

Hidden Champions of the Twenty-First Century

Hermann Simon

Hidden Champions of the Twenty-First Century

Success Strategies of Unknown World Market
Leaders

 Springer

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Introduction

How I Discovered the Hidden Champions

The original idea of researching the strategies of unknown world market leaders originated in 1986. Back then, I met Professor Theodore Levitt, the famous marketing guru who taught at the Harvard Business School. Three years earlier, in 1983, Professor Levitt had popularized the term “globalization” in a groundbreaking article in the *Harvard Business Review*.¹ During our meeting, we started a discussion about export success. Why are some countries particularly dominant in exports? Why do others fail? Two years later, when I was a visiting professor at the Harvard Business School, the topic came up again. Some 20 years later, we could continue our discussion in practically the same form. Ted Levitt passed away in 2006. I dedicate this book to him.

As was true in the past, the strong export performance of countries like Germany, Switzerland or Sweden is not due to large corporations. Large, internationally active firms with significant exports exist in all highly developed industrial countries. In my discussion with Professor Levitt, we speculated that the cause of the continuing export success of the German-language and Scandinavian countries could be traced to small and midsize companies. Countries such as the USA, France or Japan that have distinctly fewer such companies or are not as active internationally do not perform as well in exports. I gradually discovered that countless midsize companies are world leaders in their markets. The contention that these market leaders spearhead globalization has not changed in the last decade. If anything, their role in the globalization process has become even more crucial.

I have presented and discussed this topic across all five continents. In doing so, I discovered that there were hidden world market leaders everywhere. I found them in America, Brazil, Japan, South Africa, Korea, New Zealand, and in many other countries. With respect to culture, strategy and leadership, it became clear that there are striking similarities among these companies. Nevertheless, the majority of this company breed could still be found in the German-Scandinavian countries. I estimate that 80% of all midsize world market leaders come from this region. At the end of the 1980s, I coined the term “hidden champions” for these unusual companies. In 1992, an article in the *Harvard Business Review* received significant attention.² The wordplay with such seemingly contradictory terms as “hidden” and “champion” contributed to the mystique. “Hidden champions” has since become a commonly used term around the world. A search of the term “hidden champions” on google.com produces 70,200 hits as of August 27, 2008. The first book on the topic has been published in 17 countries.³ “Hidden champions” even made the cover story of *Business-Week* magazine (see Fig. I.1).

The way in which the hidden champions concept has been received has changed over the course of time. The strategies and leadership methods were initially viewed by some as strange, exotic or outdated. Some observers considered hidden champions to be extremely specialized and

Fig. I.1 Hidden champions in international publications



fanatically dedicated small-town tinkers working in a tiny niche, with virtually no chance of long-term survival in the age of large corporations, diversification and globalization. Others thought that such midsize enterprises were condemned to remain small, become technologically obsolete and ultimately succumb to the lack of risk diversification—the flipside of their narrow focus. In addition, their management methods were frequently considered archaic, patriarchal, authoritarian, and increasingly out of touch with a modern workforce. No doubt such assessments are true in a few cases. Yet the world and the ways of the twenty-first century hidden champions have developed completely contrary to these skeptics' expectations. This book reveals the spectacular successes of the hidden champions at the beginning of the twenty-first century.

More than ever, I am convinced that consistently superb management and strategies are more likely to be found among the hidden champions than in large corporations. Yet management research, teaching, and literature persist in focusing on large, well-known companies. General Motors was the star of the 1950s; IBM stole the limelight in the 1970s. Both were seen as models of excellent business management. Today, the stars are companies such as Microsoft and Nokia or Internet firms like eBay and Google. Without a doubt these enterprises are very successful. But the glory of General Motors and IBM has faded with time, just as Microsoft and the other star companies of our day may look considerably less glamorous when viewed from the perspective of 2035. Also, what can the average business observer really learn from stars of the century such as Nokia and Google, companies as unique in their respective disciplines as Albert Einstein or Tiger Woods? Fundamentally “normal” companies like the hidden champions, which have reached leading positions in their markets with specific strategies, are far more suitable role models and instructive examples. Small and midsize enterprises across the world can learn a lot more from these little-known market leaders than from the highly visible large corporations.

One aspect I would like to point out to the reader is that the huge amount of facts and data offered in this book is predominantly based on material supplied by the companies themselves. It was impossible to individually check the data and assumptions of hundreds of companies in often highly fragmented markets, and I cannot guarantee the accuracy of all company statements and data.

Notes

- 1 See Theodore Levitt, “The Globalization of Markets,” *Harvard Business Review*, May–June 1983, pp. 92–102. The term “globalization” first came into existence in 1944; in 1981 it started to become commonly used. Only after Levitt’s article was the term widely used in the business mainstream.
- 2 See Hermann Simon, “Lessons from Germany’s Midsize Giants,” *Harvard Business Review*, March–April 1992, pp. 115–123.
- 3 Hermann Simon, *Hidden Champions: Lessons from 500 of the World’s Best Unknown Companies*, Boston: Harvard Business School Press 1996.

Chapter 1

The Mystique of the Hidden Champions

Large corporations are the subject of close and constant scrutiny by academic researchers, analysts, shareholders, and journalists. Hidden champions, on the other hand, remain a virtually unexplored source of knowledge. Scattered across the globe, thousands of these highly successful companies are concealed behind a curtain of inconspicuousness, invisibility and, in some cases, deliberate secrecy. This applies to the products these companies make, how they beat the competition or—even more difficult to research—how they are managed internally. Even their names are known to only a handful of experts, consultants, journalists, and researchers.

This secretiveness contrasts starkly with the dominant positions the hidden champions enjoy in their markets. Many of them have global market shares of over 50%, and some even hold shares in their relevant markets of 70%–90%. On average, they are more than twice the size of their strongest competitors. Only a few large multinationals achieve comparable market positions. Far from lagging behind in the globalization process, the hidden champions are the vanguard of globalization. In the course of the past decade, they have grown and strengthened their competitiveness at a dramatic rate. Among the impressive characteristics of these small and midsize companies is their enduring, sustainable approach towards global excellence.

Few management researchers examine such long-term success strategies without being influenced by the fads of the day. Perhaps the most notable is the American researcher Jim Collins, who, tellingly, works as a freelance academic rather than at one of the major-league universities. In his book *Good to Great*, he describes findings that in many cases agree with mine.¹ To take one example from Collins: the lower the executives' public profile, the more successful their companies are long term. Could there be a better argument in favor of the hidden champions remaining hidden?

Who Are They? A Selection of Hidden Champions Around the World

So who are these hidden champions of the twenty-first century? Although their products constantly surround us, most are completely unknown to us. To illustrate their diversity, we will begin by taking a brief look at a selection of hidden champions from various countries. This random selection offers an initial impression of the type, market position, and typical characteristics of these companies.

Baader

In Iceland, qualified mechanics are known as “Baader men” because they were trained on Baader systems. With a global market share of 80%, Baader is the world’s leading supplier of fish processing systems.

McIlhenny

McIlhenny was founded in 1896 and has only one production site in the world, Avery Island in Louisiana, US. From there, McIlhenny’s main product “began its journey to set the culinary world on fire.” Today, the product (a.k.a. Tabasco) is sold in more than 160 countries. “It is the most famous, most preferred pepper sauce in the world.”

3B Scientific

Did you encounter a model skeleton last time you took a first-aid course? It was probably produced by 3B Scientific, the global market leader in anatomical teaching aids.

International SOS

This Singapore-based company is the world leader in international emergency rescue services. In September 2006, International SOS organized the

first direct medical emergency flight from China to Taiwan in more than half a century.

Höganäs and Hoeganaes Corporation

These two namesakes are the world's leading suppliers of powder metallurgy. They have a common origin but are independent today. Höganäs from Sweden is the "world's leading supplier of metal powder technology" whereas Hoeganaes Corporation, based in Cinnaminson, New Jersey, US, ranks number one globally in "ferrous and ferrite powders."

Tetra

Do your children have a fish tank? If so, you may know TetraMin, the most popular food for ornamental fish. Tetra is the world market leader in aquarium and pond supplies, and its market share is 3.6 times higher than that of its closest competitor.

Bobcat

Would you have guessed that Bobcat, a company from Gwinner, North Dakota, US, is the "world leader in compact industrial, construction, and agri-business equipment." With 3,300 employees, this little-known firm is also the biggest employer in North Dakota.

Gallagher

New Zealand has 3.3 million people and 70 million sheep, the ideal location when it comes to innovations for fencing in sheep and cattle. This environment produced Gallagher, the global market leader for electric fences.

Saes Getters

Until I ran into this world market leader from Italy, I was unaware that a getter is a chemically reactive material that helps to retain a vacuum. Saes has an 85% share in the world market for barium getters and generates 98% of its revenues outside its Italian home market.

Hamamatsu Photonics

“Photon is our Business” is the slogan of Hamamatsu Photonics, a world leader in light sources for technical and medical applications. With net sales of more than \$800 million² and 3,600 employees, it is one of the midsize star firms in Japan.

Arnold & Richter, Sachtler

While in Tokyo recently, a colleague and I ran into a professional camera team out filming. The initial assumption that the camera team involved two hidden champions from Germany in action right in the heart of Tokyo was confirmed: the cameraman was, of course, using an ARRI camera and a Sachtler tripod. Both of these companies are global market leaders, and their products have won several technical Oscars.

Petzl

In spite of its German-sounding name, Petzl is a French hidden champion. Initially producing caving and safety equipment, Petzl is currently “the leading innovator in the vertical world.” “Vertical world” comprises vertical sports such as rock-climbing, mountaineering or cave exploration, as well as professional applications such as work at heights or difficult access rescue operations. The company is the world leader in harnesses, rope-blocking snap links, front lamps, and similar products.

Lantal

Lantal is an abbreviation for Langenthal in Bern, Switzerland. This small town is home to the global leader in customized cabin interiors for passenger aircraft. Lantal's global market share is 60%, and its customers include more than 300 airlines, including Boeing and Airbus. Singapore Airlines' Raffles Class or Lufthansa's First and Business Classes are designed by Lantal.

Tandberg and Polycom

The market for video conferencing systems is just taking off. With a global market share of 40%, the market leader Tandberg comes from an unlikely place, Norway. Its closest competitor is Polycom from the US. Sony is about 100 times larger in revenues, but these small specialists beat the giant in video conferencing technology.

W.E.T. and Webasto

Heated car seats are a blessing when it's cold in winter. The probability is more than 50% that the heating technology in your car comes from W.E.T. Automotive Systems, as W.E.T. is the world market leader. And if you need a remote-controlled heater for your car, the global number one leader in this field is Webasto.

De La Rue

Where does money come from? From De La Rue: this UK-firm is the largest printer and maker of security paper, and it produces the banknotes for more than 150 countries.

Belfor

Belfor is the global market leader in the removal of fire and water damages. With revenues of more than \$800 million and about 3,200 employees, Belfor is more than twice the size of its strongest competitor and is the only company that can offer these services around the world.

Ulvac

Ulvac from Japan accounts for a 96% global market share in LCD panel coating equipment and a 70% share in plasma display coating equipment. Ulvac's core competency is vacuum technology, and the application in various fields generates about \$2 billion in revenues.

Orica

This Australian firm is the global leader in explosives for mines and quarries. Orica offers its innovative and comprehensive blasting services in more than 50 countries.

CEAG

There are hundreds of millions of cell phones in the world today, and a quarter of them are charged by devices from CEAG. Headquartered in Germany with 270 employees, this world market leader employs more than 18,000 people in China and has a daily production output of one million charging devices.

Gartner

Skyscrapers are becoming increasingly common, but who builds the facades? In many cases it is Gartner, the undisputed number one in the

world for jobs of this kind. As buildings reach higher and higher into the sky, each new record-breaker creates a sensation—some time ago Taipei 101 was the world’s tallest building with 101 stories. Gartner storm-tested the facade elements for Taipei 101 with an aircraft jet engine. The skyscraper was later put to a real-life test by an earthquake measuring 6.8 on the Richter scale; the facade survived unscathed. Gartner is also supplying the facade of Burj Dubai, the new record-holder as the tallest building in the world.

Zimmer, DePuy, Biomet, and Stryker

Warsaw, Indiana, has a population of only 12,145 and is called the “orthopedic capital of the world.” This little town hosts three world leaders in orthopedic products (implants), i.e., replacements for hips, knees, and other joints. Zimmer, DePuy, and Biomet are all based in Warsaw, and a fourth global contender, Stryker, is not far away in Kalamazoo, Michigan, US.

Technogym

Would you have guessed that the world’s number two in fitness equipment comes from an Italian village by the Adriatic Sea called Gambetola? Because of its outstanding innovation and new designs, Technogym was selected as the exclusive supplier of fitness equipment to the Beijing Olympics in 2008. Founder Nerio Alessandri, a fitness enthusiast, has vowed to overtake Life Fitness, the current US-based world market leader, in the next three years.

Gerriets

Gerriets produces theater curtains and stage equipment. As the world’s only manufacturer of large stage curtains, it has a 100% market share in this segment. Whether you visit the Metropolitan Opera in New York, the Scala in Milan, or the Opera Bastille in Paris, the curtains are from Gerriets.

Embraer

You are familiar with Boeing and Airbus, the makers of big aircraft. But Embraer? This company from Brazil is the world's number one in regional jets and has recently outmaneuvered Canada's Bombardier, currently number two. However, a new contender is already lurking in the shadows, Russia's Sukhoi.

O.C. Tanner

Recognizing the contributions of others in a tangible form is as old as civilization itself. So when Obert C. Tanner started his "recognition" business in the basement of his mother's home in Salt Lake City over 80 years ago, he couldn't claim he had invented a whole new type of product. But he did pioneer a whole new kind of business focused on helping companies appreciate people who do great work. The company that O.C. Tanner founded—and which still bears his name—has since grown into the world market leader in employee recognition programs, with over \$400 million in annual revenues, healthy operating profits, and no debt.

Klais

Organs made by Klais are known the world over. The instruments crafted by this globally operating company can be heard in the Cologne Cathedral and Philharmonic Hall, the National Theater in Beijing, the Kyoto Concert Hall in Japan, in Caracas, London, Brisbane, Manila (a bamboo organ), and in the Petronas Twin Towers in Kuala Lumpur. You might find it hard to believe that Klais has a total workforce of only 65 people. Globalism is not a question of company size, but of spirit.

Electro-Nite

With a global market share of 60%, Electro-Nite from Belgium is not only the global number one in sensors for the steel industry, but the market leader in every one of the more than 60 countries where it operates.

Sappi

Sappi stands for South African Pulp and Paper Industries. Sappi is the world's leader both in coated fine paper and in dissolvable pulp. With 16,000 employees, Sappi manufactures in 45 locations throughout the world.

Essel Propack

Would you expect that your toothpaste tube is made by a company from India? Essel Propack, based in Mumbai, has a global market share of 33% and is the dominant force in laminated tubes for toothpaste and similar substances. It runs 23 plants all over the world, from Russia to Venezuela to the Philippines.

Plansee

Plansee in Reutte, Austria, is the world's leading manufacturer of high-performance materials made with refractory metals and composites. It is a shining example of a true high-tech company.

Dickson Constant

If you have a soft blind over your balcony, the odds are it's a Dickson Constant from France. This company is the world market leader in technical textiles used for blinds, truck sheeting, inflatable advertising objects, and special protective clothing. Dickson manufactures 25 million square meters per year, sells in over 100 countries, and has an export quota of 70%.

Molex

Founded by the Krehbiel family in 1938, Chicago-based Molex has grown to become the number two global supplier of electronic, electrical and fiber optic interconnect solutions, switches, and application tooling. Molex remains focused on the automotive, data, telecom, consumer electronics, industrial and medical market segments where they are number one and two. Molex has sustained a compound annual growth rate of 12% over the last 21 years, more than double the market rate for its industry and has revenues of \$3.4 billion.

Jungbunzlauer

When you're drinking Coca-Cola, the name Jungbunzlauer is unlikely to be the first thing that springs to mind. But this Austrian-Swiss global leader supplies the citric acid for every Coca-Cola produced and sold.

Nivarox and Universo

You have probably never heard of Nivarox, but there's a very high chance that this dwarf from Switzerland manufactured the regulating mechanism inside your wristwatch. The company has a global market share of 90%. And have you ever thought about who makes the tiny wristwatch hands? Here, the market leader is Universo.

SGS

SGS is the world leader for product auditing and certification, with annual revenues of \$3.6 billion.³ Due to globalization and an increasing need for quality assurance, SGS is growing rapidly.

Brainlab

Brainlab offers surgeons an instrument-positioning system that works like the navigation system in your car. This fast-growing company is helping surgeons to more precisely plan and carry out surgical operations. With about 3,000 systems installed worldwide, Brainlab accounts for 60% of the global market today.

Delo

Unnoticed by consumers, adhesives from Delo have become indispensable in many areas ranging from airbag sensors to chips in bankcards and passports. The adhesives are also found in half of all cell phones worldwide, especially in the most advanced models. In new technologies such as smartcards, Delo is a leading global player. Its adhesives can be found in 80% of all chip cards produced.

Enercon

Enercon is one of the major names in the field of wind turbines. Although it has only been in existence since 1984, it is the clear technological leader in wind power generation, with annual revenues exceeding \$4 billion and a workforce of 10,000. Enercon owns more than 40% of all patents worldwide for wind power generation.

Omicron

Founded in 1984, this global market leader in scanning probe and tunnel-grid microscopes enables nanotechnology companies to actually observe their own products.

Beluga

If you want to move two 368-ton harbor cranes from Antwerp, Holland, to San Juan, Puerto Rico, Beluga Shipping is on hand to help you. Established as recently as 1995, this service company currently has 40 heavy-lift vessels. It is among the world market leaders in heavy-duty shipping.

Nissha

“Let’s Nissha it,” is the unofficial slogan of this company from Kyoto, Japan’s historic capital. Nissha is the world leader for small touch panels with a global market share of 80%. Its only competitor is the German company Kurz.

Amorim

Amorim from Portugal is the world leader in cork products and cork flooring. This company produces three billion cork stoppers per year. It benefits from the natural resources in its home country (Portugal boasts 80 million cork oaks), but reaches out into the whole world.

Jamba

Jamba is the world’s number one for cell phone ring tones. In January 2007, Peter Chernin, the president of News Corp, called Jamba “our most interesting acquisition in the mobile space.”⁴ His reasoning was that there are one billion televisions and one billion Internet connections in the world today — but almost three billion cell phones.

Netjets

Netjets pioneered the fractional ownership concept for private jets. This firm manages more aircraft than all other fractional aircraft companies combined, and its 700 jets take off 370,000 times annually.

EOS

EOS is the world's leading provider of laser sintering. This process enables the production of three-dimensional physical objects from computer data.

Did you recognize the names of any of these companies? Probably not. And they are all world market leaders. We could go on almost indefinitely with similar descriptions of hidden champions. Hidden champions serve every segment of industrial goods, consumables, and services.

The Veil of Secrecy

Why have these outstanding companies, all of which occupy leading positions in their markets worldwide, remained hidden? There are many reasons, but the most obvious is that a large number of the products offered by hidden champions go unnoticed by consumers. Many of these companies operate in the “hinterland” of the value chain, supplying machinery, components or processes that are no longer discernable in the final product or service. As a result, the products lose their distinct identity or autonomy. How many hotel guests care about which software is used for making room reservations? It's “Fidelio” and when consumers buy a bottle of soda, do they stop to consider how the liquid got into the bottle or how the label was attached? Apart from specialist engineers, who knows that the interior surface of the cylinders in a combustion engine should not be perfectly smooth but slightly rough in order to achieve better lubrication? And that Gehring produces the best honing machinery to create these surfaces? What about perfumes? Does anyone stop to think that the scents come from hidden champions like Givaudan, Firmenich, IFF or Symrise?

Another reason why hidden champions remain concealed is that they avoid drawing attention to themselves. According to the CEO of the world's leading manufacturer of textile needles, "every unwanted public mention of our company counteracts our efforts to stay unknown." His company is not exactly a midget; it employs over 7,000 people. The head of a global leader in electronic connectors told me, "I welcome your research, but at the same time I am reluctant for our company to appear in your publications." He employs almost 10,000 people. And the CEO of a sensor manufacturer with over 4,300 employees said to me, "I'm sure I don't have to tell you that hidden champions are successful because they handle their success strategies with discretion." These comments are typical of the CEOs and owners of hidden champions who prefer to stay out of the public eye. Many of them explicitly shun contact with journalists, researchers or other interested parties. The CEO of the world's number one manufacturer of a key shock absorption component remarked to me, "We want neither our competitors nor our customers to know our true market share." In a similar discussion, the CEO of a service provider stated, "We have cherished our anonymity for years and feel very comfortable about it. Nobody has noticed our niche."

Keeping a low profile in the public eye, the media and the research sector offers advantages that should not be underestimated: it helps companies to focus on their business. Jim Collins makes a telling distinction between "show horses" and "plough horses." The plough horses do not put much time or effort into grooming their public image, so they save time and energy to concentrate on their true purpose: conducting good business.

Of course, this reserve does not mean that the hidden champions are not well known to their direct customers. The opposite is true. Most hidden champions have extremely strong brand names in their markets. Their brand awareness is high, they enjoy outstanding reputations, and competitors often see them as benchmarks.

In recent years, I have noticed that hidden champions are beginning to step out from behind the curtain more frequently. There are several reasons for this. One is that rapid growth and internationalization automatically attract attention. The number of hidden champions listed on the stock exchange or attracting private equity investors has risen sixfold in the last ten years. Increasingly, hidden champions are also enlisting the services of external consultants.

Who Qualifies As a Hidden Champion?

To qualify as a hidden champion, a company must meet the three criteria listed in Fig. 1.1.

Fig. 1.1: Criteria for a hidden champion

Who is a hidden champion?

- Number one, two or three in the global market, or number one on its continent. The market position is generally determined by market share. If a company does not know its exact market share, we use the relative market share (its own market share, revenues or number of units divided by the market share, revenues or number of units of the strongest competitor). As it is not possible to monitor every market, we rely on the market share information provided by the companies.
- Revenue below \$4 billion.
- Low level of public awareness. This aspect cannot be quantified precisely, but over 90% of the companies included meet this requirement from the qualitative point of view.

Despite the substantial size of some of these companies, they typically aim to retain the strengths of midsize firms. Companies with annual revenues of more than \$1 billion are generally classified as large corporations. Size is, however, relative. Wal-Mart Stores, the largest company in the world, posted revenues of \$379 billion in 2007. Ten years earlier, Mitsubishi made it to the top with revenues of \$184 billion. Even the smallest company in the Fortune Global 500 list achieved revenues of almost \$17 billion in 2007.⁵ The average Fortune Global 500 has 67,812 employees and is thus 33 times larger than the average hidden champion with 2,037 employees. The biggest of our hidden champions are still much smaller than the international top 500 and can be described as midsize.

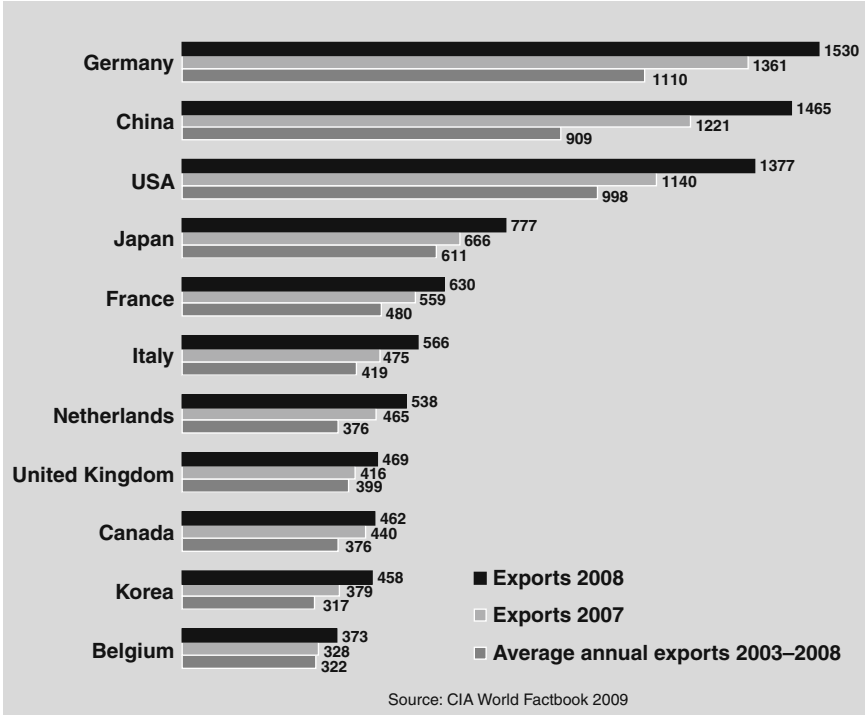
Where Do the Hidden Champions Come From?

As we learned from the selection of hidden champions at the start of this chapter, these global leaders can come from all over the world. I found and encountered hidden champions in consulting projects, conferences and travel in dozens of countries. These companies exist almost everywhere. Several times after concluding a speech, I was approached by someone from the audience with the remark, “You just described our company. How is it possible that you are so familiar with us?” In most cases, I had

never heard of the company in question. From these experiences, it became clear that the strategies, leadership methods, and cultures of hidden champions are similar throughout the world.

Before we analyze locations and country origins of the hidden champions in more depth, it is worth looking into the export performance of countries. Over the years in my speeches all over the world, I asked audiences “Which country has the highest exports in the world?” I presented four choices: China, US, Japan, and Germany. The answers have changed over time: 25 years ago, the US typically came out as number one, then in the 1990s Japan, and in recent years most listeners (almost always managers) name China as the presumptive number one. The truth is different. If we look at the most recent six years (2003–2008), Germany has consistently been the number one exporter. (Figure 1.2 shows exports for 2008, 2007, and the average annual exports for the six-year period 2003–2008).

Fig. 1.2: Exports in 2008, 2007 and in the five-year period 2003–2008 (average annual exports in billion US\$)



How can it be that a relatively small country in Europe has sustained this position for so long? A large part of the explanation lies in the prevalence of hidden champions in Germany. Contrary to what most people believe, the export strength of a country is not determined by a few giant, highly visible corporations, but rather by a large number of midsize firms that are very strong exporters. When China overtakes Germany in the coming years, this truth will not change.⁶ It also applies to China.

Along with export performance and the ensuing dependence on international markets, we observe that the interest in the topic of world market leadership varies strongly across countries. A Google search reveals a surprising pattern and confirms the strong attention that the idea of world market leadership receives in Europe. In a search with “world market leader” and country name, Germany, the leading exporter, is revealed as number one ahead of the US in absolute figures. Fig. 1.3 lists the countries with more than 20,000 entries. On a per capita basis, Switzerland, Austria, and the Netherlands top the list—all direct neighbors of Germany.

Fig. 1.3: Google pages that include “world market leader” and country name

Country	Entries	Entries per million of population
Germany	63,000	765
USA	55,200	183
UK	41,440	682
China	37,500	28
France	32,200	505
Japan	31,000	243
Netherlands	29,500	1,780
Italy	29,100	500
Canada	27,100	812
Switzerland	26,100	3,455
India	24,200	21
Australia	22,100	1,081
Spain	21,800	539
Austria	21,300	2,598

In the light of export performance and the high interest in global market leadership, it is no surprise that by far the biggest concentration of hidden champions is found in the German-speaking countries. My global list of hidden champions contains about 2,000 companies. About two thirds of them come from the German-language area. Scandinavia also has a sizable number, as does Northern Italy. For the US, my best estimate is between