

The ACS Business War-Gaming Bibliography

**Articles and essays by ACS
on business war games**

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Introduction

ACS has conducted hundreds of [business war games](#) on six continents.

Many have been on behalf of *Fortune* 500 companies, in a wide variety of industries, seeking to improve their strategy decisions and performance. Those war games have helped companies make or save billions of dollars.

Many have been at conferences and universities, helping thousands of managers [improve their strategic thinking](#) and decision-making.

ACS has written many articles and essays on business war-gaming based on that real-life experience in problem-solving and skills-building. This Bibliography summarizes those articles and essays. It provides links to full text online.

Unless noted otherwise, all were written by ACS Founder and CEO Mark Chussil.

Articles directly related to business war-gaming

[Business War Games](#), SCIP.Online, November 2002

Business war games can be hugely and dramatically effective, and yet few managers know how to design or select a business war game, or how and when a business war game can add value. This article presents key concepts and options for any company interested in business war games.

[Honey, We Shrunk the Industry: An Automotive War Game](#), Competitive Intelligence Magazine, July/August 2009

A business war game. Five automotive teams: Ford, GM, Hyundai, Toyota, Volkswagen. One set of customer judges, one set of investor judges. Three market segments. Fascinating, unexpected results.

The ACS Business War-Gaming Bibliography

The teams were smart and they wanted to win. Yet collectively their decisions subtracted value from the industry: four out of five would have been better off if they'd done nothing at all and repeated last year's moves for two more years. The fifth team had problems of its own – appearing to be successful, but leaving many billions of dollars on the table.

[Learning Faster Than The Competition: War Games Give The Advantage](#), The Journal of Business Strategy, January-February 2007

Business war games help managers anticipate, respond to, and even induce change. They're needed because the greater the change the more trends don't hold, experience doesn't fit, benchmarks don't apply, and previous strategies don't work. There is no universally accepted meaning for the term "business war game," let alone the practice of business war-gaming. This article discusses how to assess and implement a business war game for your company.

[The Seven Deadly Sins of Business War Games](#), SCIP.Online, May 2003

Having conducted business war games for dozens of the world's largest companies, we've learned a lot about what to do, and what not to do. This article (which includes a bonus deadly sin, for a total of eight) helps strategists design business war games that work.

Articles indirectly related to business war-gaming

[Practice Makes Much, Much Better](#), Homeland Defense Journal, July 2007

Nobody ever intentionally makes bad decisions, yet bad decisions get made. Nobody ever writes a plan that they expect will fail, yet plans fail. We have a choice: We can learn from experience, or we can learn before experience. We can learn where it's dangerous, or we can learn where it's safe.

[Putting the Lesson Before the Test: Using Simulation to Analyze and Develop Competitive Strategies](#). With David J. Reibstein. A chapter in *Wharton on Dynamic Competitive Strategy*, George S. Day and David J. Reibstein (editors), John Wiley, 1997. *Putting the Lesson Before the Test* was reprinted by *Competitive Intelligence Review* and *Marketing Research*.

Simulation can play a powerful role in developing and analyzing competitive-strategy options. Using simulation, managers have developed successful strategies, anticipated events that later occurred in real life, and learned about strategy, and their own businesses, at each step of the simulation process. Simulations give managers something that athletes have always had: the ability to practice before facing actual competitors.

The ACS Business War-Gaming Bibliography

[“We Are Fully Prepared”; Or, Why Plans Fail](#), Crisis Times, April 2006. Reprinted in Contingency Planning & Management – Global Assurance, March 2007.

We often ask – especially after a disaster – how we can hold people more accountable or get rid of those incompetents who failed to implement the plan. But maybe, to quote former Intel CEO Andy Grove, “That is not the right question.” Maybe the right question, therefore, is why did people believe we were prepared when we were not? And how can we do a better job of preparing for crises, or even preventing them?

[What If? How to Create a Great Strategy](#), Competia Magazine, December 2002

What if you could answer your what-if questions before you make a key strategy decision? What if you could realistically and rigorously test your options before you committed real money? What if you could raise the odds that you’d make wise decisions and create a great strategy? As this article describes and illustrates, that’s what strategy simulation is for. So: what if you investigated strategy simulation?

[What We Know That Ain’t So](#), Crisis Times, February 2006. Reprinted in CSO-online.com, NAMIC online, and in NAMIC’s In magazine. NAMIC is the National Association of Mutual Insurance Companies.

This is the true story of how a multinational company successfully avoided a business crisis. The moral of the story applies as well to government as it does to industry.

An event that threatens a business’s survival is a crisis. Not every crisis arrives with a neon light announcing “Crisis! Crisis!” Sometimes, like a cancer, it grows slowly. Did Sears pay attention when Sam Walton opened his first store? Did General Motors, Ford, and Chrysler worry when Japanese econoboxes came to America in the 1970s? Based on results, apparently not. Today Wal-Mart is seven times the size of Sears, and GM, Ford, and Chrysler are desperately fighting for their lives.

[With All This Intelligence, Why Don’t We Have Better Strategies?](#), The Journal of Business Strategy, January-February 2005

With all our skills, data, enthusiasm, opportunities, knowledge, motivation, and power, why do we produce strategies that fail? This article discusses the inherent shortcomings in conventional models and human thinking that make it easy for even the best strategists to fall into bad strategy decisions. It concludes with practical advice to help strategists improve creative thinking and decision-making.

[You’ve Got The Data. Now What?](#) A chapter in *Starting a CI Function*, Ken Sawka and Bonnie Hohhof (editors), The CI Foundation, 2008

Most strategy challenges cannot be solved – emphasis on solved, not merely “responded to” – with data and information alone. Instead, they must be solved by

The ACS Business War-Gaming Bibliography

combining intelligence (knowledge) with intelligence (human decision making). This book chapter discusses hidden traps that bedevil strategy decision-making: conventional tools, overconfidence, innumeracy, monsters, and obviousness.

Essays directly related to business war-gaming

[Honey, We Shrunk The Industry Again: Another War Game About Automobiles.](#) October 2009.

We've run it again: a business war game on the automobile industry. It was to demonstrate war-gaming, not to solve the industry's problems. That said, it revealed a lot about what goes right and what goes wrong when people develop competitive strategies.

See also Honey, We Shrunk The Industry: An Automotive War Game in the Articles section, above.

[House, MBA: What Strategists Can Learn From TV's Nastiest Doctor.](#) October 2009.

What can we learn about business diagnosis from TV's nastiest doctor? Quite a bit. We take a look at Safeway and Supervalu pricing on our rounds.

[Taking the Stress Test: Not Only for Banks.](#) May 2009.

Don't we all wish that the stress tests of banks had been done, say, a year and a half ago? The case for running our own stress tests on our businesses.

[The Model Whisperer: The Strategist's Guide to Creating Value with Models.](#) May 2010.

In qualitative business war games we experiment with ideas and paradigms embedded in our mental models. In quantitative business war games we use computer-based models to stress-test specific strategy options. In strategy decision tests we run massive what-if simulations to gauge the risks and rewards of going down different paths.

The hypothetical examples I'll present are actually not hypothetical. Each is an amalgam of multiple war games I've conducted in multiple industries, with identifying marks removed to protect confidentiality.

[The War \(Game\) Metaphor: Or, My Discomfort With What I Do.](#) November 2010.

This is something I've learned from all those war games: Watch out for the war metaphor in your strategic thinking, and challenge it if you see it. The challenge doesn't cost you anything. You can always go back to the war metaphor if you really think it works.

[Why Do War Games Work? Or, Better Questions, Better Answers.](#) March 2011.

Business war games, in my experience, provide outstanding insights that greatly impact bottom lines. But why? What is it about business war games that produces insights that evidently elude other approaches?

Essays indirectly related to business war-gaming

[Gross Galactic Product: Growth Rates, Stock Prices, and Thinking Differently In a Crisis.](#) October 2008.

How big would Google be if its recent growth weren't "as bad as some had feared"? We know growth doesn't go on forever, but our quest for bigger and better every year leads to trouble. How can executives know when they cross the line from building up to propping up to puffing up?

[I Didn't Know You Could Do That: Disaster In Simulations Leads to Progress In Real Life.](#) August 2008.

The best insights often come from surprises, and the best surprises often come from simulations. Here we'll talk about surprises in both business and crisis simulations, and actionable insights.

[Millions of Pricing Simulations.](#) February 2009.

Have you ever seen 36,270 what-if's on your strategy ideas? Have you ever seen your 36,270 what-if's compared in a universe of 5,658,120 simulations? That's what ACS did for over 150 strategists competing in a pricing tournament.

[Resisting Change: Overcoming Impediments to Creativity.](#) July 2008.

As human beings we are all familiar with the dig-in-our-heels sensation of resisting change. How do we know in which changes we ought to invest our time and treasure?

[To Bail or to Bail Out: The Futures of the Detroit Three.](#) November 2008.

What to "do about" the Detroit Three is, deservedly, front-page news. I recommend that Congress and the industry commission business war games on behalf of the industry, the workers, the government, and we the people. Now is the time to look forward.

[True-Due Diligence: Or, Avoiding Failure When Due Diligence Says You'll Succeed.](#) November 2010.

Due diligence may not protect you from frenzies of advocacy. At its worst, it's like signing an ill-advised legal document because the spell-check said it was okay. Think it doesn't happen? Remember that no one invests in a strategy or business

The ACS Business War-Gaming Bibliography

expecting it to fail, yet somehow smart people invest in strategies and businesses that fail.

[The How-Likely Case: When The Most-Likely Scenario Isn't Likely At All](#). May 2010.

Strategists commonly analyze best-case, worst-case, and most-likely scenarios before making a significant strategy decision. That covers about 0.000007618% of the possibilities. I'm not making up that number.

[When I Was Wrong](#). November 2008.

This essay starts with a shocking pricing tournament and proceeds to the challenges faced by President-elect Obama and the titans of industry. All of us are human and so all of us will be wrong. What's important is when we make our mistakes.

About the author

Mark Chussil is Founder and CEO of Advanced Competitive Strategies, Inc. A pioneer in business war-gaming and strategy simulation, his designs have won a patent and a best-in-class industry award; another patent is pending. He and his colleagues have designed strategy simulations and implemented business war games for dozens of companies, in many industries, around the world.

A highly rated and entertaining speaker, Mark speaks about strategic thinking at conferences and in corporate workshops. He has written three books, chapters for five others, and numerous articles, and he has been quoted in *Fast Company*, *The Wall Street Journal*, and other publications.

Prior to founding ACS, Mark was Director, Business Strategy Research at The Strategic Planning Institute (The PIMS Program) and Manager, Strategy Development at Sequent Computer Systems. He earned his B.A. from Yale and his M.B.A. from Harvard.

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