

PREFACE

If you are not an Advantage-Maker, the odds are that you will lose to a leader who is.

—Steven Feinberg, PhD

Do you know how to shift the odds in your favor?

Bookies—not the type who read books—were part of my upbringing.

Entrepreneurs—people who knew how to make business happen—filled my everyday experience.

Leaders—with their challenges, setbacks, and successes—shaped my professional and business focus.

Although I didn't realize it at the time, I was initiated into a unique view of the world that not many people see—the world of Advantage-Makers. I've spent a good part of my professional career discovering how people like my Dad were able to shift the odds in their favor. This book is an invitation for you to view that world of “movers and shakers” and, more important, to see the levers they employ so that you too can use them for your own benefit.

How do you win when the odds are against you? How do you shift the odds ethically and legally to succeed instead of fail? How do you make things even better when things are already working for you? The answer to all three questions is the same: Do what Advantage-Makers do.

Revealing the Magic Bullet

I'm often asked by CEOs, leaders, and managers, “If you could concentrate on one area—a magic bullet—that is central to success in business, what would that be?” It's not strengthening weaknesses or determination, although those are

usually touted and won't hurt. After decades of practical application, I'm convinced the answer can be found in a specific set of advantage-making skills—the most relevant skill set an executive can focus on for personal and business success. These specific skills accentuate and amplify existing talents to shift the odds in your favor. The team with the most Advantage-Makers almost always wins. This book describes the tools needed to increase advantage-making capability to solve the most immediate and strategic problems.

Not Another Leadership Personality Book

The Advantage-Makers is not another leadership personality book, nor is it another off-the-shelf, one-size-fits-all approach to leadership. It provides a set of pragmatic tools leaders can use to see opportunities others don't even know exist. Many books tell a leader to change what he or she is doing if it isn't working, but they don't explicitly state how. The Advantage-Maker approach shows you how, providing you with control you might never have possessed.

There is something different about how Advantage-Makers approach problems. They initiate action and thought, originating new ways of doing things. How Advantage-Makers do this has never been adequately described. This book provides the necessary description.

Influences

I am very fortunate to have been educated by great minds, some of whom you will meet in the chapters ahead, who shared their thoughts through dialogue, seminars, and writings. I noticed that each possessed something in common, though they had different backgrounds and different spheres of influence—each had a commanding vantage point that made it possible to see ways to succeed that had been overlooked.

The ideas are based on more than 23 years of experience in providing advice to leaders and managers, along with supportive evidence from applied research in the fields of social psychology, cognitive psychology, and behavioral economics from the past 50 years. This book is intended to be thoughtful and provocative, not in the sense of confrontation, but in ways that equip you with levers of opportunity.

Method

Strategic shifting is the method used to model the behavior of Advantage-Makers. Underlying the methodology is applied behavioral patterning and positioning. It is based upon analyzing behaviors in everyday interactions—among people, groups, organizations, and companies. The model highlights the Code of the Advantage-Maker. It reveals the four levers Advantage-Makers use. You will discover what keeps sticky situations sticky and how to create unexpected gains in the midst of constraints.

Strategic shifting is not another version of “thinking outside the box,” but a way of seeing more clearly what is inside

and outside the box, enabling penetration to what is important. You shift the odds in your favor by identifying powerful vantage points from which to look at problems, reveal opportunities, and create profitable courses of action.

Pointing Out Pitfalls

Although leaders should be wise, they are, at times, otherwise. This book goes beyond studies about failure and lays bare, in simple terms, the surprising mistakes and specific Laws of Defeat that cause leaders to stumble, undermining even the best Advantage-Makers' inclinations.

Cultivating Uncommon Good Judgment

The predictable "common sense" that colleagues and consultants provide as advice often sets up executives for unintended consequences. Be wary of someone whose *only* tool is a hammer; to them, every problem starts to look like a nail. They bring you their hammer and encourage you to hammer away. This limits you, and worse, the more you use the hammer, the more likely you will be hammering opportunities closed, working against yourself.

Many executives I've worked with cultivated uncommon good judgment, able to see what they couldn't before, and what others still don't. The Advantage-Makers' approach shifts the way you think, enabling you to take a profitable course of action. Using the tools in this book, you can spot hidden opportunities, influence outcomes, and create advantages.

In This Book

Part 1 Strategic Shifting: How to See What Others Miss

Chapter 1 How to Shift the Odds in Your Favor in the Best of Times and the Worst of Times

Advantage-Makers turn everything into the best possible advantage by seeing possibilities others don't see. This chapter describes strategic shifting and finding commanding vantage points to see what others miss.

Chapter 2 Breaking the Secret Code of the Great Advantage-Makers

The set of operating principles unique to Advantage-Makers. This chapter reveals their underlying time orientation, their perceptions and mindsets, the way they interact with people and challenges, and how they structure their work to spot opportunities, create advantages, and influence outcomes. Discover your own advantage-making abilities with the Advantage-Maker assessment instrument.

Chapter 3 Wise or Otherwise: Are You Following Any of the Hidden Laws of Defeat?

Even smart leaders fall prey to pitfalls that prevent them from creating advantages. Instead, they may inadvertently produce disadvantage and have to play catch-up. Knowing what to avoid can be as important as picking the right target in the first place. The emphasis is on how you can steer your organization around the traps.

Chapter 4 Shifting to a Commanding (Ad)Vantage Point

This chapter focuses on strategic shifting to a commanding vantage point and how that leads to a profitable

course of action. Most executives are strategists, but not everyone shifts their responses to a favorable perspective.

Part 2 The Advantage Points: The Levers of Advantage-Making

Chapter 5 Adaptive Stretching: It's Not the Best Who Wins—It's Who's the Most Adaptive

The first advantage point: *Adapt rapidly. The person with the widest ranges of responses wins.* Non-adaptive responses are costly. Flexibility and agility rather than rigidity lead to control. Without this skill, executives will encounter obstacles that will constrain their success. The chapter illustrates how to spot unexpected opportunity and use anomalies. Practice the advantage-making exercises to help you adaptively stretch.

Chapter 6 The Game Changer: If You Are In a Hole, Stop Digging and Change the Game

The second advantage point: *Game Changer. Do something that shifts the game.* Counterproductive behavior results from persisting in a course of action that actually doesn't work, but thinking that it should or it will. This pattern of mishandling difficulties turns into recurrent problems. Case examples instruct you on an unexpected method that enables you to do more with less, instead of making sticky problems stickier. The failed attempted solutions provide clues for creating superior outcomes.

Chapter 7 Move or Lose: Manage Momentum to Advance Your Organization

The third advantage point: *Move or lose. Spotting the invisible forces at play that drive forward movement.* Structure shapes behavior. Case examples show how best efforts are neutralized and why 60% of change programs fail. This chapter

provides a set of practical advantage-making steps to position you for forward movement and create momentum.

Chapter 8 Strategic Influence: How to Get People to Say Yes in the Right Way to the Right Things

The fourth advantage point: *Strategic Influence: The Multiplier Effect. Small influential moves, big leverage gains.*

Whenever someone makes a request, they are involving you in an influence transaction. The chapter covers four scientifically verified influence factors. It identifies how effective leaders inadvertently bungle, overlook, and lose opportunities, as well as specific practical ways to find unexpected opportunities to put to work immediately.

Chapter 9 Influence Perception: Helping People See What They Need to See

Complete the web of influence with four of the most powerful persuasion factors that are in plain sight to Advantage-Makers, but invisible to others because they don't know how to look. Assess your Web of Influence and expand your impact.

Chapter 10 Being an Advantage-Maker: How to Play in a Different League

Time to apply. If you are not continually creating advantages, then customers, employees, and stockholders will look elsewhere. Advantage-making is a high-level craft that improves with practice. As an Advantage-Maker, you will be operating in a different league.

Nothing is worse than discovering a solution was right around the corner and you didn't turn it.

—Steven Feinberg, PhD