

Strategy and Negotiation - a Mandela Inspired Framework for Integrity in Business

Employing the character, experience and insights of former South African president, Nelson Mandela as his inspiration, author Michael Friedlander weaves an ingenious framework for detecting and defending against potential scams that doubles as a foundation for enduring business strategy and successful, principled negotiating.

By Ian Browde

Detecting the Scam: Nelson Mandela's Gift by Michael Friedlander is a remarkable book that delves into the exceptional mind and actions of an extraordinary 20th Century leader and points a laser beam at certain high-level deception perpetrated in the past 2 decades.

This extremely well researched, conversational and easy read, presents a valuable platform for developing and implementing business strategy, negotiating successfully and leveraging integrity in the process.

An experienced international attorney and CEO with experience doing business around the world and now residing in California, Friedlander puts a few of the most renowned, recent scandals in energy, finance and geo-politics under his incisive and humorous microscope.

Detecting the Scam is compelling as it shows us how critical integrity is in any context, business or otherwise. It shows how leveraging integrity is actually a very powerful approach to doing business and can be the way for 21st Century companies to succeed while cutting the clutter, overruns, stress and generally high cost of the alternatives. The book is relevant because it showcases the decay, deception, manipulation and disingenuousness many people see around them at every level of society right here, wherever that is, right now; especially at work. The book is trustworthy because it clearly disclaims its ability to help detect every scam, because it delivers its information using direct quotes and acknowledges its sources and tries its best not to pass judgment while urging us to question, question and question again.

Quickly, and yet amazingly in-depth, we are stepped through 4 decades in the life of Nelson "Madiba" Mandela as he negotiated the transition of South Africa from 350 years of white supremacy and oppression to an open and interracial society. As we traverse this amazing human landscape, Friedlander draws our attention to Mandela's brilliance, courage and determination and extrapolates a framework for strategy development and negotiating, that he calls Mandela's gift; the "*Ten Powers of Negotiation*."

Then, the author deftly turns his focus to 3 scandals that dominated the presses, airwaves and data streams over the past twenty five years; the Enron debacle that tarnished both the energy and financial industries, the Chalabi deception that catapulted the United States and its allies into war in Iraq, and the Madoff ponzi scam that resulted in hordes of investors losing millions of dollars and destroying many lives. In each case, Friedlander points out how badly the scammers' victims wanted to believe the lies they were sold.

Relentlessly Friedlander asks over and again how it is that none of the best and brightest minds and leaders saw, or refused to see, the deception as it unfolded? While reminding us of the severity of the scams he analyzes, the author simultaneously, and often with tongue-in-cheek humor, uses his Duck School principles and his Subway Test to drive home the points that lack of common sense and lack of self-awareness can be devastating.

The Duck School of common sense and logic, based on similar fundamental principles as those espoused by President Mandela, is simply the notion that "if it looks, walks and quacks like a duck then it probably is one!" The Subway Test is another funny, yet easily recognized story where, walking through a subway

corridor we are offered a Rolex watch for \$50. When it is obvious that the watch is not an actual Rolex, the author asks whether the mark (any one of us) was truly scammed or whether they participated knowingly in their own deception.

With the aplomb of a highly likeable and knowledgeable tour guide, including the refreshing banter, Friedlander takes us through the incredible stories of Enron and their accountants at Arthur Andersen; Ahmed Chalabi and the politicians in Washington DC, London, and elsewhere; and Bernard Madoff and the eminent minds that surrounded him. As he guides us through these narratives, he continually applies the Duck School, the Subway Test and the Mandela powers of negotiation, so by the book's end they become easy-to-understand tools. These are tools that we can now use in our own business, political or other professional settings.

The value of *Detecting the Scam* is not only in the fair criticism it levels at the colleges and universities that "turned out" the actors in the conspiracies against society at large and individuals in particular. Its value is also not just in the framework it gives us to detect and, hopefully, prevent future scams as they inevitably arise. Its value is also not merely in its profound conclusion that each and every scam was a combination of deception and collusion where unfortunately no innocent child was present to shout "look, the Emperor is not wearing any clothes!" Rather, its value is in the usefulness, trustworthiness and relevance of the framework, the tools and the analysis provided by Friedlander that can be used in any business strategy and negotiation context.

Detecting the Scam is a book that every business person would do well to read, re-read and then integrate into their practice. Ironically, in the ultimate analysis Friedlander's book is one of empathy and hope. Empathy, because it shows us how hard it is for people, every one of us in some way shape or form, to see themselves self-deceiving and being drawn into the world of wishing and wanting. Hope, because it gives us the tools and thus the power to overcome the proclivity to choose the shortcut over the high road. This will enable us to become proficient in designing and implementing ethical, sustainable strategy and to negotiate everything in life, and in business, more effectively.