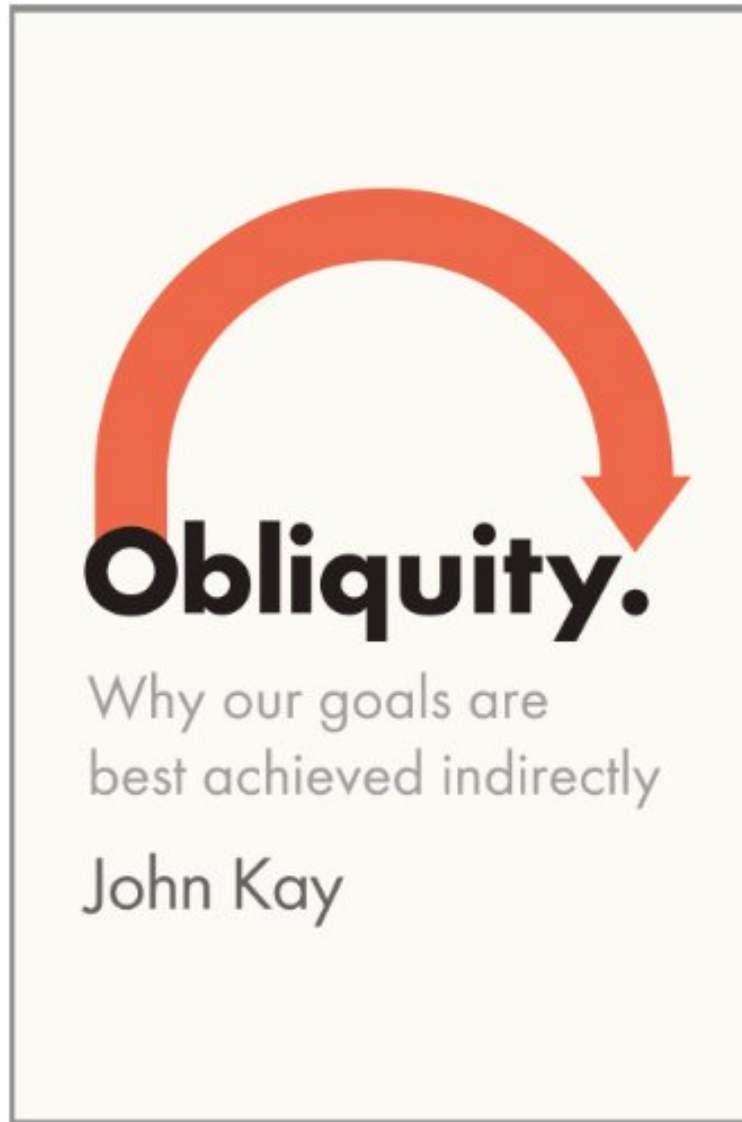


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## Obliquity: Why Our Goals Are Best Achieved Indirectly

*John Kay*

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**John Kay : Obliquity: Why Our Goals Are Best Achieved Indirectly** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Obliquity: Why Our Goals Are Best Achieved Indirectly:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Started slow for me, but ended well.By jedsbudThe book started out slow for me and it took a while for me to understand where the book was going. But the last half seems, at least to me, to wrap it up nicely.The basic premise that I got out of the book is that there are many ways to get a solution to the problems we face and that perhaps the best solution is not the direct path. I agree with the author that the world is full of "hedgehogs" that determine a path for success slowly and straightforward, "objectives are one-dimensional and transparent and it is possible to determine when and whether goals have been achieved." (Kay

195) I tend to fall in the 'hedgehog's' Mr. Kay describes. The question is do I want to be a 'fox' that goes about the same problems darting in and out, learning from mistakes but eventually capturing its prey or escaping danger. It does give me something to think about with my goals in life. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Brilliant! By IN8 If you've experienced the bagging feeling often in your life, that a decision or course of action should be right but doesn't feel right, or just doesn't turn out as you expect, *Obliquity* could be a way to understand big only what happened but why it will happen again and again. This approach fits with other related developments in thinking and deciding e.g. Rita McGrath's work on transient competitive advantage and discovery based learning. It's also an easy quick read to leave you with lots to ponder. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Fantastic! By Kyle Eschenroeder John Kay lays out a convincing argument against aiming too directly at what we want to accomplish. Thinking about happiness too much makes us unhappy. Trying to define our purpose makes us feel purposelessness. The best things in life are found in a round 'a'bout way. This book will change the way you approach your life in a fundamental way... and alleviate some of the pain that has been brought by an army of ignorant self-help authors.

A leading economist charts the indirect road to happiness and wealth. Using dozens of practical examples from the worlds of business, politics, science, sports, literature, even parenting, esteemed economist John Kay proves a notion that feels at once paradoxical and deeply commonsensical: The best way to achieve any complex or broadly defined goal—from happiness to wealth to profit to preventing forest fires—is the indirect way. As Kay points out, we rarely know enough about the intricacies of important problems to tackle them head-on. And our unpredictable interactions with other people and the world at large mean that the path to our goals—and sometimes the goals themselves—will inevitably change. We can learn about our objectives and how to achieve them only through a gradual process of risk taking and discovery—what Kay calls *obliquity*. Kay traces this pathway to satisfaction as it manifests itself in nearly every aspect of life. The wealthiest people—from Andrew Carnegie to Bill Gates—achieved their riches through a passion for their work, not because they set materialistic goals. Research has shown that companies whose goal (as declared in mission statements) is excellent products or service are more profitable than companies whose stated goal is increasing profits. In the personal realm, a large body of evidence shows that parenthood is on a daily basis far more frustrating than happy-making. Yet parents are statistically happier than nonparents. Though their short-term pleasure is often thwarted by the demands of childrearing, the subtle-oblique-rewards of parenthood ultimately make them happier. Once he establishes the ubiquity of *obliquity*, Kay offers a wealth of practical guidance for avoiding the traps laid by the direct approach to complex problems. Directness blinds us to new information that contradicts our presumptions, fools us into confusing logic with truth, cuts us off from our intuition (which is the subconscious expression of our experience), shunts us away from alternative solutions that may be better than the one we're set on, and more. Kay also shows us how to acknowledge our limitations, redefine our goals to fit our skills, open our minds to new data and solutions, and otherwise live life with *obliquity*. This bracing manifesto will convince readers—or confirm their conviction—that the best route to satisfaction and success does not run through the bottom line.

This is an elegant, simple book and, rarely for a business book, is written by a man who actually understands the academics and philosophers he quotes. The best nine quid you'll spend this year -- Jeremy Hazlehurst \* City AM \* [A] smart, witty book -- William Leith \* Evening Standard \* John Kay is an admirable debunker of myths and false beliefs - he can see substantial things others don't. Read this book. -- Nassim N Taleb \* The Black Swan \* Economics with style as well as substance -- Stephen Bayley, architecture and design correspondent \* Observer \* *Obliquity* is a characteristic John Kay production. It is a pleasure to read -- Howard Davies \* Financial Times \* How rare is it for an academic economist to write with such clarity, intelligence and courage. And, in these troubled, confusing times, how desperately we need other dismal scientists to follow John Kay's shining example. -- Liam Halligan \* Spectator Business \* About the Author John Kay is a visiting professor at the London School of Economics and a fellow of St. John's College, Oxford University. As the director, he established the Institute for Fiscal Studies as one of Britain's most respected think tanks.