



**MB** BIBLICAL  
SEMINARY

## Vision and Strategic Planning LDR 534

*The mission of MB Seminary is to educate and equip men and women to help lead the church in reaching Canada and beyond with the Good News of Jesus Christ.*

Instructor: Randy Wolff, PhD  
Associate Professor of Leadership Studies and Practical Theology  
Email: [randywolf@mbseminary.ca](mailto:randywolf@mbseminary.ca)  
Credit Hours: 3  
Prerequisites: None  
Course Term: April 15 – June 15, 2024  
Instruction: May 2-3 (6:30 pm - 9:30 pm), May 4 (8:30 am – 12:00 pm) at Willingdon Church

### Course Description

This course provides Christian leaders with a biblical perspective on planning within ministry organizations, the skills to develop a shared vision for ministry, and a set of practical planning and execution tools for making progress towards that vision. This course's themes are informed by a Mennonite Brethren perspective in accordance with the Mennonite-Brethren Confession of Faith

### Objectives

This course will help you:

- Appreciate and make the most of the unique design that God gives to each ministry
- Strengthen their philosophy of strategic planning that includes the development of mission and vision through to formulation and implementation of ministry goals
- Practice various strategic planning skills by designing and implementing a strategic planning process for their ministry
- Design and begin implementing a robust leadership development plan (or assess and revise their personal leadership development plan from a previous leadership course)
- Apply the lessons learned in the classroom in real-time ministry settings

## Course Textbooks

Barton, Ruth Hailey. *Pursuing God's Will Together: A Discernment Practice for Leadership Groups*. IVP Books, 2012. 256 pages.

Herrington, Jim, Mike Bonem and James H. Furr. *Leading Congregational Change: A Practical Guide for the Transformational Journey*. Fortress Press, 2020. 207 pages

McChesney, Chris, Sean Covey and Jim Huling. *The 4 Disciplines of Execution: Achieving Your Wildly Important Goals*. 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. New York: Simon and Schuster. 2022. 336 pages.

Total pages = 799

## Required Inventory

[Risk-taking Test](#) by Psychology Today

Note: When it comes to discerning vision and engaging in strategic planning processes, it's important to understand one's capacity for risk-taking. This test will help you gain a better understanding of your risk tolerance. Make sure that you order the full report (\$4.95 USD) after doing the free version. You will have an opportunity to integrate the results of the test and your subsequent reflections into some of the assignments for this course.

## Intensive Schedule

Learning Intensive (Willingdon Church)	
Thursday, May 2, 2024	6:30 – 9:30 pm
Session 1	Course Introduction Theology of Vision Discernment and Strategic Planning
Session 2	Discerning God's Will Together
Friday, May 3, 2024	6:30 - 9:30 pm
Session 3	Increase Urgency, Build the Guiding Team
Session 4	Get the Right Vision
Saturday, May 4, 2024	8:30 am – 12:00 pm

Session 5	Communicate for Buy-in and Empower Broad-based Action
Session 6	Create Short-term Wins, Don't Let Up, and Make it Stick

Note: Attending all sessions of the course intensive is a requirement for passing the course.

## Course Assignments

The assignments for this course include three integration projects, discussion groups, personal leadership development plan, and the course evaluation. If you ever have an idea for an alternative assignment that you believe would have greater personal value and would still meet the objectives of the course, feel free to talk with me about it. In addition, feel free to use other formats (e.g. PowerPoints, Prezi, storyboards, videos) for your assignments. Please double-space all written assignments.

Assignments are due by 11:59 pm (your time) on the day they are due. I would ask that you submit your assignments in Populi. Once I have marked your assignment, I will put it in your grade book in Populi where you can check your grade and review the comments I made on the assignment (you will receive an automatic notification whenever I put a graded assignment in your grade book). Please note that I typically deduct 5% of an assignment's total possible value for each week that it is late (assignments submitted more than two weeks beyond the due date will not be accepted). If you find that you are unable to complete an assignment on time, I will grant one extension of up to one week for one assignment during the course (without penalty) when you inform me of your need for an extension before the due date for that particular assignment. I will also consider extensions in exceptional circumstances such as a medical emergency (when a doctor's note accompanies the request). For the times when I allow a student to rewrite an assignment, I will generally take off 20% of the assignment's value before assigning a grade to the rewritten assignment.

I am fine with you using AI platforms, including ChatGPT, to assist you in your research for any assignments for this course. Please treat any work that these platforms create as sources that you need to appropriately cite or describe (you don't need to do this if you use an AI platform for simply editing your work). For example, you may want ChatGPT to create an outline for you in response to the question about Jesus' approach to discipleship. That's totally fine if you include a note that ChatGPT assisted you in creating the outline.

Here is an overview of all the assignments followed by a detailed description of them:

### Overview of Assignments

Week	Due Date	Assignments	Percentage of Final Grade	Cumulative Percentage
Week 1	Apr. 20	Integration Project #1	25%	25%
Week 2	Apr. 22-27	Group Discussion #1 (date to be determined by group leader)		
Week 3	May 2-4	Learning Intensive		
Week 4	May 11	Integration Project #2	25%	50%
Week 5	May 18	Personal Leadership Development Plan	20%	70%
Week 6	May 20-25	Group Discussion #2 (date to be determined by group leader)		
Week 8	Jun. 8	Integration Project #3	25%	95%
Week 9	Jun. 10-15	Group Discussion #3 (date to be determined by group leader)	5% (for all three group discussions)	100%
Week 9	Jun. 15	Course Evaluation	-----	-----

#### Integration Projects (worth 75% of the final grade)

During three weeks of the course, you will have an opportunity to do three integration projects based on the required readings (these combine the reflection papers and major project you may have had in other MB Seminary courses). The week after your integration project is due, you will meet in church-based discussion groups to discuss your projects and to explore other related topics. The maximum length for each integration project is 1,800 words.

#### Integration Project #1 – Discerning God’s Will (25% of final grade)

##### Required Reading – *Pursuing God’s Will Together*

Ministry teams make many decisions. Obviously, we want to make the best decisions in keeping with God’s will. For this assignment, develop a theology of discerning God’s will together. Based on Scripture, the *Pursuing God’s Will Together* text, and other relevant sources (see Appendix A

for a sample list of vision and strategic planning resources), describe a biblical approach to discerning God's will as a team. What is the role of prayer in this discernment process? How might a ministry team grow in its capacity to hear from God? To what extent should discussion and strategic thinking/planning influence a group's sense of God's leading? What are other factors that contribute to discerning God's will together? Even though this is primarily a theological paper, I would ask that you begin to apply your theology of discerning God's will together to your ministry. What would your theology look like in practice? How might it influence the strategic planning or evaluation process you will design and implement for integration projects #2 and #3?

The maximum size for this integration project is 1,800 words.

Due Date: April 20

### Integration Project #2 – Design a Strategic Planning or Evaluation Process (25% of final grade)

Required Reading – *Leading Congregational Change*

Require Inventory -

For this assignment, you can either design a strategic planning process (see Option 1) or an evaluation process for an existing program, ministry, or other initiative (see Option 2). Make sure you clearly state which option you have chosen in your paper.

#### Option #1 – Design a Strategic Planning Process

For this option, design an in-depth strategic planning process for your ministry (e.g., your church, language ministry, elder's team, life group, Sunday School class) or work (e.g., workgroup, department). Make sure that you design the process in consultation with your team (working collaboratively with team members to design the process will help them own it and engage the process in a more meaningful way). Using the discussions with your team as a guide and input from other sources (e.g. *Leading Congregational Change* – you can also check out some of the vision and strategic planning resources listed in Appendix A), create a process with your team that will help your ministry or workgroup clarify its vision and take steps to achieve that vision (this could focus on several steps of the change process or just one of them). Depending on the scope of the process you develop, you may be able to complete it in one month before the third integration project is due. However, it's fine to develop a longer process and report on the steps you accomplished for the final integration project. If others from your group are taking this course, you are welcome to do this assignment together. If this becomes a group project, make sure you describe how you worked together to design the planning process.

**OR**

#### Option #2 – Develop an Evaluation Process

For this option, develop a process for evaluating a ministry, program, or activity. To what extent is your ministry, program, or activity actually accomplishing its mission (or operating in alignment with its core values or other guiding principles/goals)? As with option #1, include your

team in the design of the process. Integrate *Leading Congregational Change* and other sources that provide insights into these kinds of evaluation processes (see Appendix A for a sample list of vision and strategic planning resources). Then, for the third integration project, you would report on the findings of the evaluation and the steps you plan to take based on the evaluation results. If others from your group are taking this course, you are welcome to do this assignment together. If this becomes a group project, make sure you describe how you worked together to design the evaluation process.

The maximum size for this integration project is 1,800 words.

Due Date: May 11

Integration Project #3 – Implementing a Strategic Planning or Evaluation Process (25% of final grade)

Required Reading – *The 4 Disciplines of Execution*

For this integration project, you will have an opportunity to implement and report on your strategic planning process or evaluation process from the second integration project:

Option #1 – Implementing Your Strategic Planning Process

This option has three parts:

Part 1 – Strategic Planning Process

Facilitate the strategic planning process you created for the *Design a Strategic Planning or Evaluation Process* assignment (or as much of it as you can). Make sure that you take careful notes related to each step of the process.

Part 2 – Analysis of the Process (1,200 words)

Craft an analysis of the process based on your observations and those on your leadership team (it will be important to regularly debrief with others on your leadership team throughout the process). The analysis should incorporate insights about effective strategic planning techniques from all three of the course texts, class discussions, and other relevant sources (see Appendix A for a sample list of vision and strategic planning resources). It should also describe where the process was most successful and where you could have improved it in light of your personal observations, the course instructional content, and what you discover in the literature. How did you notice the primary risk-taking personality traits (sensation-seeking, harm-avoidance, comfort with ambiguity) and mediating personality traits (conscientiousness, reward dependence, locus of control) from the *Risk-taking Test* play into how you engaged with the process? It will also be important to include some discussion about possible next steps in the strategic planning process. In addition, include any materials that you used during the planning process (you can include any additional materials as appendices - these will not count toward your assignment word limit).

### Part 3 – Executing the Plan (600 words)

Considering insights from *The 4 Disciplines of Execution* and the instructional content, along with ideas from other sources (see Appendix A for a sample list of vision and strategic planning resources), what approach could be beneficial for effectively implementing the strategic plan on an ongoing basis? How would you implement and sustain this approach for operationalizing your strategic priorities?

### Option #2 – Engaging in an Evaluation Process

For this option, you will actually evaluate your ministry, program, or activity using the process that you described in the second integration project (option #2). This option has three parts:

#### Part 1 – Analysis of the Evaluation Process (300 words)

Describe the evaluation process. What worked well? What obstacles did you encounter?

#### Part 2 – Report on Evaluation Findings (900 words)

For this part, give a detailed report on the evaluation findings. Assess the findings in light of the team's mission and core values. What would you recommend based on the findings to help the team better achieve its mission? Make sure that you integrate relevant ideas from the course discussions, course textbooks and other relevant sources (see Appendix A for a sample list of vision and strategic planning resources). How does the literature intersect with and inform the findings? In addition, how did you notice the primary risk-taking personality traits (sensation-seeking, harm-avoidance, comfort with ambiguity) and mediating personality traits (conscientiousness, reward dependence, locus of control) from the *Risk-taking Test* play into how you engaged with the process?

Please include any additional materials as appendices - these will not count toward your word limit.

### Part 3 – Executing the Plan (600 words)

Considering insights from *The 4 Disciplines of Execution* and the instructional content, along with ideas from other sources, what approach could be beneficial for effectively implementing your recommendations (from Part 2 of this assignment)? How would you implement and sustain this approach for operationalizing your strategic priorities?

The maximum size for this integration project is 1,800 words.

Due Date: June 8

### **Discussion Groups (5% of the final grade)**

During Weeks 2, 5 and 9, you will meet in a church-based discussion group for 90 minutes to discuss your integration projects, explore other related topics, and contextualize ideas to your ministry setting. A designated leader from the host church will facilitate the church-based

discussion groups for students from the host church. If you attend another church, please arrange to meet with a leader from your church (and any other students in the class from your church) to discuss your integration projects (and send me the name and email address of the leader, so that I can contact them about your participation grade). Your group leader will coordinate with you and the other group members as to when it would be best to meet.

The assessment of participation in discussion groups involves attendance and actual participation in the group sessions (both are worth 50% of the discussion group mark). The discussion group leaders will use the following rubric to assess each group member's participation:

Excellent participation (worth 47-50/50) – The group member consistently engaged in the group conversations. The person did an excellent job listening to other group members and consistently added meaningful content to the conversations.

Great participation (worth 43-46/50) – The group member engaged in the group conversations most of the time. The person paid attention to what others said and added relevant content to the discussions fairly regularly.

Good participation (worth 40-43/50) – The group member sometimes engaged in the group conversations. The person was somewhat attentive to the group conversation and would add relevant content periodically.

Fair participation (worth 35-39/50) – The group member did not often engage in group conversations. The person seemed out of touch with the group conversation and would rarely add relevant content.

Poor participation (worth less than 35/50) – The group member rarely, if ever, engaged in the group conversations. The person seemed distant and uninterested in the group discussion and even other group members.

### **Personal Leadership Development Plan (worth 20% of your final grade)**

If you have done the Personal Leadership Development Plan assignment in a previous MB Seminary course (e.g. LDR 510: Christian Leadership Practices), please do Option #2: Follow-up Plan below. Otherwise, do Option #1: New Plan.

#### Option #1 – New Plan

This option is for those who haven't created a Personal Leadership Development Plan in a previous MB Seminary course and has four parts:

Part One – *Understanding Your Personal Calling Workbook* (worth 30% of the assignment's value)

For this part of the assignment, prayerfully work through the *Understanding Your Personal Calling* workbook posted in Populi. I would encourage you to spread out this exercise over



several days or longer to give yourself a chance to reflect on the questions and ideas that emerge. Include the completed workbook as part of this assignment.

#### Part Two - Rule of Life (worth 30% of the assignment's value)

This part of the Personal Leadership Development Plan gives you an opportunity to describe what you are already doing in each of the 12 practices listed in the Rule of Life document (in Populi) and what you could add or change that would strengthen your leadership foundations (and better position you to live out your personal calling). If you are not doing something in a particular area and don't think you should, that's fine. In addition, feel free to add other areas that you have found helpful. To help you identify which areas should be a top priority for you right now, include a short statement at the end of this part where you identify 2-3 Rule of Life elements that will receive extra attention during the next few months. Include a rationale for why you believe these are especially important for you right now. The approximate length of this part is 600 words (point form is fine for this section).

#### Part Three - Strategic Plan (worth 35% of the assignment's value)

Establish three strategic objectives that will promote your development as a Christian leader over the next three months. Indicate the rationale for selecting each objective (why is the objective important in light of your calling, your Rule of Life, and your Risk-taking assessment results). In addition, identify at least three key action steps for each objective, which will help you take steps toward achieving the objective over the next three months (this means that you will have at least nine action steps in total). Make sure that all the action steps are **SMART**:

- **Specific** (i.e. focused on one clearly defined area)
- **Measurable** (i.e. you should be able to chart your progress and know when you have achieved the action step)
- **Achievable** (i.e. you should be able to achieve the action step within the stated time frame)
- **Relevant** (i.e. the action step should actually help you achieve your overall objective)
- **Time-framed** (i.e. you should include a completion date so that you have a clear target for completing the action step)

Here are two examples of SMART action steps:

- I will memorize one verse per day, starting today, for the next three months.
- I will develop my teaching gift by attending the Teaching Adults Effectively conference next month

At the end of this section, include a one-page summary of your prioritized objectives and action steps that you can use as a quick reference guide. Recognizing that it is difficult to work on three major objectives at the same time, I have asked you to prioritize them in your one-page summary. Make the first one your top priority. You can move on to another objective once you feel you have made reasonable progress on the previous one.

#### Part Four - Setting up Supportive Accountability (worth 5% of the assignment's value)

For this part, give the entire assignment to someone who will provide some supportive accountability as you implement the plan (e.g. a mentor, friend, family member, pastor). Include a note at the end of your assignment saying who received a copy of this assignment.

#### Option #2 – Follow-up Plan

In a previous leadership course, you articulated a personal leadership development plan. The purpose of this plan was to help you articulate key objectives for developing as a godly and effective servant leader. In this assignment, you will have the opportunity to review and revise your objectives and specific action steps from your last leadership course. There are four parts to this assignment:

##### Part 1 – Review Your Progress (600 words)

In this section, assess the progress you have made on the objectives/action steps in your previous personal leadership development plan. What obstacles have stood in your way? After reflecting on your progress, carefully review the results of the inventories you did in LDR 510. If you did the Emotional Intelligence 2.0 inventory in LDR 510 and you didn't redo it for LDR 532, please do it again (the second test is free) as a part of your review of your inventory results. As you review the results of all the inventories (including the Risk-taking assessment for this course), discuss areas where you have seen noticeable growth or increased application of particular practices/skills. Which areas seem to have become weaker? Where have you been unable to apply practices/skills in your life and ministry, as you would like?

##### Part 2 – Revise Your Plan (600 words)

Based on your review of your progress and your inventory results (including the Risk-taking assessment for this course), what are the three objectives that you think are most strategic in helping you live out your personal calling and develop as a godly and competent servant leader? List them in order of priority. What are at least three steps you will need to take to realize each of these objectives? Feel free to keep old objectives and actions steps; however, you may find that you have become aware of other objectives and action steps that may be more effective in helping you develop as a leader who can increasingly live out your God-given calling. Alternatively, you may have made significant progress towards accomplishing an objective and would like to focus on a new one. I would encourage you to focus on one objective at a time (trying to achieve all three at the same time could be overwhelming). Make sure that each of the nine action steps is **SMART**:

- **Specific** (i.e. focused on one clearly defined area)
- **Measurable** (i.e. you should be able to chart your progress and know when you have achieved the action step)
- **Achievable** (i.e. you should be able to achieve the action step within the stated time frame)
- **Relevant** (i.e. the action step should actually help you achieve your overall objective)

- Time-framed (i.e. you should include a completion date so that you have a clear target for completing the action step)

Here are examples of two SMART action steps:

- I will memorize one verse per day, starting today, for the next three months.
- I will develop my teaching gift by attending the Teaching Adults Effectively conference in March

### Part 3 – Plan Summary (300 words)

Make a 300-word summary of your revised objectives and accompanying action steps. It's helpful to keep this document in front of you, so that you have a tangible reminder of these priorities.

### Part 4 – Distribute your Revised Plan

As an additional step, give copies of your one-page revised summary to some you trust who can support and guide you in accomplishing your objectives. Include a note at the end of your assignment saying who received a copy of your plan.

Due Date: May 25

## Course Evaluation

Because your feedback is very important to me (I will often change future offerings of a course based on the feedback I receive from students), I have made the course evaluation a required part of the course. You will find the course evaluation in Populi.

## Grading Scale

Letter Grade	Percentage	Description	Grade Point	Meaning in Graduate Work
A+	97-100	Superior	4.30	Exceptionally well-reasoned, compelling development of position. Outstanding incorporation of personal vision as well as of references and resources. Strikingly appropriate examples. Extraordinary insight, critical analytical and evaluative ability, and creativity. Superlative style and language usage. Makes an original contribution and is potentially publishable.
A	93-96.99	Excellent	4.00	Well-argued and convincing development of position. Insightful incorporation of personal vision as well as of references and resources. Notably appropriate examples. Excellent insight, critical analytic and evaluative ability, and creativity. Impressive style and language use.
A-	90-92.99	Very Good	3.70	Thorough and plausible development of position. Skilful incorporation of personal vision as well as of references and resources. Very good examples. Very good insight, analytic and evaluative ability, and creativity. Commendable and fluent style and language usage.
B+	87-89.99	Proficient	3.30	Proficient development of position. Appropriate incorporation of personal vision as well as of references and resources. Relevant examples. Good quality insight, analytic and evaluative ability, and creativity. Clear and correct style and language usage.

B	83-86.99	Good	3.00	Competent development of position, but possibly with some gaps and/or limitations. Good incorporation of personal vision as well as of references and resources. Good examples. Reasonable insight, analytic and evaluative ability. Little creativity. Generally good style and language usage, but possibly with some minor flaws.
B-	80-82.99	Average	2.70	Average development of position, but with obvious gaps and/or limitations. Satisfactory incorporation of personal vision as well as of references and resources. Satisfactory examples. Reasonable insight, analytic and evaluative ability. Little creativity. Generally satisfactory style and language usage, but possibly with some minor flaws.
C+	77-79.99	Adequate	2.30	Adequate development of position with significant gaps and/or limitations. Some incorporation of personal vision as well as references and resources. Adequate use of examples. Very little creativity. Considerable number of issues related to coherence and style.
C	73-76.99	Acceptable	2.00	Limited development of position with a noticeable lack of consistency with personal vision or references. Limited integration with external sources. Acceptable analytic and evaluative ability. Numerous weaknesses in terms of clarity, coherence, and grammar.
C-	70-72.99	Needs Work	1.70	Passable but unimpressive development of position. Position not completely consistent with personal vision <i>or</i> references and resources not taken fully into account <i>or</i> examples are basic or not completely convincing <i>or</i> barely acceptable insight and analytic and evaluative ability. Adequate style and language usage, but with weaknesses in some respects (e.g., clarity, coherence, grammar). Overall quality shows noticeable deficiencies.
F	Below 70	Below Standard	0.00	Unacceptable work at graduate level. Shows lack of understanding and/or competence in several of the criteria described above. This grade is a failing grade at the graduate level.

### Assignment Assessment

When I assess written assignments and presentations, I tend to look for the following:

- Appropriateness – The content matches the requirements of the assignments.
- Substantiveness – The content reveals deeper level thinking. This may take the form of critiquing existing ideas and proposing new ones. It may involve applying ideas from the readings and class discussions in deeply personal ways. It could also include a novel integration of ideas from various sources. As you think about substantiveness, I would also ask you to go beyond “left brain” thinking that focuses on systematic and logical thinking. Add “right brain” analysis that views concepts in intuitive and more holistic ways. This may involve viewing assignment topics from creative vantage points by using word pictures, analogies, metaphors, pictures, diagrams, drama, poetry, music, and other creative devices that can often enrich conceptual meaning and make it more personal. In order to get an A on an assignment, **you really need to present your ideas in an integrative and creative way.** Go beyond the stated expectations of an assignment (not in terms of length ☺). Surprise me with a novel combination and/or expression of ideas.
- Coherence – The content flows in a consistent and meaningful way.
- Engaging – The writing style does not distract from the content (e.g. grammatical mistakes), but rather engages the reader’s attention. By the way, I love creative title

pages that introduce a theme or multiple themes from your assignment in an engaging way.

### **Assignment Grade Appeals**

Students can appeal their grade to me by stating in writing their reasons for contesting the grade. Deadline for such appeals is one week after the student has receipt of grade. Formal course grade appeals can be made with Dr. Brian Cooper, the MB Seminary Registrar.

**Web Support-Student Portal** — <https://mbseminary.populiweb.com>

All students at MBS will receive a MBS-Populi username and password. This is determined at the time of an online application. If you have any difficulty with your password or your login credentials, please contact Keith Reed, Director of Ministry Support, ([keithreed@mbseminary.ca](mailto:keithreed@mbseminary.ca)).

### **Course Intensive/Campus Closure**

In the event of deteriorating weather conditions or other emergency situations, every effort will be made to communicate information regarding the cancellation of classes to your church host and contact.

### **Paper Formatting**

Students are required to adhere to the Turabian Notes (Bibliography) format for all papers. Consider the [Purdue Owl](#) website for information or, Turabian, Kate, L. A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Thesis, and Dissertations, 9th ed. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 2018.

### **Academic Integrity and Avoiding Plagiarism**

As Christian scholars pursuing higher education, academic integrity is a core value of the entire MB Seminary community. Students are invited into this scholarly culture and required to abide by the principles of sound academic scholarship at MBS. Equity of Access It is the responsibility of a student with a learning disability to inform the MB Seminary Director of Student Development ([briancooper@mbseminary.ca](mailto:briancooper@mbseminary.ca)) of that fact before the beginning of a course so that necessary arrangements may be made to facilitate the student's learning experience. To repeat: To ensure that instructors know to accommodate a student who has a learning access issue, the student must inform the Director of Student Development of a disability before the beginning of the class. After that is too late.

### Appendix A: Bibliography on Vision and Strategic Planning

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- Appel, G., and A. Nelson. *How to Change Your Church (Without Killing It)*. The Leadership Centre, Willow Creek Canada, 2004.
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- Fundamental Issues in Strategy: A Research Agenda*. Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press, 1994.
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