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Customer Review

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★★★★★ "Begin at the end.", September 30, 2008

By [Robert Morris](#)

After meeting at Camp David with President Jimmy Carter for several days, President Anwar Sadat of Egypt and Prime Minister Menachem Begin of Israel reached a series of accords. Of course, the news media eagerly awaited a briefing. Finally, the three world leaders emerged and one journalist asked, "After thousands of years of wars between your two countries, how were you able to achieve a peace agreement? Prime Minister replied, "We did what all wise men do. We began at the end." That is precisely what Lawrence Hobbs has in mind when explaining the importance of having a "clarity of purpose" clearly in mind first, before formulating and then executing a strategy. In fact, the clarified purpose (i.e. the ultimate goal) can serve as a vision that guides and informs all efforts to achieve it. That's an important point.

With brilliant use of the "journey" metaphor, Hobbs carefully organizes his material in response to these questions:

- Chapter 1: Where do we want to go?
- Chapter 2: How do we plan to get there?
- Chapter 3: How will we know that we're there?
- Chapter 4: What will that look like for each business?
- Chapter 5: What will we do to get there? What will we stop doing?
- Chapter 6: How will we organize ourselves?
- Chapter 7: Who will do it? How much can they spend?
- Chapter 8: What exactly must be done?
- Chapter 9: How do we get everyone on board?
- Chapter 10: Where should be? Where are we? What are we doing about the difference?
- Chapter 11: Are we there yet?
- Chapter 12: What went wrong? What went right? What should we change?

Note: A summary of these and other key questions (per each chapter) is provided in Figure 0.2 on Page xvii.

Credit Hobbs with identifying the "what" first so that he can then focus most of his (and the reader's) attention on the "how." Whenever appropriate, he also explains the "why." I also appreciate his skillful use of a standard format of five sections by which to organize key points in each chapter: Context, Why Do It?, What to Do, How to Do It, and Summary. These and other reader-friendly devices facilitate, indeed expedite frequent review of the key points later.

With regard to the book's title, Strategic DNA, it suggests that "a company's ambition - its vision and strategy - is first clearly described in a 'genome' that includes critical objectives, their relationships, and the achievement targets that give them form. The genome is then proactively used to frame all significant discussions, virulently permeating its way into the details that achieve the vision." In other words, just as no two human beings have the same deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA), a nucleic acid that contains the genetic instructions used in the development and functioning of all known living organisms, no two organizations have the same resources (including people), strengths, weaknesses, and objectives. It would be a fool's errand for anyone to attempt to apply all of Hobbs's recommendations when formulating and then executing a strategy for her or his own organization. That said, the wealth of information and counsel that Hobbs so generously provides in this volume can help to guide and inform those immensely difficult initiatives. Moreover, and of at least as much importance, his knowledge and wisdom can then be of incalculable value during the subsequent process of continuous improvement to ensure that the given objectives are achieved.

This is a brilliant achievement.

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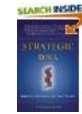
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