

Introduction

I hope you enjoy consuming this book; I enjoyed writing it. It is a composite of the experiences I've gathered working with a wide range of people at several organizations across a range of industries. Each of the resulting tools within this book comes from hard-won lessons learned along the way—along the journey of continually improving how business gets done.

THE OBJECTIVES OF THIS BOOK ARE TO:

- ▶ *Make your life easier* – It will help you visually understand how businesses flow from potential to profitability. With this knowledge it will be easier to understand, in business, what you need to do, why you need to do it, and how to do it. The frameworks within should also make it easier for you to explain your vision to others, thus making it easier for everyone in the company to leverage their collective efforts while pushing to reach shared goals.
- ▶ *Be fun to read* – You should be able to recognize parts of yourself and others in this book. The wonderful team of

people who helped edit this book laughed, shook their heads, and shared their stories of how they have run into similar issues in their careers. Every effort has been made to make the information easy to understand and apply. The end result should be a book that gives you more energy as you read it, rather than one that feels like a forced march.

The first two parts of this book will go a long way toward helping you understand how to make your business life easier with Kring Strategy Mapping (KSM).

Part one illustrates how KSM came about—how it evolved out of a need to overcome the real challenges of real people. Part two should help you determine how to best invest your time and energies when facing your business challenges. By taking you through real examples with real people, it should be easier for you to see how you can practically apply strategy mapping to your business.

Each of the themes within the book are almost business parables. Most chapters contain a single theme and start with a person. You get to learn a little bit about who the person is, what he or she does at the company, and the challenges they face in making their business lives better. In most instances the person surfaces a difficulty he or she has, and we

then work together to understand how that challenge fits into the flow of the larger business as a whole. By understanding the challenge within the larger context of KSM, the solutions come much more easily and intuitively. This also improves integration and communications – two of the larger challenges businesses face today.

In other examples, the people I'm working with run out ahead and come up with their own solutions. In these instances we are just chatting about business strategy mapping, and then all of a sudden things change. The pattern is almost always the same: 1. We are talking; 2. they freeze; 3. their eyes dart back and forth; 4. their eyes get big; 5. and then there is a rush of chatter as they explain to me the simplified solution to a complex challenge they have been wrestling with for some time. It's fun when you can see the process start and then know what is going to come next.

Within these pages you will see an overview of what Kring Strategy Mapping (KSM) is, how it works, and how you may be able to use it in your world. Interest has been expressed in future versions of this book that are both more- and less-detailed. As a result, a more-detailed "practitioner's guide" will be written that will give you greater step-by-step information about how you can use KSM to write business plans, communicate to groups, make investment decisions, etc.

Also, a simpler version of the book, containing KSM business fables, will be written. You can use these business fables to explain to others the merits of taking particular courses of action. For example, there is a short story about two hikers, one that looks only down at his feet and the other that looks both down and up. The one who looks only at his feet is astonished to see how fast things change. A mountain that wasn't there a second ago appears out of nowhere. For the hiker who also looks up, it was seen miles off, and the optimal path to conquer it or go around it was selected long ago. For many in a business that focuses only on the short-term (their feet), businesses appear to change at the speed of light. For those with the ability to look both down and up as well, business is a series of recognizable trends and situations. For this second group, businesses do not seem to change as quickly.

THE VALUE OF KRING STRATEGY MAPPING (KSM)

Through the use of KSM and the resulting use of text and pictures, you can quickly understand the flow of a business. This visual understanding of business can help you both individually and as part of a larger group. An intuitive way to demonstrate the value of understanding KSM is through a simple exercise.

Separate fifteen employees into three equal groups. Have each group assemble the exact same jigsaw puzzle,

- > the first group with the puzzle pieces face down,
- > the second group with the puzzle pieces face up,
- > and the third group with the puzzle pieces face up and with a copy of the puzzle box lid.

Which group is going to be happier, faster, more productive? The group with the puzzle box lid.

This book will help you figure out what your puzzle box lid looks like. You can use this to get a feel for what the puzzle box lids of your competitors look like as well.

WHO FINDS THIS USEFUL?

People with the following needs have found the material in this book useful:

- **Product managers** use it to improve their ability to see how to best invest their efforts in guiding their products from potential to profitability (and the points in between)
- **Marketing, finance, operations,** and **IT** people often use it to better see:
 - > The flow of the business

- > Where they fit within the flow
- > How they link up with others
- > And what they need to do to make their departments work Better
- **Entrepreneurs** use it to link together all the things they need to do to run their businesses successfully.
- **Middle managers** use it to drive decisions and the resulting actions, while better connecting with those surrounding them in the organization.
- **CEOs** use it to determine how to best invest resources (time, money, and people) in their companies.
- **Venture capitalists** use it to flow check and evaluate business plans—to determine how to prioritize which projects/companies to invest in and how to best make the investment within each.
- **Students of business** use it to better see how their marketing, operations, finance, and IT classes fit together.

You will hear about some of their stories along the way.

HOW DO YOU IMPLEMENT THE FRAMEWORK?

By using KSM to understand how business flows from potential to profitability (and the points in between), many implementations of the mapping framework become intuitive. For example:

- Some use it to guide everyday thinking. By mentally walking through the steps in their minds, they use it as a *whole*, to see and balance their efforts within the entire organization. Others walk through *pieces* of the framework to focus on a specific area of interest. Used in this way, it can be an excellent tool to guide thinking.
- Others use it more formally to guide strategic planning activities. By assembling key subject-matter experts into a small group, it is possible to complete strategic integrated plans for an initiative, a product, a business unit, or the larger company as a whole.
- It can be used to integrate complex, multiple stakeholder environments. By understanding the flows of multiple stakeholders and how they fit together, it makes generating solutions much more collaborative and intuitive.
- It is scalable. It can be used for multiple issues, products or companies in a category. This helps isolate similarities

and differences between a company and its competitors. Used in this way, it is easier for you to understand the likely outcomes of various scenarios when faced with changes in your environment.

As you go through the book you'll see how you can best use the framework in any situation.

As you think of things you either like or would like to see changed along the way, please feel free to e-mail me at KringStrategyMapping@gmail.com. For the business geeks out there, this is fun stuff. For people merely interested in business, this should be enlightening.

I hope you enjoy it.

Ken Kring

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