

Systems for the Strategic Self

Why are you still building?

The question tends to arrive where startup culture has the least to say: after failure, after success, or halfway through years of competent work whose original purpose has quietly gone thin. Another goal can restore motion. It cannot explain why the motion matters.

The Meaning Operator translates existentialist philosophy into an operating discipline for founders. Its seven-part MEANING framework treats meaning not as one hidden answer to discover, but as an architecture to build, inspect, and maintain across Mission, Engagement, Anchors, Narrative, Intrinsic worth, Now, and Growth.

You will learn to:

- Distinguish motivation, which points action at a goal, from meaning, which explains why the goal matters.
- Recognize the different structures of the failure rupture, the success rupture, and the long middle.
- Diagnose which domain has gone quiet before treating the entire architecture as lost.
- Choose a mission you can endorse instead of inheriting one from status, investors, or an earlier version of yourself.
- Rebuild engagement by returning to work that absorbs rather than merely administers.
- Protect relationships, practices, and commitments that hold value when the company does not.
- Revise the story of the founder arc without turning every loss into a lesson or every pivot into destiny.
- Test whether the work has worth now, with the hoped-for outcome set aside.
- Run the seven-domain audit whenever the question returns.

The result is a practical set of instruments: a mission test, engagement audit, anchor map, narrative reconstruction, intrinsic-worth test, present-tense practice, growth record, and recurring MEANING review.

This is not a motivational book, a promise that every venture is worth continuing, or a substitute for clinical care. It will not tell you what your life means. It is for founders and operators who want a rigorous way to decide what their work asks of them, what it costs, and whether they can still call it worth doing.

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