

Introduction

My mother deserves the credit for inspiring my career path with her early words of wisdom, which encouraged me to think often. I can still remember the important lessons she gave me as a kid, which came during frequent scoldings—usually well deserved. She'd wave her index finger and sternly say, "If you think you can get away with that, mister, you've got another think coming!" Decades later, I'm grateful for all those extra thinks, because they taught me to become a strategic thinker.

Many different experiences during my 35-year career have contributed to my passion for strategic thinking, project management, and organizational excellence. These started in high school and continued beyond getting my MBA from Harvard, after which I worked in a program planning role in the Office of the Secretary of Transportation in Washington, D.C. I then switched careers to become an international development consultant, where I learned and taught a planning approach based on systems thinking that came to be a foundation for my life's work.

After starting my own consulting company, my client base shifted to corporations, government agencies, and research institutions. These clients were very different from my previous clients in developing countries, but they faced similar issues—organizing across boundaries, sorting out complexity, and managing change. Surprisingly, I found that the same strategic management tools that worked well in developing countries were also suited for handling the complex tangle of issues my new clients faced.

I've had the privilege of helping clients in corporate and governmental settings to get started on ambitious projects, which ranged from setting up education systems in Bangladesh to helping American scientists design surveillance systems for detecting nuclear tests by rogue

nations. They've included programs to strengthen security in financial institutions, grow new enterprises to the next level, consolidate IT systems after mergers, improve the ways correctional institutions handle prisoners, and streamline service delivery in governmental agencies.

These projects have taken place in high- and low-tech environments, in Fortune 500 companies, small firms, state and federal government agencies, research laboratories, and academic institutions in 34 different countries. Along the way, I've learned some valuable ways to approach any project—small or large, simple or complex—and make it succeed.

This book completes a decade-long writing effort and contributes to my life mission: To share the very best strategic management practices with motivated men and women who aspire to make a positive difference in all dimensions of their work and their lives.

Why I Wrote This Book

The reasons why I wrote this book come from my experience as a strategic management consultant who approaches projects from a different angle than most. I believe these same reasons are why you should read this book.

The world has dramatically changed over the past 30 years and continues to do so. Today, everything happens at a lightning-fast pace. Every activity is more demanding and competitive than it's ever been. Today we all face challenges more complex those that confronted us in decades past. As the pace picks up, we are asked to do more, and we must do it well.

Far too many educated, experienced, and talented people fail to accomplish what they want for lack of the right tools to think, plan, and act effectively. Their approach to problems may be incomplete or scattered, their action plans lack the potency required to get the results they are truly capable of accomplishing. The frustrating gap that remains affects both their personal and organizational success.

The system you will be reading about in this book offers truly useful strategic thinking, planning, and action tools tuned to the tempo of the times. They will give you the edge you need to achieve the results you want in today's new world.

This book offers practical solution approaches for leaders and teams of all types facing issues of all types and sizes. Leaders—including CEOs, senior executives, program managers, and others involved in strategy and projects—will find fresh insights for communicating strategic intent to those who execute such critical activities.

Project teams and managers—as well as wild-eyed visionaries, dreamers, and entrepreneurs—can use this step-by-step, flexible approach to plan and execute change initiatives more rapidly and effectively than by using any other method.

This book can benefit anyone with Goals, whether they are personal or professional. And it doesn't require that you have an engineering-type mind.

Like it or not, being well-educated, competent, and hard working is not enough to lead to professional success, career advancement, and personal satisfaction in today's world. Expertise in your own professional area is *necessary*, but not *sufficient*. Being good at what you do is a must, but by itself, it's not enough.

By mastering the new discipline of Strategic Project Management, you will maximize your ability to execute the new ideas your organization needs, as well as advance your own career, whether you are already a certified project pro, a beginner, or somewhere in between.

Getting the Most from This Book

Strategic Project Management Made Simple offers a vital thinking process that is usually missing in project management and strategic planning. These proven concepts will help you consider what you need to think about before you turn to traditional project management tools. Applying these ideas will increase your team's ability to:

- Convert any problem, idea, or opportunity into clear Objectives and action plans that can be smoothly implemented.
- Sharpen the logic of your strategy so that it's aligned both within the project and with the larger organizational Strategies, Goals, and Vision.

- Communicate strategy concisely to build shared understanding, support, and accountability among champions, stakeholders, and project teams.
- Uncover and deal in advance with the probable pitfalls that can derail your efforts.
- Organize cross-functional and other task forces into committed and effective teams that are clear about who needs to do what, when, and how.
- Improve working relationships, reduce conflict, and encounter fewer persons who are obstacles on the path to success.
- Increase performance, productivity, and profits—saving time, money, and frustration.

The bottom line is that the techniques and tools you'll learn in *Strategic Project Management Made Simple* will equip you to do the upfront critical thinking that will give you and your team the end results you need—you can plan on it!

Three Logical Parts

Part One of this book explores the principles that make Strategic Project Management so effective. Chapter 1 describes what makes this approach unique and points out mistakes to avoid. Chapter 2 introduces the Four Critical Strategic Questions, If-Then thinking, and the art of formulating hypotheses. Chapter 3 unveils what may be the World's Best-Kept Management Secret: The Logical Framework. Chapter 4 describes how any business unit, intact team, program or project team can leverage these ideas to improve their effectiveness.

Building on that foundation, the four chapters of Part Two offer step-by-step instructions on how to design executable projects by answering the Four Critical Strategic Questions. Chapter 5 covers the fine points of defining and aligning Objectives, and Chapter 6 tackles Measurement issues. Chapter 7 demonstrates how to reduce problems in advance by managing Assumptions; and Chapter 8 covers the nitty-gritty of work planning. At the end of each of these four chapters, you'll find application steps that will help you build a strategic project plan.

Part Three pulls it all together in three chapters. Chapter 9 explores the human dynamics of projects. Chapter 10 discusses the art of action-learning and execution. Chapter 11 describes a dozen ways to implement these ideas and provides tips for getting started.

Each chapter includes client and project examples, along with a Key Points Review at the end of each. The Appendix contains a wealth of resource information, including checklists, a glossary of terms and usages, a variety of client best-practice examples, references to published articles, and other helpful resources to deepen your knowledge.

Along the way, you'll also learn how some of my clients have put these tools into action. While all the examples and case studies are real, some have been edited for confidentiality, abbreviated to fit the space, or modified to highlight key learning points. For readers who want more in-depth knowledge, you'll find downloadable versions of the abbreviated case studies and other examples at www.ManagementPro.com.

You can also subscribe to my complimentary report, *Take It From Terry*[™], which includes diverse strategic management articles and case studies on a whole range of topics, both professional and personal.

At the risk of annoying English purists worldwide, certain words in this book are always capitalized, even in mid-sentence. These are strategic management terms that have been given precise definitions in the book and are therefore capitalized to emphasize their explicit use.

The best way to master the materials in this book is to read it at least twice. The first time, simply aim to understand how the concepts fit together. On your second time through, follow the tips at the end of each chapter and apply them to your own issues. These ideas are meaty, so I encourage you to underline key sentences and scribble in the margins to make this book your own.

While the tools presented here are powerful, there is a catch: You may have to reinvent how you think. You'll have to expand your mental models so that you see your environment in new and different ways; and you must be willing to embrace the mindset of both a strategic planner and a project manager. Ideally, reading this book will be a stimulating way to enjoy and learn because we all have "another think coming"!

Strategic Project Management Made Simple empowers you to think bigger, plan smarter, move faster, and accomplish ambitious Objectives more consistently. People who can do so are a rare breed—and you are about to become one!

