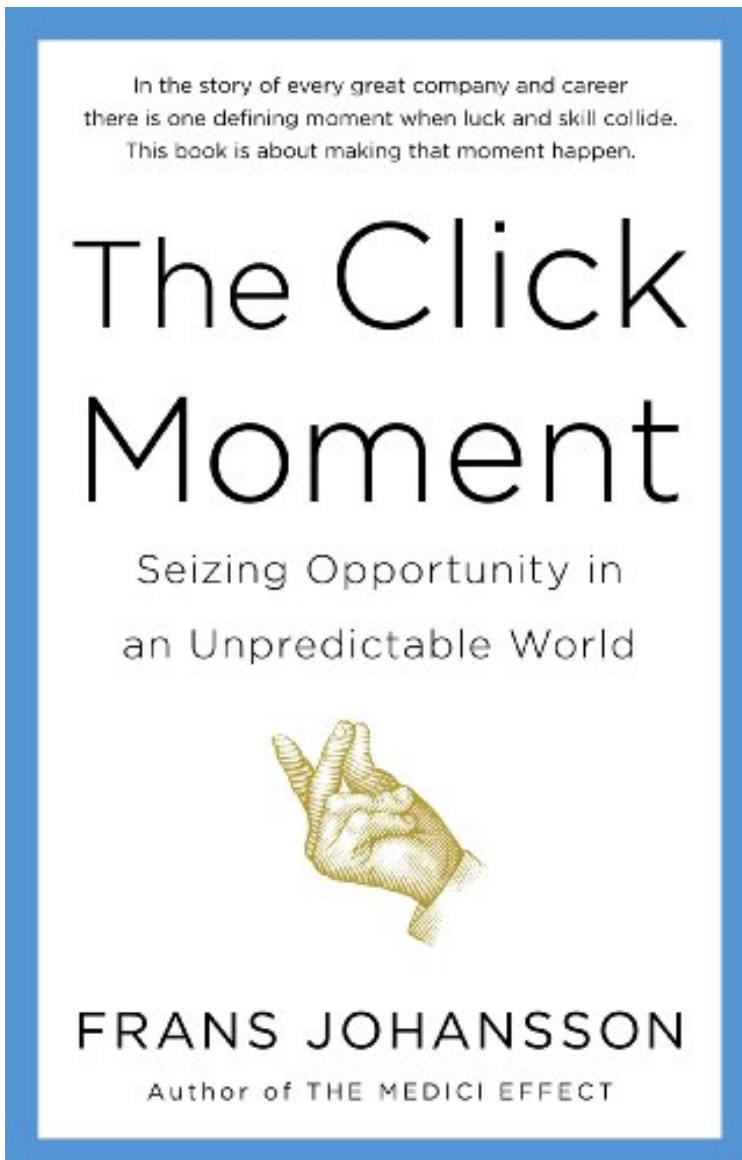


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The Click Moment: Seizing Opportunity in an Unpredictable World



Par Franz Johansson
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Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurIn The Click Moment, Frans Johansson, author of The Medici Effect, shows how to stay ahead when you can't predict the futureSuccess is random. But we can capture this randomness and turn it in our favour.According to bestselling author Frans Johansson, planning and careful analysis no longer guarantee success. But dig deep into the actions of successful people and organizations and you find one common theme. A turning point occurs and they take advantage of that 'click moment' to change their fate.Diane von Furstenberg saw a matching skirt and top on TV and the wrap-dress was born. Microsoft

Windows was on the brink of being shut down until two people met at a party. Starbucks sold brewing equipment until Howard Schultz experienced his first latte. These people capitalized on their luck and altered the course of their lives. The Click Moment shows how we can follow them by opening ourselves up to chance encounters and harnessing the forces of success that follow.

EXTRAIT PORTFOLIO / PENGUIN THE CLICK MOMENT Frans Johansson is the bestselling author of *The Medici Effect*. Born and raised in Sweden, he has founded a software startup, a healthcare firm, and a hedge fund, and is currently CEO of strategy and innovation at the consulting firm The Medici Group.

FOREWORD I wish I had read this book many years ago. Maybe I would have worried less about whether I knew what I was doing or not and more about simply getting going. The truth is that we are all in some way stumbling on the road to success. The thing that makes this book so compelling is that it provides a roadmap for how to think about that journey. Many of the lessons of this book are ones I had to discover through my own process of trial and error. Luck not only matters far more than we like to believe, but it is also our best chance to stand apart. As such, there is no one single master plan for success; every journey is unique. Sure, there are actions we can all take to improve our chances: get the best schooling, expand our networks, outperform our peers to that coveted promotion but they are susceptible to the unexpected turn. What do you do when your best-laid plans come undone? And they inevitably will. That is why Frans's message is so powerful. For once there is someone that takes seriously the notion that some things are out of your control and mistakes will happen and that your success hinges on essentially making your own luck by taking advantage of click moments that you never could have foreseen.

Frans's first book, *The Medici Effect*, focuses on why intersections of cultures and industries are a hotbed for innovation and creativity. The Click Moment explores how to harness the unexpected ideas and click moments that come out of such intersections. It chronicles amazing moments that changed the course of individuals and companies, who in turn have influenced our everyday lives in unexpected ways. It is also filled with plans that go awry and the knowledge that, in the end, if we keep pushing, if we keep trying, we will eventually break through. I know this now. And so will you. In my life, for example, whatever plans I had have changed a million times over, and the click moments that opened me up for opportunities to succeed were completely unexpected. After leaving culinary school, I just knew that my future was in France, because that's where the best food in the world was made. Or at least I thought so at the time. It just did not work out that way. My skin color became a barrier, but that crushed dream gave way to another opportunity where I learned that amazing food is found all over the world. My own journey has taken me from Ethiopia to Sweden; to France, Switzerland, and Japan; to New York and to becoming a force in revitalizing Harlem. This was not the pathway my twenty-year-old self imagined I would ever take. But it's a pathway that was marked by unexpected opportunities. For example, I got the chance to head up my own kitchen at Aquavit because the former executive chef suddenly died from a heart attack. It was a tragedy, but it also meant that my career changed. I now had an opening to try something different, and it allowed me to present my own ideas around tastes and flavors. The unspoken truth around success is that so much of it is so difficult to plan for or to predict. The Click Moment has allowed me to more deeply understand the pivots in my own journey. With these insights and the how-tos Frans shares in his book, I know I can more purposefully create intersections where the unexpected happens, recognize a click moment, and make the most out of these opportunities. Essentially, I now have an unfair advantage over luck and chance. At every step of the way, windows of opportunity opened and closed, some of them worked and others did not. The hallmark of a great career is never the brilliance of the person behind it; it is the person's tenacious and stubborn willingness to keep trying until the chips fall in his or her favor. Work hard, try different things, stay unique, but never believe that you can predict what will happen next. Instead, stay open to the possibilities and be prepared to switch plans if things don't go your way. Sometimes life simply throws you a lot of curveballs. But it is from those curveballs that new and exciting opportunities will start to emerge. You never know what awaits you.

INTRODUCTION Heading into the fall of 2004, ABC was dead last among broadcast television networks. Then, on September 22, something surprising happened and its fortunes changed. That was the night *Lost* debuted. The program came out of nowhere and delivered 18.7 million viewers to the struggling network, making it ABC's most-watched dramatic premier in nine years. In a world of reality shows, *Lost* was a breath of fresh air. Centering on the survivors from an airliner that crashes on a mystical island, the show seemed like a sure-fire winner. It attracted an incredibly intense fan base that passionately dissected all the clues revealed in each episode. The plot was so intricate that the origin of a smoke monster from the first season wasn't revealed until the sixth. Critics and fans agreed that the island's mythology and the slow unraveling of its central mysteries made the

show great. It must have required an incredible amount of planning to even get on the air. Except the exact opposite was true. Many of the story elements that Lost fanatics loved were ideas the producers thought were too crazy to work. The show, it turns out, was a byproduct of a meeting between Damon Lindelof and J. J. Abrams. At the time, Lindelof was a writer on the modestly successful *Crossing Jordan*, and Abrams was the creator of the popular series *Alias*. Lindelof desperately wanted to write for *Alias*, and after years of trying to make a connection, he received a call from a mutual friend. Good news, she said, You can meet him. Bad news, its a ridiculous idea about a plane that crashes on an island. The idea didnt come from Abrams, but from ABC executive Lloyd Braun, who became infatuated with the notion of a scripted version of *Survivor*. He asked Abrams to rewrite the pilot, but Abrams declined, agreeing to supervise a writer instead. Lindelof thought the idea was insane, but saw an opening if he could pitch a few good ideas for this stupid plane crash show he could propel himself to a writing position on *Alias*. During their meeting it was clear to both men that *Lost* would never make it, so they pitched increasingly crazier ideas to each other. Abrams wanted random noises on the island to scare the viewer. When asked what the noises would be, Abrams responded, I dont know, its never going to get picked up. But it did. Things happened so quickly that Lindelof didnt have time to write the script. Instead, he handed in a twenty-page treatment, which Braun unexpectedly approved, along with *Desperate Housewives*, which turned out to be the biggest success of the 2004-2005 television season. For his part, Braun was promptly fired for approving a \$12 million television pilot that didnt even have a script for a show idea Michael Eisner, the CEO of Disney (which owns ABC) thought was never going to work. When Eisner graded all the pilots ABC approved that year, he gave *Lost* a two out of ten. The man who developed the two shows that saved ABC was out of a job before they even aired. Now, if the world moved in a predictable way, nothing in this story would make sense. In such a world we would expect the intricate mysteries on the island of *Lost* to be carefully planned. In such a world we would expect a successful producer such as J. J. Abrams and an executive such as Michael Eisner to realize that *Lost* had amazing potential. We would expect a writer such as Lindelof to strategize about how to get on one of the most influential shows in TV history, not how to get off it. And we would, of course, expect the person who developed *Lost* and *Desperate Housewives* to be rewarded, not fired. But the world does not move in a predictable way. The story behind *Lost* actually makes a lot of sense. The implications are mind-boggling. This book is about two very simple but highly provocative ideas. The first one is this: success is random, far more random than we have come to believe. The second is that there are a number of specific actions that individuals and organizations can take to capture randomness and focus it in our favor. The reason people tend to consider these ideas provocative is because success, we are often told, is a result of strategy, planning, and careful analysis. Luck, on the other hand, is a force that lies outside of our control. This book rejects these conventional perspectives and proposes a useful and compelling alternative. At first blush, these interconnected ideas may seem at odds. If success is indeed random, how can any actions truly improve our chances? If celebrated companies, such as Starbucks and Google, or small businesses or investments or even ones career and love life all are the result of serendipity, then there is no point in directing our efforts in any particular direction, is there? But in fact, acknowledging the power of random forces does not render us powerless. Quite the contrary. There are a number of specific actions you can take that will open you or your organization to chance encounters, unexpected strategies, and complex connections, just as there are certain actions that will enable you to capture randomness and seize opportunities. These actions set us up for greatness in an unpredictable world, and I will explore them in detail later in the book. For now, however, it is enough to know that when you dig deeply into what underlies any personal or corporate success, you will see that one theme repeats again and again: somewhere, at some point, someone got lucky. They experienced a serendipitous encounter, an unexpected moment of insight, or an unplanned culmination of events. There was one instant when fate turned their way, a moment they can look back at and say, that was when it started. We all have these click moments, as I call them, and it is rather remarkable that we dont give them more of our attention, because they can change our lives.

PART IAN UNPREDICTABLE WORLD 1 THE MOLDAVIAN THEORY OF SUCCESS

One February morning in 2005 the Moldavian pop star Dan Balan woke up to a ringing phone. It was seven a.m. People didnt usually call him that early, even considering the fact that he was in a Manhattan hotel and trailing Europe by six hours. Half awake, Balan answered and heard a friend on the line. Dan, Dan, put on the TV, put on NBC, his friend yelled. The Today Show! Balan crawled out of bed and turned on the Today Show. The hosts were discussing a story about a video that had gone viral. In 2005 gone viral was not in the common vernacular, in fact YouTube had just been created. But apparently this video had been seen by millions of people around

the world in just a few days an entirely new phenomenon. Balan wondered why his friend had insisted he watch the show, but then they aired the video. And he knew. The video was of a somewhat pudgy kid lip-synching into a cheap camcorder with the sound of a heavy dance beat playing in the background. It wasn't a particularly good performance, Balan thought; he had certainly seen better. The song, unusually melodic, was in a strange language. But Dan Balan understood it. He should have he had written it. Balan's song was getting airtime on the most watched morning show in the United States. It was a remarkable turn of events. In the strangest of ways, Dan Balan had gotten very, very lucky. The world is an unpredictable place. On the face of it, this does not strike most people as a controversial statement. It seems obvious; we experience unpredictability almost every day, from dramatic rises and falls in the stock market to our luck catching a lone cab on a rainy day. However, the import of such a statement is not as clear. If the world is unpredictable, then you can't actually foresee whether your idea, project, or meeting will work out as planned. In fact, it might mean that the plan is outdated before you even start to execute it. And if you can't logically plan your way to success, that must mean that success, when it happens, is a result of something unexpected of something random. This idea, however, seems radical to many people. On the one hand, we aren't surprised by the uncertainty of everyday life, but on the other, we believe that success can be analyzed and planned for. It is a revealing paradox. The implications are explosive and they obliterate every commonsense notion we have about strategy and planning. Just ask Dan Balan. In 2004, Balan's pop group O-Zone released a song called Dragostea din tei. It launched in Romania at the top of the charts and spread like an epidemic through Europe. That summer it became one of the most dominant dance-club tracks in history. Within months the song had been recorded in about a dozen languages and all versions raced up the lists. At one point there were five different versions of the song in the French top-twenty music charts at the same time. The song was a phenomenon everywhere everywhere, that is, but the United States. At the epicenter of the music universe, O-Zone fell flat. The band signed a record contract with an independent label that didn't seem to have the experience or resources to successfully market the album. And the timing was bad. Dragostea din tei came out at a time when techno-based club tracks were ebbing in popularity in the United States. The airwaves were dominated by RB and hip-hop stars such as Destinys Child and Jay-Z. The song had no sales to speak of and got very little radio play. The band's promoters decided to focus on their strengths, which, in this case, lay in the rest of the world. They pulled the U.S. marketing campaign and skipped touring the States altogether. But only a few months later, Dragostea din tei came back out of nowhere to conquer the United States. Although it never achieved the same blockbuster status as it had in Europe, the song still climbed the charts without any visible promotional efforts at all. How did this happen? O-Zone's strategy, after all, was to walk away from the American market. O-Zone's success can be traced to Gary Brotsma, a Staples employee from Saddle Brook, New Jersey. Brotsma was having a quiet day at home, sitting in front of his computer with his headphones on, listening to Dragostea din tei, lip-synching and making funny expressions. I was just fooling around, having a good time, he said about that particular moment, and I recorded it. As a joke, he uploaded the video to a site called Newgrounds, then sent the link to some friends. They all had a good laugh, and I thought nothing of it. But some of those friends shared the link with other friends. One click led to another and the video caught on and became one of the world's first truly viral videos. I recall catching the link on a political blog that had absolutely nothing to do with music or videos, Romania, or Moldavia. Brotsma became known as the Numa Numa guy and the video is believed to be the most watched in the history of the Internet, with more than one billion people having seen it. Dragostea din tei shot up the dance charts and finally made O-Zone a success in the United States. There is no way that Dan Balan could have planned for this. Still, it is tempting to try which, of course, was the immediate reaction of marketers everywhere. The question was straightforward: how can one create a video that spreads as virally as the Numa Numa guys? It is only natural to assume that we can simply learn what made that video spread and then do just that. But can we ever truly explain and replicate the exact success formula of a video, or the greatness of, say, Starbucks and so many other successful companies and individuals? The short answer is, not likely. True success requires something else. Yes, we want to find the recipe the secret sauce that makes someone break through but sometimes good things just seem to happen and it's impossible for any of us to truly explain why. If there is a recipe, it is, as we shall see, probably not what you think it is. Michel Roux saw this lack of secret sauce play out firsthand. He is the marketing executive who invented the powerhouse brand for the Swedish vodka company Absolut. Before Roux came on board, Absolut was just another generic vodka. The bottle was shaped like something you'd find on an episode of M*A*S*H. And it had no neck, so it was hard for a bartender to pick it up. Roux and his team were told that

the Absolut project was doomed and we should not get into it, he recalled in an interview a few years later. But they took on the challenge anyway. They designed a memorable bottle and created an iconic marketing campaign—the one with Absolut bottles decorated with paintings by different artists, such as Andy Warhol and Jean-Michel Basquiat. Roux even created a whole new category of vodka—the premium bottle. These efforts by Roux and his team took Absolut from about one hundred thousand cases sold in 1980 to some 10 million in 2007, making it the third largest spirit brand in the world. Many in the industry consider Roux to be a legend. One day I ran into him at an event where we were both speaking. While on stage he was asked what, exactly, he had done to create such a success. Roux hesitated for a bit before simply saying, “If I knew that, I would do it again and again. Indeed, he has not come anywhere near creating such a massive success for any other brand or product. If you ask someone who has lived the dream—someone like Dan Balan—they will admit in unguarded moments to having absolutely no clue how to press repeat on their success. You can’t think of any strategy or any formulas to create a song like “Dragostea din tei,” Dan Balan told me over the phone minutes before going on at a concert in Moscow. It doesn’t exist. And it isn’t as if he hasn’t tried. As noted earlier, many different versions of the song were recorded, and they all skyrocketed to the top of their respective charts. But why? And why not do it again? I think it was the words “numa numa and maia hi,” Dan mused. They are so fun to sing that they traverse language and culture. But he can’t use those words again for another song. Maybe he could use the same process in creating them? Unfortunately those words, or sounds, were created in an entirely serendipitous way. We did a sound recording early on to get the beats down and I just invented nonsense words on the spot as a stand-in, he explained to me. Balan expected to change them later. But he never did. When Balan heard the song later, something inside him clicked. It was just the way the song sounded with the nonsense words in them. It just sounded good, so we decided to keep them, he said, and concluded: Luck made it the way it was. What holds true for individual careers also holds true for organizations. For instance, how did Nike come up with the idea for the first Nike trainer, the shoe that ignited the company’s meteoric rise from retailer to global brand? Bill Bowerman, the legendary running coach, was having breakfast one morning with his wife while they discussed a thorny challenge he was grappling with: how to develop a spikeless sports shoe. Then he saw his wife pry a waffle from their six-inch art deco waffle iron. It was a fateful moment as Bowerman, without saying a word, sprinted back to his lab and returned with two cans of chemicals which, when mixed, created latex. He poured them into the waffle iron. Could the small spikes on a waffle grip the track without damaging it and also provide comfort to the runner? He poured three more latex waffles and combined them on one shoe. The answer was yes. The experiment worked. That one random moment represented a turning point for the shoe company and allowed the company’s CEO, Phil Knight, to build the foundation for an athletic apparel empire. Then there is Facebook. There are several fortuitous aspects to Mark Zuckerberg’s story, but one in particular caught my eye recently. The Business Insider, a business news Web site, detailed a surprising instant-message conversation that took place between Mark Zuckerberg and a confidant. It was July 26, 2004. By that time Zuckerberg and his pals had moved to California and begun working on the start-up full time. Facebook had netted almost one million users and was becoming a force to be reckoned with. But the conversation revealed that Zuckerberg believed that a different project altogether was more worthy of his efforts. Confidant: Well you should recover the shares you need to recover legal fees. Zuckerberg: I won’t pay the legal fees. Zuckerberg: The company that buys us will haha. Confidant: Cool hopefully that’ll be soon so you can move on and just work on what you want to. Zuckerberg: Well it just needs to propel Wirehog. What was Wirehog? It was an application that allowed users of Facebook to transfer files to one another. The founder of what would become a \$100 billion company thought the greatest value wasn’t in the social connections we make or even the information Facebook could sell to advertisers—it was in transferring files. Good thing he didn’t sell. Randomness, it turns out, is everywhere, and it upends best laid plans over and over again. This may be particularly true in politics, where fortunes can rise and fall in an instant. Take Joseph Estrada, for example. Estrada was one of the Philippines’ most respected movie actors and a hero to the poor in the vast island nation. After deciding to run for president in 1998 he won by the largest margin in the nation’s history. But only two years into his term, a friend and provincial governor, Luis Singson, delivered a bombshell. He admitted to having personally delivered nearly \$12 million in gambling bribes to President Estrada. He is not just a gambling lord, Singson said. He is a gambling god. He is the most corrupt person I have ever met. The allegations sent shock waves through the Philippines. Opposition political and religious leaders demanded Estrada’s resignation, but he refused. Nearly two months after the revelations, a contentious impeachment trial began. Estrada’s prospects looked grim. A bank executive testified that

Estrada had invested nearly \$12 million under a fake name, but the real death knell apparently lay inside a sealed envelope. Rival politicians claimed the envelope contained financial documents that proved Estrada's corruption, but the president's political allies successfully blocked opening the envelope. The opposing senators walked out in disgust, and for a moment it seemed as if Estrada's presidency would continue. But then something unexpected happened—something that Estrada could never have foreseen. Students began gathering at the Shrine of Mary, commonly called the People Power Shrine, in Manila to protest the president. Some of them began texting other students to join in. Something in the messages clicked and the texts spread like wildfire. Over the course of a few days more than 70 million text messages were sent, coordinating a peaceful protest of nearly 700,000 people. After months of stalemate in the courts, it took just eighty-eight hours for the people to succeed in forcing Estrada to resign via a process no one had expected or predicted could possibly work. Just as random events can oust a president from power, so, too, can they propel a politician into the stratosphere. By any usual measure, prior to 2004 Barack Obama would have had virtually no chance at winning the presidency, no matter how talented, intelligent, or strategically minded he was; but a single moment in time changed all that. His keynote speech at the 2004 Democratic National Convention was meant to ensure his victory in the Senate and introduce a new political player to the national scene, but his ringing speech was repeated over the cable news shows and spread virally over the Internet to millions of viewers. Before the speech, the Philadelphia Daily News ran the headline, Who the Heck Is This Guy? After the speech, the Christian Science Monitor called it the national debut of what could be one of the most exciting and important voices in American politics in the next half century. When Obama returned to Illinois he found himself campaigning in front of thousands, rather than a few hundreds, and he won the Senate election easily. He began to realize that he might have a shot at the presidency, but he was torn. Obama was incredibly popular, but also inexperienced. Senator Tom Daschle gave him some advice. I told him that he has a window to do this. He should never count on that window staying open. That one night changed everything for Obama. Success in the real world is far less scripted than we usually acknowledge, and filled with unexpected moments that tip the balance. Random encounters, insights, meetings and outcomes dominate the backstories of successful start-ups, fast-tracked careers, long-lasting corporations, and even world-changing artists and scientists. However, such an observation might leave us feeling we've missed something. If the world is so filled with uncertainty, how, aside from hoping for the best, do we consciously strive for greatness? Since our caveman days we have trained ourselves to look for patterns in nature in order to find explanations for what we see and experience. But just because we have found that it makes sense to connect the shapes of clouds with the appearance of rain does not mean that social interactions can be predicted in the same way. I started thinking about unpredictability and randomness a few years after my first book, *The Medici Effect*, was published. That book examines how and why groundbreaking ideas occur at the intersection of different fields, cultures, and industries. These types of ideas appeal to people concerned with innovation—people working in strategy, R&D, business development, entrepreneurship, and so on. But of course, there are a lot of writers competing for the attention of that audience. Around the same time that my book was published there must have been at least another fifteen new books on innovation alone. How could a first-time author stand out? One evening, my wife came home from her job as a diversity consultant for JP Morgan Chase. She was very excited. She had just been tasked with finding the business case for diversity and realized that the ideas in my book were exactly what she was looking for. Weirdly, we had never made the connection before, but now it seemed obvious. I honestly think people would want to hear about it, she said. She was right. Before I knew it I was presenting to Steve Black, who at the time headed up the investment banking side at JP Morgan Chase. That single conversation turned the world on its head for me. Chief diversity officers in corporations around the United States invited me to speak to their CEOs and executives on how to drive innovation. The interest took me completely by surprise; the demand for my ideas went global and allowed me to build a consulting firm based on these principles. One evening at a client dinner a strategy executive sitting next to me leaned over and said, Your side-door strategy has been nothing short of brilliant. I frankly had no idea what he was talking about and had to ask him what he meant. Well, he said, instead of going to chief innovation officers, heads of strategy, or R&D folks, you targeted chief diversity officers. And through them you got to people like me. Your strategy, he said, was to knock on the one door that other innovation thinkers did not. A side-door strategy, I thought. It even had a name. To an outsider this must, indeed, have seemed like a brilliant approach. But I knew better, of course. What had very clearly been the result of a serendipitous conversation with my wife was construed by others as evidence of my strategic foresight. It was, however, a notion that I could

comfortably reject out of hand. I would be hard-pressed to call my side-door strategy anything but plain luck. But this realization immediately led to a question. What if this was the case everywhere? What if all of the well-planned and well-executed strategies people have told us about are really the result of unplanned meetings and encounters, random moments and events, serendipity, and plain luck? What if the stories behind companies such as Microsoft or Nokia or the stories behind world-famous authors, index-destroying investors, and breakthrough scientists had a lot more to do with randomness than we thought? What if success or failure is just one unexpected moment away? Curious, I sent an email to my class from business school to ask them about the role serendipity and luck had played in their lives. Within minutes my inbox was overflowing with responses. Yet, despite this overwhelming admission of how unpredictable our world can be, very few people I talked to had spent much time thinking deeply about how to incorporate what seemed to be a very basic law of nature into their corporate or professional strategy. The reason seemed obvious: randomness defines the part of our lives that we can't control, so how can we rely on it? My journey now had a clear goal to incorporate randomness, serendipity, and luck into the heart of execution and strategy. By the time we are done, you should have a new understanding of how to seize opportunity in an uncertain world. The chapters that follow are filled with stories that reveal what really happened to people and companies on the road to success. The point is not for you to follow them exactly, but for us to uncover the role circumstance played in their paths to greatness. Ultimately, we will look at the specific actions you can take to increase your own exposure to serendipity, luck, and random events, and learn how to capitalize on the outcomes that end up working in your favor. So far I have used the words randomness, serendipity, and luck somewhat interchangeably, even though there are meaningful differences between them. The term random, for instance, has a precise definition within mathematics one that is quite different from the more colloquial use of the word. As for the words luck and serendipity, they are often used to explain a positive outcome, but the former term implies less control than the latter. However, these terms all have one thing in common: they all are used to convey or describe unpredictability. They all suggest that something has happened that you could not or did not plan for. For instance, if you plan to meet a person for coffee and then you do meet that person for coffee, the meeting wouldn't be attributed to serendipity. If you know that a certain geology book has the answer to a question on minerals you are struggling with, you'd be hard-pressed to call yourself lucky when you find the answer there. Instead, words like random, serendipity, and luck are used when something unpredictable happens. We meet someone at the coffee shop we didn't expect to see. Or we couldn't find the book we were looking for, but stumbled across another one that set us off in a better direction. Likewise, throughout this book I will refer to events that are unexpected, unplanned, or unintended as random, serendipitous, or lucky. In exploring these concepts I have split the book into two parts. Part 1 examines why the world is so unpredictable. We will look at why we have such a hard time making accurate predictions or effectively explaining the past. We will look at why an overreliance on logic might kill any chance we have for success, and why we don't want to believe that the world is random, even in the face of very strong evidence that it is. We must understand our own biases and limitations in order to incorporate randomness into our lives. That's where Part 2 comes in. We all want a cheat sheet for life, some surefire way to take the lead or push our organization ahead. By the time you get to Part 2, you will see why following a formula for success can be hugely counterproductive. We will look at the specific actions you can take instead to increase your exposure to serendipity, luck, and random events and how to capitalize on events that look promising. We will explore three approaches for capturing randomness that represent three ways of thinking about success. The first is click moments, which are unexpected yet defining moments in time, such as Bill Bowerman's insight with the waffle iron or Obama's 2004 convention speech. The second is what I call purposeful bets, which are actions we take despite our not knowing whether they will work or not, for example, the creation of the pilot for *Lost*. Finally we have complex forces. These are unexpected and unplanned-for consequences of actions that nevertheless lead to success, such as the events that ousted President Estrada in the Philippines, or what happened when Gary Brolsma uploaded his lip-synching video of *Dragostea din tei*. It may seem implausible and even unsettling that success is so dependent upon circumstance. Can Microsoft's rise to dominance in the nineties be the result of a click moment? Can the genius of Picasso be attributed to a string of purposeful bets? Can the success of a company, such as Pfizer, be a function of complex forces? Is it possible that what we attribute to foresight, brilliance, strategy, planning, and analysis is actually a function of randomness, serendipity, and luck? As you will see in the chapters that follow, the answer to these questions is yes. The next question, of course, is: What we can do about it? Before we answer, we must first understand why the world works this way. In order to understand

that, it makes the most sense to look at the limited pockets of the world where randomness has minimal influence. By understanding these exceptions we can tackle what the world looks like for the rest of us. And there are such exceptions zones where we can better predict how to become successful. As you turn the page you will discover one of them. It is 2,106 square feet in size and located roughly twenty minutes outside of Manhattan.

SERENAS SECRET There was a moment in the 1999 US Open Womens Tennis Championship Final when Serena Williams could have put away the match and won. She had two match-point opportunities to defeat the current number one seeded female tennis player in the world, Martina Hingis, but had been unable to close it. Now, looking up at the center-court scoreboard in the Arthur Ashe Stadium in Queens, she found herself on the receiving end in a tie-breaker. If she lost this point, the match would go on to a third set, and anything could happen. If she won the point, she would have a chance to serve for her first grand-slam singles title. To this day Serena is known for her crushing serve. That weekend it dominated the entire tournament, and she notched 62 total aces 42 more than anyone else. But today that power serve was counterbalanced by the nerves of a girl not yet old enough to vote. Despite her overwhelming power, she had committed 57 unforced errors, more than doubling her opponents 24. But none of that mattered right now.

No one would remember the errors if she returned this serve. Standing on the left side of the court, Hingis rocketed a ball cross-court. Sensing its arrival, Serena transferred her weight to the balls of her feet. Hingis anticipated a return volley, but Serena returned a forehand down the right side of the court. Hingis could do nothing more than watch the ball bounce past her from a distance. The tiebreaker was even. If Serena won the next two serves she would win the match. Serena willed the next serve to remain in and pounded the subsequent volleys into the backcourt. Unable to handle Serenas power, Hingis lobbed a ball over the back line. Advantage Williams. The crowd erupted. Over the course of just a few hours they had watched her dominate, then lose her composure, then come within one point of redeeming herself. With the game on the line Serena took a deep breath at the baseline center mark and powered a serve into the left sideline. Hingis defended the ball back, only to see Serena pound a forehand into the opposite side of the court. Hingis could barely return it and the ball landed just beyond the baseline. The match was over and seventeen-year-old Serena Williams was the winner of the 1999 US Open. She doubled over, clutched her chest, and began to cry and laugh simultaneously. The match would mark the public rise of one of the most formidable tennis players of all time.

Serena Williams has, since that moment, dominated the womens tennis circuit. There has been no one who can touch her. The only opportunities afforded her competitors have occurred when she has

been injured, but she is always able to come back, climbing the rankings swiftly and playing with remarkable confidence. In fact, Serenas longevity and ability to stage comebacks is what makes her such a riveting player. She won the 2010 Australian Open and Wimbledon more than a decade after earning her initial Grand Slam singles title and, despite repeated injuries, she's owned the number one slot on five separate occasions. She is only the fifth woman in history to win four straight Grand Slam singles titles, and the most recent to hold all four simultaneously. With thirty-nine singles and twenty doubles titles, Serena is widely considered to be one of the most accomplished and admired tennis players in history. How did Serena garner such incredible success? What was her secret? The easy answer is that she possesses a superhuman talent for tennis. She stands above the rest of us in a way that is almost impossible to understand. She is, simply put, born to play the sport. You could almost say that she is one of a kind, but that wouldnt be quite true. Serena has a sister, Venus, who has been almost as good as Serena on the tennis circuit. And that is no accident. When Richard Williams heard in 1980 that Romanian tennis player Virginia Ruzici earned \$40,000 in one day for winning a minor tournament, something inside him clicked. He turned to his wife and said:

Lets have more kids and make them tennis players. Venus Williams was born in June of that year, followed by Serena in 1981. A high school dropout, Richard Williams had no formal tennis training. Instead, he studied books and videos on the subject and became a self-taught expert. When Serena was a toddler, Williams moved his family from Saginaw, Michigan, to the notoriously dangerous city of Compton in Los Angeles County, reportedly because he wanted to expose his daughters to the ugly possibilities of life and enhance their competitive advantage. By the ages of three and four, Serena and Venus were practicing two hours a day on the public courts of Compton. By 1991, Serenas record was 463 on the United States Tennis Associations junior tour. In 1995, before she graduated from high school, she turned pro. Two years later, she was already number ninety-nine in the world rankings. Then came the fateful 1999 victory at the US Open when she captured the familys first Grand Slam win. A few years later, beginning in the spring of 2002, she went on a tear. She pulled off the Serena Slam, claiming four straight Grand Slam titles and ascending to number one in the world rankings for the first time in her career. Venus has also enjoyed

incredible success. She has been ranked number one on three separate occasions and was the first African-American female tennis player in history to reach the top spot. During her career, Venus has won twenty-one

Grand Slam titles more than any other female tennis player currently playing. Except for her sister, of course. There is almost nothing about this story that seems random. Richard Williams set out to turn his two daughters into tennis superstars. And he did. It certainly seems that he had found some secret formula. So the question here is: What did Richard Williams do to set up his daughter for such success? Are there any lessons we could learn from him? There are and those lessons are, generally speaking, completely repeatable. In his book *Outliers*, Malcolm Gladwell suggests that the key to success in any endeavor is, to a large extent, not a matter of talent, but rather a result of practicing for a total of about 10,000 hours. If this formula is correct, then it would seem that success can be achieved in ways that are entirely predictable. You simply select something you want to be the best at, and then you work very, very hard at becoming just that.

You practice much more than anybody else, and this virtually guarantees your place at the top of the game. This rule certainly seems to hold true for Serena and Venus. They practiced several hours a day from the time they could lift a tennis racket. My first tennis memory? Serena writes in her memoir. People always ask about it, but I'm afraid I don't have one. I just remember playing, all the time. Her father's single-minded determination helped Serena in her early years. Richard would fill a shopping cart with hundreds of tennis balls and the sisters would take turns hitting them over the net one after another after another. When Serena grew old enough, she made and kept making personal sacrifices, anything to get more hours practicing tennis. She gave up cheerleading and softball in order to spend early mornings and late afternoons on the courts. After her 1999 US Open win, a jubilant Williams told the *Philadelphia Inquirer* that I just practiced so hard for this day and now it's really here. Gladwell based his 10,000 hours idea on research by K. Anders

Ericsson. In the early 1990s Ericsson studied what separates good violinists from great ones and what separates great ones from the virtuosos. What he found was surprising, and it went against many of our commonly held beliefs about talent. He found that there was no such thing as a talent for playing violin. Instead, the number of hours spent practicing was what made all the difference. Although his subjects started playing at about age five, their practice patterns soon diverged. The group that became the best in their class was practicing thirty hours a week by the time they reached twenty. If you add all of those hours up, you get roughly 10,000 hours worth of focused practice, far more than the 4,000 hours for those who became, for instance, music teachers. Gladwell writes, The striking thing about Ericsson's study is that he and his colleagues couldn't find any naturals, musicians who floated effortlessly to the top while practicing a fraction of the time their peers did. Their research suggests that once a musician has enough ability to get into a top music school, the thing that distinguishes one performer from another is how hard he or she works. That's it. Success, painted in this light, does not require winning some random talent lottery. Instead, success is something you cultivate through hard work and intense focus. Many others have supported this view of success. In his 2008 book *Talent Is Overrated*, Geoff Colvin argues that deliberate practice is the key to success. Yo-Yo Ma has spent more time practicing on the cello than perhaps any other person on Earth. Ever. He was a superstar at twenty, and he still is. David Shenk makes a similar argument in *The Genius in All of Us*. He talks about baseball legend Ted Williams, who had an incredible ability to see the ball leave a pitcher's fingers and predict where it would pass over the plate. People simply resigned themselves to the fact that he had unmatched natural ability. Not true, said Ted. Nothing except practice, practice, practice will bring out that ability. *Revue de presse* With characteristic clarity Johansson presents an account of how randomness can enhance success in business and your own life (Sir Ken Robinson, bestselling author of *The Element*) Frans Johansson is a master storyteller and one of the most innovative thinkers I know. (Teresa Amabile - Professor, Harvard Business School) An informed and measured account (*Financial Times*) A terrific read, smartly researched, full of stories you find yourself repeating to others (*Management Today*)