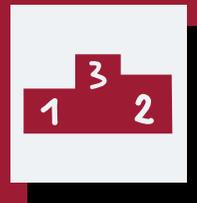
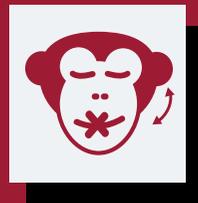
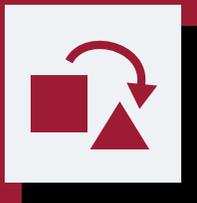


# WHY MOST IDEAS FAIL

Fascinating Insights from the World of Science



Jeroen De Flander



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# **WHY MOST IDEAS FAIL**

## *Fascinating Insights from the World of Science*

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## WHY IDEAS FAIL

We all have great ideas. And we often need the help of others to let them shine. But getting people to support our brainchild is easier said than done. We know—and have probably experienced firsthand—that people don't always do what we like them to do. Sometimes they just don't seem to care about our idea and we wonder why they don't see the same benefits that we're seeing. Sometimes they seem to make all the wrong moves and we wonder, "How difficult can it be?" And sometimes they just seem too busy with other things and we think, "Why don't you push a little harder." Just like we do.

We all struggle to get our ideas across. And the surprising truth is that failure doesn't come so much because of the quality of the idea, but because of age-old, programmed human behavior.

When our new idea—whether it's a project, a corporate strategy, a business plan or a policy to improve the education system—comes into contact with million-year-old human dynamics, our idea is in trouble. These human complexities are so powerful that they can override our own rational thinking and

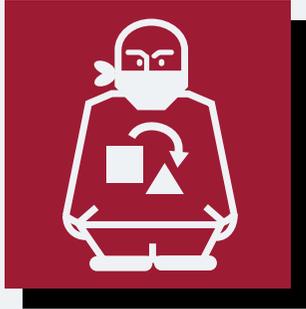
stop us from executing our own ideas, as happens every New Year for 88 percent of the population.

These human dynamics—the execution villains—are the reason why most ideas take the long route to the finish line. If we aspire to get a better return from our strategy, then we must learn how these human behaviors impact the idea journey and how to deal with them. Why not join me in the lab for a few interesting experiments?

## THE CURSE OF KNOWLEDGE

### *The Tapping Experiment*

#### VILLAIN #1



Imagine you're sitting with 15 other people in a small room. The host asks your neighbor to tap out the rhythm of a famous song like Happy Birthday on the table. You have to guess the tune. How much chance do you think you have of guessing the song correctly?

You've just taken part in an experiment designed by Elizabeth Newton from Stanford University. Over the course of the study, Newton repeated the process 120 times. Only 4 songs—2.5 percent—were guessed correctly. Not many, is it? But here's the interesting thing. Before the Listeners tried to guess the song title, she would ask the Tapper and the Listeners to predict their success rate. While the Listeners thought they would get 10 percent of the songs right, the Tappers thought the Listeners would guess a whopping 50 percent of their songs.

Isn't that amazing? The average Tapper got the message across 1 time in 40, but they thought they'd hit a homerun 1 out of 2. They overestimated their communication abilities by a fac-

tor of 20. So what happened? Does tapping make you a poor judge of your abilities? The simple answer is yes. The scientific name for this human phenomenon is the Curse of Knowledge. Here's how it works. When a Tapper—the idea creator—taps the song, the tune is playing along in his head. He's hearing the melody to Happy Birthday in his head while tapping the song. But the Listeners don't hear that music. The only information they get is a strange Morse code. It's very hard for a Tapper to judge the quality of his taps as he can't undo the tune playing in his head while tapping. The knowledge has 'cursed' him.

If we transport the Curse of Knowledge to the business world, it's not difficult to imagine that when an idea creator—a CEO, manager, policymaker or entrepreneur—finishes communicating and thinks, "I'm sure everybody gets my great idea after my extensive communication efforts", he's probably reached no more than 3 percent of his target population. Houston, we have a problem.

## THE CURSE OF KNOWLEDGE

### *The 'E' Experiment*

But there's more. Let's try a second experiment. This time, draw an imaginary 'E' on your forehead with your finger.

Researcher Adam Galinsky of Northwestern University and his colleagues divided participants into two groups. Those from the first were primed to feel powerful. How? They had to recall and write about an incident where they had power over others. The other group was asked to write about an incident in which someone else had power over them. Next, all participants were asked to draw the letter 'E' on their foreheads.

Now, there are two ways to draw an imaginary 'E' on your forehead. One way is as if you're reading it yourself, with the solid bar on your left and the openings on the right. The other way is to draw the 'E' as if another person is reading it, with the solid bar on your right and the openings on the left. The first choice produces a backward and illegible 'E' from the viewer's perspective. The second choice leads to an 'E' that's backwards to you.

The result? Surprisingly, the high-power participants from the first group were 3 times more likely to draw a self-oriented 'E'. Galinsky argues that power makes us blind. What does

it mean? It means that the more power we have, the harder we find it to imagine the world from someone else's perspective. We draw the letter backwards because we are used to others adapting to our point of view. It also means that the effect of the Curse of Knowledge is likely to be reinforced when the person communicating is the boss. Houston, we might have a big problem.

Science teaches us that idea creators misjudge the quality of their communication due to the Curse of Knowledge. The effect is tripled when the idea creator is, or believes he is, in a position of power. But human nature doesn't only impact the behavior of the idea creator. It also impacts the behavior at the receiving end.

## DECISION PARALYSIS

### *The Jam Experiment*

#### VILLAIN #2



Sheena Iyengar from Columbia University and Mark Lepper from Stanford set up their lab in the form of a tasting booth on 2 different Saturday's at Draeger's supermarket, an upscale grocery store in California. One week, they had 24 jams to sample on the table, and the next week only 6. Customers could try as many samples as they liked and received a \$1 discount coupon for a jam of their choosing.

The first results were as expected. Over the course of a 5-hour period, 60 percent of people who passed the display of 24 jams stopped, while only 40 percent did at the stand with 6 on display. So more choice means greater initial appeal. But the surprise came when they looked at the sales figures. Thirty percent of the people who stopped at the '6 jam' booth used the coupon and bought jam, but only 3 percent bought something at the '24 jam' booth. People initially exposed to a limited number of options are much more likely to purchase the product

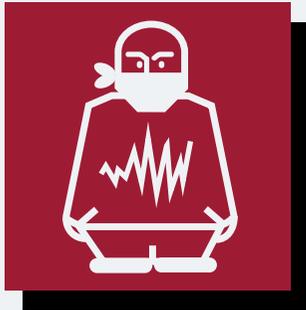
than those given a greater choice.

So what happened? Science calls this human phenomenon Decision Paralysis, another villain on the execution road. Again, it's not a deliberate action, but rather an expression of innate human behavior, this time at the receiving end. When someone wants us to do something (like buying jam), but presents us with too many options (24 flavors), we're paralyzed. We can't decide.

## MESSAGE DISTORTION

### *The Sherlock Holmes Mystery*

#### VILLAIN #3



Sir Arthur Conan-Doyle wrote his first Sherlock Holmes story in 1886. The fictitious character was based on a real man, Dr Joseph Bell, a renowned forensic scientist at Edinburgh University. Conan-Doyle wrote 60 adventures in total. The collection is known as The

Cannon. All but 4 stories are narrated by Holmes' loyal sidekick Dr Watson. Together, they solve the most amazing mysteries. Now think for a moment. What's the most famous Sherlock Holmes expression you know?

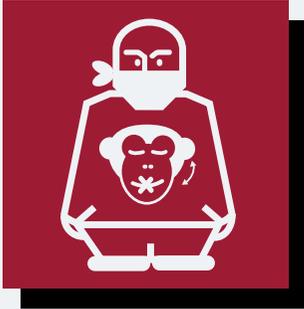
Most probably you answered, "Elementary, my dear Watson." Now here's the interesting part. The character Sherlock Holmes never actually uses this precise phrase. You won't find it in any of Conan-Doyle's books. Holmes does say 'Watson' all the time. He was his loyal companion after all. He also uses the word 'elementary' repeatedly, as a way of showing how smart he is. (They run into the most complex situations. Holmes points out the solution and states it's 'elementary' as if the solution is

the most obvious thing in the world). And somehow, both words ended up together. Why? Because there's a nice fit. We can easily imagine Sherlock Holmes saying, "Elementary, my dear Watson," showing his unique ability and intellectual superiority towards his friend Watson. It's a characteristic of a communication phenomenon science calls Message Distortion, another villain on the execution road. Gordon Allport and Joseph Postman researched message shortening. And their results are astonishing. A message loses a whopping 70 percent of its details after 5 to 6 mouth-to-mouth transmissions.

## MITIGATED SPEECH

### *The Cockpit Tragedy*

#### VILLAIN #4



In an environment where ‘no’ is unacceptable, people don’t dare to challenge decisions. In such an environment, individuals are more afraid of the consequences of disagreeing than the consequences of someone’s wrong decision. Even if lives are at stake. Take a look at

the following cockpit conversation between the first officer and captain on a cold winter’s day in January, shortly before take-off:

**First officer:** “Look how the ice is just hanging on his, ah, back there, see that?”

(waits)

**First officer:** “See all those icicles on the back there and everything?”

(waits)

**First officer:** “Boy, this is a, this is a losing battle here on trying to de-ice those things, it [gives] you a false feeling of security, that’s all that it does.”

Shortly after being given clearance to take off, the first officer expresses his concern for the fourth time.

**First officer:** “Let’s check those [wing] tops again since we’ve been sitting here a while.”

**Captain:** “I think we get to go here in a minute.”

Finally, when they were on their take-off roll, the first officer noticed that something was wrong with the engine readings.

**First officer:** “That don’t seem right, does it?” (3 seconds pause). “Ah, that’s not right.”

**Captain:** “Yes, it is, there’s 80.”

**First officer:** “Naw, I don’t think that’s right.” (7 second pause). “Ah, maybe it is.”

Minutes later, the Air Florida aircraft failed to gain sufficient height on take-off. It crashed into the nearby Potomac River. There were only 5 survivors.

Unfortunately, the co-pilot’s inability to trigger the right decision from the pilot isn’t a tragic stand-alone fact. According to US National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) research, this type of communication failure occurred in 75 percent of all plane accidents.

## **MITIGATED SPEECH**

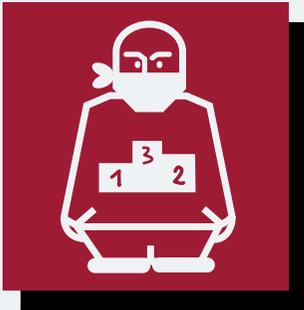
### *The Cockpit Tragedy*

In a potentially life-threatening situation such as the Air Florida cockpit or Rhode Island Hospital, we would expect subordinates to be very explicit in their communication. We would expect the nurse to say, “Don’t do anything until we get confirmation,” and the first officer, “Don’t take off until we’ve checked our wings again.” Instead, they only hinted. The communication phenomenon that explains why subordinates downplay the meaning of their message when addressing their boss is called Mitigated Speech. It’s villain number 4 on the execution road.

## THE PYGMALION EFFECT

### *The Israeli Army Experiment*

#### VILLAIN #5



Consider a 15-week army course where 105 soldiers were assigned to one of 4 instructors. A few days before the start of the program, each instructor was briefed, including the following message:

We have compiled much data on the trainees including psychological test scores, sociometric evaluations, grades in previous courses, and ratings by previous commanders. Based on this information, we have predicted the command potential (CP) of each soldier. ...Based on CP scores, we have designated each trainee as having either a high, regular or unknown CP, the latter due to incomplete records. When we're not sure, we don't guess. Soldiers of all 3 CP levels have been divided equally among the 4 training classes.

Each instructor was given their list of trainees (one-third of whom had a high CP, one-third a regular CP, and the remain-

der an unknown CP). They were then asked to copy each trainee's command potential into their personal records and learn the names and scores before they arrived.

It's important to know that, at the time, these 4 instructors didn't know that the command potential classification—the performance score on the list they received—was completely random. In other words, the soldier listed as having the highest CP could very well be the worst soldier in the group.

After 16 weeks, at the end of the combat course, the performance of the 105 soldiers was tested in 4 different areas. One of these performance evaluations, for example, was their proficiency in the use of weapons they had been trained to master. The outcome? Those soldiers who got marked with a high command potential significantly outperformed their classmates in all 4 subjects. Those with an average CP scored the lowest. The third group—those with an unknown performance potential—ended up in the middle. The difference in performance between the best and the worst group was 15 percent.

After detailed analysis, it showed that the experimentally

## **THE PYGMALION EFFECT**

### *The Israeli Army Experiment*

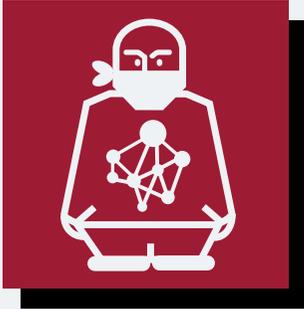
induced expectations—the fake command potential scores—explained almost three-quarters of the variance in performance. In other words, by making a superior believe a subordinate has the ability to be a great performer, the actual performance increases. And the effect isn't marginal. It's a whopping 2-digit figure!

Strange, don't you think? When we believe a team member has the ability to be a great performer, our belief becomes reality. The performance expectation we have for our team members is a self-fulfilling prophecy.

## CO<sub>2</sub>MPLEXITY

### *Tata's Dream*

#### VILLAIN #6



At Tata's research center in Mumbai, India, there were two cars on display. One was a complete prototype of the Nano—the \$2,500 compact car they were working on. The other was a neat bi-section with the car's guts clearly visible.

Every day, people were invited to examine the car on display in the hope they would propose simplifications. It all started in 2003 with Ratan Tata's dream. He wanted to build the cheapest car in the world. He gave his engineering team, led by 32-year-old star engineer Girish Wagh, 3 requirements. The car should be dirt cheap, respect the regulatory safety requirements, and drive like a real car.

Their initial prototype didn't even come close. To keep costs down, the engineers had come up with a vehicle which had bars instead of doors, and plastic flaps to keep out the monsoon rains. It was closer to a quad cycle than a car and lacked punch. Even a bigger engine, which boosted the power by nearly 20 percent, was still dismal. "It was an embarrassment," Wagh

admitted afterwards.

But, in hindsight, the first failure also proved to be very helpful. If they were to succeed in building a 'proper' car and not an upgraded four-wheel scooter or a cheap-looking alternative nobody would be interested in, they had to rethink every aspect of the car. They had to take each component—from the windshield wipers to the radio—and figure out what to leave and what to throw out. And for each component they decided to keep, they had to design it as simply as possible to keep the production costs under control. The whole process was a balancing act. Cutting too much or being too simplistic meant compromising on safety, performance, and design. Cutting too little meant a car that was too expensive.

To succeed in their tightrope act, they quickly understood they needed help. Ratan Tata called a meeting of his top parts suppliers and, after showing them the first flawed prototypes, asked them for support. At first, they were skeptical. But Tata persisted and, after some debate, most of Tata's regular suppliers joined the project. Rane Group, for example, focused

## CO<sub>2</sub>MPLEXITY

### *Tata's Dream*

on reducing the weight of the steering system materials used, replacing the steel rod of the steering with a steel tube—a major cost-reducer. Typically, the product is made of two pieces, but it was redesigned as one to save on machining and assembling costs. Another supplier, GKN Driveline's team, spent a year developing 32 experimental variants to create the perfect drive-shaft—the component that transfers power from the engine to the wheel. With the help of their French and Italian designers, they changed the design to make it lighter and easier to manufacture.

Over time, Wagh's team grew to 500 engineers. A core team of 5 gathered every day at 3pm to discuss the latest developments. Each member represented a different part of the car—engine and transmission, body, vehicle integration, safety and regulation, and industrial design.

Fitting all the redesigned parts together was another challenge. The engine, for instance, had to be redesigned 3 times. Initially, Wagh thought they'd buy an off-the-shelf engine. The team evaluated all the small-capacity engines available, but

found nothing suitable. So, in early 2005, they decided to build their own. The first was a 540cc engine that, when fitted on the prototype, lacked the necessary power. So its capacity was increased by 9 percent. But it still didn't deliver enough power. So they added another 9 percent before Wagh finally settled on a 623cc engine. This, however, required re-aligning the foot pedal to have sufficient legroom. And so on. In the end, the tightrope act paid off. When Ratan Tata stepped out of the driver's seat from the first Tata Nano, it made a lasting impression. What shook the automobile world most was the fact that the designers seemed to have done the impossible. The car was dirt cheap, but didn't look like it. It didn't look like an upgraded 4-wheel scooter. Instead, it was a nice-looking, real car... but with the price tag of a scooter.

The challenges these engineers faced are comparable with those we face when we decide to combat CO<sub>2</sub>mplexity. As with the Nano, we have to ask ourselves which process components we need and which can be left out. We should ask questions like, "Do we really need Balanced Scorecard software?"

## CO<sub>2</sub>MPLEXITY *Tata's Dream*

and “Do we really need to keep tracking those KPI’s?” Or “Do we really need to include the corporate values as evaluation criteria in our individual objective-setting process?”

Our next challenge is to simplify, as far as possible, those components that we decide to keep. Einstein understood this challenge perfectly. He said, “We need to make things simple, but not too simple.” To combat the CO<sub>2</sub>mplexity villain, we need smart simplicity. To combat CO<sub>2</sub>mplexity, we have to make things simple. We have to ask ourselves questions like, “We have to manage projects, but do we need all the bells and whistles from the 100-page manual for every project?” and “We have a KPI dashboard, but do we need all those KPI’s?” But we can’t make things too simple. They still need to serve their purpose, like the size of the engine to keep speed and real doors for safety and comfort. We can probably simplify our budget process, but we do need its core. We can probably get rid of some of the complexity of our project management process, but we do need to manage our projects in a professional way. I’m sure you get the picture. Successful strategists walk The Simplicity Tightrope,

carefully balancing the overly simple and the overly complex. Tip over to the complex side and you’ll fall in the complexity swamp. Tip over to the simple side and the value is lost.

## WILLPOWER DEPLETION

### *The Cookie Experiment*

#### VILLAIN #7



In the first part of the experiment, Baumeister's team kept 67 hungry participants in a room that smelled of freshly baked chocolate cookies. He teased them further by showing them the treats. Half of the group was allowed to dig in and eat the cookies and the second group was asked to eat radishes.

Next, Baumeister's team gave the participants a second, supposedly unrelated challenge. They had to trace a geometric figure without retracing any lines or lifting their pencils off the paper. After a brief test period, they were told that they had as many attempts as they wanted. They would be judged only on whether or not they could finish tracing the figure. If they wished to stop beforehand, they had to ring a bell.

Unknown to the participants, these geometric figures were impossible to solve. The researchers wanted to test the effect of Willpower Depletion. In other words, would the group who had eaten the cookies put in more execution effort than

the group who had selected to eat radishes? The effect of the manipulation was immediate and undeniable.

On average, the cookie contestants kept going for 18 minutes, making 34 attempts to solve the puzzle. However, the radish group gave up after 8 minutes, having made only 19 attempts. As they had to resist the cookies and force themselves to eat vegetables, they could no longer muster the will to fully engage in another torturous task. They were already mentally exhausted. They ran out of willpower. The villain won.

## THE 7 VILLAINS ON THE EXECUTION ROAD

If we want our idea to be successful, we have to navigate these powerful human complexities.



1. If we want people to understand our idea, we have to overcome the **Curse of Knowledge**.



2. If we want people to make the right choices, we have to combat the villain **Decision Paralysis**.



3. If we want to keep the core of our idea visible, we have to fight **Message Distortion**.



4. If we want others to challenge questionable decisions, we have to circumvent **Mitigated Speech**.



5. If we want the whole team to perform at peak level, we should tackle **Golem**.



6. If we want to speed up decisions, we should reduce **CO<sub>2</sub>mplexity**.



7. If we want people to keep pushing our idea forward, we have to outwit **Willpower Depletion**.

## HEAD – HEART - HANDS

Each execution villain offers us a way of making sense of the complex human dynamics that every idea has to navigate. They provide us with direction on how to get our idea into the heads, hearts, and hands of others.

Thinking about the specific behaviors of the villains triggers fundamental why questions on the impact of human behavior on our idea like, “Why doesn’t repeating my idea message help create understanding?” Thinking about tactics to outwit the bad guys on the execution road help us answer important questions on how to make a successful H3-connection like, “How do I trigger the right emotions with my idea story?”, or “How can we increase commitment to the strategy?”

We’ll also discover that successful strategists found an answer to 3 crucial questions: (1) How do I make others *care* about my idea— care enough so they are willing to figure out how they can contribute to success; (2) How do I make others *aware* of what the idea is all about—aware enough so they can make autonomous decisions that positively impact success; (3) How do I keep others going and *energize* them enough to keep

them traveling the execution path even when I’m not around?

The name given to this successful triple connection—the connection between a big idea and the travelers it meets on its execution path—is the *H3-connection*. It’s our gateway to traveling the Execution Shortcut. Let’s take a look at two successful idea journeys.

## PAUL O'NEILL'S & DONALD BERWICK'S AMAZING IDEA JOURNEYS

One windy day in October 1987, a few minutes before noon, a 51-year-old man with an idea took to the stage of a posh hotel in Manhattan, New York. He wore a gray pinstripe suit and a matching red power tie. He looked fit, solid, and confident. Just like your typical chief executive.

Then he started to speak.

“I want to talk to you about worker safety” he kicked off with. He then highlighted the company’s statistics, telling the crowd that numerous workers were so badly injured that they were forced to stay off work for a while. “Our safety record is better than the general American workforce, especially considering that our employees work with metals that are 1,500 degrees and machines that can rip a man’s arm off. But it’s not good enough,” he told the crowd, “I intend to go for zero injuries.”

The audience—a group of prominent Wall Street investors and stock analysts—was utterly confused. This wasn’t what they’d expected at all. They’d imagined big promises about future earnings, a bold vision or talk of some serious cost cutting. Anything but a safety lecture.

As soon as the presentation was over, they scuttled out of the room. One financial advisor raced to a payphone in the hotel lobby, called his 20 largest clients and said, “The board has put a hippy in charge and he’s going to kill the company.” He then urged each of them to get rid of all their stock immediately, before the news came out.

It turned out to be the worst piece of advice he ever gave.

When the Aluminum Company of America—better known as Alcoa—failed to perform, they hired Paul O’Neill as their new CEO, hoping he could turn the tide. He did. In the end, he stayed with the company for 13 years. Under his watch, Alcoa’s injury rate fell to one-twentieth the US average. The stock price had risen to 5 times the level of 1987. If that financial advisor had told his clients to buy a million stock instead, they would have earned more than 1 million in dividends and their stock would be worth 5 million.

Even today, O’Neill’s legacy lives on. Alcoa remains one of the safest companies in the world. In 2010, not one single employee day was lost due to injury in 82 percent of Alcoa factories.

## PAUL O'NEILL'S & DONALD BERWICK'S AMAZING IDEA JOURNEYS

In fact, on average, you're more likely to get injured at an accountancy office or software company than by handling molten aluminum at Alcoa.

So how did that happen? Alcoa doesn't specialize in selling safety equipment. They're into aluminum. You wouldn't have expected O'Neill's crazy idea to get very far. But somehow it did. As a result, a sluggish aluminum company became one of the most successful companies in the industry. And it went from strength to strength, long after the individual who had sparked its journey had left the company.

Early on December 14 2004 at a large industry convention, a 57-year-old man with an idea took to the stage. He said, "Here's what I think we should do. I think we should save 100,000 lives. And I think we should do that by June 14 2006—18 months from today. 'Some' is not a number and 'soon' is not a time. Here's the number: 100,000. Here's the time: June 14 2006—9am."

The audience—a large group of healthcare leaders—was surprised. This wasn't what they'd expected at all. Of course

there was a problem. At the time, everyone knew that the improvement potential was huge. "Between the healthcare we have and the care we could have lies not a gap, but a chasm," concluded the US Institute of Medicine in 2001 in their landmark report about healthcare in the next century. But it's one thing to know about an execution gap, and another to close it. The road to the finish line was filled with road blocks. And the healthcare leaders just didn't see how Donald Berwick, CEO of a small not-for-profit organization, could mobilize 3,000 hospitals—75 percent of all US hospital beds—to buy in to his crazy idea to save 100,000 lives in 18 months.

But they were proved wrong.

Exactly 18 months later, Berwick took to the stage again and said, "Hospitals enrolled in the 100,000 Lives Campaign have collectively prevented an estimated 122,300 avoidable deaths and, as importantly, have begun to institutionalize new standards of care that will continue to save lives and improve health outcomes into the future."

On July 7 2010, Berwick left his position as president and

CEO of the Institute for Healthcare Improvements (IHI). But his legacy lives on. By December 2008, 4,050 hospitals had joined the program. Eight states enrolled 100 percent of their hospitals in the campaign. Other countries like Brazil, Canada, and Denmark also embraced the program. On top of that, there was a clear spillover effect to other domains like the 100,000 Homes Campaign—a national movement of communities working together to find permanent homes for 100,000 of the country's most vulnerable homeless individuals and families by July 2014. What's Berwick's secret? How can one individual with no hierarchical power inspire and guide thousands of executives, physicians, and nurses in 3,000 hospitals enough to save over 120,000 lives in 18 months? And how does the idea keep going strong long after the individual who sparked its journey has left?

O'Neill's safety idea and Berwick's dream to save 100,000 lives are textbook examples of successful idea journeys. And although their organizations might sound as if they don't have very much—a 60,000-strong company with operations in 30

countries listed on the New York Stock Exchange and a not-for-profit organization with 75 employees—both ideas followed a very similar travel pattern on their way to success.

**1** First of all, both ideas found a way into the hearts of the people involved. It tapped into their emotional side and made them care. And so they decided to become a part of its journey. “Why not share my other idea?,” thought one low-level employee when he heard that O'Neill was looking for ideas to improve safety. He suggested grouping the painting machines in order to switch the pigments faster so they'd respond more flexibly to customer demands. “It was like he gave us the winning lottery numbers,” an executive said. Within a year, the aluminum siding profits had doubled. Once the Alcoa employees believed they were part of something important, they all started to pile in. It wasn't that the healthcare professionals hadn't known that lives could be saved. Every person in the room had been aware of that. But just knowing wasn't enough. It wasn't until that memorable December day when Berwick launched his bold idea that they really

started to care. Somehow he found a way into their hearts.

**2** The second remarkable characteristic shared by both journeys is that both ideas found its way into their heads. Travelers on the execution road understood what had to be done to succeed. Berwick's team scripted 6 simple interventions with matching tips and tools each hospital could easily embrace. For example, when a patient is on a ventilator, their head should be elevated at a 45-degree angle to avoid suffocation. Doctors and nurses alike were encouraged to draw a line on the wall behind the bed of every patient on a ventilator and to tell everyone—family, other patients, and janitors—to notify someone immediately if the patient's head dropped below the line on the wall. At Alcoa, O'Neill installed a simple feedback loop. If someone was injured, the manager in charge had to report directly to him within 24 hours with a plan to prevent such an injury reoccurring. O'Neill made it very clear how they could contribute to the success of the idea.

**3** And success is permanent. People keep pushing the idea forwards, long after the idea creator has left the scene. Take Alcoa. It's now a safer place than it was when O'Neill left. And every week, new hospitals all over the world join the program. Somehow, the idea has found a way into the hands of the people. The idea stuck—the third shared characteristic of both journeys.

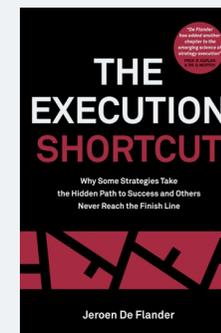
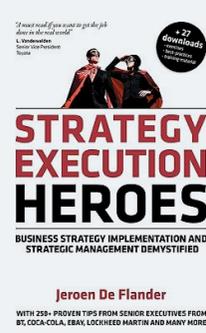
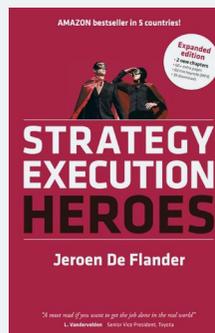
IN THE END, STRATEGY SUCCESS largely depends on the strategist's ability to make successful H3-connections. And while the need for this triple connection is obvious—so obvious most idea creators don't think twice about it—successful H3-connections are much harder to make than most of us think. Not so much about who we are, but because of how we are programmed as human beings. When our idea comes into contact with million-year-old human dynamics, our idea is in trouble. If we want people to understand our idea, we have to find a way to beat the 7 execution villains. These powerful human complexities make strategy journeys extremely challenging. They also explain why most ideas take the long road to the finish line. Or worse, never make it at all.

But if there is difficulty on the execution road, there is a large measure of hope as well. Simply by wrapping a story around our big idea, adopting a crew concept, and boosting belief, we can motivate others. By providing prioritization support, a finish line and a few well-chosen signposts, we can improve decisiveness. By simplifying the working environment and cultivat-

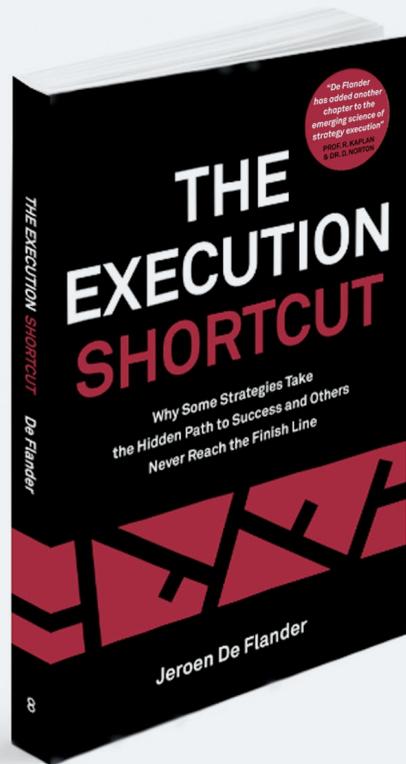
ing the right execution habits, we can energize travelers. And that's great news. It means we can influence the path our idea takes. It means we can greatly improve the odds of idea success in our favor. In the end, traveling the Execution Shortcut means tapping into the hidden potential we all have as human beings. So why not tap into this well of human strength? Why not be a H3-connector? Connect your idea with the Hearts, Heads, and Hands of your fellow travelers and uncover the hidden path to success.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jeroen De Flander is one of the world's most influential thinkers on strategy execution and a highly regarded keynote speaker. He has shared the stage with prominent thinkers like Michael Porter. His first book *Strategy Execution Heroes* reached the Amazon bestseller list in 5 countries and was nominated for Management Book of the Year 2012 in the Netherlands.



## WHAT OTHERS SAY ABOUT *THE EXECUTION SHORTCUT*



“De Flander has added another chapter to the emerging science of strategy execution.”

PROF.SSOR ROBERT KAPLAN, HARVARD BUSINESS SCHOOL & DR DAVID NORTON

“*The Execution Shortcut* is a fantastic read! It is full of wonderful advice and practical examples and explains in a clear and engaging style how to get your ideas or strategies implemented. You will not only enjoy reading this book—you will act on it!”

COSTAS MARKIDES, PROFESSOR OF STRATEGY & ENTREPRENEURSHIP, LONDON BUSINESS SCHOOL

“This book explains in an engaging way how Just Do It’s don’t come automatically. It only happens when the mind is triggered, the heart inspired, and willpower strengthened.“

BERT STEVENS, VICE PRESIDENT EUROPE OPERATIONS, NIKE

“*The Execution Shortcut* offers a great roadmap to win in the new reality of business.”

JORGE INDA MEZA, GLOBAL DIRECTOR OF STRATEGIC INNOVATION, AB INBEV

“This book gives brilliant tips on execution excellence.“

ATUL JAIN, SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT, SAMSUNG

“*The Execution Shortcut* is a must read for every leader who wants to boost strategy commitment and guide others through the implementation maze.“

CAROLINE HILLEGEER, SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT STRATEGY, GDFSUEZ

“I can recommend this book to any leader.”

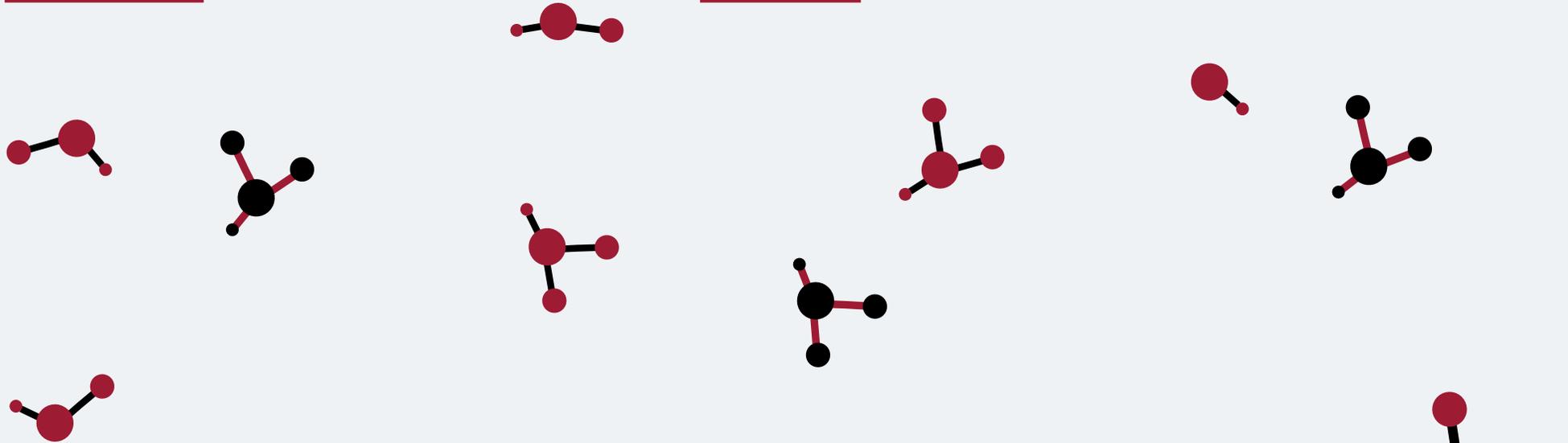
PATRICK BODART, PRINCIPAL DIRECTOR, EUROPEAN PATENT OFFICE

“De Flander’s latest book charts a strategy for taking any idea off the drawing board and into real life. A great help to anyone looking to bring a good idea into the real world.”

-- KIRKUS REVIEWS







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**THANK YOU!**

