

What this book solves.

Smart people with good information still make bad calls. I have watched it for years on major projects: competent teams, full briefings, every fact in the room, and the wrong call walked out of the room with every signature behind it - minuted, agreed, and wrong. What was missing was never the information. It was the question.

The most dangerous failure of the twenty-first century is not a failure of technology. It is a failure of thought: the quiet, trainable discipline by which a mind frames a problem well, reads the evidence honestly, then catches itself being wrong. Who teaches the asking? Into that gap has stepped a machine that will think, fluently and instantly, on our behalf. It answers questions you never asked, in prose more confident than most experts, and it will not once ask what the answer is missing.

There is no shortage of good books about how the mind errs. I have learned from them; this book owes them its debts. But reading about error has never, by itself, prevented it. What is missing from that shelf is a working discipline - something you can run before the decision, in the meeting, at your desk, in the small hours when the answer looks obvious.

The discipline, in five moves.

That is what this book builds. It is called PRISM: five moves, run in sequence before any decision that matters. P, R, I and S run in order; M stands over all four.

P Problem Framing <i>Are we solving the right problem?</i>	R Research <i>What would prove me wrong?</i>	I Interpretation <i>What else could this mean?</i>	S Synthesis <i>What do all the pieces say together?</i>	M Metacognition <i>How confident should I be, and what am I missing?</i>
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Every chapter closes in protocols - small, deliberate practices you can run yourself - because understanding a failure has never prevented one. Practice does. Fifteen chapters in three widening circles carry the method: the mind (chapters 1-7), the room (8-12) and the machine (13-15). A real case opens every chapter, from Deepwater Horizon to Flight 1549, Lia Lee and a 1492 abbot. Chapter 12 puts the method to work on five cases from the public record: Challenger, Columbia, the Boeing 737 MAX, Deepwater Horizon and Carillion.

The record is printed with the book.

The cases come from the record, and the record is printed with the book. The book cites 498 distinct works - 249 published articles and papers, 110 books and chapters, 60 pieces of news and features, 42 official reports, 16 institutional resources, 10 court records, 7 preprints, 3 interviews and podcasts, and 1 photograph - and carries 587 numbered endnotes. A Note on Method at the front records how it was made: sources were checked against original material where it was available, and the notes name the limits and the uncertainty. Where the evidence is young or contested, the text says so on its face. The record and my reading of it are kept separate. The Sources, the full list, is free to download from the book's site. Check it.

498

WORKS CITED

587

NUMBERED ENDNOTES

441

PAGES

15

CHAPTERS

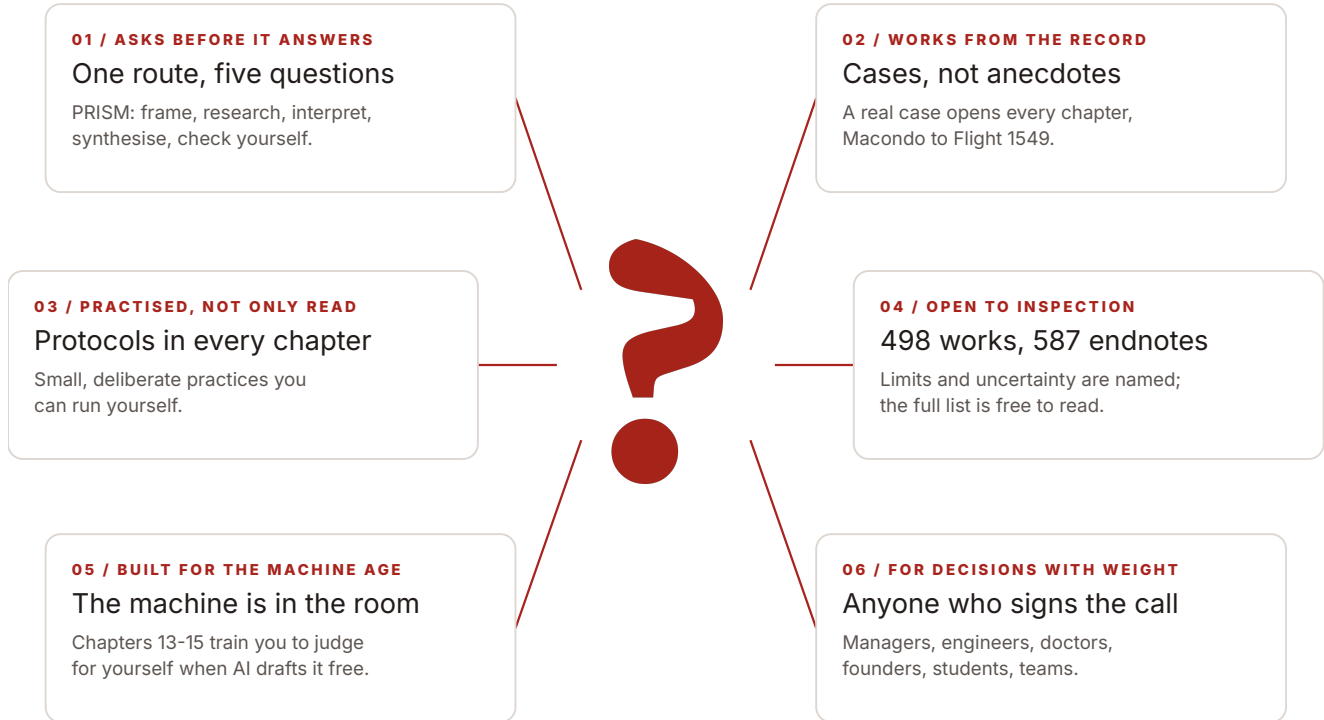
It is written for people whose decisions carry weight: the manager before the hire, the doctor before the diagnosis, the founder before the signature, the parent before the answer. Anyone whose wrong call is paid for by someone else.

I cannot promise this book will make you certain. Certainty is the one product honest thinking never sells. What I can promise is a discipline: a way to ask, before the decision is made and cannot be called back, what you might be missing - and the practice to make the asking a habit.

The rest is yours.

The book on one page.

One question at the centre, six things the book does about it. Each branch is taken from the book itself.



From the record.

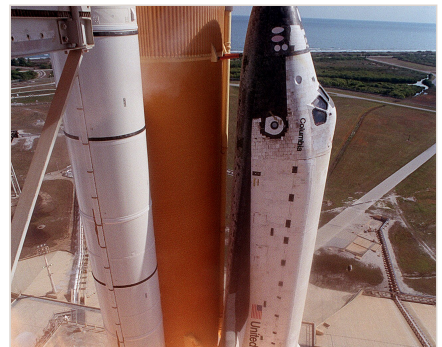
Three of the cases the book examines. Public-domain photographs, via Wikimedia Commons.



Deepwater Horizon, 2010. The rig on fire after the Macondo blowout. US Coast Guard, public domain.



Challenger, 1986. One of the five cases in Chapter 12. NASA, public domain.



Columbia, 2003. STS-107 at launch, another of the five. NASA, public domain.