



Strategy and the Fat Smoker; Doing What's Obvious But Not Easy

David H Maister

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We often (or even usually) know what we should be doing in both personal and professional life. We also know why we should be doing it and (often) how to do it. Figuring all that out is not too difficult. What is very hard is actually doing what you know to be good for you in the long-run, in spite of short-run temptations. The same is true for organizations. What is noteworthy is how similar (if not identical) most firms' strategies really are: provide outstanding client service, act like team players, provide a good place to work, invest in your future. No sensible firm (or person) would enunciate a strategy that advocated anything else. However, just because something is obvious does not make it easy. Real strategy lies not in figuring out what to do, but in devising ways to ensure that, compared to others, we actually do more of what everybody knows they should do. This simple insight, if accepted, has profound implications for

1. How organizations should think about strategy
2. How they should think about clients, marketing and selling and
3. How they should think about management.

In 18 chapters, Maister explores the fat smoker syndrome and how individuals, managers and organizations can overcome the temptations of the short-term and actually do what they already know is good for them.

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