

Buzzwords, Blunders,
and Better-Work Myths

The Incredible Story of

Deft



Isaak Tsalicoglou

Foreword by J. Scott Perry

The Incredible Story of Deft (2nd ed.)

Buzzwords, Blunders, and Better-Work
Myths (Lean, Agile, etc.)

Isaak Tsalicoglou

This book is available at <https://leanpub.com/deft>

This version was published on 2025-04-01



Leanpub

This is a [Leanpub](#) book. Leanpub empowers authors and publishers with the Lean Publishing process. [Lean Publishing](#) is the act of publishing an in-progress ebook using lightweight tools and many iterations to get reader feedback, pivot until you have the right book and build traction once you do.

© 2017 - 2025 Isaak Tsalicoglou, OVERBRING Labs

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced in any form or by any electronic or mechanical means, including information storage and retrieval systems, without written permission from the author, except for the use of brief quotations in a book review.

Tweet This Book!

Please help Isaak Tsalicoglou by spreading the word about this book on [Twitter](#)!

The suggested tweet for this book is:

[I learned how to recognize the pitfalls of hype in change and improvement thanks to The Incredible Story of Deft!](#)

The suggested hashtag for this book is [#deft](#).

Find out what other people are saying about the book by clicking on this link to search for this hashtag on Twitter:

[#deft](#)

Also By **Isaak Tsalicoglou**

Lo and Behold, X! — Above, Beyond, and Far Away

Northwind Elixir Traders

Lo and Behold, X! — Bifurcation and Deliverance

Lo and Behold, X! — Doldrums and Machinations

Lo and Behold, X! — Growing, Pains, and Awareness

Lo and Behold, X! — Denizens of the Ivory Fortress

The Cave

Contents

Before we begin	i
Reader’s Note	ii
Foreword	iii
Preface	vi
New Beginnings, New Horizons	1
Welcome to the Pony Farm	2
Meeting the Marks	3
Is There Anything Deft Cannot Accomplish?	4
The Industrious Industrial Hero	11
The Thunderstruck Researchers	12
Lunch Is Served	13
The Data-Driven Engineer	14
Rude Awakenings	15
Data-Driven Overreach and Downfall	16
The Maverick Student	17

Bob's (Literally) His Uncle	18
The Band of Brothers	19
Deft and Betovlax	20
The Whale of Ultra-Deft	21
Good Ideas, but Even Better Marketing	22
The Questions are the Answer	23
Choose No Side	24
About the Author	25

Before we begin

This content is not available in the sample book. The book can be purchased on Leanpub at <https://leanpub.com/deft>.

Reader's Note

This content is not available in the sample book. The book can be purchased on Leanpub at <https://leanpub.com/deft>.

Foreword

I met Isaak Tsalicoglou at the perfect time to discover his intelligent, comedic wit and give levity to an incredibly frustrating situation.

It was late 2017 and I was engaged with a global corporation in which I had found myself as a somewhat reluctant consultant. I was introduced to a team of experts that were going to change everything. Their system, in which innumerable sums of money were being invested, was hailed as the panacea for all business practices. This team described themselves as “Black Belts”. The operational process I had been attempting, for years, to implement would now be turned over to this band of martial artists? Analysis after number crunching analysis of the benefits would now be reviewed for validity.

The following months were filled with meetings, charts, workflows, acronyms, analysis of analysis of analysis, and every combination of procedural if/then statements and scenario interpretations. So much of which had nothing to do with the solution I could summarize on a bumper sticker.

After almost a year, they arrived at their glorious conclusion: my plan, completely intact and unchanged. High fives all around. In half the time that it took to make the decision, \$14 million dollars was saved. Sales increased. All was right with the world—4 years after I had introduced the solution.

Enter “Deft”.

Welcome to the amusing and often unnerving world of corporate shenanigans, where the pursuit of the pinnacle of operational success often resembles a circus act. This is The Incredible Story of Deft.

In this satirical exploration, “Deft” takes you on a journey through the modern business landscape, a realm where the allure of the next big thing is as irresistible as it is comical. Amid the lofty promises of increased efficiency, streamlined processes, and a

brave new era of productivity, corporate managers find themselves chasing an elusive mirage. In their never-ending cycle to stay ahead of the curve, they embark on a perpetually futile cycle of adopting the latest and greatest “solutions” to their challenges. The fervor and excitement lead to swapping one form of bureaucracy for another, leaving a trail of puzzled employees in their wake.

The Deft expedition introduces us to the usual suspects, uncovering the bizarre and bewildering world of hyped-up corporate solutions. Well-meaning executives, armed with presentations and flashy buzzwords, earnestly believe they have discovered the holy grail of corporate utopia, only to find themselves lost in a sea of complexity and confusion.

Yet, beneath the satire lies a poignant reflection on the human condition within the corporate sphere. As we laugh at the absurdity of it all, we cannot help but recognize ourselves and those we have worked with in the characters of Deft.

Be careful. Deft is real. So real, in fact, that there are those, who after reading Isaak’s essay on LinkedIn about Deft, eagerly questioned how they could implement it. Truly, Deft invites us to question our own tendencies to blindly pursue the latest silver bullet without considering the consequences – namely, shooting ourselves in the foot. Through the witty tales of corporate initiatives gone awry, we are reminded that in the pursuit of progress, discernment is as vital as innovation.

Thank you, Isaak. Deft is timely, provocative, and funny. It makes an undeniable, yet controversial point with tongue-in-cheek humor and a dose of sarcastic wit. For anyone that has been witness to the ridiculousness of best practice analysis, process theory, decision matrix, and the associated marketing-inspired labels, *The Incredible Story of Deft* is a comedic indictment.

J. Scott Perry¹

¹<https://www.linkedin.com/in/jscttperry/>

August 6th, 2023
Austin, Texas

Preface

This content is not available in the sample book. The book can be purchased on Leanpub at <https://leanpub.com/deft>.

New Beginnings, New Horizons

This content is not available in the sample book. The book can be purchased on Leanpub at <https://leanpub.com/deft>.

Welcome to the Pony Farm

This content is not available in the sample book. The book can be purchased on Leanpub at <https://leanpub.com/deft>.

Meeting the Marks

This content is not available in the sample book. The book can be purchased on Leanpub at <https://leanpub.com/deft>.

Is There Anything Deft Cannot Accomplish?

“It is the mark of an educated mind to be able to entertain a thought without accepting it.”—Aristotle

With the introductions concluded, it was now time for Lina to launch into her Deft sales pitch. She knew that most would believe it, and hoped that at least one participant, Fredrik, might see through it. Her hope was misplaced.

“So, let us begin!” Lina said, almost leaping to the laptop perched upon the podium and hitting the spacebar with fury to make the slides advance. A single word appeared on the projection screen:

Deft

With fervor and mock conviction, Lina launched into her pitch of this miraculous management mindset, methodology, toolkit, business model, strategy, philosophy, *you-name-it* that promised everything to everyone.

“Ever heard of ‘Deft Management’? As we established, it seems that some of you have heard about it, but also that most of don’t really know much about it. That’s OK. Even if you think you know *much* about it, you probably don’t know *all* about it, and I can assure you, you are *very unlikely* to know the things we will be learning about Deft in this training or rather, this *anti-training*.”

“So. If you never heard of Deft before starting at Betovlax, that’s understandable. You might have heard of other things similar

to Deft Management, right? These too, you might be surprised, are part of it! Surprised?”

The participants looked at Lina with the same vacant stare of cows munching on grass. They had no clue what she was getting at. She continued, aiming to relieve their confusion and perhaps even their feeling self-conscious for not having heard of Deft before.

“We all know that there are just *so* many great ideas in business out there already, right? Plus, new ones keep appearing regularly in new business books, online and offline articles, and on our social media feeds. There are simply *way too many* cool ideas to keep track of. So, understandably, you might have never heard of this trusty set of business ideas that we will simply be calling ‘Deft’ from now on.”

“Still, if you *never* heard of Deft before, you are *totally* missing out! In fact, you can forget *all* other great business ideas out there—including those that you might be applying daily with great success!”

“Trust me, they all *pale* in comparison to Deft. *That’s* why it’s time to set aside our non-fiction books, throw away any preciously earmarked ‘Body of Knowledge’ volumes, shelve any certifications you may have, and listen up. Straight out of Silicon Valley or some other fancy, mystical location where—unlike the place where you have worked before—business *magic* routinely happens, Deft is *the one* management approach to finally rule them all—and it’s here to stay.”

Everyone except for Fredrik, Maribel, and one other guy looked bewildered, including Mike. Maribel looked simultaneously skeptical and interested, while Fredrik looked puzzled and perhaps a little irritated, but he decided against intervening. Fredrik crossed his massive arms in front of his chest, looking frustrated and defensive. That other guy’s name was Nick; and Nick seemed skeptical.

Lina mashed the spacebar on the laptop’s poor keyboard once again with fury, switching to the next slide and continuing her delivery.

What you can expect

“Deft can provide a multitude of highly sought-after benefits to any industry, function, and organization—for sure, including this one. Just as a small sample, Deft can enable you to—”

Now, Lina kept pressing the spacebar, making bullet points appear on the projection screen, voicing her supplemental comments next to each.

- Continuously improve your operations. “So that your business can become adaptable and resilient!” she said.
- Consistently create high-quality, differentiated products, services and software. “In fact, even entire ecosystems!” she exclaimed.
- Repeatedly surprise and delight customers. “With empathetic forethought and attention to detail!” she emphasized.

Lina switched slides again and continued her presentation.

Great expectations

“Yet, Deft’s wonders don’t stop there! Deft can also help you to—”

- Reliably achieve sustainable, organic revenue growth and reduced costs. “For higher profit margins, of course!”
- Harness your supply chain. “To increase the quality of manufacturing, decrease its costs, and *slash* lead times!”
- Align your stakeholders. “To fiercely prevent collaboration inefficiencies and recurring cross-functional conflicts!”
- Respectfully engage and involve diverse employees. “And coach them for personal and professional growth!”
- Proactively attract, develop and retain top talent. “So that we can prevail in the so-called ‘war’ being waged for it!”

Lina hammered the spacebar again, its actuation resonating first within the laptop’s flimsy chassis, and then within the podium’s structure.

To the moon!

She continued her delivery, this time with far fewer comments. “And—why not?—Deft can also provide you with the insights to:”

- Disrupt competitors’ paradigms and grow market share. “Despite volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity!”
- Efficiently monetize revenue streams in the digital, data-driven world of AI, automation. “And blockchain!”
- Expedite and incentivize the operational readiness of a modular knowledge-management architecture.
- Strategically reposition your business and deploy new enterprise capabilities to sustain its competitive advantage.
- Synergistically deliver compelling innovation by holistically leveraging seamlessly hybrid cloud-centric architectures.
- Mindfully incentivize diverse teams and individuals to engage inclusively in equitable and sustainable innovation.

The words danced on the slide, each bullet-pointed row appearing with a fade-in effect, while the participants looked on with growing interest. Lina forged ahead, pressing the poor spacebar one last time with a fury no laptop development engineer had ever anticipated while dimensioning the device for longevity or reliability. Thankfully, the type of the matte-black laptop on the podium had a reputation for being over-engineered and fully capable of taking the abuse by people like Lina with grace and indifference for years and years.

A final slide appeared on the screen.

Deft.-

The word’s prominence was accentuated by a full stop and an imperative dash after it, aligned middle and center, as if a final incantation cementing Deft’s finality in participants’ minds. Lina sought to explain why.

“*Whatever* it is that you want to achieve, Deft can help you achieve it *faster, better* and *more* sustainably than comparable approaches and methodologies. So, my dear colleagues—if you *never* heard of Deft before, very soon you will be wishing you had done so *much earlier* in your career—because every month spent not doing Deft is a month of wasted human potential.”

Now everyone in the audience, and not only Nick, looked skeptical.

“Deft *truly* is the bee’s knees!” said Lina with mock enthusiasm and finished with a smirk. “So, dear colleagues. Here’s how our anti-training will play out. I will *not* bore you with theory. There is *plenty* of theory on what Deft is, what it can do for you and for a company—all of that is well documented in books and articles.”

“What we will do *instead*, is we will dive into Deft’s *story* and into some of its most heroic tales of unconventional thinking!”

Lina started pacing on the stage, really on the space right in front of the participants seated in their chairs, while she went on about Deft’s story.

“Deft has a long, complex, and interesting story, though no one is sure exactly when, where and how it began. Most agree that Deft is an invention of the early twentieth century. However, some of its proponents even go as far as to consider it as the modern rediscovery and reinterpretation of the enduring wisdom of noble savages and ancient civilizations. A handful of researchers even believe that Deft’s roots go back further in time. They say that Deft’s recent success represents the rebirth of archaic, ancient knowledge; knowledge that had been deliberately kept under wraps by sinister businessmen looking to make a profit by hoarding its valuable secrets.”

“In fact, there are as many tales and explanations of Deft’s origins and true meaning as there are people believing that they live and breathe Deft every single day, both at work and at home. Incidentally, these people just *love* to argue passionately about whose version of Deft’s story and meaning is ‘the right one.’”

“Deft experts have recounted such tightly-interwoven tales of

Deft's origins and successes in numerous books, some of which award-winning. Illustrious Deft book awards are handed out annually by special-interest groups. These groups carry Deft forward—or, so they think. In reality, more than anything else, they bring Deft into professionals' minds and onto CVs, into corporate strategies, agendas and roadmaps, and onto tangible and electronic bookshelves."

Mike raised his hand, eager to ask a question. Lina graciously extended an open palm towards him, offering him the opportunity.

"Yes... *Mike*, was it? Please, go ahead," she said.

Mike stirred in his seat.

"Do we, I mean, does Betovlax have a *Deft Strategy* at all?" he asked.

Lina smiled the widest smile anyone thus far in the room had witnessed. She waited a bit before responding with a sardonic smile on her face.

"Well-not anymore!"

Mike was visibly taken aback, so Lina extended a hand gesturing like a traffic policeman eager to stop him from continuing.

"But, don't worry, Mike. You will find out why."

She turned to address the audience in its entirety, looking at everyone and no one in particular.

"We will all find out why. For the time being, I just want you to do one thing over the next few days. Choose your avatar and see which one you prefer."

A silence fell over the audience, as nobody had any idea what Lina meant by this. She proceeded to explain.

"Let me explain what I mean by 'avatar.' Deft's long history revolves around quirky yet affable characters of a diverse and expansive cast. Different flavors of Deft, of which there are plenty, favor different characters and their respective inspirational tales."

"These characters are typically heroic and sometimes lonely, misunderstood figures caught in their self-imposed, dogged pursuit of management innovation and excellence. However, as in a well-written, formulaic Ancient Greek tragedy, they predictably

reach catharsis and ultimately prevail—at least for a while. In this process, or long after they have passed away, they also achieve overwhelming recognition and acclaim. This, despite initial adversity or intense criticism and pushback from colleagues and other habitual naysayers.”

“Which characters you will read about will depend on whose tale you might stumble upon on any given Deft conference, book or article. It also depends on whom you’ll be proselytized by on the abundant virtues and success stories of Deft, and its plethora of attendant methodological frameworks with eccentric names.”

“What you need to remember for now is this: Deft has something for *everybody*. Most importantly, which tale you will prefer and more likely consider true, usually depends on the character you will identify with the most, either from a personality standpoint or due to your own business circumstances and work experiences, long before you joined this company. And that’s also why I say once again: *Deft is the cat’s pajamas, the bee’s knees!*”

Lina could see that everyone still looked skeptical, which is exactly how she liked it, so she continued.

“See? Whether you are a disgruntled employee grappling with bureaucratic procedures in the front lines of business, a process geek seeking business perfection through smoothness of execution, a seasoned executive looking for some inspiration during your mid-life crisis, a new team or project leader herding cats, or a member of a senior management team suffering under shareholder pressure to improve results—Deft’s tales of origination have something to offer for everybody, and that ‘everybody’ includes you. And you. And you too. And me too!” Lina said, pointing in sequence at various participants and finally at herself.

“So, without delay, let us begin our learning. Let us step into the first of the many tales of Deft, and read between the lines. You will see for yourself what I mean.”

“We shall begin our training with an exploration of Deft in industry” said Lina, preparing for the first actual part of the Deft anti-training.

The Industrious Industrial Hero

This content is not available in the sample book. The book can be purchased on Leanpub at <https://leanpub.com/deft>.

The Thunderstruck Researchers

This content is not available in the sample book. The book can be purchased on Leanpub at <https://leanpub.com/deft>.

Lunch Is Served

This content is not available in the sample book. The book can be purchased on Leanpub at <https://leanpub.com/deft>.

The Data-Driven Engineer

This content is not available in the sample book. The book can be purchased on Leanpub at <https://leanpub.com/deft>.

Rude Awakenings

This content is not available in the sample book. The book can be purchased on Leanpub at <https://leanpub.com/deft>.

Data-Driven Overreach and Downfall

This content is not available in the sample book. The book can be purchased on Leanpub at <https://leanpub.com/deft>.

The Maverick Student

This content is not available in the sample book. The book can be purchased on Leanpub at <https://leanpub.com/deft>.

Bob's (Literally) His Uncle

This content is not available in the sample book. The book can be purchased on Leanpub at <https://leanpub.com/deft>.

The Band of Brothers

This content is not available in the sample book. The book can be purchased on Leanpub at <https://leanpub.com/deft>.

Deft and Betovlax

This content is not available in the sample book. The book can be purchased on Leanpub at <https://leanpub.com/deft>.

The Whale of Ultra-Deft

This content is not available in the sample book. The book can be purchased on Leanpub at <https://leanpub.com/deft>.

Good Ideas, but Even Better Marketing

This content is not available in the sample book. The book can be purchased on Leanpub at <https://leanpub.com/deft>.

The Questions are the Answer

This content is not available in the sample book. The book can be purchased on Leanpub at <https://leanpub.com/deft>.

Choose No Side

This content is not available in the sample book. The book can be purchased on Leanpub at <https://leanpub.com/deft>.

About the Author

This content is not available in the sample book. The book can be purchased on Leanpub at <https://leanpub.com/deft>.

More books by Isaak

This content is not available in the sample book. The book can be purchased on Leanpub at <https://leanpub.com/deft>.