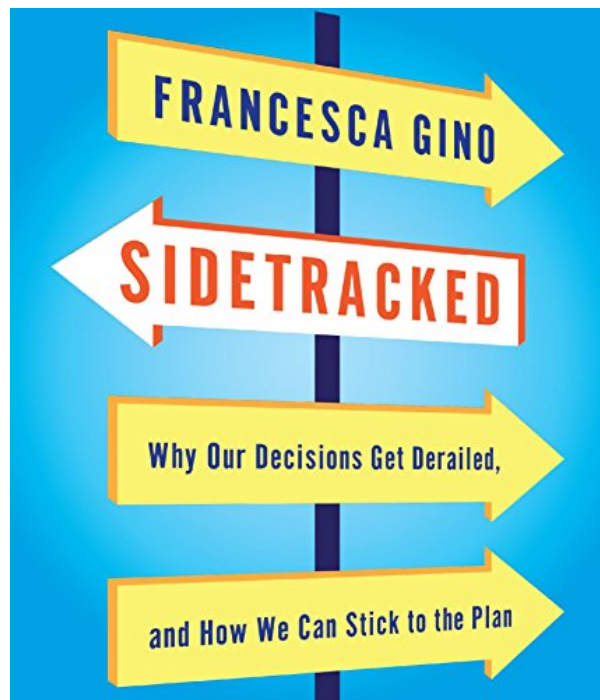
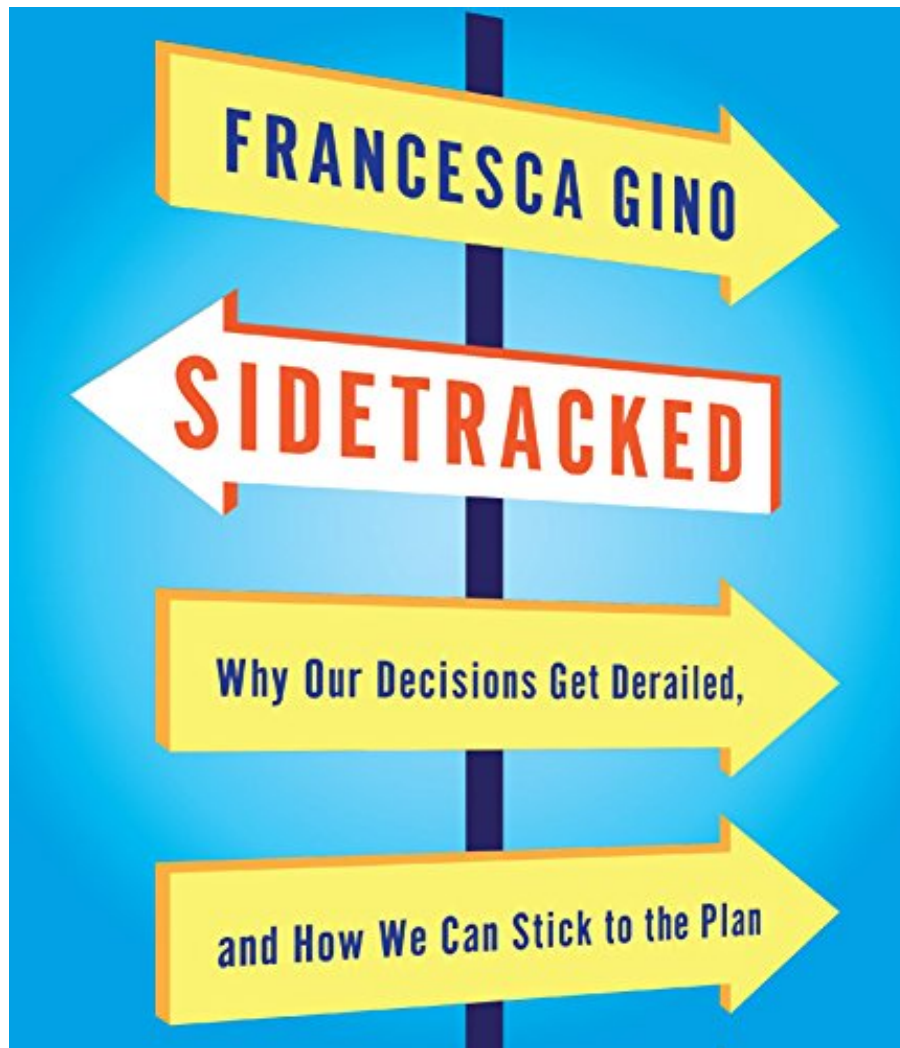


SIDETRACKED: WHY OUR DECISIONS GET DERAILED, AND HOW WE CAN STICK TO THE PLAN BY FRANCESCA GINO



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PDF

Psychologist and Harvard Business School professor Francesca Gino has long studied the factors at play when judgment and decision-making collide with the results of our choices in real life. In *Sidetracked*, she explores inconsistent decisions played out in a wide range of circumstances from our roles as consumers and employees (what we buy, how we manage others) to the broader human choices that we make (who we date, how we cultivate friendships). Gino's research reveals when a mismatch is most likely to occur between what we want to do and what we actually end up doing. What factors are likely to sway our decisions in directions we did not initially consider? And what can we do to correct for these subtle influences? The answers in *Sidetracked* to these and similar questions help us better understand the nuances of our decisions and avoid the unconscious obstacles to greater efficiency, satisfaction, and ultimate success.

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Most helpful customer reviews

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful.

students were shown one of two movies – a beautiful National Geographic movie and Bodyguard

By Ian Mann

In the movie, Defending Your Life (1991), the central character, Daniel Miller, asks his wife to role-play an upcoming salary negotiation with his boss. Daniel wants to be paid \$65,000, and as his wife offers less, Daniel rehearses his position – “I cannot take the job for under \$65,000!”

In the next scene, the negotiation, his boss offers of \$49,000. Before his boss can finish his sentence, Daniel replies: “I’ll take it!”

How is it that we get side-tracked from what we want to do, from what we believe, and even from values we hold?

Psychologist Francesca Gina demonstrates through numerous experiments how subtle influences affect one’s decisions and behaviour. The context triggered Daniel’s anxiety and he accepts what he clearly he does not want.

As Gina demonstrates, there is a plethora of factors that influence one’s behaviour and decisions. If getting advice could improve the outcome of a decision, one will surely ask for the advice, and consider it. Not

necessarily. I will depend of what occurred before one had to make the decision.

In an experiment, students were shown one of two movies – a beautiful National Geographic movie and Bodyguard, an emotionally disturbing movie about a bullied schoolboy. The students were then given a challenging task to perform for which they would be paid only for success. 74% of those who saw the Bodyguard rejected the offer of help against only 32% of those who saw the National Geographic movie.

Unconnected, prior emotions influence how we behave in subsequent unrelated situations. Did a driver cut you off on the road to work? Is that why you rejected a staff member's request to attend a conference?

Ducati, the Italian motorcycle manufacturer is constantly trying to improve their bikes' performance. They achieve this by having the bikes fitted with sophisticated telemetry and raced around testing tracts. The most expensive sensor on the bike is the rider who also feeds in his riding experience to the information mix. It was noticed that the rider's input added no improvement at all to the bike's functioning in too many cases. The rider's input improved performance only when the researchers factored in the rider's mood.

The evidence is clear: Our emotions impact our behaviour, thinking and decision even when the two are entirely unrelated. The value of this insight in practice is simply that knowledge creates awareness and so taking one's emotional temperature before making critical decisions is strongly advised.

Many outstanding businesses were started by friends, Apple, Microsoft, Yahoo, Google, and this is to be expected. Social bonds are an immense asset when they are positive because they enhance one's effectiveness. Working with conscientious people will heighten your conscientiousness and with enthusiastic people will heighten your enthusiasm.

How strong do bonds have to be to influence behaviour significantly?

Gino tested this in a controlled environment where students were asked to complete as much of a 12 part calculation task as they could in 5 minutes. The whole task could not be completed in that time. On completion they were asked to check their own answers and to take their own pay from an envelope of cash on their desks. They were then to place their answer sheet in the recycle bin. As far as they knew no one would be able to tell if they had cheated.

Based on previous tests the researchers had a fair idea of what percentage of people would cheat in these circumstances by exaggerating the number of answers they had completed correctly.

In one experiment an actor was hired to stand up after a few minutes and ask the researcher what he should do as he had finished. He was informed to count his correct answers and take the appropriate amount from his envelope. He did this then stood up and asked what he should do with the empty envelope, implying that he had finished in an impossible timeframe and had all correct. Clearly, he was cheating. He was told to put both in the recycle bin and leave.

Everyone in the room was aware of this event and as clearly aware he that was cheating and would not be caught. The effect of this incident on the other students' honesty varied.

In the experiments where the actor wore a neutral coloured t-shirt, cheating amongst the other students increased by only 4%. When actor wore the university's t-shirt cheating increased by 24%.

We are influenced by subtle cues from others. Is he someone I associate with? Is he one of us? If so, as evidenced by the t-shirt, we are influenced by his behaviour. If he can cheat, and he is one of us, then maybe I can, too.

Social influences need to be taken seriously; they too can sidetrack even the usually honest without one even being aware.

The book is a fascinating collection of insights into behavioural psychology that covers a wide array of issues all of which are part of our everyday experience. You will be fascinated and enriched by reading this book.

Readability Light --+-- Serious

Insights High -+--- Low

Practical High -+--- Low

Ian Mann of Gateways consults internationally on leadership and strategy

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful.

WHY or decisions get sidetracked.

By Luis Sabogal

The book Sidetracked is subtitled: Why our Decisions Get Derailed and How We Can Stick to the Plan however I believe that it doesn't really get into "how" we can stick to the plan but instead just gives tips on things to think about when you're making decisions. It is largely left to the reader how to implement the results of the many studies found in the book. The "why" is really where I found the book shines. The book begins with inner forces that cause us to make short sighted decisions. It shows us that sunk costs can lead us to put unnecessary weight on one choice over another or that the belief that we are wearing off-brand sunglasses can lead us to feel inauthentic and often be dishonest when we think no one is looking. The main point of this section is to show us why we sometimes relax our own standards due to external forces, especially ones that should have no bearing on our decisions.

The section I really enjoyed and learned a lot from was the second section that was about forces from our relationships. I learned from the drawing an E on your forehead experiment that I focus more on myself than I do on others. I also really enjoyed learning about the curse of knowledge. I now understand that there is a cognitive bias that happens where people have so much knowledge on a subject they can't understand how people can struggle with the information because they are experts at it. Additionally, I found it very eye opening how there is an "us" vs "them" mentality that not only changes your perception of things but actually changes your behavior. Gino really does a great job at going in depth of explaining how groups of people can have a bias towards other people and their relationships. I feel like she gave us so many examples that it is hard to deny that we have huge biases for certain social situations.

The final portion of the book focuses on forces from the outside. In this section, it outlines how external information can affect how we analyze data as well as how it affects the decisions that we make. One of the more interesting things discussed was considering the sources of information. An example used was a retail store that changed their guidelines on how employees would achieve their sales bonuses. Once the new policy was enacted productivity increased dramatically. However, upon further inspection it was found out that the week before the deadlines employees would purchase products and then return them after bonuses were paid out. This shows that while initial information might be good, further research needs to be done to verify information is correct. Another area these chapters looked at was the effect of "darkness" and human honesty. It showed examples of how individuals who felt that their actions were unknown would be more likely to commit unethical decisions. These examples were interesting because while people generally think of themselves as good, they can easily convince themselves their otherwise immoral actions were acceptable under different circumstances. These external forces discussed in the book showed that the actions we take can easily be influenced by outside sources.

Overall, I feel like this book makes you aware of the distractions in your life in an easy and understandable way. It is split up into three parts that all apply to my life. I would recommend this book to anyone who is looking to find out what is holding them back from being their best selves.

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful.

AMAZING Book! (disclosure, I'm the author's husband so this review may be slightly biased)

By Gregory Burd

Yes, the stories are all true. I have my fake watch in the nightstand drawer, it's a good fake but I tend not to wear it much as I don't want to unknowingly shift my decision making (which apparently is out of my control, who knew?).

I watched as my wife worked diligently to bring her research together into this cohesive and fun to read book. I was there during many of the experiments at CMU, UNC and elsewhere helping as much as I could fascinated as the results were tabulated and in utter awe as my wife worked with a smile on her face to write

up and publish the results. This is her passion and she is amazing.

To those who wrote reviews with less than 3 stars, what book did you read?! Because it couldn't have been this one. Honestly, I feel like you must have been skip-reading or something.

To those who wrote reviews saying things like "this book is mostly the same as OTHER PERSON's NAME HERE, don't bother" you must be joking or a shill for the OTHER PERSON's work because although there are times where there is overlap (which is normal when two people work together on projects and then write about them in different books, right?) this book stands on its own.

Again, I'm biased but in my humble opinion this book is a must read and will eventually find itself on the all-time best sellers lists globally.

See all 63 customer reviews...

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