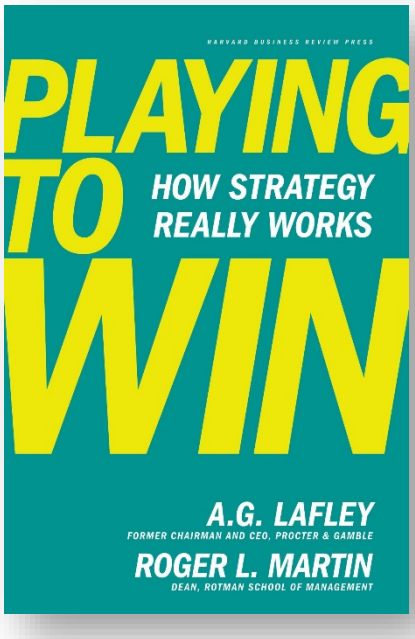


Book title: **Playing to Win: How strategy really works**

Author(s): **A.G. Lafley, Roger L. Martin**

Publisher: **Harvard Business Review Press (5 Feb. 2013)**

Lafley and Martin teach how to develop strategies to help you achieve what we all want: to be a winner in the marketplace.

Review

In this book, Lafley and Martin focus on a model they call the “Strategy Cascade”. The five questions you need to ask yourself to establish an effective strategy:

- What is your winning aspiration?
- Where to play?
- How to win?
- What are your core capabilities?
- What are the supporting management systems?

Strategy is not complicated, but it is hard. It’s hard because it is about making choices. Many people try to do all the analysis, so they make a perfect choice. Or they say that it is too much work and the benefit is not worth it. The reality is that you can’t determine if your strategy is perfect at the point you create it. The authors believe that strategy creation can be straight-forward and even fun.

The heart of a strategy are the questions “where to play?” and “how to win?.” Making that choice inherently requires both art and science. You must be creative in identifying all the options you might take. And then you must be scientific in assessing what needs to be true for them to be effective strategies. And finally, you must test them. These things always need to come together; otherwise, you are missing a key component.

Organizations, both large and small, can apply this approach to strategy development. Ultimately strategy is about increasing your odds of success, but there are no guarantees. The authors have seen that making a choice and having a strategy typically leads to stronger businesses. Creating a cohesive strategy takes effort as all five elements must fit together to reinforce each other. While merely “playing to play” with no clear way to win may work for a time, but when a competitor appears with a clear game plan in the future, you are likely to find yourself losing.

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