

WHAT'S NEW WINTER 2025

Trailblazers – Learning From The Best

Whilst the book was sold out within two days of launch, the real test is what readers think. Overall reactions, so far, range from Amazing to Excellent, though early days. The review from Ingrid places a clear spotlight on strategic aspects.

“What a triumph! A perfect front cover prepares the reader. Brilliant models and great illustrations. These remind me of heady days organizing business seminars on ‘thinking differently’ for teams of City actuaries. An exciting read if seeking to create new concepts, enhance the customer experience and maybe expand.” Ingrid Brandon – formerly at Swiss Re Group and Impact Innovation
Reader reaction will be gauged early in the new year, using a star rating system.



Rating	Comment	Impressions
☆☆☆☆☆	Superb	Fascinating and extremely useful
☆☆☆☆	Really good	Very readable and helpful
☆☆☆	Enjoyable	A great journey through time
☆☆	Disappointing	Didn't learn much
☆	Not for me	The past is history



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It is not often you get the opportunity of an offshore photoshoot. This took place on the Balmoral of Fred Olsen Cruise Lines. The photo shows the captain to my left and hotel services director to my right. The book inscription reads, “joining the dots.”

This bumper edition includes a famous study on child psychology. Time does not date it. Take great care if trying this experiment with your family, especially with the festive season upon us!





The Marshmallow Experiment

Important insights can be drawn from what was a serious study. In the 1960s, Stanford University psychologist Walter Mischel devised an ingenious study on delayed gratification.

Known also as the Marshmallow Experiment, this self-control test was on groups of four and five year olds. Each had a tempting choice. A box of marshmallows was on a table. The deal was to take one whilst Mischel was out of the room - or resist and take two on his return.

Each group was not told how long he would be out of the room. Nor were they aware the experiment was being filmed. Several kids covered their eyes or kicked the table, hoping Mischel would return quickly. A few succumbed, swiftly grabbing the treat.

Most held out for about three minutes. Nearly a third managed to last the full test of 10-15 minutes duration that varied slightly according to the group.

The aim was to identify the mental processes that enable some children to delay gratification whilst others capitulate. In follow-up studies between 1968 and 1974, Mischel concluded that most who held out experienced greater positive self-esteem and well-being, with better attainment at school and in life generally.

Those caving in were prone to behavioural problems at home and school and tended not to have lasting friendships. Stressful situations were more difficult and so was concentration. Higher susceptibility to obesity was also mentioned.

The key to understanding the test lies in what Mischel refers to as two systems of the brain, similar to Daniel Kahneman's Thinking Fast and Slow. Mischel described this as 'hot' thinking which is simple, quick, reflexive and emotional, in contrast to 'cool' thinking that is rational and reflective. The latter prefer to mull over options and consider the context and consequences.

Research findings can be applied to today, such as doing homework with little if any prompting, avoiding a minimalist approach, being punctual, keeping within budget and thinking ahead. There is also something here about goal setting, determination and suppressing any impulse of 'I want it and I want it now.'

Years ago, friends tried this on their three. A team approach sounded impressive. So did resisting for 15 minutes. Fatal flaws were the age range of 4-10 and pliable Dad, likely to opt for a shortish duration so they thought.

"Double or quits," the group chorused. "Do it three times Dad. Let's see if we can hold out for two hours at least." In prospect were 16 mouth-watering chocolates each! An expensive experiment was rapidly abandoned – and not repeated.

The Mischel study was criticized as other factors might be involved, such as home upbringing and group dynamics. Firm conclusions are often difficult to draw in social research. Correlation can be deceptive and even misleading. Yet, Mischel's study appears compelling, highlighting the importance of mental resilience.

