WINNING THE RIGHT GAME

HOW TO DISRUPT, DEFEND, AND DELIVER IN A CHANGING WORLD

RON ADNER

"One of our most important strategic thinkers for the twenty-first century."
—JIM COLLINS

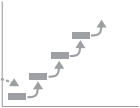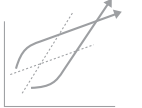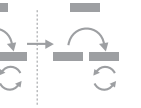| Ch 1 Winning the Wrong Game	Ch 2 Ecosystem Defense	Ch 3 Ecosystem Offense	Ch 4 Timing Ecosystem Disruption	Ch 5 The Ego-System Trap	Ch 6 Mindsets Matter	Ch 7 Strategic Clarity is Collective
Main Cases						
Kodak	Wayfair vs Amazon TomTom, Garmin vs Google Spotify vs Apple	Amazon Alexa Oprah Winfrey ASSA ABLOY	Tesla and Autonomous Vehicle Wolters Kluer 23andMe Zebra Technologies	Apple and Mobile Payments Electronic Books GE Predix Electronic Health Records Microsoft vs IBM	Microsoft Azure	
Tools						
Value Architecture Value Inversion	The 3 Principles of Ecosystem Defense	MVE Staged Expansion Ecosystem Carryover	Trajectory Plot Timing Framework	Leadership Litmus Test Hierarchy of Winners	The Ecosystem Cycle	

Discussion questions for a single session on Winning the Right Game as a whole:

(A) Can you articulate our value architecture clearly enough to identify the sources of ecosystem disruption? (Ch 1)

(B) To what extent is your organization focused on responding to competition vs. driving competition vs. changing the basis of competition? (Ch 2 and 3)

(C) What does the competition between ecosystems tell you about timing your commitments? (Ch 4)

(D) How are we strategizing leadership, followership, and leadership mindset in in our ecosystem? (Ch 5 and 6)

(E) How can we use the language of *Winning the Right Game* to improve how we communicate our strategy?

How can you identify the shifts that will disrupt your ecosystem, turn partners into rivals, and undermine your ability to win?

Ch. 1 Winning the Wrong Game Means Losing

Main Cases	Tools
Kodak	Value Architecture
	Value Inversion

① Looking forward five years, what is the balance between inside vs outside the box threats and opportunities in your environment?

② What are the elements of your value architecture? How is each one being impacted by the changes in your environment? What does this reveal about the path of ecosystem disruption?

③ Consider your partners. Where do they lie on the three complementor trajectories (Fig 1.9)? Where are you exposed to the threat of value inversion? Where do you have an opportunity to drive it?

Figure 1.9: The three possible relationships between the effectiveness of complementors and a focal firm's own outcomes (examples are for a focal firm focused on profiting from digital printing consumables). Page 27
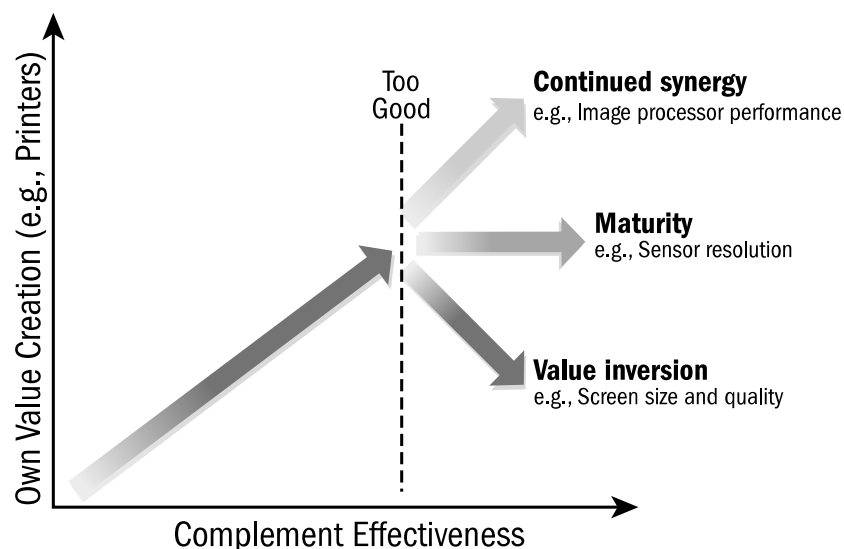
How can you stand your ground against ecosystem giants, and even thrive in the aftermath?

## Ch. 2 Ecosystem Defense Is Collective

Main Cases
Wayfair vs. Amazon
TomTom, Garmin vs. Google
Spotify vs. Apple

Tools
The 3 Principles of Ecosystem Defense

1. Consider the two or three biggest threats you are facing. What part of your value architecture are most under pressure?

2. What does this mean for the need — or opportunity — to modify your elements and your value architecture? Where should you accept commoditization? What merits defending, enhancing, or redefining with new elements?

3. What must change in your approach to partners as you modify your architecture in this way?

Figure 2.3: Wayfair's enhanced value architecture, with addition of the Deliberation element and new links (marked in bold). Page 46
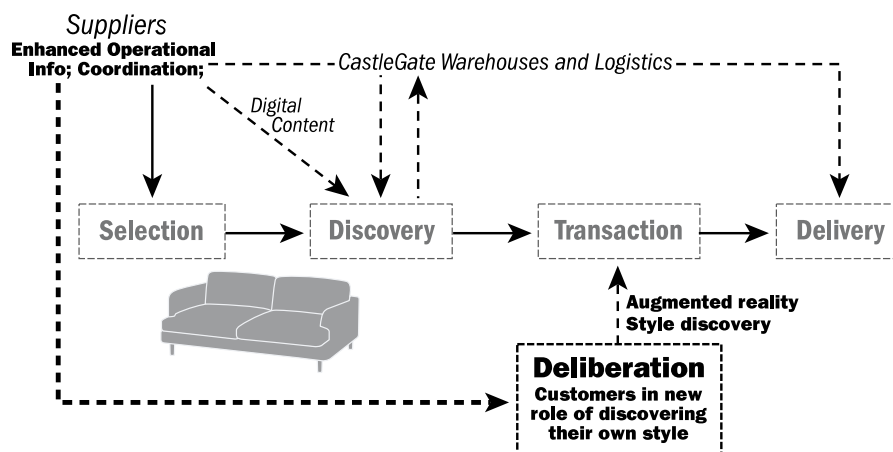
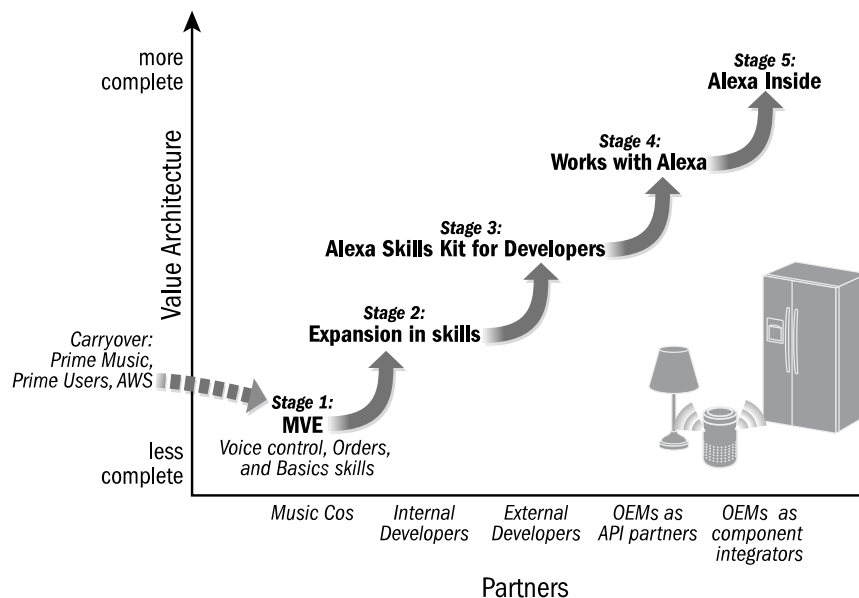# How can you drive ecosystem disruption and redefine the basis of competition?

Ch. 3 Ecosystem Offense: From Adding Competition to Changing Competition

Main Cases
Amazon Alexa
Oprah Winfrey
ASSA ABLOY

Tools
MVE
Staged Expansion
Ecosystem Carryover

1. To what extent are you focused on responding to competition vs. driving competition vs. changing the basis of competition? Is this the right balance?

2. Consider you growth initiative. What is your plan for aligning your partners as you construct your ecosystem (MVE, Staged Expansion)?

3. How are you approaching ecosystem carryover? How will you align internal partners to allow for the necessary commitment?

Figure 3.1: Ecosystem construction chart for Amazon Alexa. Page 80

How can you predict the timing of ecosystem disruption— when the window of opportunity will open, and when it will close?

Ch. 4   Timing Ecosystem Disruption: Too Early Can Be Worse Than Too Late
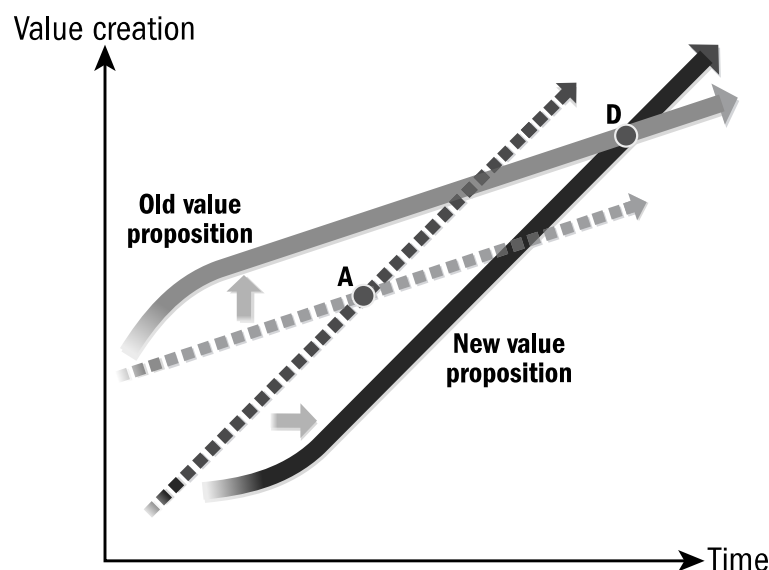
Main Cases
Tesla and Autonomous Vehicles
Wolters Kluer
23andMe
Zebra Technologies

Tools
Trajectory Plot
Timing Framework

① How are you incorporating the impact of extension opportunities and emergence challenges into your timing expectations? What are the top two or three assumptions you are making? What is your strategy for validating them?

② What are the indicators that you want to track for planning the transitions across the quadrants in Table 4.1. Where in your organization is there greatest potential for shaping this progress?

③ How are you linking your logic for Seize, Wait, Shape or Shift' to a perspective on time compression diseconomies and the half-life of relevance? What are the sources of divergence within your team, and how will you sort through them?

Figure 4.4: Emergence challenges holding back the new value proposition interact with extension opportunities for the old value proposition to dramatically delay the time of disruption and the performance level required for disruption from point A to point D. Page 117

How can you safeguard your role in an ecosystem and avoid the *ego*-system trap?

Ch. 5   The *Ego*-System Trap

Main Cases
Apple and Mobile Payments
Electronic Books
GE Predix
Electronic Health Records
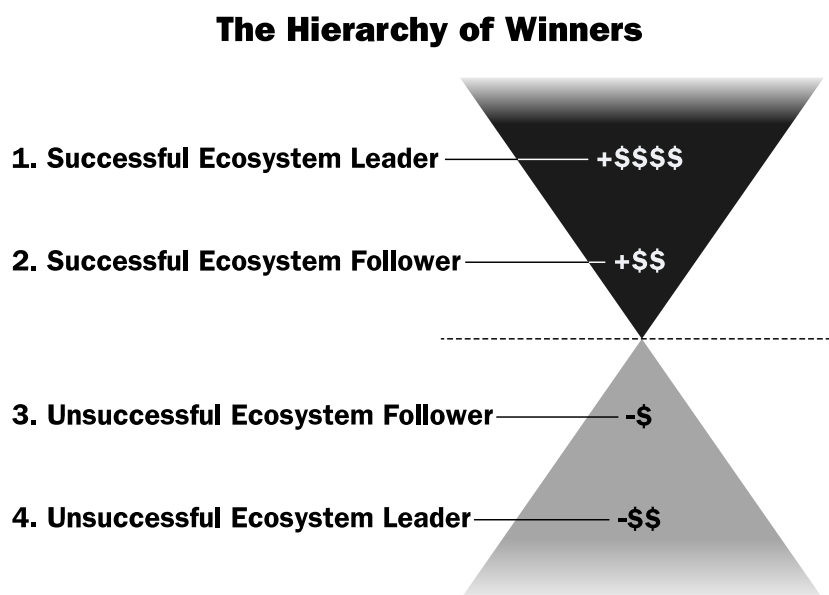Microsoft vs. IBM

Tools
Leadership Litmus Test
Hierarchy of Winners

(1) Articulate the boundary of your current ecosystem. Where is there greatest disagreement on boundaries within your team? What does this mean for your organizational susceptibility to the ego-system trap?

(2) Consider your ecosystem initiative, and your responses to the litmus test questions. Who are your most supportive partners and followers? What does this mean for your MVE?

(3) Looking more broadly, how are you strategizing your role? What is your best argument for a leadership role? What is your best argument for smart followership? What is your process for weighing the two options?

Figure 5.2: The hierarchy of ecosystem winners and losers does not divide into leaders and followers. Page 150

The Hierarchy of Winners

1. Successful Ecosystem Leader ——————— +$$$$

2. Successful Ecosystem Follower ——————— +$$

3. Unsuccessful Ecosystem Follower ——————— -$

4. Unsuccessful Ecosystem Leader ——————— -$$

Source: Ron Adner. 2021. *Winning the Right Game: How to Disrupt, Defend, and Deliver in a Changing World.* MIT Press. Boston.

How must the way you develop and select leaders change in a world of ecosystems?

Ch. 6   Mindsets Matter: Establishing Leadership Is Different from Exercising Leadership

Main Cases
Microsoft Azure

Tools
Ecosystem Cycle

① Where in the ecosystem cycle are your most important opportunities? What steps are you taking to developing and matching leaders to contexts?

② How are you approaching the tradeoffs between execution and alignment required for success at your level in the organization? One level above? One level below? What is your process for aligning these levels?

③ What shifts are required in the internal ecosystem to support your initiative? How can you reduce the risk of successful but stranded pilots?

Figure 6.1: The ecosystem cycle of emergence and maturity and the leadership challenges associated with each phase of the cycle
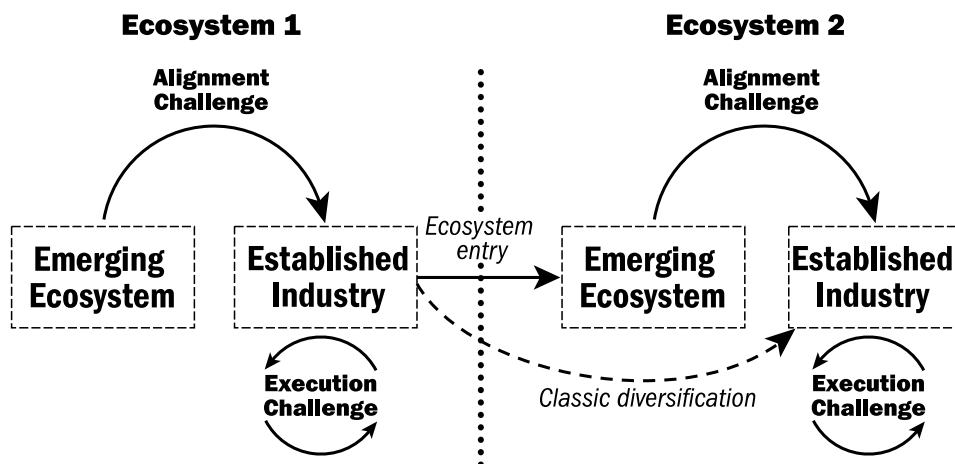
Why building and implementing new ecosystem strategies depends on embracing a new strategic language.

Ch. 7   Strategic Clarity Is Collective

① What parts of your strategy do you think are least understood within your organization? How does this vary within the hierarchy (up, down, across)? Why do you think this is?

② What parts of your strategy are most/least supported by your approach to budgeting? If you could change two things, what would they be?

③ How can you deploy the language and concepts presented in *Winning the Right Game* to increase strategic clarity AND strategic comprehension within your organization?