plans they have some common characteristics with Roth and Millers's caretakers. They seem to defend a market share with means other than an aggressive manufacturing strategy. In terms of manufacturing they seem to simply rely on their dependability. They seem to invest less, comparatively speaking, in modern production systems or techniques.

The second and third clusters are more pronounced with respect to their manufacturing efforts. Compared with cluster 1, cluster 2 seems to have applied the newest ideas in operations management. They give more planning responsibility to their workers, they pursue zero defects and improved vendor quality, reduction of manufacturing and vendor lead times, have emphasized more strongly the capability of introducing new products, have developed more new processes for new products, and have invested more heavily in CAD, CAM, JIT, FMS and robots.

Comparing cluster 2 with cluster 3, the list is less long: a higher emphasis on worker safety, manufacturing lead time reduction and reconditioning of physical plants. The third cluster emphasizes more than the first cluster the investments in CAD, FMS, and invests more in R&D as a % of sales and envisions a higher growth in the proportion of new products to be introduced in the market as compared to previous years.

These differences in past action programmes are confirmed, though somewhat less pronounced, in the future action programmes. Cluster 2 emphasizes manufacturing and vendor lead time reduction more than cluster 1, and adds to the emphasis on worker safety and reconditioning of physical plants a higher emphasis on JIT and vendor quality, in comparison to cluster 3. Cluster 3 tends to emphasize FMS more than cluster 1.

For the 96 respondents that answered both in 1987 and 1988, we checked whether the differences in clusters had some impact on performance in 1988 or on the type of resource commitments, i.e. action plans pursued. The only performance indicator which was significantly influenced by the clustering was growth: the companies in cluster 3 had a significantly higher growth than the companies in clusters 1 or 2. Cluster 3 invested in 1988 more in R&D as a % of sales than the two other clusters, intended to more heavily emphasize robots in the future, than cluster 1, while cluster 1 had put more emphasis on manufacturing reorganisation.

We propose the following summary out of all this. The first cluster of 37 companies emphasizes a manufacturing scope of dependability and serving the market. Starting with a larger market share, they emphasize less creative development in manufacturing, and have emphasized one year later the reorganisation of their manufacturing. Cluster 2 is a cluster of

innovative manufacturers and are similar to the innovators in the U.S. sample. The size of this group seems to be high, but this can perhaps be explained by the fact that a voluntary questionnaire probably introduces a bias towards the more innovative manufacturers. Cluster 3 emphasizes product performance as its scope, and is on many action plans somewhere in between clusters 1 and 2. It clearly emphasizes more than cluster 1 the use of FMS, CAD, etc, and invests more in R&D. They seem to be more technology driven. Although we found very few differences in performance in general, this group seems to grow faster than the others.

Let us now turn to the 1988 sample. In terms of past action plans there were few differences: cluster 3 scores higher than cluster 1 on reconditioning of physical plants. However, the differences we observed for the action plans in 1987 are confirmed in the future action plans in 1988. The large cluster 2 scores higher in emphasis than cluster 1 on value analysis and product redesign, worker safety, integration of information systems across functions and reconditioning of physical plants. Cluster 3 scores higher in emphasis on worker safety than cluster 1. Cluster 2 scores higher than cluster 3 on CAD, plant relocation and integration of information systems across functions. Again it seems that the second cluster is more active in manufacturing terms. The first cluster is putting less emphasis on manufacturing programmes than the other clusters. Cluster 3 is again somewhere in between clusters 1 and 2.

5. Discussion

The analysis has allowed us to derive three meaningful clusters. The present analysis supports the approach proposed by Roth and Miller. As with the North American analysis, we were able to determine three clusters. These clusters show a high stability from one year to another, even though the two samples are not completely identical.

Labeling clusters is always somewhat arbitrary, but on the basis of the analysis we would propose the following. The second cluster, which is also the biggest in both 1987 and 1988, can be called manufacturing innovators. Both in competitive priorities and action plans they seem to strive for what others have called worldclass manufacturing (Schonberger,1983). Our analysis does not enable us to say whether or not

they are worldclass manufacturers. It simply shows that relatively speaking they pay more attention to priorities and action plans which are usually identified with worldclass manufacturing.

The third cluster is a group of focused manufacturers which emphasize performance of their products. They seem to be a bit more oriented towards the deployment of technology in their emphasis on CAD, FMS, and strive for a good production process characterised by worker safety. The difference with the second cluster is however not so large. Let us label this group the high performance products group.

The first cluster seems to be a cluster where manufacturing is relatively speaking not so much the key to the competitive strategy. In terms of priorities, conformance and speed of reaction to customers' demand are emphasized (in absolute terms, although not more than the other clusters in relative terms). But the resource commitments in manufacturing, measured as the emphasis on action plans, is lower than in the other groups and this across the board. Given that their market share is bigger than that of other groups, one could hypothesize that these manufacturers are more marketing oriented in their strategy. This is confirmed by their competitive priorities which emphasize a better service to the customer (such as consistent quality, speed of delivery, etc). Let us call them the marketing oriented group.

One of our objectives was to check whether the North American clustering would be robust. To a certain extent the "manufacturing innovators" coincide with the North American "innovators". The marketing oriented group has quite a number of analogies with the North American "caretakers", but have in their priorities something of the "marketeers". Consequently we would not be so negative about them as Roth and Miller are about the caretakers. Our last group is one that does not appear in the North American analysis. It is a group pursuing top performing products. Some of the companies in this group stand for high performance products, for which some European manufacturers are well-known. It is perhaps a more pronounced European strategy.

These differences between the European and North American results raise the issue of whether we can really talk about generic manufacturing

strategies, and if they are generic manufacturing strategies, how many of them do exist? With the exception of the European high performance product group and the North American caretaker group, none of the clusters which are derived can be easily identified with the typical strategies which were proposed earlier. The caretakers are perhaps low cost producers, and the high performance product group are perhaps high quality producers, but manufacturing innovators, marketeers or marketing oriented groups do not really coincide with any of the strategies proposed. In the life-cycle model of Hill (1985) or Abernathy (1987), marketeers could perhaps be identified with process oriented manufacturers. In that case one would expect them to place high emphasis on process improvements, which we do not observe. And, although one would not expect the largest cluster (of large companies) to be at the beginning of a technological life-cycle, innovators could be identified with companies in the beginning of the technological life-cycle. In that case we would expect them to put emphasis on flexibility. We can partially observe this in the data.

The difference between Europe and North America is of course intriguing. If one accepts the convergence hypothesis, i.e. that management concepts, strategies and approaches in different industrial regions would evolve towards each other if the external conditions became more similar, then Europe and North America would be expected to have similar, if not identical, generic strategies. The convergence hypothesis has been under attack, especially since the more careful study of Asian and in particular Japanese management approaches. Perhaps our findings contribute some empirical support for rejecting the convergence hypothesis.

We would cautiously suggest that indeed both this study and North American findings suggest the existence of generic manufacturing strategies. However, we suspect that even if we merge the results of the two studies the list of four approaches (innovators, caretakers, high performance product suppliers, marketeers) is not exhaustive.

Finally, there seems to be little or no relation in our study between the classification into groups and performance. Except for a higher growth for the high performance products group in comparison with the marketing oriented group, there was no significant difference for a set of more than 15

performance indicators (going from more general performance indicators such as profit, growth etc, to more manufacturing specific indicators such as inventory reduction, quality improvement, etc). None of the three strategies we determined on the basis of the European sample seems to be superior either in the short or medium term.

6. Conclusion

Manufacturing strategy has received increased attention over the last decade. Many papers about the components of manufacturing or the trade-offs to be made in manufacturing have been published, but few empirical studies exist which attempt to determine some typical manufacturing strategies. Following a similar North American study we derived on the basis of two European samples three typical manufacturing strategies;

- focused on high performance products
- based on manufacturing innovativeness
- marketing oriented

Some similarity with the North American results exists, but there are also clear distinctions. Further empirical studies seem to be needed to determine whether generic manufacturing strategies exist, and if so what a complete set of generic manufacturing strategies would be.

Notes

- (1) The European Manufacturing Futures Project is part of a larger project, the Global Manufacturing Futures Project, initiated by J.G. Miller at Boston University, and carried out in Europe in collaboration with INSEAD, Fontainebleau, (K. Ferdows and A. De Meyer) and in Japan at Waseda University, Tokyo (J. Nakane).
- (2) A non-parametric test was carried out to test the significance of the ranking. This test is omitted here since it would only further complicate the results; and would not contribute to the interpretation. We have paid attention only to the extremes of the list.

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TABLE 1

mnemonic name	capability as proposed in questionnaire
low prices	ability to offer low prices
new product development speed	ability to make rapid design changes and/or introduce new products quickly
volume flexibility	ability to change volume rapidly
conformance	ability to offer consistent quality
performance	ability to provide high performance products
delivery speed	ability to deliver products quickly
delivery dependability	ability to deliver on time
broad product line	ability to deliver a broad product line
speed of production changes	ability to change production plans quickly

TABLE 2

Programmes / Activities

Giving Workers a Broad Range of Tasks (job enlargement)
Giving Workers More Planning Responsibility (job enrichment)
Changing Labour / Management Relationships
Manufacturing Reorganisation
Worker Safety
Worker Training
Management Training
Supervisor Training
Preventive Maintenance
Zero Defects
Manufacturing Lead-Time Reduction
Vendor Lead-Time Reduction
Computer-Aided Manufacturing
Computer-Aided Design
Reducing Setup / Changeover Time
Value Analysis / Product Redesign
Group Technology
Capacity Expansion
Reducing Size of Manufacturing Units
Plant Relocation
Developing New Processes for New Products
Developing New Processes for Old Products
Narrowing Product Lines / Standardising
Defining a Manufacturing Strategy

TABLE 2 (CONT.)

Integrating Information Systems Between Manufacturing and Other Functions
Integrating Information Systems Within Manufacturing
Reconditioning of Physical Plants
Just-In-Time
Robots
Flexible Manufacturing Systems
Closing Plants
Statistical Quality Control (process)
Statistical Quality Control (product)
Improving New Product Introduction Capability
Quality Circles
Automating Jobs
Production / Inventory Control Systems
Reducing the Size of Manufacturing Workforce (including hourly and salaried)

TABLE 3

**Group centroids of the groups
(competitive abilities) (1)**

Competitive ability	group 1	group 2	group3	F-val
1987	n=37	n=132	n=42	
	mean rank	mean rank	mean rank	
low prices	5.1 5.	5.0 8	4.9 5	0.37
new pro dev speed	4.5 6	5.4 5	4.8 6	4.79 **
volume flexibility	4.1 8	4.7 9	4.6 7	1.99
conformance	6.6 1	6.6 1	5.9 2	15.87 ***
performance	3.5 9	6.3 2	6.1 1	134.33 ***
delivery speed	5.5 3	5.7 4	5.0 4	5.07 **
delivery dependability	5.7 2	6.1 3	4.6 8	29.31 ***
broad product line	4.4 7	5.3 6	3.2 9	40.33 **
speed of prod change	5.3 4	5.1 7	5.3 3	0.44
1988	n=35	n=114	n=27	
low prices	5.1 7	5.0 7	4.7 6	0.45
new prod dev speed	5.3 6	5.6 5	3.7 9	22.34 ***
volume flexibility	5.5 5	4.8 9	4.4 7	3.68 *
conformance	6.4 1	6.4 1	6.4 1	0.97
performance	3.8 9	6.2 2	5.7 3	75.98 ***
delivery speed	6.1 2	6.0 4	4.7 5	26.76 ***
delivery dependability	5.7 4	6.0 3	6.4 2	3.96 *
broad product line	4.4 8	5.0 8	4.1 8	5.22 **
speed of prod changes	5.8 3	5.1 6	5.1 4	4.19 *

(1) means give mean centroid (on a scale from 1 to 7); rank gives ranking for the competitive priorities of groups

- * p<.05
- ** p<.01
- *** p<.001

TABLE 4

**Comparison of emphasis on action plans
and business unit characteristics**

Clusters compared	1987	1988
Past action plans & business unit characteristics		
1>2	none	none
1>3	current market share	none
2>1	give workers more planning responsibility zero defects mfg. lead time reduction vendor lead time reduction CAM and CAD developing new processes for new products JIT FMS introduction of robots improving new product introduction capabilities vendor quality	none
2>3	worker safety mfg. lead time reduction reconditioning physical plants	none
3>1	CAD FMS past proportion of new products as % of sales R&D spending as % of sales	reconditioning physical plant
Future action plans		
1>2	none	none
1>3	none	none
2>1	mfg. lead time reduction vendor lead time reduction FMS	value analysis & product redesign worker safety integration of information systems across functions reconditioning physical plant
2>3	JIT worker safety reconditioning physical plant JIT	CAD plant relocation integration of information systems across functions
3>1	vendor quality FMS	worker safety
3>2	none	none

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