## PREFACE

This is not merely a book but a platform for defining, structuring, and solving business problems. Business problems are not like math problems, economics problems, or engineering problems: they are more like quandaries, issues, predicaments, and situations that must be defined before they are solved. To be defined, they must be articulated, and the basic disciplines of business and management to date have tried to sweep the difficulty of defining problems under the rugs of their own language systems. What we do here is lay bare this black box of business problem definition and break it down so that it can be mastered and practiced in any business domain. To do so, we introduce a set of powerful, universal modeling languages that will allow you to represent any issue, predicament, or difficulty in any one of five problem-solving languages: languages that will let you build models of the predicament that will give you a well defined problem to solve. We call these languages *flexons* (flexible objects for the generation of novel solutions).

Model-based problem solving—the discipline our platform teaches and gives you practice with—is useful not only because it allows you to generate precise, deep, and accurate problem statements in any domain of business practice, but also because it allows you to design your problem-solving process for insight.

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Having five modeling languages is more than five times more valuable than having one, because business problems are unlikely to yield to insights generated from any one language alone and far more likely to yield to an adaptive tool kit of languages. We will show you both why and how.

Like any other discipline, practice is paramount, so our platform is relentlessly practice oriented. Each modeling tool kit comes with a set of training examples that are drawn from actual business scenarios and predicaments and are either current or have occurred very recently. By the end of the training sequence, you will have seen, defined, and solved problems ranging from smart phone design to currency trading, from executive team mismanagement to vertical integration in the auto industry, and from pharmaceuticals research and development process improvement to private equity deal flow optimization.

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## THE DESIGN OF INSIGHT