

Preface

Who This Book Is For and What It Will Do for You

Sometime in the coming months, you will face a decision that puts real capital, real people, or real reputation on the line. You will have to make it without complete information, under real-time pressure, with at least one capable person in the room who disagrees with you. This book was written for that moment.

This book is written first for the people who carry such decisions personally. They include chief executives and the executives who report to them. They also include internal strategy teams that prepare the analysis those executives act upon. Private equity operating partners face the same burden when they inherit someone else's strategic mess on the day a deal closes. They have little time to fix it. If a wrong call costs your firm a year, a market position, or your own job, this book was written with you specifically in mind.

A second, and larger, audience will find equal value in these pages. That audience includes management consultants who need frameworks tested against real firm experiences rather than borrowed from a textbook. It includes MBA and undergraduate business students who want strategy taught through real decisions rather than abstraction. It also includes entrepreneurs in technology and non-technology industries. They build something from nothing. They cannot afford to learn strategic discipline one expensive mistake at a time.

Here is the case for this book, made plainly. I built and refined the frameworks over four decades of consulting engagements or drew them from real experience. I did not assemble the frameworks from other people's theories. This is not a single idea stretched across 200 pages. It is a working collection of 14 frameworks. Each addresses a different way strategic thinking decomposes. Each includes a diagnostic you can score honestly in an afternoon and practices you can use the same week. Read it once to build the discipline. Then keep it on the shelf you reach for, not the one that serves as backdrop for a video call. Open it again when a real decision lands on your desk.

When the executive team's perspective is muddled and unclear, reach for *Strategy Without Illusion*. Its fourteen frameworks and practical tools serve one purpose. They help you see the decision clearly, exactly as it is and not as you wish it were.

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