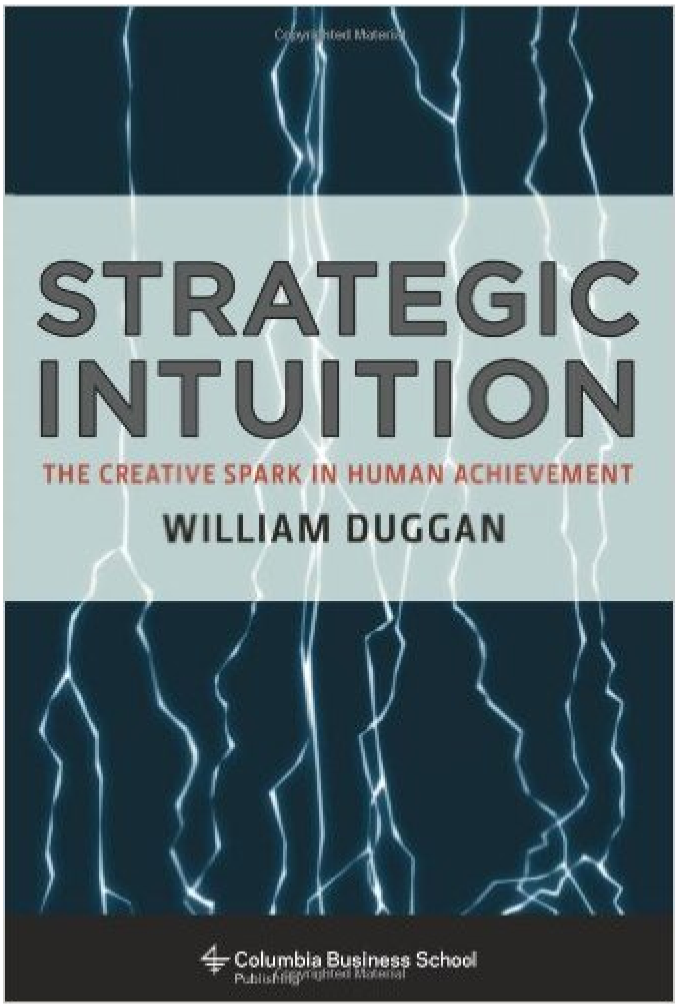
Strategic Intuition: The Creative Spark In Human Achievement (Columbia Business School Publishing)



Synopsis

How "Aha!" really happens.When do you get your best ideas? You probably answer "At night," or "In the shower," or "Stuck in traffic." You get a flash of insight. Things come together in your mind. You connect the dots. You say to yourself, "Aha! I see what to do." Brain science now reveals how these flashes of insight happen. It’s a special form of intuition. We call it strategic intuition, because it gives you an idea for action-a strategy. Brain science tells us there are three kinds of intuition: ordinary, expert, and strategic. Ordinary intuition is just a feeling, a gut instinct. Expert intuition is snap judgments, when you instantly recognize something familiar, the way a tennis pro knows where the ball will go from the arc and speed of the opponent’s racket. (Malcolm Gladwell wrote about this kind of intuition in Blink.) The third kind, strategic intuition, is not a vague feeling, like ordinary intuition. Strategic intuition is a clear thought. And it’s not fast, like expert intuition. It’s slow. That flash of insight you had last night might solve a problem that’s been on your mind for a month. And it doesn’t happen in familiar situations, like a tennis match. Strategic intuition works in new situations. That’s when you need it most. Everyone knows you need creative thinking, or entrepreneurial thinking, or innovative thinking, or strategic thinking to succeed in the modern world. All these kinds of thinking happen through flashes of insight—strategic intuition. And now that we know how it works, you can learn to do it better. That’s what this book is about. Over the past ten years, William Duggan has conducted pioneering research on strategic intuition and for the past three years has taught a popular course at Columbia Business School on the subject. He now gives us this eye-opening book that shows how strategic intuition lies at the heart of great achievements throughout human history: the scientific and computer revolutions, women’s suffrage, the civil rights movement, modern art, microfinance in poor countries, and more. Considering the achievements of people and organizations, from Bill Gates to Google, Copernicus to Martin Luther King, Picasso to Patton, you’ll never think the same way about strategy again.Three kinds of strategic ideas apply to human achievement:* Strategic analysis, where you study the situation you face* Strategic intuition, where you get a creative idea for what to do * Strategic planning, where you work out the details of how to do it.There is no shortage of books about strategic analysis and strategic planning. This new book by William Duggan is the first full treatment of strategic intuition. It’s the missing piece of the strategy puzzle that makes essential reading for anyone interested in achieving more in any field of human endeavor.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

We all know how to be logical; at least most of us do. But logic only takes us so far. Real progress comes through those who are willing to take old ideas, combine them, and use them to solve an unrelated existing problem.Breakthroughs do not come from ordinary activity, but from those that are willing to look beyond, and consider new possibilities. They take what is known from the past, and generalize it to a new situation.Even in writing the closing, the author writes, "My opportunity to write this book arose from when I saw a gap in the field of strategy at the same time that I saw the existing elements that might combine to fill that gap. In all these chapters, not a single idea, not a single example, is my own. I borrowed them all. But the combination is new, and I am grateful for the opportunity to present it here to you."The author looked at many different areas of human endeavor, looking for commonalities for when leaps of progress were made. The areas were science, war, entrepreneurship, the arts, and social work.It’s not enough to be knowledgeable about the past, and to know the theories of the present. Can you take them to come up with a solution to a current problem, by using ideas from one area of knowledge, and apply them to an area where they have not been previously applied?What is ordinary is when you know a goal, and create a plan to achieve that goal. If you have enough resources, and your plan is adequate you will succeed at an ordinary goal.What is extraordinary is trying to achieve something that is totally new. Those that do so achieve it by using what is already known (by some) in a totally new way.

How do breakthroughs actually happen?It’s not because some Grand Planners get around a table and decide to brainstorm. It happens in the shower, or stuck in the traffic, or sleeping, or any other point of the day. It’s a TV clichÃ© as well (see House), but it has happened to all of us at some point. The author shows that many or most of the best ideas come not as the source of planned research, but because your brain, through intelligent memory, combines elements of knowledge into something new.So, yes, you should set goals and strive to reach them. But these goals can change at any moment. The ability to abandon your prior target and seize the emerging opportunity is what defines strategic intuition.If I have any issue with the book, is that it may be too long. I think Duggan first wrote the book with his core concept, realized that it was about a hundred pages long, and felt embarrassed because all "serious" books are at least 200 pages. So then he added a few more pages to each chapter by restating the points he had already made and adding some examples. It’s fine for a book to be short. Sometimes, a really good idea can be expressed in few pages. This book is an example.I also felt the examples he used were a bit tired, but perhaps that’s my point of view from a non-American perspective. One gets quite sick of reading about Bill Gates, the Google Guys and Martin Luther King. So that’s nitpicking and not a real flaw in the book’s structure.Other reviewers have had issues with the book because it doesn’t give specific advice on how to get more of these flashes of insight. But that’s the point: you cannot rush an epiphany. There are no 7 steps to creativity or 5 ways to be more innovative, and the author is quite honest about it.

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