

Ignore the obvious and embrace the innovative

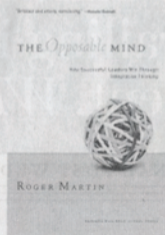
The book: *The Opposable Mind: How Successful Leaders Win Through Integrative Thinking*, Harvard Business School Press, 2007; \$29.95; 191pp.

The author: Roger Martin

Humans have a hand up, so to speak, over other animals because we have opposable thumbs that enable us to hold tools, such as pens, and innovate in creative ways that elude lesser life forms. Roger Martin, dean of the University of Toronto's Rotman School of Management, alludes

to the creative friction generated by rubbing forefinger and thumb together as he looks at the thinking processes of great business visionaries, including several Canadians. What makes these leaders great, he says, is their ability to look at problems where the immediately obvious solutions are diametrically op-

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posed and come up with a creative alternative that combines these opposites in a way that forges an unprecedented new path. These leaders are “integrative thinkers” who continually look for ways to improve how things are done. As examples, Martin includes contrary — and ultimately wildly successful —

actions taken by Procter & Gamble's A.G. Lafley; dancer/choreographer Martha Graham; and Canadian entrepreneur Bob Young, co-founder of software company Red Hat Inc., to show how creative breakthroughs happen when brilliant people ignore the obvious and use creative friction to spark business models. Martin suggests anyone can learn to become an integrated thinker. Maybe so. But it would help if you were brilliantly original to begin with. *Laura Ramsay, Financial Post*