



Antoni Gutiérrez-Rubi

Lecciones de Brawn GP

Las 10 claves empresariales para competir con éxito

“La F1 es un mundo cuyo análisis permite trasladar un montón de ideas y reflexiones al sector de la empresa.”

Del prólogo de **Pedro Nuño**, profesor de IESE

LESSONS FROM BRAWN GP.

Lessons from Brawn GP: 10 managerial keys to competing successful.

The arrival of a new car on the Formula 1 scene, without a sponsor or acclaimed figures gave rise to authentic surprise. When that same car became a clear favourite, winning race after race, the surprise became stupefaction and began the revolution of what is considered the greatest show on earth.

This book explains how the Brawn GP triumph was managed, what factors influenced the victory and how the established order of the F1 aristocracy was changed forever. But above all it explains the lessons that come from that, as the success of this new motor-racing team exemplifies actions, principles and attitudes that can be perfectly extrapolated to the business world.

"This book shows us the lessons learned from Brawn GP's rush to the top: speed, innovation and adaptation are the three basic pillars for getting to number one."

Joan Villadelprat, president of Epsilon Euskadi

"Antoni Gutiérrez-Rubí has done an excellent job in documenting the Brawn team and the F1. Combining the data he's collected with his deep understanding of management, he reaches very interesting conclusions that bring us closer to excellence."

Manel Serras, journalist specialising in F1

CONTENTS

FOREWORD	9
INTRODUCTION.....	11
BUSINESS LESSONS FROM BRAWN GP	15
SPORT AND ITS LESSONS FOR COMPANIES	19
1. THE ADVENT OF THE UNEXPECTED	29
2. THE TRIUMPH OF CREATIVITY AND SIMPLICITY	45
3. THE WINNING STRATEGY	51
4. THE COMBINATION OF EXPERIENCE AND YOUTH	57
5. CALCULATED AMBITION	65
6. SPEED AS A COLLECTIVE ATTITUDE	77
7. CHALLENGING NORMS	83
8. CHAOS AS AN OPPORTUNITY	87
9. THE TIME OF THE MOST DARING	97
10. THE TRIUMPH OF WORK WELL DONE	107
10+1. OTHER LESSONS	119
REFERENCES	133

FOREWORD

Pedro Nueno, IESE Business School

Extracting ideas from Formula 1 and applying them to the field of management is befitting in the difficult times that companies are now experiencing. On other occasions I've talked about the famous lateral thinking proposed by the MIT professor Edward de Bono and its power to stimulate innovation. It may be that in our world we trick ourselves, or we don't want to see anything that would force us into the difficult task of rethinking things. But if we force ourselves to think in another environment that is not ours, there we can see everything, we can go deeper, suggest improvements, praise the right solutions. And this is why many business schools teach their students through case studies. They learn by arguing about other companies so they might apply what they learn to theirs.

But if we really want to seek out a difficult case, we've got to look at Formula 1. Formula 1 is at the limits of a sector: the automobile sector. It is one of the technological drivers of the sector that pushes the speed-safety binomial to the limit, but doing this involves speed in every facet of a Formula 1 win. There is huge competition because so many want to be there precisely for its great exclusivity; competing in this field requires imagination, media impact and, again, speed.

The complexity of the environment has led many of the people involved in it to develop relationship, communication, negotiation and even life focuses that also push the limits beyond the most conventional standards. It is living on the technological edge in many ways. And all of it with the pressure of knowing the world is watching.

In the end, in business as in Formula 1 there is a clear, concrete, measurable result, with the same parameters for everyone who competes no matter how sophisticated, creative or different the process employed in achieving it. It is therefore a world whose analysis allows for the transfer of loads of ideas and reflections to the business sector. And once again this exercise of "lateral thinking" can be a great help in seeing new perspectives, hidden angles or areas with possibilities of applying creativity that are not easy to identify or that we avoid identifying. And above all in the economic times and environment in which we live, the topic of speed is an especially important aspect in thinking about it. How can we go faster?

BUSINESS LESSONS FROM BRAWN GP

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The 2009 F-1 season kicked off in Melbourne with a surprise double triumph for a new team, Brawn GP (formerly Honda). These victories shook the foundations of top-flight motor racing: a plain white single-seater (with almost no sponsorship) bested the proudest teams and the multi-coloured circus of the most demanding sponsors.

Speed and a knack of taking advantage of opportunities and adapting to changed circumstances, in this case the new F-1 rules on diffusers, humbled the big names, proving that intelligence, efficiency and merit cannot always simply be bought with money, or guaranteed by power.

The wizard Ross Brawn, one of the men behind the seven world championships notched up by Schumacher, has shaken up the status quo among the F-1 aristocracy. New ideas and solutions came up against old privileges and hierarchies. Flavio Briatore, the Renault boss, has been heard to wonder aloud, unashamedly but showing himself up pathetically, "The championship is going to be won by a driver who was unemployed or another who was about to retire. What about credibility?" Well yes, the fastest will win – isn't that what racing is about? These are the ten business lessons to be learnt from Brawn GP:

1. The unexpected bursting onto the scene (an opportunity in the F-1 rules).
2. The triumph of creativity and simplicity (the old/new diffuser).

3. The winning strategy (ideas against power).
4. The combination of youth and experience (the winning formula).
5. Calculated ambition (a car without sponsors: they'll come along soon enough).
6. Speed as a group attitude (a team was set up in three weeks).
7. Challenging the status quo (a new team in the empire of the classics).
8. Chaos represents an opportunity (the big names adapt badly to uncertainty).
9. The time for boldness (buying out Honda, starting afresh).
10. The triumph of a job well done (agile teams hungry for glory).

The keys to the best job lie in smart design, creative radicalism and distinctive execution

As none other than the three times world champion Niki Lauda said, "The truth is that Brawn have done the best job." And Pedro de la Rosa confirmed this: "The car is very well designed, with highly radical, different solutions." These are the keys to the best job: smart design, creative radicalism and distinctive execution.

Only clear thinking and agility can overcome uncertainty. Big corporations, on the other hand, cannot generate this kind of knowledge because they are based on slow, rigid templates where changes come about only after long gestation periods. The new reality in society, as on the internet for example, moves at a speed which is going to prove lethal to the giants who do not manage to adapt: "Competition will no longer be between big and small, but between fast and slow." (Nikesh Arora, vice-president of Google). There's no time to waste.