



## What I Didn't Learn in Business School: How Strategy Works in the Real World

*Jay B. Barney, Trish Gorman Clifford*

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**What I Didn't Learn in Business School: How Strategy Works in the Real World** Jay B. Barney , Trish Gorman Clifford

Meet Justin Campbell. He's a new MBA graduate who's landed a job with a strategy consultancy. His engagement team is on a mission: help HGS Inc., a specialty chemicals firm, define and execute a strategy for exploiting a textile technology the company developed.

Justin and his team deploy state-of-the-art strategy tools to analyze the attractiveness of potential markets for the technology. But they soon realize the tools don't help them grapple with the human side of strategy--including political forces swirling within HGS. Everyone involved in the engagement is biased and insecure, brilliant and hardworking, selfish and lazy, loyal and dedicated.

Justin and his cohorts aren't "real"--What I Didn't Learn in Business School is a business novel. But they're realistic: they're just like us. Their story reveals the limitations of strategy tools and demonstrates tactics for navigating the messy, human dynamics that can make or break a company's strategy efforts.

This engaging book uses the power of story to present potent lessons for anyone seeking to excel at strategy management. It's a compelling read--whether you're an MBA grad struggling to apply what you learned or in the fray and eager to see what MBAs get wrong when they land in the real world.

## What I Didn't Learn in Business School: How Strategy Works in the Real World Details

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# From Reader Review What I Didn't Learn in Business School: How Strategy Works in the Real World for online ebook

## Tina Chang says

The book is selected material for my course on strategy. We discussed those analysis and political factors in the story. I'm not that fascinated by the plot itself since I'm going to be tested on it. However, I'd recommend this book for those are highly interested in the process of making strategic decisions.

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## Andre says

### [AUDIOBOOK]

So, maybe I shouldn't be so harsh of a critic for a book that I picked because I liked the narrator. However, I don't believe that this book accomplished what its intention was - to provide insight into the business world. I was keen to get some input into some practical decision making skills, given modern political climates in organizations.

The book was more of a novel than a textbook, which made it engaging and easy to get through. However, the writing felt like it was written by business folks. Further, Justin (the main character) made countless cringe-worthy comments and decisions. However, maybe that is an accurate view of a young, inexperienced, professional.

I loved the reflection questions at the end of the chapter. They helped keep me engaged. I would have liked if they supplied some brief answers to these questions, so as to help me learn about how I'm analyzing the situation versus another person.

It was a fun and easy read, but I didn't feel like I really gained much from it. This is why I rated it so low.

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## Sreejith Manghat says

A short yet insightful peek into the strategy consulting world. Justin (the protagonist) in the story realizes the limitations of his highly-acclaimed MBA program study as he tackles his first ever real-world strategy engagement that is unlike any of his hundred odd MBA cases.

Justin goes further to appreciate the true value of his MBA learnings as tools that can provide additional perspectives while solving real world problems. In the real world, team work and organizational behavior play a bigger role - and of course burning the midnight oil through pure hard work!

All in all, a pleasant read that tickles and mildly ridicules the MBA program study; a good way to prepare for the real world post-MBA.

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## **Auggie Heschmeyer says**

This turned out to be far more engaging than I ever could be imagined it would be. For a book that is basically a business school class in disguise, there are some moments of really lovely prose and even some unexpected twists and turns. As a work of high art, it's nothing special, but as a work of business education, this is a book you should buy for each and every one of your entrepreneur friends.

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## **Tony says**

Simple presentation in novel format of business consulting related ideas. While you may not learn anything new, especially if you've gone to b-school, you gain a different perspective on some of the core aspects of business strategy. In other words, the real world is not a case study! Gave it three stars because it was amusing.

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## **Brian Keller says**

A very light read, but still engaging. It gives a fine look at what a newly-minted MBA faces in the real world. It also serves as a textbook with references to core material that every MBA should grasp immediately. Curious as to what MBAs do and how they think? Got a few hours to spare? Then this is a cute read. But, if you're not an MBA student and you've got a bunch of other good books to read, I suggest you move on to more interesting material.

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## **Lauren says**

The plot can be summarized as "watch a new MBA grad stumble through his first job and mess up really obvious stuff." It was interesting but I didn't learn much.

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## **Joshua Giles says**

Wowzer this was one of the best business books I have read. Not many business concept books can be told in story form and done so well that someone reading it purely for pleasure and not business insights could enjoy

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## **Anand Iyer says**

What I didn't learn in business school is a book every budding consultant should have read at least once, especially the ones hired from B-school. The B-school learnings that are thrashed have been elucidated: how Porter's five force can be bent to the shape of the manager or how NPV calculation varies with the managers' interest. But most important, how hydra-headed a client actually is and how important it is to address every head in the same "deck".

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### **Elizabeth says**

My professor made me read this book. Meh... interesting and a quick read but a lot of the insights were obvious and nothing was truly surprising. I suppose this is a result of having a protagonist that embodies several dumb mistakes new MBAs make. In actuality a new MBA would only make 1 or 2 of the mistakes in this book and they wouldn't be so glaringly simple. This also does nothing to encourage me to want to become a consultant ever in my life. I enjoy problem solving but the lifestyle seems terrible in terms of work/life balance.

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### **Erica Johnson says**

In their effort to write a "business novel", what the authors actually produced was both a poor business book and a bad novel. On the business side: their main points could have been summarized in 50 pages rather than 200. Essentially, the real world is not a class example - who knew? In order to come up with good business strategies, one has to use their head to analyze possibilities, rather than just blindly follow practices learned in class. As far as a novel: it is clear that neither author has done much work in fiction. The dialogue is incredibly repetitive (I stopped counting how many times the main character responded with "What do you mean?" after a dozen instances) and the characters are flat and not expressed well. Gordon was described as "a snob" late in the book - but there were no actions showing that he was a snob. They clearly forgot the "show don't tell" high school writing instruction. Overall, I don't think I learned anything from this book aside from some business jargon - the rest was common sense.

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### **Laman Abdulla says**

If you are a business school student or a recent graduate- DO read it before going out for your first job.

An engaging and light read. Describes in a concise manner the challenges of a recent graduate who tries to apply the "bookish" material into practice and realizes how many additional factors are impacting real life decision making. This is clearly not something he has been taught in the business school.

The book is a useful read for students/recent graduates especially before their first job in the field. It will equip them with comprehension of some of what they should be expecting from the job's technical and especially emotional aspects.

Managers/team leaders will find it helpful to better understand challenges of their new team members.

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### **Ravi Warrier says**

A brilliant book to open the eyes of any MBA graduate, especially a recent graduate. The book is written in a fictional form narrating the story of a newly graduated MBA, Justin Campbell, working on his first consulting assignment.

Justin progresses through his short assignment, learning each day the practical implications and limitations of what he learned in his b-school. He learns that applying his MBA knowledge to real life problems of his client is not as easy as it seems and that he is constantly reminded by his daily experiences that he needs to bring more to his team table than just theoretical knowledge.

A brilliant book (again) and a must read by any recently graduated MBA.

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### **Hason Mohammed says**

The book helps you to get a better understanding of strategic thinking. You will understand how many theories work in real word.

You will see theories like VIRO and its limitations. Moreover, you will get a sense of how politics within firms play a major role in decision making and how to overcome them.

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### **Andrea James says**

A light and breezy book which is written in story-style, which I normally dislike in business books but is rather suitable as an accompaniment whilst running as one doesn't need to focus quite as hard.

I liked the reflection questions at the end of each chapter as they provided good prods to think about the situation described in that chapter.

The book's attempt to portray the rougher side of consulting felt more like reading the consulting equivalent of the TV programme Suits. No matter how dark they made it seem, it still came with a glossy sheen and Hollywood ending (I hid this review in case people consider this line a spoiler).

All in all, if you were thinking of doing an MBA and planning to get into consulting and this book/audiobook fell in your path, you may find it a harmless way to spend a few hours (given you're thinking of being a consultant, you should be able to blitz through easy reading material pretty quickly).

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