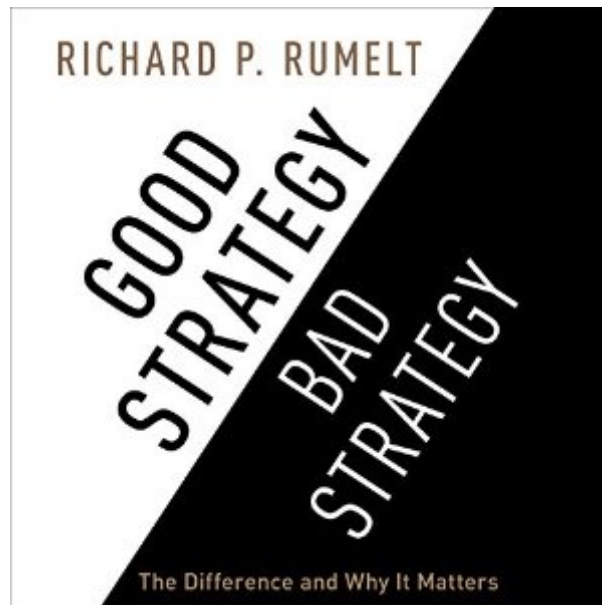


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# Good Strategy/Bad Strategy: The Difference And Why It Matters



## Synopsis

Developing and implementing a strategy is the central task of a leader, whether the CEO at a Fortune 100 company, an entrepreneur, a church pastor, the head of a school, or a government official. Richard Rumelt argues that the heart of a good strategy is insight - into the true nature of the situation, into the hidden power in a situation, and into an appropriate response. He shows you how insight can be cultivated with a wide variety of tools for guiding your own thinking. Good Strategy/Bad Strategy integrates fascinating examples from business, nonprofit, and military affairs to bring its original ideas to life: From Apple to General Motors, from the two Iraq wars to Afghanistan, from a small local market to Wal-Mart, from the Getty Trust to the Los Angeles Unified School District, from Global Crossing to the 2007-08 financial crisis, and many more. The abundance of business-ready insights offered by Rumelt stem from his decades of digging beyond the superficial to address hard questions with honesty and integrity.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Rumelt's 'Good Strategy Bad Strategy' provides an excellent framework for understanding the difference between good and bad strategies. The material benefits greatly by his inclusion of good and bad strategy examples. Rumelt begins by pointing out that developing and implementing a strategy is the central task of a leader. Strategy, however, does not equate to buzzwords, values, slogans, or financial goals. Good strategy applies power where it will do the greatest good. Most organizations don't have a strategy, let alone a good one. Good strategy almost always looks simple

and obvious, and is built around one or two critical issues. Bad strategy tends to skip over problems. Strategy is about how an organization will move forward. The purpose of Rumelt's book is to clarify the differences between good and bad strategy, and help readers create good strategy. A good strategy is coherent; most organizations pursue multiple objectives that are unconnected with each other, or even conflict with each other. One way to begin is by identifying the leading competitor and asking how that company became that leader, then segueing into how one's own company could also become a leader. (My preference is more direct - ask significant/target customers for advice on how one could substantially increase business volume with them.) Steve Jobs' turnaround of Apple in 1996 began by shrinking the firm to a scale and scope appropriate for the niche producer it was at the time (4% of the total market). Jobs got Microsoft to invest \$150 million in Apple and develop new Microsoft Office software for Apple to deflect Gates' worries over antitrust prosecution.

I am not a strategy specialist. I run a small business and am currently co-chair of a study task force appointed to deal with issues facing our local (UMC) church. Over the years I have looked at a number of books about business planning and strategy and have found interesting things but have always felt that they were written for someone who had to "sound smart" in some meeting or presentation. I was visiting my brother's house and started reading his copy of Good Strategy/Bad Strategy one evening. I stayed up until 3 a.m. to finish it. There is a wealth of practical wisdom here that is presented without jargon and with a nice garnish of wit. At first I assumed the "bad strategy" concept would apply to big companies and that I could breeze through it. But, as I got ahold of the argument, I began to see bad strategy all around me. It's there in state government, in the school system, in town planning, at a park where I am a trustee, and, of course, in Washington D.C. This idea has been a real eye-opener to me and I hope that it reaches a wide audience. The benefit is not just to strategy experts, but to ordinary people who need a way of understanding what is right and wrong with the institutions around them. Even more than the "bad strategy" idea, I found the author's approach invigorating and empowering. Dr. Rumelt doesn't tell you what to do to make a good strategy. Instead, he says that it is the product of insight. In addition, he tells us that a strategy can't be "proven" to be correct. It is simply a good guess ("hypothesis") about what will work. (I sort-of always knew this, but couldn't articulate it in the face of so much expert blather about the best way to plan.) But, he then explains ways of thinking that help generate insight.

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