0037 The Outcomes Formula

The Summers Principle Book · https://kb.jeffreysummers.com/docs/0037-the-outcomes-formula/

Once the operator accepts that there are only two causes, they need a diagnostic tool. Some way to know, in a given moment, which cause is running. Design or default. Right thinking or wrong thinking. Engineered intent or its absence.

The operator cannot judge that from the inside of their own thinking. Intention feels sincere from the inside whether it is producing outcomes or not. Confidence feels justified from the inside whether it is warranted or not. Logic feels sound from the inside whether the premises hold or not. The operator who tries to grade their own thinking by how the thinking feels will grade it wrong most of the time, in the direction of self-flattery.

There is one reliable test. The Outcomes Formula.

Right thinking, right outcomes. Wrong thinking, wrong outcomes. Your outcomes are the verdict on your thinking.

The Formula runs backwards. Not from thinking to outcome — from outcome to thinking. The operator looks at what happened, and what happened tells them what to think about how they thought. If the outcome was right, the thinking behind it was right, even if it felt shaky at the time. If the outcome was wrong, the thinking was wrong, even if it felt airtight when they made the call.

That is a hard reversal. Most operators want the Formula to run the other direction — from sound-feeling thinking to permission to expect a good outcome. That direction does not work. It cannot work. Thinking that feels sound but produces the wrong outcome was wrong thinking. The operator's confidence in it was misplaced. The outcome is the only reliable verdict, because the outcome is what actually happened, and everything that led to it — every assumption, every read, every decision — either supported the outcome or did not.

The Formula is diagnostic, not prescriptive. It does not tell the operator what to think next. It tells them how to grade what they already thought. That is the tool they need, because thinking that grades itself does not improve. Thinking that gets graded by outcomes does.

The guardrail is where operators most want to escape the Formula. The guardrail is this: the Formula does not account for luck.

No operator gets to claim my thinking was right, I just got unlucky. Luck is not a category the Formula recognizes. The outcome is the verdict. Full stop. If the operator's thinking was right, the outcome would have come in right. If the outcome came in wrong, the thinking was wrong somewhere — usually in an assumption the operator did not know they were making, or a risk they did not know they were exposed to.

This is the same argument the principle makes at 0035, run at the operator-diagnostic layer. There is no third cause. There is no luck. There are outcomes, and the outcomes trace to design or default, and the operator can read their own thinking backwards from what the outcomes produced.

If luck were admitted as an exception, the Formula would collapse. Every operator would hide behind it. My thinking was right, the market turned. My thinking was right, the kitchen manager quit. My thinking was right, the equipment failed. Every one of those is an operator refusing to let the outcome speak. Every one is a re-entry of the third cause the principle already rejected. Every one is a way to keep thinking that has produced wrong outcomes.

The Formula closes that door. If the market turned and the operator was not designed against market shifts, their thinking was wrong at the layer of risk exposure. If the kitchen manager quit and there was no bench, the thinking was wrong at the layer of succession design. If the equipment failed and there was no maintenance schedule, the thinking was wrong at the layer of capital planning. In every case, the outcome traces to a layer of thinking the operator was not doing. The wrong outcome is the verdict on the missing thinking.

This sounds harsh from the outside. It is not, from the inside of design. The operator who takes the verdict seriously gets a diagnostic tool that actually works. They learn where their thinking is holding up and where it is not, one outcome at a time. They do not have to guess. They do not have to argue with themselves about whether their intent was pure or their logic was sound. They just look at the outcome, and the outcome tells them what to work on.

The operator who rejects the verdict — who insists their thinking was right and the outcome was unfair — learns nothing. They keep the thinking. The thinking keeps producing outcomes. The outcomes keep coming in wrong. And the operator keeps blaming layers outside their thinking, until the operation runs out of runway.

The Formula is the daily-use form of the principle. The principle says outcomes trace to design or default. The Formula says outcomes are the verdict on the thinking that produced them. Same law. Different application. The principle is metaphysical. The Formula is operational. Together, they close the loop the operator needs to run their own thinking as a designed thing rather than a

defaulted one.