If You Only Read One Chapter, This is It

What were they thinking when they made that decision?

— *Anonymous Employee*

The book is written for everyone who wants to improve their decisions, help achieve better company results, decrease risk, improve teamwork, grow their careers, reduce stress, and do more with less. It is about:

1. …how leaders, managers, and employees may unknowingly make bad decisions and destroy value along the way.
2. …why many are simply unaware of the flaws plaguing some of their decisions and resist any thought that they are wrong—until it is too late.
3. …a simple, straightforward, low cost, easy-to-implement way to understand, identify, and avoid many flawed decisions.

The insights and solutions were developed based on my 30+ years of experience as a top executive of a market-leading growth company and five years of researching the work of hundreds of experts in their fields. Accordingly, I bring the unique perspective of an insider who knows that

problems in corporations rarely stem from a shortfall in technical or professional expertise, but rather from a shortcoming in the "soft" skills of social interaction, communication, and self-management.

The Problem

As humans, we are hard-wired for survival. As a result, our thoughts are often out of place in the very different kinds of "survival" situations we encounter in business, as well as in modern life. But most of us are not conscious of these mismatches and the internal processes that occur in the 5-inch space between our ears. Consequently, our decisions are often not as rational as we believe, or are based on a non-conscious defective analysis of our options. The result is that our judgments and decisions often suffer in ways that could have been avoided.

Concept

Just like bugs can inhabit our computer operating systems and software applications, they can exist in human beings as well. I call these mind-bugs™. I use the term mind-bugs as a metaphor for the problems all humans experience with thinking, as a result in part of being hard-wired for survival. While my work is supported by considerable science, (See Appendix C) the technical language is not practical for most applications in business. So through the use of fresh, simple-to-grasp terms like mind-bugs, and equally straightforward practices, this book shines a spotlight on the problem and provides business-friendly tools and solutions.

One Example – Informed Leader Fallacy Mind-Bug

Whether it is a small project team leader well down the organization hierarchy or a "C suite" executive, we deeply want to be led by people who know what they're doing and who don't have to think about it too much. So by the time we achieve a leadership position ourselves, we are good at making others feel positive about our judgment, even if there's no strong basis. But the amount of success it takes for leaders to become overconfident isn't terribly large. Some achieve a reputation for great successes when in fact all they have done is take chances that happened to work out. The fierce personal confidence and sense of infallibility that characterizes

many leaders serves as a breeding ground for this mind-bug. Most decision makers will trust their own intuitions because they think they see the situation clearly. Accordingly, it causes leaders to fall into a trap of believing they are better informed than they really are. Everything is based on the appearance of being informed, rather than actual information. How long do you think that success will last if this mind-bug bites you? This book will help you avoid this mind-bug and 19 others.

First, Do No Harm

Detecting and avoiding mind-bugs is not a new process to add to an already overburdened staff. It is a low risk, low cost, easy to implement, way to go about what we already do. This book will describe how to practice mind-bug detection as part of our daily routines. Experience shows us that executives, managers, and employees often spend far more time fixing decisions that go wrong than helping them go right in the first place. And often they are merely dealing with symptoms and not getting at the real problem. This book is about helping that change. Makes sense, doesn't it?

Thought Governance

I believe we need to expand our focus on corporate governance policies to include *thought governance policies*. Thought Governance implies that we will not take our inherently faulty thinking processes for granted. We will take command of our thinking so it is not in automated control of our decisions. Corporate missions, values, governance, and human resource processes are deficient unless they pay attention to continuous improvement in the quality of individual thinking. Directors need to step up and address this critical omission. Under good Thought Governance policies, the responsibility of leadership is to create a culture where mindfulness in decision-making can thrive, to create an organization that is in command of its thinking.

Success – Why You Should Read This Book

I believe the approach provided in this book will substantially reduce risk and improve the results of your decisions. It doesn't require significant investment, burdensome compliance measures, or disproportionate expenditures of time. It is flexible and adaptable to the way we work today.

It does require practice and commitment. While losses will still occur, they will less likely be the result of poor judgment; rather they will reflect the reality that not all investments pay off.

In the next decade and beyond, I believe the single biggest determining factor of a company's competitive success will be the ability to collectively advance its quality of thinking. Eliminating mind-bugs could be the difference between sustainable performance and failure. Give these practices a try. You will be glad you did.