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DIRTY ROTTEN STRATEGIES

How We Trick Ourselves and Others into Solving the Wrong Problems Precisely

Ian I. Mitroff & Abraham Silvers

When problems arise, the first question inevitably is: how can we fix it – *and fast*? Too often, however, individuals, organizations, and governments attempt to fix the *wrong* problem by zeroing in on the need for one, simple solution rather than uncovering and addressing the complex issues that cause it.

In **DIRTY ROTTEN STRATEGIES: How We Trick Ourselves and Others Into Solving the Wrong Problems Precisely (Stanford University Press; November 9, 2009; Hardcover; \$24.95)**, crisis management expert Ian Mitroff and statistician Abraham Silvers blow the whistle on how everyone from big business to the media prevent real progress – intentionally (Type Four Errors) or not (Type Three Errors) – by mislabeling the most prevalent concerns of our time and creating erroneous, if elaborate, solutions that miss the mark entirely.

As Mitroff and Silvers note, “We can’t solve old and new problems with assumptions, mindsets, and institutions of the past.” **DIRTY ROTTEN STRATEGIES** provides the 21st Century tools and strategies necessary to identify the *right* problems and solve (or manage) them precisely. With compelling real-world examples of dirty rotten strategies in action, Mitroff and Silver deconstruct the most common pitfalls to the major challenges of our time – from the implicit paradox of managing nuclear weapons to dealing with wicked problems like the war in Iraq that defy a single definition or solution.

In **DIRTY ROTTEN STRATEGIES**, Mitroff and Silvers show how to quickly and correctly separate essential information from excess details and effectively get to the heart of the matter. Turning conventional wisdom on its head, the authors explain why more than one agreed-upon definition of a problem can be a strength, *not* a weakness and why our globally interconnected world requires that we manage – not solve – our most difficult messes.

DIRTY ROTTEN STRATEGIES gives readers the real-life techniques to master today’s key problems such as:

- **How the media contributes to the public’s obsession with “unreality”** – from celebrity culture to the blurring of boundaries between fact and fiction – which keeps society from addressing the real issues at hand.
- **The Health Care System’s basic flaw** – how the focus on profits and cost-control has obscured the real goal of improving the health of the general population.
- **How Higher Education sets students up to fail** – by setting up a false hierarchy of knowledge between “soft” and “hard” subject areas and creating rigid divides that limit our ability to solve complex problems effectively.
- **The *real* issue with God** – how society’s elemental focus on the individual prevents any solution to global, higher-level problems from being found.
- **The self-made limitations of scientific inquiry** – why scientists need to loosen their hold on expert consensus if they ever want to answer the world’s most pressing problems – from Global Warming to Cloning.

DIRTY ROTTEN STRATEGIES is a deep analysis of how we define, shape, and make sense of our political and social realities, often to our own detriment, and how we can shift the focus to the *real* concerns using the *right* methods to guarantee change. It is a must-read guide on navigating every modern challenge with insight and expertise.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Ian I. Mitroff is the founder of the USC Center for Crisis Management and the consulting firm Comprehensive Crisis Management. He has worked with clients ranging from the American Red Cross to General Motors to Taco Bell. Since the Tylenol poisonings in Chicago in 1982, Mitroff has researched and consulted on nearly every major crisis. He is a professor at the Marshall Goldsmith School of Management and a visiting professor at the University of California, Berkeley.

Abraham Silvers currently provides statistical consulting and support in the field of health studies and clinical trials and environmental problems. He was Associate Professor of Mathematics at California State University, Los Angeles; Associate Professor of Experimental Studies, Baylor College of Medicine; and Professor of Statistics at The University of California Medical School at San Francisco. Silvers was elected a Fellow of the American Statistical Association (ASA) in 1988 for his contributions to clinical trial methodology.

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