

PATH TO  
**GROWTH**  
AND  
**PROFITABILITY**

How to Boost Your Profits Using an “Outside-In”  
and “Bottom-Up” Perspective and the Operating  
System for Commercial Management

By

**TONI KESKINEN**

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# Praise for Path to Growth

*"This book gives a new perspective how to create a bridge between strategic decision-making and day-to-day operational management especially in Commercial Management. A strong reading recommendation"*

**Timo Ritakallio, President and CEO, OP Financial Group**

*"As a multidisciplinary analysis practitioner I'm excited about Toni's book on aggregating different data sets to better understand your company's path to growth and profitability. It's part science and part pure art, as those qualities always go hand in hand in analysis that seeks to understand something the competitors don't know."*

**Mikko Leskelä, Strategy Consultant, NOREN**

*"I would recommend this book to anyone who wants to be one step ahead and dare to take the "red pill". Beautifully written and so easy to understand."*

**Kai Virtanen, Head of Foresight, VERE OY**

*"This is a must read for any modern executive, for understanding how to define and execute a strong, data driven, customer centric commercial strategy. Toni's personal hands on experience and passion with several customer cases comes alive in this book, and will help You in shifting gears to focused growth and profitability."*

**Hanna Kivelä, CEO, FUJITSU**

*"A groundbreaking book. A non-obvious and brilliant solution to an obvious problem. I challenge you to read this book, and not end up raving about the possibilities of a new operating system for management. Highly recommended."*

**Marco Mäkinen, Chief Strategy Officer and Partner, TBWA Helsinki**

*"Path to growth is an inspiring insight how customer oriented, holistic vision-creation-to-strategy-implementation cycle can and probably should be based on data in each stage. And how this can be done in pragmatic, successful way."*

**Matti Suurnäkki, CEO, Voimaosakeyhtiö SF Oy**

# Thank You & Acknowledgements

It has been a long way to write and finish this book: it is the culmination of more than 25 years in business with continuous discovery, co-creation, and learning with amazing colleagues and clients. While I've published four books in Finnish earlier, this is my first book in English.

I have been very lucky to find and connect with brave and brilliant people and companies who have trusted me and made it possible to dive deep, learn and create new insights and approaches. The theories and practices I have developed have their foundation in these cases, learning and empirical evidence. Thank you all!

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Working the way that I have been working isn't always easy for those nearest to me. Thank you, Katy, Nuppu, Nelli, Kukka & Anton for bearing with me, and encouraging me to go for it. I love you <3.

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# 1.

## Introduction

Most business leaders can pinpoint problems causing inefficiencies that lead to underperforming or declining sales. Too often, however, they try to solve those problems on a bug-fix basis. But quick fixes create a false sense of accomplishment. The need to be busy and productive prevents us from taking a better look at the big picture and underlying challenges. The fundamental issues dragging performance down are not identified, and the correct core adjustments in strategy and perspective are not made.

Another weak point hides behind KPIs. You don't lead KPIs, which are outcomes – you lead activities related to phenomena that you need to understand to influence them and change the outcomes with the actions. Therefore, understanding key phenomena is imperative.

Shifting from quickly fixing bugs to understanding critical business phenomena and applying this understanding to adjusting your company's strategy is like finding a new perspective to manage your company more successfully.

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Finding this new perspective is a superpower that changes how you see customers, markets, and your future. For most managers, that means replacing old tools, practices, and approaches to discover new insights. Working this way improves your capability to marry effective strategy with actions that immediately improve your operational efficiency.

This change does not happen by looking at standard departmental financial reports. You also need a fresh perspective on data and how to use data purposefully. Data needs to be aggregated from various sources and enriched with external data to discover new insights and instruments for genuine change.

### **Logical Creativity: Making the Most of What You Already Have**

Growing and becoming more profitable does not have to be a fool's errand, constantly looking for something new and shiny. The fastest route to profitable growth is to make the most of what you already have.

There are five proven paths to organic growth, all of which we will cover later in the book:

1. **Upselling:** selling more products and services customers are already using
2. **Cross-selling:** Selling new services or products to entice existing customers
3. **Customer acquisition:** appealing to new customers
4. **Improving retention:** serving your customers better to avoid losing them
5. **Pricing power:** finding ways to higher prices and higher profit margin

All these growth paths interlink to create an optimum.

Evidence shows that when you collaborate with your customers with a broad portfolio, their annual billing grows disproportionately, which means that  $1+1 > 2$ . Discovering why your customers choose wider adoption of offerings and what value they gain from doing so also gives insights about improving retention, differentiating your value from the competition, and opening avenues for pricing power. Innovations in value proposition and the creation of solutions from existing offerings can be a source of competitive advantage, another fruit of Logical Creativity.

## **Operating System for Commercial Management: From Data to Answers**

My colleagues and I have made it our mission to create a tool that aggregates relevant data inside and outside the company, analyzes it with the appropriate algorithms, and delivers the answers to solve the growth equation and create a shared view of the markets, risks, and possibilities. We call this tool **Operating System for Commercial Management**.

The primary question Operating System for Commercial Management answers is: "Where is the growth?" which is about connecting portfolios with markets. To make the answers more actionable, we also need answers to more advanced questions: "Why these companies? What makes them opportunities or risks right now?" which takes us to the timing-related question "When" and the resource allocation-related question "How." These questions will reveal critical phenomena for strategic prioritization – the focus areas to concentrate on. These

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questions help reveal the phenomena that you need to manage and measure, phenomena that can make or break your success.

These answers create a bridge between strategic decision-making and day-to-day operational management. Our big, bold value promise is to help our customers succeed by providing them with a new perspective, a single source of truth, a platform that defines priorities, and a narrative that brings everyone together.

Operating System for Commercial Management is about unity, collaboration, and synergies instead of different KPIs and turf wars. It is not a new ERP or CRM – its role is to aggregate data from different internal and external sources and deliver meaningful answers.

### **The Journey Ahead**

This book starts with the challenges and difficulties we are up against. Then we will continue to reset the perspective and introducing a new perspective and Sherlocking for addressable strategic challenges. A case study gives an overarching view of how things change in the process and paves the way for the view on next generation of management and strategy process. Then we will move on to views and best practices on how to manage change. Before closing, there is a best practice case on how the transformation process was done by a market-leading financial group.

This new commercial management approach is fundamentally different due to its depth and actionable nature, outside-in and bottom-up logic. Instead of anxiety and confusion, it gives you clarity, energy, and empowerment. It delivers a sense of

purpose and meaning for the company and its employees. It gives you a shared language and perception and accelerates collaboration. Get ready for a new perspective and enhanced growth.

I hope you enjoy the book!

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