

BOOK CHAPTER

From the Ivy Tower to the C-suite: Garbage Can Processes and Corporate Strategic Decision Making

By [Daniel A. Levinthal](#)

[+ Author and Other Information](#)

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The garbage can model of organizational decision making was initially framed as being particularly applicable to universities and other "illegitimate" organizations that were likely subject to unclear technology and goals. It is argued here that corporate strategy making, a most traditional organizational process, may be subject to garbage can processes as well. While business firms may have a goal of profit maximization, the "technology" of profit maximization, particularly over moderately distant horizons, is typically sufficiently poorly understood so as to permit garbage can-like mechanisms to come into play. Consideration of garbage can processes in a corporate context also suggests some enrichments of the original conceptualization, particularly the role of organizational politics. Problem resolution is not merely an issue of the mobilization of sufficient collective energy, but is also a problem of legitimation. In the corporate context, legitimation is importantly driven by the links that can be made between a possible solution and the, typically ambiguous, corporate strategy.

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