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Management: Theory and Practice, and Cases

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Abstract

This working paper reports on a major Harvard Business School project designed to enhance MBA and practicing executives in case learning. The work is built on the foundation of HBS field cases employing the monomyth "hero's journey" classic story structure along with the creation of associated fictional case characters designed to engage readers in the dimensions of human behavior, decision-making, and judgments in carrying out the work of the modern corporation.

A most fortuitous event in starting the project was the engagement of our research assistant with a theater academic background, and experience as a scriptwriter and director at a repertory theater. Shannon O'Connell noted that our collection of field cases on learning to become a successful functional manager had the potential to be organized into an executive's "hero's journey." This setoff a process: (1) completing our field cases to encompass the issue domain of an IT functional manager; (2) recrafting the cases from multiple industries to include one industry; (3) integrating the key characters of monomyth hero's journey, and (4) writing the case dialogue for the protagonist's, Jim Barton, hero's journey. The result was our novel-based Harvard Business Press book: *Adventures of an IT Leader (*2009).

In our *Adventures* book, we experimented with mechanisms to facilitate active learning such as Jim Barton's "living whiteboard," whereby Barton kept a running list of ideas associated with a set of evolving principles of IT management. Another mechanism we used to facilitate reader/student introspection was end-of-chapter/cases Reflections. Also, we experimented with audio versions of book chapters in the classroom.

We went onto continue Jim Barton's hero's journey in a second Harvard Business Press book using the same novel format, but a different industry and executive context: *Harder Than I Thought: Adventures of a twenty-first century leader* (2013). *Harder* focuses on CEO leadership in the global economy and the fast-changing IT-enabled pace of business. We extended the mechanism of Barton's living white board to interludes in the book of simulations and avatars to explore CEO decision-making.

Keywords: cases, innovation, management, CIO, CEO, hero's journey, monomyth

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Dartmouth's Amos Tuck was established in 1900 as the first graduate school of management. The Harvard Business School was established in 1908 and awarded the first MBA (Master of Business Administration). While Tuck was the first graduate school of management, the Harvard Business School is noted and famous for being the business school that pioneered the case method—arguably, the dominant methodology for training management professionals.

The founders of the Harvard Business School concluded post-graduate study of management had similarities to other professional schools like Medical and Law Schools. This similarity in learning from practice is reflected in the footnote of every Harvard Business School case: "Cases are not intended to serve as endorsements, sources of primary data, or illustrations of effective or ineffective management." This footnote cautions that similar to other professions like medicine and the law, there are rarely pat answers to complex decisions in the disciplines of continuously changing fields and those that are imbued in highly complex human situations. Experience and judgment are always in play, and relevant in many ways.

Teaching cases are intended to focus on important issues in the purview of practicing managers, and as a basis for discussing these issues in context, determining alternative courses of actions for analyzing and deciding on these issues, and facilitating a process of contemplation by the student in creating his/her knowledge necessary to operate as an effective management leader. The MBA degree is intended to certify that a graduate has engaged in an intensive process of mastering a process of study that

embodies analyzing the key set of management issues of practicing executives and techniques for executing alternative courses of actions for addressing the issues. As important, case study is intended to communicate and provide incentive to aspiring managers to maintain a process of reflection on their decisions in practices and a drive towards continuous learning. This continuous learning is facilitated by activities at HBS including publishing teaching cases and the *Harvard Business School Review*, providing global Executive Education programs, and hosting research conferences on important business subjects such as causes of the Financial Crisis of 2008.

While cases persist in the curricula of virtually every business school, cases and the case method as developed and used at the Harvard Business School are not without controversy. The controversy is especially apparent in major research universities with business schools. I studied management at a research university whereby the traditional arts and sciences faculties exerted strong influence and control in the university and faculty promotion processes. Faculty promotions were submitted to the President and a senior university faculty committee (without senior business school faculty members) for final review. In the final oversight review, published articles in what are called "first-tier academic journals"[1] were heavily weighted in the final tenured promotion decisions. Cases and case teaching were given secondary consideration, if any consideration at all.

Accordingly, I like many management students, had mixed exposure to cases during my business school studies. And what exposures I did have with cases in the classroom were more lectures about the case than class discussion of the case issues.

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[1] "First tier" journals were heavily biased towards established academic fields such as *Administrative Science Quarterly* for business school faculty specializing in organizational behavior, or *Communications of the ACM* for business school faculty members specializing in IT strategy and management. Only recently were established business journals such as the Harvard Business Review or MIT Sloan Management Review given more weight in the academic review process for promotion and tenure.

And there were failed attempts by some faculty to throw together a 1 or 2 page "arm-chaired" written case to spice up dry lectures. These attempts further undermined the case method and the development of quality field cases as important academic learning experiences.[2]

However, there were some exceptions in that our business school faculty did have two tenured professors with DBA's from Harvard, and teaching experience at HBS. These professors did incorporate cases and case teaching in their classrooms, and also were among the most popular instructors. Nevertheless, both professors did not come through the ranks of Assistant to Associate to Tenured Professors at the research university. Both came to the faculty as senior professors with tenure. While this situation still persists at many business schools, researching and case writing has continued to broaden beyond the Harvard Business School in many ways such as at the University of Virginia business school, the Ivey business school, and the NACRA (North American Case Research Association).[3]

Learning the case method requires an infrastructure, takes time and is continuous. After a three-year whirlwind career after graduating from the University of Washington with my PhD in Business in 1966, a year and half at the Boeing Corporations as a simulation software engineer then manager in the Boeing 737 program, a year as an Assistant Professor at the University of Illinois and a year as a Systems Analyst

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[2] Quality business cases do not come easily or cheap. The HBS full cost estimate for a quality case that becomes part of the HBS MBA curriculum is approximately $100,000.

[3] NACRA holds annual case writing conferences, publishes their Quarterly Case Research Journal, and partners with Harvard, McGraw-Hill and others in making teaching cases and case method research and teaching widely accessible to other academic institutions and management professionals. For further information:
http://www.nacra.net/nacra/index.php5
Accessed by author, September 1, 2013.

McNamara "whiz-kid" at the Department of Defense, I landed at the Harvard Business School as an Associate Professor, and was quickly overwhelmed by being immersed into a total case teaching environment. My first-year involved a steep learning curve about the HBS culture; and my first-year MBA classroom case teaching experience almost did me in—which even today when I think about it, is a vast understatement. The experience set me off on a life's journey in learning how to teach and create effective business cases.

I was lucky too. During my first two years at HBS, I was in a first-year teaching group with Professor Bill Bruns. Every HBS MBA first-year required class has a 4-6 member teaching group faculty plus a doctoral student course assistant, who meet for at least an hour before teaching each classroom case. This is a required meeting no matter how many times a professor has taught the case. During the teaching group meeting, the case approach is discussed, and teaching notes shared. In effect, the teaching group is not only intended to maintain high quality MBA teaching, but also is intended to develop new faculty as effective case teachers, and keeps those that are experienced case teachers up-to-date and on their toes.

Professor Bill Bruns was a MBA graduate of HBS, and was visiting HBS from the faculty of the University of Washington Business School. He had a special understanding of my plight, and was especially helpful to me in both learning the HBS culture and learning to become a competent case method teacher.[4] Bill's first advice to me was the best advice on case teaching that I ever received: "When you get in trouble during a class, just stop, and trust the class; inevitably, the class will come to your rescue, but you have to stop, wait, and be patient." Is that hard to do! But it works.

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[4] After Bill Brun's two years visit to HBS, he was invited to join the permanent faculty. Bill remained at HBS until his retirement, and appointment as an emeritus Harvard professor. He still travels the globe on behalf of HBS teaching other faculty the case method of teaching and art of writing business cases.

I got into a lot of trouble in case discussions during my first year: talking too much, cutting off students' comments that I did not fully understand, and the list goes on. I still get in trouble, but Bill's advice rarely fails me. It is when I try to wing it, when I got into deep trouble, and risk losing the confidence and trust of the class. Once trust is lost with a class that you expect high performance from, it is extremely hard to regain credibility.

I learned other lessons too about crafting a case. It is dangerous and often embarrassing to do too much interpreting when writing a case: dangerous because business cases are generally complex with a lot of things implied rather than explicit. Most cases involve underlying good stories, but the real stories are often opaque, and need to be discovered through discussions with class groups with diverse experiences— having a large class of 80 to 90 students means that on almost any subject a class member will know more than you and likely had a relevant personal experience on the subject under discussion. Too much personal interpretation by the professor on writing and teaching cases tends to inhibit discovery by both students and the instructor.

In writing cases, it's important to get the facts right, talk to the right sources, and accurately describe key events, and context. The stories and characters of a case are the mechanisms enabling students to long remember management lessons after case facts have faded away from their memories. Maintaining Case Teaching Note files and networking with others that teach theirs and others' cases keeps your case teaching dynamic and fresh.

 I have also learned that some really good cases seemingly last forever. For example, I was gone from the Harvard Business School for 14 years while building our

consulting firm, and then returned to HBS to teach the first-year MBA Accounting and Control case course that I had taught during my first years at HBS. Upon returning to the HBS faculty, I saw new case names with more modern business contexts and numbers. But some of these cases were eerily familiar—that is, many of the key case issue were the same. When I read the new case teaching note, I learned that the "new" case was the old case, but had simply been artfully updated with the changed environment and numbers. The case discussion strategy was fundamentally the same—the issue of one of these cases was a short case on transfer pricing policies and overhead allocations. The case over time had its exhibits boiled down to just a few numbers, but with an associated issue that defied resolution through rigorous analysis. The art of this case involved reducing the quantitative analysis required making room for more class discussion of the far more important human judgments, which were required to make the transfer pricing system work. The 1-¼ pages case generated class discussion that could barely be contained in the 80-minute class period.

I was fortunate to have another experience that was associated with the power of the case method. In 1974, I left HBS with my research assistant and graduate of the HBS doctoral program, David Norton. Dave and I founded Nolan, Norton & Co., a management consulting firm specializing in IT strategy and management, which we grew and operated for 14 years before merging with KPMG.

In building a headquarters office for our firm in Lexington, Massachusetts, we created a replica of an HBS classroom for 80 to 90 participants designed to facilitate case interaction and discussions, along with 4 small group discussion rooms. Our consulting methodology included writing cases on our clients' issues, and bring the client

management team to Lexington to discuss their cases along with other associated HBS cases to facilitate learning and analysis of alternatives for the issues that the company was facing. We also extended this into multiple client company programs whereby we conducted multi-client case research and included guru faculty from HBS and other business schools to jointly discuss management issues. The companies that worked with us in this capacity included IBM, AT&T, GE, Cisco, Shell, BP, DuPont, Phillips, Boeing, Apple, drugstore.com, Boeing and the like.

One of the more familiar NNC research projects that came out of this multi-client research was the balanced-score card methodology whereby David Norton worked with HBS Professor Robert Kaplan in case research in going beyond financial performance metrics. Both Dave and Bob went onto publish a series of field cases, *HBR* articles, and Harvard Business Press books on the subject and methodology.

As important as the case method lessons that I have learned, is that like business itself to remain vital and relevant, cases and case teaching must change with the environment and times. And, now is a most exciting and challenging time for creating effective business cases due to breakthrough innovations that are proliferating in digital media, and global possibilities for expanding the form and use of cases.[5] So it is my privilege to share some of the work that my colleagues and I have being doing here with the hope that some of the ideas might be useful to each of you as you endeavor with your own continuous learning curves on creating effective business cases. Here, I would like to share with you some of our recent work on the idea of a fictional, or novel case format, digitization of case media, and coping with some of the challenges in multi-media mixed

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[5] Review of the NACRA 2013 case précis' for this conference is impressive evidence of the diversity in use, techniques, and global scope of business cases, and the coming together of case method professors in learning from each other.

format cases. This is not about writing arm-chaired cases; it is a process that is built on a foundation of field case development, and then going beyond the individual set of field cases, by crafting elements to extend the case method into a set of integrated cases and coherent story.

Our journey in creating a novel based on an integrated set of field cases began with the scenario whereby a promising functional line manager of a corporation is asked to assume management responsibility for a different function in his/her development towards assuming general management responsibilities, and possible consideration for the top executive position of Chief Operating Officer or Chief Executive Officer. In this first book (*Adventures of an IT Leader*), we have the protagonist, Jim Barton, a successful Loan Officer of a financial institution, being asked by the CEO to become the financial institution's new CIO.

With the classroom success of *Adventures*, we continued the saga of Jim Barton becoming a Twenty-first Century CEO in a different corporation with our second book: *Harder Than I Thought*. *Harder* employs the same format of creating a set of case based chapters, and then integrating the cases into an extended case study of 20 chapters on dealing with the issues of becoming a successful CEO. These issues and chapters include building a collaborative executive leadership team, global outsourcing, strategic partnering, and working with and restructuring the board of directors.

Partially as a result of our research for *Harder* and partially from our experiences on board of directors, we expanded our author team and we are currently working on a third novel book continuing Jim Barton's corporate leadership challenges into reinventing boards of directors for the twenty-first century.

Use and advantages of a "novel" case format: IVK Case Series and *Adventures of an IT Leader*

Upon returning to the HBS faculty in 1991, we hired Professor Rob Austin, who joined the HBS faculty after a 10-year stint as a CIO at Ford Motor Company. Rob and I began a case writing program to capture the breadth of issues facing practicing CIO's with our objective of compiling the cases into a book for teaching the emerging body of knowledge on IT strategy and management. We also hired a previous colleague of Rob's as our research assistant, Shannon O'Donnell. Rob holds a master's degree in Theater, and earlier had met Shannon, who had been a scriptwriter and director at the Philadelphia Repertory Theater.[6]

During our case writing, Shannon was instrumental in addressing two problems that we encountered. The first problem had to do with obtaining case releases on the sensitive IT issues involved in our cases. Some of the case situations turned out badly, and getting companies to sign release forms for distributing and teaching the case studies often ran into trouble as senior manager at companies were asked to sign the releases.[7] The second problem we discovered was our collection of IT cases were from different industries, and there was a pre-case setup time required by students to learn about industry structure and context. While there were obvious learning benefits from this learning, we discovered that learning many industry contexts raised a pedagogical issue; the balance between learning and discussing industry context limited the time to adequately focus on the IT issues. Shannon suggested a way that we might cope with

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[6] Currently, Rob Austin is a chaired professor and Shannon O'Donnell is an assistant professor at the Copenhagen Business School where both are involved in an innovative program at CBS in integrating the Arts into research and study of management.

[7] Often if a senior manager was concerned about releasing the case, he/she would consult the company's law department. Inevitably, the release process became more complicated, drawn out, and conservatism transpired where important case content was asked to be edited out, or release permission was simply denied.

these two problems, as well as suggesting an innovation that could enhance the effectiveness of our overall project.

Shannon suggested that we develop an integrated case series, using a single industry for the context of all the cases in the series. This seemed workable to us because the IT issues were relatively common across industries. To cope with the release issue, she further, suggested that we use a fictional novel case format, but based on the foundation of the issue as the issue played out in the real companies that we studied—similar in form to the fictional novels written by noted authors such as James Michener.[8]

Finally, Shannon observed that our current collection of cases could be organized into the classic story format based on Joseph Campbell's monomyth, or the "hero's journey"-- a basic pattern that is found in many narratives from around the world.[9] The advantage of applying the monomyth structure had the considerable benefit of enabling us to craft our case characters to further engage our students in the work of the characters and by extension and projection, their human characteristics in conducting their work. And, of course, human value systems and past experiences play into the judgments people make in their decision-making.

Working with this format, we created our hero, the line executive (Jim Barton) employed by a fictional financial service firm (i.e., IVK) experiencing a financial crisis

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[8] James Michener wrote engaging novels such as *Hawaii* and *Alaska* based on his extensive historical research on these states.

[9] Joseph Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1949. In a monomyth, the hero begins in the ordinary world, and receives a call to enter an unknown world of strange powers and events. The hero who accepts the call to enter this strange world must face tasks and trials, either alone or with assistance. In the most intense versions of the narrative, the hero must survive a severe challenge, often with help. If the hero survives, he may achieve a great gift or "boon." The hero must then decide whether to return to the ordinary world with this boon. If the hero does decide to return, he or she often faces challenges on the return journey. If the hero returns successfully, the boon or gift may be used to improve the world. The stories of Osiris, Prometheus, Moses, Gautama Buddha, for example, follow this structure closely. (See Monomyth Website, ORIAS, UC Berkeley accessed 2013-08-21). Perhaps, the most famous use of Campbell's hero's journey was the producer of the movie *Star Wars*, George Lucas.

and in the throes of turnaround mode. Jim Barton is asked by the new CEO to assume the CIO position, which is seen as pivotal to the turnaround. With no formal IT background, Barton is reluctant, but decides to set off on his "hero's journey" to learn how to be an effective CIO, and manage the IT function to facilitate the turnaround of IVK.

Our set of draft field cases on IT management and strategy issues provided the foundation for eighteen IVK cases paralleling Barton's "hero's journey" and integrating a cast of characters along the way. For each case, we developed an associated case teaching note. Then Rob and I with assistance from Shannon, taught MBA, undergraduate, and ExecEd courses on IT strategy and management in our respective classes: at the Harvard Business School, the University of Washington Business School, and Copenhagen Business School. We took careful notes on our teaching experiences and revised both the cases and teaching notes.[10]

During this project, we were simultaneously working on a conference series at the University of Washington: The Seattle Innovation Symposia (SIS). Results from the SIS were used to develop a series of TV programs for the University of Washington Educational Channel (Channel27) that were also released widely in the USA and other countries through the Public Broadcasting Research Channel. These program segments

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[10] Shannon served as our research assistant and attended our classes and also took careful notes. In addition, she engaged students after the classes to further discuss their thoughts about the cases and discussion. Finally, Shannon administered an evaluation instrument surveying the students about on their class and IVK case experiences. The survey results were reported in our joint article with Shannon: Austin, Nolan O'Donnell, "The Technology Manager's Journey: An Extended Narrative Approach to Educating Technical Leaders," *Academy of Management Learning and Education*, Vol. 8, No. 3, 337-355.

are still actively broadcast, and are available through the University of Washington TV web site.[11]

Two of the SIS TV program segments are particularly relevant to our IVK cases and *Adventures of an IT Leader* book. The first is the TV segment at the SIS whereby Rob Austin, Shannon O'Donnell and I explained the theory and practice of our IVK novel initiative: *Digital Natives in IT learning*.[12] The second is the TV segment where Rob Austin and I demonstrated to the SIS attendees the use of the combination of a printed chapter/case (IVK Chapter 10) discussion followed immediately by an in-class audio chapter/case (IVK Chapter 11) on a shorten audio case (read by Shannon): "*Technology Leadership*."[13] In this simulated class, the students discuss a recommended course of action developed by the IVK IT team, and then listen in to the CEO's meeting where the course of action is discussed, and the CEO dramatically decides to take a different course of action. In these combined cases, the students "walk in the shoes of the IT team" then are forced to "walk in the shoes of the CEO."

During the discussion of Barton's IT team thinking, most of the students agree that this is the course of action that IVK should take. When the students learn of the CEO's overruling of the IT team's decision and are asked to consider why the CEO chose an alternative course of action, only about half of the students are able to make the transition of "walking in the shoes of the CEO" and change their position to the CEO's perspective. Students actively experience and learn that once making up your mind on a

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[11] http://uwtv.org/series/17392905/
This is the url for the SIS web site, and includes all the program segments that were produced during SIS. Accessed by Richard Nolan on August 23, 2013.
[12] http://uwtv.org/series/17392905/watch/16212760/
Accessed by Richard Nolan on August 23, 2013.
[13] http://uwtv.org/series/17392905/watch/16212454/
Accessed by Richard Nolan on August 23, 2013.

decision, the natural tendency is to defend the decision that you first made and be highly critical of an alternative course of action. It is often difficult to fully listen to another course of action, and then resist reacting defensively once you have earlier made up your mind.

With a grant from Novell, we also put up a web site with the assistance of the IT staff at the University of Washington making our IVK cases, teaching notes, course outlines, and an IVK blog available to a set of colleagues, and other IT professors interested in using all or some of the IVK cases in IT courses. Some professors had tailored their own IT courses to emphasize various themes and IT issues, and chose to use selected IVK cases to address some IT issues and not others.

Simultaneously with our IVK project, we entered into a contract with Harvard Business School Press to publish the individual cases, make the case teaching notes[14] available through Harvard Business School Case Publishing, and publish a Harvard Business Press book: *Adventures of an IT Leader*.[15] Our Harvard Business Press book editor, Kathleen Carr, was enthusiastic about the project, and made a number of important contributions such as facilitating graphics for the book cover, and character scenes for the beginning of each major part of the book. Since a major objective of the book was to embrace the body of knowledge on IT strategy and management, we incorporated the concept of Jim Barton's living white board, where he kept a running list of key IT strategy and management concepts/principles, and as he continuously learns, he updates his white board. We crafted "Reflections" at the end of each chapter, and have

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[14] The IVK individual cases/chapters and teaching notes are available from Harvard Business Press by going to the HB Press web site, and then searching on "Adventures of an IT leader."

[15] Robert D. Austin, Richard L. Nolan, and Shannon O'Donnell, *Adventures of an IT Leader* (Boston: Harvard Business Press, 2009).

used the ending white board in a course final examination asking student to derive their set of key concepts and principles for developing an IT strategy and a set of IT management principles for executing their strategy.

During the course of the project, we worked with HBS IT Video professional Tom Ryder, to develop an audio version of the book, where Shannon read the chapters, and we posted them on Apple's iTune's making the audio chapters globally accessible to our HBS ExecEd course participants (Delivering Information Services) in advance of the course. We learned that a number of the executive attendees who spoke English as their second or third language, used the audio chapters in different forms: some listened to each chapter, others listened while they also read the chapters. Their collective responses were that having the audio chapters facilitated their comprehension of key ideas.

Continuing Jim Barton's Hero's Journey: *Harder Than I Thought*

With encouragement from our Harvard Business Press editors, we launched a sequel to Jim Barton's hero's journey: *Harder Than I Thought: Adventures of a twenty-first century leader*.[16] Jim Barton's hero's journey continued facing a turnaround challenge in a corporation in the aerospace industry.

By the turn of the century, corporations had become huge in size, scope, and global economic impact. Information technologies had matured to the point that the pace of elemental transactions was almost instantaneous, collapsing the viability of long-term strategy formulation. The majority of consumers were characterized by growing up with IT—referred to as digital natives, while the older generations of digital immigrants were

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[16] R. Austin, R. Nolan and S. O'Donnell, *Harder Than I Thought* (Boston, Harvard Business Press, 2013). This book is also available in hard cover, kindle edition, and audio from Amazon.

fading into a minority of consumers and corporate leaders. Corporations were forced to become collaborative and continuous learning organizations. The new hero's journey plight of Jim Barton was to lead a struggling military cargo airplane manufacturing company into this new, full-fledge corporate reality of the twenty-first century.

To create the context for this novel project, we concluded that a leading edge technology-based industry was important to highlight the key issues of corporate executive leadership. At the time, Boeing and Airbus were fighting for industry leadership in the commercial airplane industry. Shortly into the twenty-first century (2003), Airbus had surpassed Boeing in the number of commercial airplanes delivered, as well as size of orders backlog, and was deemed the new industry leader after Boeing held the number one position for more than 50 years.

In response to the Airbus competition, Boeing had designed a light composite, fuel efficient, commercial airplane to be manufactured with a massive global outsourcing strategic partner process. Some likened the new airplane to be an industry "game-changing" airplane in a similar way to Boeing's 707, which was the first successful jet propelled commercial airliner launching Boeing's long industry leader position during the last half to the twentieth century. The new Boeing airplane was futuristically called the Dreamliner—later, formerly designated the Boeing 787.

To successfully undertake our *Harder* book project, we were challenged with a significant task of researching commercial airplane industry competition and the recent change of industry leadership as well as Boeing's challenge in gaining back its lost industry leadership position. This required both secondary research and primary research

including interviews with commercial airplane manufacturing leaders.[17] This background research was especially important in getting Rob, Shannon and I to a relatively deep understanding of the industry competition, and the key decisions made by the executive leaders in the competing corporations. Even though the three of us were often located in different countries, we engaged in numerous Skype video conference calls discussing the airplane manufacturing competitive decisions and the background/analysis for making the decisions.

Our extensive background research provided the foundation to tackle twenty-first century executive and board leadership, which we then began to weave into Jim Barton's hero's journey at the fictional SMA (Santa Monica Aerospace) Corporation. Barton's journey begins with becoming a member of the SMA board of directors, being elected to chair the board's governance committee and leading the search for a turnaround CEO. With no "takers" for the CEO job, Barton is pressed into taking the CEO job himself. We then trace Barton's first day as a CEO through his journey of turning the corporation around by designing and manufacturing a successful commercial cargo airplane. A set of 20 CEO issue/decision chapters follow.

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[17] The extended case study of a company has been a practice at the Harvard Business School for many years. It took several forms at the Harvard Business School ranging from a series of cases such as Professor David Yoffie's cases on Microsoft (Yoffie 1992,'95, '96, '97, '98' '99, 2000, '02, '05) and Apple (Yoffie '95, 2002, '04, '05, '06, '08, and '12). A second variant had a number of case authors writing HBS cases on various topics on one company such as the General Electric Corporation. For more than 30 years numerous HBS GE cases have been written. A third variant involved historians publishing academic articles in the quarterly *Business History Review*, which began publishing in 1926 and in 2011 became a joint partnership with the Harvard Business School and Cambridge University Press. A fourth variant has been the publishing of books on corporations and their executive leadership by university presses including the Harvard Business Press. The fourth variant as a viable publishing opportunity seems to have significantly declined during the last decade with decreasing university budgets in general, and the pressure that is being brought to bear by digital media on traditional book publishing.

In addition, we brought back the living white board from our *Adventures* book, but in a different form, to serve as a mechanism for additional perspective on implications of CEO leadership decisions. This new form employs simulation and avatars of the cast of characters to amplify their individual characteristics, which provide "interludes for the main parts of the book:

The Lords of Leadercraft

A Leader of Men

Your Lineup is a Mess

Execute, Execute, Execute

The Leadership Main Course

Still Figuring It Out

These interludes are created as videos played privately in Jim Barton's office, and are staged to allow both Jim Barton and the reader to step out of the reality of their current situations, and experience a different view and perspectives of the situation and the various CEO issues and decisions. By amplifying the individual characteristics of the characters, we intended to particularly highlight human characteristics as might influence discussions and decisions.

In *Harder,* we expanded Jim Barton's purview further in restructuring his board of directors, and establishing global strategic partnerships including an aggressive Japanese outsourcing strategic alliance. We also continued to use Reflections at the end of each chapter as a basis for reader contemplation, and suggested classroom discussions.

Current Jim Barton Project: *Reinventing Boards of Directors* (working title)

During our research and case writing over the past 5 years including *Adventures* and *Harder*, we have concluded that corporations have grown to reach sizes and complexities whereby they have outgrown the form and workings of their board of directors. Especially in the United States, the common corporate practice of having CEO's also serve as board of director chairs, has impeded the restructuring of board membership to provide the experience and skills required to discharge the fiduciary duties of the board in carrying out effective oversight of corporate leadership to shareholders, employees, and society. Accordingly, we have concluded that Jim Barton hero's journey requires one more book-length episode in tackling the challenge of reinventing boards of directors. This hero's journey is turning out to be Jim Barton's ultimate challenge, as well our author team's ultimate challenge.

To take on this ultimate challenge, we are privileged to have expanded our team with one of the most talented HBS case method teachers and case writers: Professor F. Warren McFarlan. Warren has not only distinguished himself at HBS, but also has distinguished himself as an authority on serving on nonprofit boards[18], as well as USA and international boards.

With our expanded team, we now join Jim Barton as he takes stock on his career as a corporate executive, CEO with a clipped short tenure due to his own making, and now driven to make a positive contribution to improving corporate governance.

We pick up on Jim Barton's saga as he is contemplating his future after being forced to resign as CEO of Santa Monica Aerospace. During his contemplation, Barton is approached with opportunities to serve on several boards of directors. It is during his

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[18] Warren joined Marc Epstein in recently authoring: Epstein, Marc J. and F. Warren McFarlan, *Joining a Nonprofit Board* (San Francisco: Josey-Bass, A John Wiley Imprint, 2011).

pursuit of these opportunities that Barton reflects on his own personal experiences with corporate boards and earlier serving on boards that he concludes that board service, and participating in an overall movement of reinventing boards of directors is something that he is not only vitally interested in, but something that he might be able to make an important contribution. So once again, Jim Barton embarks on another hero's journey.

Summary and Conclusions

So I have been privileged to have stumbled into case method teaching and case writing, and have found both a wonderful career and a continued challenging experience. I hope that my experience might inspire some of you to continue to engage in the innovations required to take the case method into the twenty-first century, and likewise inspire your students to engage in continuous learning about corporations, management, and board oversight.