

The Game of Thrones Has Failed: Why JPMorgan's \$3.9 Trillion Succession Reveals Corporate America's Broken System

What if the greatest CEO transitions in history weren't accidents of intuition, but products of scientific precision we've never bothered to decode?

Picture this: It's Monday morning at JPMorgan Chase, and America's financial titans are gathered for their annual investor day. Beneath the polished presentations and strategic updates, a far more primal drama unfolds — the psychological theatre of succession, where careers built over decades hang in the balance of a few pivotal moments.

As Jamie Dimon prepares to step down from commanding the nation's largest bank, three contenders emerge from the shadows: **Marianne Lake**, the English-born accountant turned consumer banking empress; **Doug Petno**, the hard-nosed commercial banker navigating treacherous political waters; and **Troy Rohrbaugh**, the markets visionary whose technological foresight may define banking's future. Each carries a distinct psychological blueprint. Each represents a different vision of power.

But here's the question that should terrify every board of directors: What if none of them should even be in contention?

The \$1.8 Billion Problem

The numbers are staggering and troubling: According to SHRM's latest research, nearly 20% of CEO successions are "forced" rather than planned. Spencer Stuart found that 45% of boards report having an adequate *emergency* succession plan in place, but only 26% have a formal succession plan with options across timelines. When transitions fail — and research for two decades suggests 40-60% do — the average cost can reach \$1.8 billion in shareholder value destruction. Per company. Per failure. Poof!

We're not just talking about money. We're talking about the systematic failure of how corporate America identifies, develops, and elevates its leaders. The current model — what I call the "Game of Thrones" approach — compresses decades of leadership development into a few years of high-stakes political maneuvering.

It's medieval. It's wasteful. And it's about to become obsolete.

The Berkshire Model: What Warren Buffett Knew but Never Codified

Twenty-five years ago, Warren Buffett began cultivating Greg Abel not through dramatic auditions or boardroom politics, but through methodical, longitudinal development. Abel's ascension wasn't a sprint — it was a marathon mapped across decades of carefully orchestrated experiences. Buffett is the maestro.

But here's what keeps me awake at night: Buffett's genius was intuitive, uncoded, irreplicable. When he's gone, so is the methodology. Charlie's gone. Greg has the opportunity to create his own journey for his successor (and his 60+ CEOs) while crystallizing the magic for the empire for generations to come.

What if we could reverse-engineer that wisdom? What if we could transform succession from educated guesswork into strategic science?

Enter Stratevita: The Future of Leadership Cartography

Imagine a system that doesn't wait until leaders are 50 to begin succession planning, but identifies and cultivates successors across 25-year developmental arcs. Imagine psychological cartography that maps not just current competence but future potential, creating leadership development pathways as precise as GPS navigation.

This isn't science fiction. The technology exists. The methodology is proven. What's missing is the will to abandon the addiction to corporate drama in favour of systematic excellence.

The Questions That Will Define the Next Decade

- Would JPMorgan's current contenders even be candidates under a 25-year Stratevita framework?
- How many potential leaders never get the chance because they don't excel at corporate theatre?
- What would organizational culture look like if succession became collaborative development rather than zero-sum competition?
- Can we transform the psychology of leadership from political survival to systematic excellence?

The Revolution Waiting to Happen

McKinsey research shows that companies with robust leadership development programs are 2.4 times more likely to meet financial targets. According to Forbes only 11% of surveyed companies have a strong leadership bench. The fragility is baked-in.

We know what works. The question is: Do we have the courage to implement it?

In my full analysis, I explore how Stratevita could revolutionize not just who becomes CEO, but how culture itself evolves to support systematic leadership excellence. I examine the psychological landscapes that separate successful transitions from disasters. And I reveal why Greg Abel's opportunity to begin identifying his own successor — right now, for 2050 — represents the most important succession decision of the next quarter-century.

The Game of Thrones model has reigned for too long. The architecture of succession is about to undergo its most fundamental transformation since the modern corporation was invented. That \$1.8 billion problem? It's nearly a trillion dollars for the S&P 500. Every year.

The only question is: Will your organization lead this revolution, or become its casualty?

This is the opening movement of a larger symphony. The full analysis reveals the methodology, examines specific case studies, and provides the roadmap for transformation. Because the future of leadership isn't about who wins today's game — it's about who has the wisdom to change the rules entirely. To read the full analysis visit IAXOV.COM and fill out a painless contact form.

Read the full analysis: "The Architecture of Succession: From Game of Thrones to Strategic Cartography."

Richard LeBlanc is Chief Strategy Officer of IAXOV, a business professor, strategic advisor and essayist specializing in organizational psychology and leadership development. Connect with me to explore how insights from IAXOV's Stratevita will transform your organization's approach to succession planning and the financial returns that accrue.