



WHAT ARE WE MISSING? · A NOTE FROM THE AUTHOR

What this book solves.

Smart people with good information still make bad calls. I have watched it for years on major projects: competent teams, full briefings, every fact in the room, and the wrong call walked out of the room with every signature behind it - minuted, agreed, and wrong. What was missing was never the information. It was the question.

The most dangerous failure of the twenty-first century is not a failure of technology. It is a failure of thought: the quiet, trainable discipline by which a mind frames a problem well, reads the evidence honestly, then catches itself being wrong. Who teaches the asking? Into that gap has stepped a machine that will think, fluently and instantly, on our behalf. It answers questions you never asked, in prose more confident than most experts, and it will not once ask what the answer is missing.

There is no shortage of good books about how the mind errs. I have learned from them; this book owes them its debts. But reading about error has never, by itself, prevented it. What is missing from that shelf is a working discipline - something you can run before the decision, in the meeting, at your desk, in the small hours when the answer looks obvious.

That is what this book builds: a working discipline for judgment, trainable and practised, not a tour of a hundred effects. Every chapter closes in protocols - small, deliberate practices you can run yourself - because understanding a failure has never prevented one. Practice does.

The cases come from the record, and the record is printed with the book. It cites 473 works - 262 peer-reviewed studies, 87 books, 53 works of journalism, 49 official reports and public inquiries, 11 hearing transcripts and court records, and 11 classical texts - and carries 594 endnotes. A Note on Method at the front records how it was made: each source checked against the original, each quotation to the last word; anything that couldn't be verified came out. Where the evidence is young or contested, the text says so on its face. The record and my reading of it are kept separate. The full source list is free to download from the book's site. Check it.

It is written for people whose decisions carry weight: the manager before the hire, the doctor before the diagnosis, the founder before the signature, the parent before the answer. Anyone whose wrong call is paid for by someone else.

I cannot promise this book will make you certain. Certainty is the one product honest thinking never sells. What I can promise is a discipline: a way to ask, before the decision is made and cannot be called back, what you might be missing - and the practice to make the asking a habit.

The rest is yours.

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I began writing What Are We Missing? in 2021.

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