HOMEPAGE · COPY DECK · V4 · REBUILT TO THE FINAL BRAND STRATEGY

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The Wondering Practitioner. Complexity and uncertainty are the territory; the mindset is the brand; the book is one instance of the work. Written to the final Brand Strategy, the June sitemap, and Steve's ratified language.

/ 01 · HERO

If everything is so good, why does it feel so disorienting?

I'm Steve Barth. I write about complexity and uncertainty, and about how people and the systems they run stay oriented when certainty is out of reach.

THE CREED · SET APART

> *Complexity is the territory. Uncertainty is the map. Orientation is the discipline. Constraints are the practice.*

Start a conversation → CONTACT

/ 02 · INTRO / ABOUT

Where this came from

I spent thirty years in financial markets, most recently as a partner at an investment firm, making decisions where being wrong cost real money. I have also raced long-course triathlon for forty years, including the Ironman World Championship in Kona in 2024. Somewhere in the training I noticed that the body I was building and the portfolio I was running sat on the same architecture. I left the industry to figure out what that meant. The figuring turned into essays, a framework, an analytical tool, and now a book.

> *I should say up front that I'm wrong a lot. Finding out where is most of the work.*

Read the longer story → ABOUT

/ 03 · HOW IT WORKS

What's underneath

The habit underneath all of it is wondering what is real beneath the stories, systems, incentives, and outputs we are handed. Almost everything we deal with is a system, and systems have structure and design that can be read. Reading them is the work. It shows up in three connected ways.

The framework	Constrained systems thinking, built across decades in markets and endurance sport, and operationalized into an analytical tool called The Constraint Engine, which pressure-tests a system and scores its coherence.
Applied analyses	The framework as the active lens on something specific: a company, a market, an institution, a policy.
Open inquiries	The questions the framework opens rather than closes: identity, creativity, character, attention, and the human cost of optimization.

PULL LINE · VERBATIM FROM THE STRATEGY

> *The book is one instance of the work. The essays are another. The engine is another. None of them is downstream of the others. Together they are the project.*

What I offer is a lens rather than a prescription, and an open invitation to think alongside me.

Explore the framework → FRAMEWORK

/ 04 · CORE FRAMEWORK

The lens I work with now

Constrained systems thinking holds that every system that endures is carried by three load-bearing constraints, and that the same three keep the person running it oriented.

Pacing	Pacing is the rate at which you move through and within a system. A crash diet and a hypergrowth quarter fail the same way: the speed outran what the system could absorb.
Humility	Humility is a system's grip on reality, its built-in recognition that the future is uncertain. Costco caps its own margins at 15 percent because it knows it cannot please everyone. That discipline is humility wearing a price tag.
Friction	Friction is the structural resistance that keeps a system oriented, the guardrails technology keeps promising to remove. Take away the wrong resistance and the system stops correcting you, right up until it corrects you all at once.

> *The three work as one architecture, and the weakest of them is where the system breaks.*

The framework provides the language. The writing takes it everywhere else.

/ 05 · BOOK

The Discipline of Constraints

AMPLIFY PUBLISHING · JANUARY 2027

The book lays the framework out in full: why systems drift toward fragility, why life inside them feels disorienting even when every metric says things are fine, and how pacing, humility, and friction keep a system coherent and its operator oriented. It is the deepest single expression of this thinking, and still just one instance of it.

ATTRIBUTED LINE · FROM THE INTRODUCTION

> *"I am not writing this as an academic. I am a practitioner. I see what I see precisely because I failed to follow the principles I now describe."*

I wrote it for anyone navigating complexity and uncertainty, which, as far as I can tell, is everyone: the curious reader, the operator, the investor, the builder.

Preorder the book | More about the book

/ 06 · SPEAKING

Built for the Tuesday after

I build talks for the Tuesday after, when the applause has faded and the problem is still on your desk. Audiences leave with a working lens they can use that week on a reorg, a portfolio, a product decision, a policy question. I speak with leadership teams, companies, conferences, and institutions, including the rooms where technology and policy get decided.

Deciding with incomplete information	Frameworks that hold up without needing a prediction.
Coherence under pressure	Knowing which constraints hold a team together before something tests them.
The entropic tax	The bill every over-optimized system eventually pays, and how to stop accruing it.

See speaking topics → SPEAKING

/ 07 · CONTACT / NEWSLETTER

Say what you're working on

If something on this page connected with a problem you are working on, I would genuinely like to hear about it. Tell me what you are building and where the system is straining, and we will go from there.

Get in touch

The newsletter runs whatever I am wondering about through the structural lens: markets, AI, institutions, character, the occasional Tuesday problem. Twice a month and no more often than that.

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TAGLINE

A common language for a common problem.

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/ ALTERNATE HERO HEADLINES · FOR REDLINE

OPT A	Everything is optimized. So why does the ground feel like it's moving?
OPT B	I write about complexity, uncertainty, and how systems and the people inside them stay oriented.
OPT C	The disorientation you feel is real, and it has a structure that can be read.