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## Crafting Strategic Maneuverability to Boost Business Performance

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### Abstract

*Few studies regarding strategic maneuverability are found in strategic management literature, and there were merely theoretical concepts with no empirical evidence to support the concepts. This study is an attempt to explore the concept and relationship between strategic maneuverability and company performance. The study uses a quantitative research method with respondents of 53 service companies in the oil and gas industry in Indonesia. The study's result supports that strategic maneuverability, with dimensions of organizational agility, flexibility, and responsiveness, has positive and significant effects on the company's performance in terms of financial, customer, internal process, and learning & growth. This study contributes to the literature in strategic management in general and the Theory of Maneuvers, particularly in two respects. First, it aims to operationalize and develop measures of strategic maneuverability. Second, to examine the relationship between strategic maneuverability and firm performance and providing empirical evidence.*

*Keywords: strategic maneuverability, business performance, organizational flexibility, organizational agility, organizational responsiveness.*

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## I. INTRODUCTION

D'Aveni and Gunther call the current business condition as hypercompetition, marked by the fast-changing environments and fierce competition, where companies compete aggressively against competitors to dominate the market and achieve a sustainable competitive advantage [1]. However, the company's efforts to achieve and maintain a sustainable competitive advantage consume enormous resources. On the other hand, competitors are trying to imitate, neutralize, and defeat its competitive advantage. This focuses on achieving and protecting the company's long-term competitive advantage to be shifted in achieving a series of short-term competitive advantages to disrupt the status quo. Thus, the company needs to have the ability to maneuver strategically to create added value continuously in the face of short-term competitive advantage and try to hold as long as possible before the actions of competitors erode these advantages. Like in war, [2] states that the company needed a strategy to defeat competitors, conquer the markets, and protect the strategic resources to penetrate and expand the markets continuously. Many scholars examine military conflicts that date back thousands of years and gain insights that provide an additional dimension to business studies, particularly regarding the firm's competitive advantage. The military viewpoint also provides fundamental principles that can foster an understanding of strategy, which can be applied to a multinational company aiming to strengthen its position globally or a small business struggling every day for survival. Besides, there are many references that associate military strategy with the business, such as using strategic resources to exploit markets, developing business intelligence to anticipate competitors' actions, avoiding direct confrontation with strong competitors, bypassing high entry barriers, restructuring marketing activities to strengthen market position, and using new technology to create innovative products. Various studies regarding warfare strategies for applications in the business world, mostly related to business maneuvers, have been carried out by [1]–[5].

The studies state that military-like maneuverability is required to navigate the turbulent environments, anticipate market dynamics, increase profitability, business growth, and company survival. Business maneuvers are directed to target competitors' weaknesses, with the support of organizational flexibility, movement speed, and tactical agility to maximize the element of surprise and beat competitors. However, existing studies are limited to theoretical declarations that have not been substantially supported by empirical evidence. Therefore, many researchers doubt the concept and application of strategic maneuvers in the competitive business environment. This research's main objective is to examine the

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relationship between strategic maneuverability and company performance, using the case of service companies in the oil and gas industry in Indonesia.

A literature study was carried out to explore this concept theoretically, then proceed with the effort to define the concept's operationalization and finally develop the dimensions and measures of its construct. This study contributes to the literature in strategic management in general and the Theory of Maneuvers, particularly in two respects. First, it aims to operationalize and develop measures for strategic maneuverability, thus clarifying the concept. Second, to examine the relationship between strategic maneuverability and firm performance and providing empirical evidence.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 1. Strategic Maneuverability

In a hypercompetitive and rapidly changing business environment, strategic planning aims to create business disruption by following the three main principles of dynamic interactions. First, all activities the company takes are interactions of actions and reactions against competitors. Second, all company actions are seen relative to competitors, such as value creation, operational effectiveness, and efficiency, or the risk of such actions. Third, companies need to understand long-term trends and the development of a maneuver to predict future results [1]. Furthermore, D'Aveni and Gunther argue that companies need to focus on developing critical capabilities in creating business disruptions and status quo, namely speed and surprises so that companies can react quickly in capturing business opportunities and actively maneuver to beat competitors. Speed is also needed to improve its ability to serve customer desires and determine the right time to enter the market, both as a first mover and as a fast follower. To maneuver agile in new directions and pursue new business opportunities faster than competitors, companies need to increase the company's operational flexibility, lean production process, and a flatter organizational structure. Companies are also encouraged to invest in common resources that can be used across the organization to increase its flexibility. The surprise element is essential for the success of the pioneer company in preventing or delaying competitors from following so that it has the time to strengthen its market position and gain a competitive advantage as long as possible. The main elements of surprise are flexibility and creativity, which support the company's commitment to innovating, developing technology, and creating new products that can disrupt the markets.

Pech and Durden [3] illustrate the uncertain and unpredictable market conditions as a war zone, which can lead to a company's life and death situation. Strategic maneuverability,

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supported by elements of speed, surprise, and flexibility, is required to navigate the business environment, anticipate market dynamics, and increase profitability, growth, and survival. The strategic maneuverability is directed at targeting competitors' weaknesses, supporting the flexibility of the organizational structure, speed of movement, and tactical agility, to maximize the element of surprise for competitors. The maneuver's success depends on the competence of human resources, organizational culture, and knowledge management, which are relatively superior to competitors. Furthermore, Pech and Slade [4], [5] adopt the theory of maneuver in warfare and apply it into the business context and highlight four main maneuverability elements. First, the mission analysis process analyzes the company's capabilities against competitors' intentions and determines the strategic intent. Second, command, control, communication, and intelligence, including leadership and control of organizational flexibility, facilitate responses based on accurate and reliable data in real-time. Third, corporate action in building and maintaining efforts to weaken competitors. Fourth, take initiatives proactively in facing the opportunities and challenges that arise.

Paley [2] suggests that to beat competitors focusing on the weaknesses of the opponent, a company can use an indirect strategy maneuver consisting of five main elements. First, focus the company's strengths to fight the weaknesses of competitors. Second, serving customer needs by solving their problems in a way that is better than competitors. Third, achieve psychological benefits by influencing the imbalance of the leaders of competing companies' minds so that they make wrong decisions and steps. Fourth, convince competitors that too aggressive competitive action will exhaust their human, financial, and material resources. Fifth, competition's main objective is to get a key position in market competition to gain competitive advantage and advantage. Thus, indirect maneuvers require extensive resources in the form of 1) market intelligence, to find out the latest market conditions, 2) flexible organization, to respond quickly to opportunities and challenges that arise, and 3) competent leaders, to manage human, financial, and resources that support the achievement of a strategic position in the market. Thus, indirect maneuvers' ultimate goal is to win customers, win market share, and achieve its strategic goals without going through direct confrontation that would consume company resources.

The studies above show that the main elements of successful strategic maneuverability are organizational flexibility, organizational agility, and organizational responsiveness. Flexibility refers to an organization's ability to meet various types of customer demands without sacrificing time, effort, cost, and quality. Agility relates to the speed with which a company realigns its strategies and reconfigures its resources to deal with upcoming

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opportunities and threats. Responsiveness relates to the organization's ability to adjust company systems to anticipate a changing business environment proactively.

Zhang, Vonderembse and Lim [6] define organizational flexibility as the company's ability to efficiently meet increasing customer demand levels without experiencing disruption or loss. Rudd, Greenley, Beatson and Lings [7] stated that organizational flexibility could be achieved by considering four factors: organizational flexibility, financial flexibility, structural flexibility, and technological flexibility. Organizational flexibility is the company's ability to quickly adapt to market conditions, including market position, goods and services offered, processes, and production capacity. Financial flexibility is the company's ability to acquire and use financial resources quickly. Structural flexibility is the company's ability to restructure the organization, reduce bureaucracy, and effective communication skills between departments. Technological flexibility is the company's ability to keep an update of technological developments following customer demands. Organizational agility is the company's ability to change the direction and goals to maintain a competitive advantage, which consists of identifying opportunities and challenges and responding accordingly to market demands. Weber and Tarba [8] define organizational agility as the ability to continuously observe and respond to changes in the business environment and adjust the organizational structure to ensure the successful implementation of the chosen strategy. Morton, Stacey and Mohn [9] state organizational agility is a continuous effort to adjust the direction of company goals as a function of time and a function of strategic choices in response to environmental changes. The three main elements of organizational agility are strategic sensitivity, resource fluidity, and leadership unity. Strategic sensitivity is the sensitivity of the company's perceptions, concerns, and awareness of environmental changes, resource fluidity is the company's ability to rearrange and use existing resources differently, and leadership unity is the ability to make decisions quickly and precisely without complicated bureaucracy [9], [10]. Customer responsiveness is closely related to customer relationships and customer satisfaction, which can be achieved by fulfilling customer needs, adapting customer demands, and focusing on customer solutions [11]–[13].

## **2. Business Performance**

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Pech and Durden [3] illustrate the uncertain and unpredictable market conditions as a war zone, which can lead to a company's life and death situation. Strategic maneuverability, supported by elements of speed, surprise, and flexibility, is required to navigate the business environment, anticipate market dynamics, and increase profitability, growth, and survival. The strategic maneuverability is directed at targeting competitors' weaknesses, supporting the flexibility of the organizational structure, speed of movement, and tactical agility, to maximize the element of surprise for competitors. The maneuver's success depends on the competence of human resources, organizational culture, and knowledge management, which are relatively superior to competitors. Furthermore, Pech and Slade [4], [5] adopt the theory of maneuver in warfare and apply it into the business context and highlight four main maneuverability elements. First, the mission analysis process analyzes the company's capabilities against competitors' intentions and determines the strategic intent. Second, command, control, communication, and intelligence, including leadership and control of organizational flexibility, facilitate responses based on accurate and reliable data in real-time. Third, corporate action in building and maintaining efforts to weaken competitors. Fourth, take initiatives proactively in facing the opportunities and challenges that arise.

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### **3. Strategic Maneuverability and Business Performance**

Strategic maneuverability represented by organizational agility and organizational flexibility will help firms to make fast decisions and accurate response with the support of information about competitors' strategies, technological developments, customer needs, and the current situation of the market, which will increase the successful implementation of corporate strategies which in turn will improve the business performances [23]. The studies of [24] and [25] found that organizations with high flexibility can anticipate changes in customer preferences, competitor movements, technological development, and economic changes and can reposition themselves by reconfiguring their resources, capabilities, and competencies. Organizational flexibility will increase the company's capability to adjust marketing offerings, product and service mixtures, and production capacity, thereby increasing the potential for implementing the chosen strategy.

The research conducted by [26] shows organizational agility is the ability to produce a competitive advantage in a changing and unpredictable environment by detecting and reacting quickly to changes that come, both by competing companies and changes in customer requirements. Asil and Farahmand [27] state that organizational agility, which has customer-oriented characteristics, organizational commitments, and resource fluidity, is a dynamic feature with high value, rare, difficult to imitate, and difficult to replace so that it can help companies maintain a competitive advantage. A study conducted by [28] shows that

organizational agility, which is reflected by speed, quality, flexibility, and leadership unity, directly influences business performance.

Supported by organizational flexibility and agility, the company can respond quickly and precisely to changes in market demand so that it will produce a competitive advantage gained from knowledge of changing customer requirements, and in turn will help build the company's reputation and improve company performance [12], [13]. The company's ability to respond quickly to customer needs, either by launching new products or modifying existing products, can improve customer satisfaction, revenue growth, profit, and market share performance [29]. Hence:

H1: Strategic maneuverability has a positive effect on the business performance.

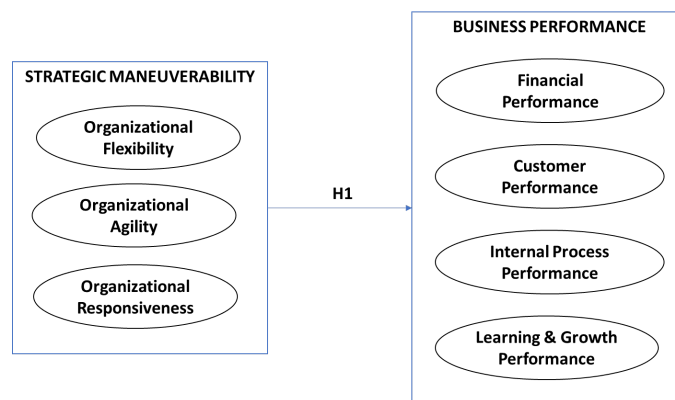


Figure. 1. Research Model

### III. METHODOLOGY

#### 1. Data collection

The data were collected from the oil and gas service firms in Indonesia using random sampling. A questionnaire is sent by email to 337 companies randomly drawn from the vendor list in the oil and gas operators database in Indonesia. Data were gathered using questionnaires from respondents consisting of C-level executives, directors, VPs, senior managers, and managers. Respondents were informed of the goals of the survey and assured of the confidentiality of their answers. We received responses from 53 company executives, giving a response rate of 15.7%.

#### 2. Measurement and Analysis

This study uses multidimensional measures adopted from studies in the literature review and modifying them slightly to fit the context. Business performance is measured using multidimensional scales adopted from [30] and [31], consisting of financial performance,

customer performance, internal process performance, and learning & growth performance. To measure the strategic maneuverability, we are using the measurements of organizational flexibility adopted from studies of [7] and [32], organizational agility from studies of [9], [10], [33], and organizational responsiveness from studies of [34] and [11]. All responses to the multi-item measures were captured using five-point Likert-type scales.

Partial Least Square - Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) method is used for the data analysis using SmartPLS version 3 software [35]. The latent variables of strategic maneuverability and business performance are operationalized at a higher level of abstraction as higher-order hierarchical models that contain two layers of constructs. The data analysis performed included descriptive statistics, evaluation of measurement model, evaluation of structural model, and hypotheses testing.

#### IV. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

##### 1. Evaluation of Measurements Model

The reflective measurement model's evaluation focuses on the validity and reliability of constructs, which consist of indicator reliability, composite reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity [36], [37]. Table 1 shows the analysis results of construct reliability and convergent validity.

**Table 1.** Reliability and Convergent Validity

Description	Cronbach $\alpha$	C. Reliability	AVE	Loadings
Strategic Maneuverability	0.900	0.938	0.834	
Organizational Agility				0.927
Organizational Flexibility				0.887
Organizational Responsiveness				0.925
Business Performance	0.893	0.927	0.761	
Customer Performance				0.928
Financial Performance				0.836
IntProcess Performance				0.927

Learning Growth Performance				0.789
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As presented in the table above, all variables used in this study have good validity as measured by convergent validity (AVE), all of which are above the threshold value of 0.5. Likewise, in the measurement reliability test, the results showed that all Cronbach  $\alpha$ , composite reliability, and loadings had a value above 0.7. Thus, all measurement instruments used in this study have an adequate level of validity and reliability.

**Tabel 2.** Discriminant Validity

	Strategic Maneuverability	Business Performance
Strategic Maneuverability	<b>0.913</b>	
Business Performance	0.805	<b>0.872</b>

Discriminant validity requires AVE's square root value (bold) shall be greater than the correlation value between variables. Table 2 shows that all discriminant validity meets the Fornell-Larcker criteria.

## 2. Evaluation of Structural Model

The structural model evaluation consists of the coefficients of determination ( $R^2$ ) value and model fit (SRMR). The coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ) shows the size of the endogenous variable's variance caused by all the exogenous variables connected to it, which values is expected to be higher than 0.70 for most of the research. While the SRMR value between 0.03 to 0.08 is considered to have a good fit of model [36]. The analysis results tabulated in Table 3 shows the values of  $R^2$  are regarded as moderate levels of predictive accuracy and SRMR gives a good model fit.

**Table 3.** Coefficients of  $R^2$ , Adj  $R^2$  and SRMR

	$R^2$	Adj $R^2$	SRMR
Business Performance	0.648	0.641	0.071

## 3. Hypothesis Testing

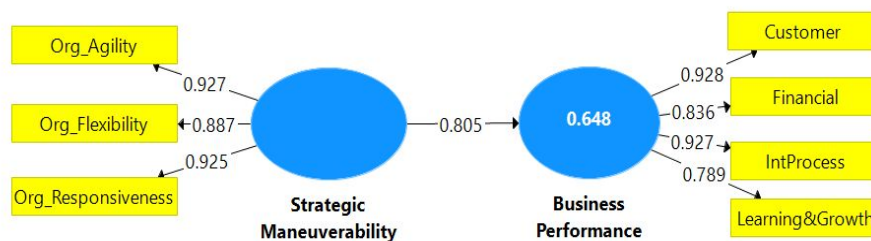
The analysis results support the hypothesis that strategic maneuverability has a positive effect on business performance. The regression coefficient is 0.805, with a t-value of 17.005 indicates the H1 hypothesis is supported with a 95% confidence level.

**Table 4.** Results of Hypotheses testing

Hypotheses	Coefficien t	t-statistic s	p-values
Strategic Maneuverability □ Business Performance	0.805	17.005	0.000 *
Note: * significant at 95% confidence level			

#### 4. Discussions

According to the sample data of 53 service companies in Indonesia's oil and gas industry, this study attempts to explore the relationship between strategic maneuverability with firm performance. The results show there is a positive relationship between strategic maneuverability with firm performance. The influence of the strategic maneuverability elements on company business performance can be ordered as organizational agility (loading = 0.927), followed by organizational responsiveness (0.925), and organizational flexibility (0.887), respectively. The most significant influence of strategic maneuverability on company performance is found in the customer (0.928), followed by internal process (0.927), financial (0.836), and learning and growth (0.789), respectively. Therefore, firms should focus on developing organizational agility, organizational flexibility, and organizational responsiveness to increase its strategic maneuverability in the era of hypercompetition to achieve competitive advantage and improve firm performance. This result was in agreement with studies that showed a positive impact of organizational agility, organizational flexibility, and organizational responsiveness that constitute the strategic maneuverability of the firm performance, namely finance, customer, internal process, and learning and growth [23]–[28].



**Figure.2.** PLS-SEM Results.

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Finally, testing the fifth hypothesis (H5), which states that organizational agility has a direct positive relationship with organizational performance, is supported empirically. The increase in organizational agility brought a positive impact on the organizational performance. This result is consistent with the study of Li et al. [28] which confirmed that the organizational agility increased the firms' performance gains. Studies by Zhou et al. [29] and Chan et al. [30] also supported that the organizational agility could help businesses to rapidly alter operations to meet the consumers' requirements for the fishery products. The organizational agility could help firms with the ability to customize the fishery products and make the revenue of the company keep growing.

## V. CONCLUSION

This study contributes to a better understanding of how strategic maneuverability can help to boost business performance. This study found that strategic maneuverability positively affects firm performance, such as financial, customer, internal process, and learning and growth performance through empirical evidence from Indonesia's oil and gas service companies. The essential elements that constitute the strategic maneuverability are organizational flexibility, organizational agility, and organizational responsiveness. Lastly, this study explains how firms use strategic maneuverability to cope with the dynamic of business environments and create a competitive advantage to boost firm performance.

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