

For One Person

*The mental models I use to build, decide, lead, live, and
protect what matters, so you can build your own*

FILIPPE NÉVOLA

For Lu.

This book was only possible because of you, Luane. You were there for every moment, you lived almost every one of these stories with me, and you stayed by my side through all of it, even the craziest projects and the ones that took far too much of my time. There were hard moments, and you stayed anyway. You always supported me, even when you did not see what I was seeing, you trusted my instincts.

And this book is necessary because of you, Lucas. So that one day you can know a little of our story, and how we got here.



CONTENTS

This Is Not Exactly an Autobiography	1
Hello World	4
Ball	7
Family First	12
Protect the Machine	16
Two-Way Door Asymmetry	21
Get Into the Weeds	26
You Only Have 24 Hours	30
Aggressive Momentum	34
The Compounding Effect	38
The Infinite Game	43
The Models Working Together	47
How to Use This Book	50
Closing: The Operating System Is Never Finished	53
Changes Over Time	57

This Is Not Exactly an Autobiography

Hello, Filipe Névola here. Before anything else, so you do not mistake this for the wrong kind of book: it is not a memoir you read to learn about me. It is the operating system I actually run my life and my companies on, written so you can build your own. The stories are here to carry weight, not to be the point. The point is the tools, and by the end the real work is yours, naming your own models, not memorizing mine.

For a while I did think this would be an autobiography, the obvious format: birth, childhood, school, companies, the usual march to the person writing these words. But I am not sure chronology is the best way to understand a person.

A life is not only a sequence of events, it is also a sequence of interpretations. Two people can live the same event and walk away with different lessons, see the same opportunity and make opposite decisions, suffer the same pain and build different futures from it.

So this book is not exactly an autobiography. It is closer to a reverse engineering of my operating system. The chapters are organized around the mental models that shape how I think: how I decide, how I work, how I protect my family, how I take risks, how I deal with health, how I build companies, how I try not to fool myself, and how I keep playing when the game gets long.

The personal stories are still here, and they need to be, because models without stories become slogans. They sound clean but they carry no weight. "Protect the machine" sounds like generic advice until you understand the fear, grief, pain, and family history behind it. "Family first" sounds obvious until you watch how easily work steals the best hours of your day when you do not actively defend them.

I am writing this for one person, and I do not know who that person is. This is not a writing trick, it is how I have actually worked for years,

building products and companies for one real person at a time instead of an imaginary crowd. Maybe an entrepreneur trying to build without destroying his body. Maybe a parent who wants ambition and presence at the same time. Maybe someone who has lived close to sickness or loss and decided that repeating the same history is not acceptable. Maybe someone with a good life from the outside who still needs a clearer internal map. If this book helps one person make one better decision, protect one relationship, take one smarter risk, or avoid one avoidable mistake, it is worth writing.

I do not pretend these models are universal laws. They are **mine**. They came from my family, my body, my work, my mistakes, my companies, my country, my fears, my ambitions, and the people I love. Some may be wrong, some may change, and that is fine. A mental model is not a prison, it is a tool. The point is not to become loyal to a sentence, the point is to get better at living.

The book starts with a few origin stories, because every operating system is installed somewhere. Mine began in São Vicente, Brazil, with a factory worker father, a teacher and pianist mother, a lot of soccer balls, a strong desire to do things by myself, and a life that slowly turned into companies, code, family, health battles, investments, and a search for long-term games.

Then it moves into the models.

- Family First.
- Protect the Machine.
- Two-Way Door Asymmetry.
- Get Into the Weeds.
- You Only Have 24 Hours.
- Aggressive Momentum.
- The Compounding Effect.
- The Infinite Game.

These are not separate ideas, they are connected. Family First tells me what the game is for. Protect the Machine tells me what must not break while I play. Two-Way Door Asymmetry tells me how to take risks without destroying the base. Get Into the Weeds tells me not to outsource my

judgment. You Only Have 24 Hours tells me how to multiply that finite time through people, sitting next to Get Into the Weeds and bounded by Protect the Machine and Family First. Aggressive Momentum tells me not to hide inside endless analysis. The Compounding Effect tells me why repeated small actions matter. The Infinite Game tells me not to win today in a way that makes tomorrow worse.

That is the structure. Not my life in chronological order, but my life through the models that keep shaping it.

CHAPTER 2

Hello World

June 18th, 1988. That was my hello world. I was born in São Vicente, São Paulo, Brazil.



You can probably guess from the picture that the city was not rich, and the hospital shows it. São Vicente has a real place in Brazilian history, it was the first official city in the country. But being historically important does not make a place economically easy.

That contrast matters to me. I did not start in anything that looked like a startup story. No garage myth, no family office, no obvious path toward technology companies, investing, or building products. There was a normal Brazilian family, work, effort, limitations, and a lot of life happening without any special label on it.

My father, Walter, was a factory worker for almost his entire life. Funny enough, his job title was programmer, but not the code kind. He was a production programmer, more like a steel production scheduler. He worked with reality: production, timing, constraints, the thing either ships or it does not. My mother, Leila, is a teacher, from basic education all the way to music, and a pianist too. She gave me a different environment: learning, discipline, sensitivity, repetition, and the idea that education changes what a person can even see.



My father used to say he was the only father he knew who imitated his son. Usually it is the son who copies the father, the walk, the words, the way of working. With us it ran the other way, and he was proud of that. He also said I was his number one friend. He did not say it in a sentimental way, he said it like a plain fact, the way you state something that is just true. I think about that a lot.

Looking back, I can see both of them in me clearly. From my father I picked up a respect for work that is not abstract. Real work happens out in the world, it has constraints and schedules and friction, and a plan is only worth something if it survives contact with production. From my mother I picked up that learning and expression matter. Teaching is not only handing over information, and music is not only playing notes, both of them need attention, practice, patience, and the belief that a person gets better by doing the thing again and again.

This mix explains a lot of me. I like ideas but I do not want to live only in ideas. I like models, but I want them attached to action. I like thinking, and I get uncomfortable the moment thinking turns into an excuse to dodge execution. I like building, and I still care about the human side of whatever is being built.

Maybe that is why this book is not only a memoir and not only a book of ideas. If I write only stories, I lose the system. If I write only models, I lose the human reason the system exists in the first place.

So the first lesson of my life is probably this: context matters, but it does not fully decide the future. Where you start hands you the material. It gives you constraints, fears, habits, examples, sometimes wounds. It is not the whole story.

I was born in São Vicente. I grew up around family, work, education, music, and eventually a ball. That was the first environment. The first installation. The first version of the operating system.

Later I would build companies. I would learn to code. I would lead people. I would become a father. I would feel pain in my body. I would think hard about risk, money, health, reputation, and long games. But before any of that there was a simple beginning. A city by the beach, a father who worked with production and called me his number one friend, a mother who taught, and a kid who would take a very long time to figure out how much of his thinking started right there.

CHAPTER 3

Ball

My first word was "ball." Not "mom," not "dad," not "water." Ball. I was lazy to talk, I had no rush to say anything, but I was already obsessed with soccer, and I had a lot of balls around me.



That sounds like a tiny childhood detail, the kind of thing relatives repeat at lunch, but I do not think it is small at all. A first word is not a destiny, of course. But for me the ball was never just a toy. It was my first object of obsession, repetition, competition, coordination, and independence, all of it at once, before I had any of those words.

And while I was lazy to talk, I was in a hurry to walk and to do things myself. I was proud when I could reach the couch on my own to drink my baby bottle without anyone carrying me there. I liked the feeling of executing without waiting for someone to do it for me. That instinct never left.

I played soccer from my early years until I was 12, basically every single day. I also competed in futsal as a goalkeeper, and since I lived two blocks from the beach I played on the sand all the time too. So soccer was not an activity I did sometimes after school. It was the environment I lived in.

Here is the thing about sports: they teach you in a way no lecture ever could. You learn fast that wanting to win is not enough, that the

ball does not care about your excuses, that your body matters, that your teammates matter, and that pressure changes how you act whether you like it or not. You learn that losing hurts and is not the end. And you learn that sometimes the best thing you can do is not the beautiful thing, it is the useful one.

I was a goalkeeper, and goalkeepers have a strange relationship with mistakes. A striker can miss ten shots and still become the hero with one goal. A midfielder can give away three bad passes and just disappear back into the rhythm of the game. But when a goalkeeper makes a visible mistake, the punishment is instant: the ball goes in, and everyone saw it. That builds a specific kind of responsibility. When you are the last person before the goal, you cannot hide from reality for very long.

Playing with my father, who was a goalkeeper coach, was tough. He used to throw the ball at my face on purpose so I would not be afraid of it when I competed. It was not fun to get hit in the face, and honestly it still does not sound nice written cleanly on a page. But a lot of things in life are not easy and still teach you something real. The point was never cruelty, it was **preparation**. If fear made me turn my face away at the wrong moment, the ball would go in. Once I learned that getting hit was survivable, I could stay in the play.



He killed my fear on purpose, and he had a phrase for it that I still carry: the fear of losing takes away the will to win. Think about that. If you are busy protecting your face, you are not playing the game, you are just trying not to get hurt, and a player who is only trying not to get hurt has already given up the goal. My father did not want me afraid of the ball because a goalkeeper afraid of the ball is already beaten before the shot comes. The same man also told me, again and again, to be the best. Not to be okay, not to participate, to be the best. That fed something in me that never turned off, this constant pull to compete and to win.

And that lesson keeps coming back in adult life. A hard customer conversation is a ball coming at your face. A medical diagnosis is a ball coming at your face. A business risk is a ball coming at your face.

A missed deadline, a painful negotiation, a team conflict, a financial decision, a personal loss, all of them are testing the same thing: do you turn away, or do you stay present?

Now, do not read this as me telling you to go look for pain. I am not. I do not believe suffering automatically makes people better, some suffering only damages, some pressure only breaks. But I do believe a person needs enough contact with reality to stop being fragile.

For me soccer was always serious. Tournaments, competition, the score on the board, my father in my ear telling me to be the best. It was never a hobby, it was a place where I went to win. Later I came to love tennis, after soccer, and tennis was the opposite, it was always just for fun. Nobody threw a ball at my face on a tennis court. I never needed to win a match to feel okay about myself, I played because I liked playing. I think I needed both, the serious thing that taught me to compete and the light thing that taught me a ball can also be just a ball.

And here is the part I am honest about because I still do not understand it. I stopped playing futsal at the turn of a year, after about two years as the substitute goalkeeper, right when I was about to become the main keeper. The spot I had been working toward was basically mine, and I walked away from it. To this day I do not know why I stopped. Maybe it was tennis pulling me the other way, the fun thing winning over the serious one. Maybe I was just tired of training since I was around three or four years old, which is a long time to do anything before you are even a teenager. I do not have a clean answer, and I am not going to invent one to make the story tidy. Sometimes you leave something you loved and the reason never fully arrives.

The ball taught me execution. Do the thing. Move. Decide. React. Try again.

The team taught me interdependence. You can be independent and still need other people. You can own your role without pretending the game is only about you.

Competition taught me feedback. The score is not the whole truth, but it is not nothing either. Results matter because they reveal

something: sometimes skill, sometimes preparation, sometimes luck, sometimes that your strategy was just wrong.

The beach taught me adaptation. Sand changes how the ball moves, wind changes the game, uneven ground changes your balance. You do not get to demand perfect conditions before you play.

Looking back, the ball was probably my first mental model before I had any idea what a mental model was. It told me:

- Do not wait forever before acting.
- Reality gives feedback.
- Your body is part of your performance.
- Teams matter.
- Fear gets smaller when you face it enough times.
- The fear of losing takes away the will to win.
- Losing is information, not identity.
- The game continues.

That is why this chapter sits here, near the beginning. Before the companies, before the code, before the frameworks and repositories and investments, there was a ball. And with it, one simple lesson I still carry: life gets a lot easier to understand the moment you are willing to enter the game.

CHAPTER 4

Family First

Every morning belongs to Lucas. Since he became our son here in Brazil, that is the rule: every morning is 100% with him, except for Pilates on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. We spend that time together, we learn together, and only after that do meetings or real work start. Family First is the model that keeps it that way, and that reminds me what all the rest is for.

But before Lucas there was Lu. In August 2026 we complete twenty years together, almost twenty already as I write this, and in all that time there is only a handful of days when I did not talk to her: the few days she was in a coma in an ICU, early on, when we were young. I stayed. And then we married. The day I asked her to date me I went to her father and told him, plainly, that I was going to marry her. I was not asking permission and I was not joking. That is the kind of decision Family First is made of, the one you make once and then keep choosing every morning after.



Work matters. Money matters. Ambition matters. Building matters. I am not going to pretend those things are unimportant, because a lot

of good in my life came from work, from taking responsibility, from building companies, from trying to create value, from wanting more than comfort. But ambition has a dangerous habit: it quietly eats the best part of the day and leaves the family with the leftovers. That is the exact thing Family First exists to stop.

It means the default use of my time and energy should protect the family life we already worked to make possible. Work does not disappear, and not every family wish beats every work responsibility. It just means family is not the thing I get to after everything else is done, because everything else is never done. There is always another message, another issue, another deal, another bug, another meeting, another customer, another opportunity, another thing that feels urgent only because someone wants it now. If family time has to wait for the absence of work pressure, family loses every time.

And it is not only a schedule choice, it is an identity choice. The morning is one of the freshest parts of the day, with better attention, more patience, more emotional availability, and if I hand all of that to work and leave family with the tired version of me, I can say family is first all I want, but my calendar will say something else. A life is not built from values written in a notebook. It is built from repeated allocation.

- Where does the best energy go?
- Who gets protected time?
- What gets moved when pressure appears?
- What never gets moved unless the reason is truly serious?

Those questions show you the real hierarchy.

Family First is also a defense against a comfortable entrepreneurial lie: that one day, after enough success, there will be time. It sounds responsible and it is a trap. "After this launch." "After this customer." "After this quarter." "After this fundraising." "After this product works." "After this crisis." The future keeps moving, the child keeps growing, the marriage keeps absorbing the cost, the body keeps carrying the stress, and the family keeps waiting for a version of life that never shows up.

I do not want to build a company that wins by making my home lose.

That does not mean the balance is always easy or perfect. There are seasons when work gets intense. There are days when I fail. There are moments when an urgent business situation really does need attention. The model is not a fantasy where everything is calm and neatly divided, it is a **default**, and defaults matter because they decide what happens when I am tired, busy, or distracted. If the default is work first, family becomes a negotiation. If the default is family first, work has to prove why it deserves an exception.

Family First also means understanding that the people next to you carry the weight differently than you do. When I had cancer I faced it in a rational way, almost like a robot, and the truth is Lu suffered more from the outside, watching, than I did living it. The waiting, the powerlessness, that is its own kind of fight, and it is heavier than people think. The same event, the same days, experienced in two completely different ways. If you only watch your own version, you will keep telling yourself the family is fine while the person beside you is carrying something you never bothered to see.

This shapes money decisions too. More income is not automatically better if it pays for itself with predictable stress or absence at home. A bigger opportunity is not automatically better if it makes me less present for the people I claim to love most. An ambitious project can absolutely be worth it, but the family cost has to be said out loud, not hidden inside the excitement.

There is a difference between sacrifice and leakage. Sacrifice is chosen, it has a reason, it has a time frame, and the people affected understand it. Leakage is when work slowly takes more and more because nobody is watching the boundary. Family First is how I watch the boundary. It asks me to design work around family rhythms instead of always forcing family to bend to work, to notice when every urgent work item runs over planned time together, and to reject the idea that being physically present is the same as actually being there.

Let me give you the hardest example I have, because Family First is easy to write and hard to do. There is a guy named Zach, an American, and over a couple of years we built a real friendship and real mutual

admiration. We tested working together for a few months, and it was good. I even flew to the US to visit him with no business agenda, just to spend time, and it was still good. And then I stopped. Not because of him, because of Lucas. I was preparing for Lucas to arrive, I knew I would not work all day anymore, and I could not do both Zach and QuaveONE, so I chose to stop. That is a boundary, and boundaries are not the easy parts of a friendship, they are the expensive parts. It was hard, and it was right.

It also gives ambition a healthier place to live. I still want to build, I still want Quave to grow, I still want to take bets, I still want to make things that matter. But I want all of that inside a life where the people closest to me are not the silent investors paying the price for it. Family First does not make ambition smaller. It makes ambition answer to something bigger.

The question I keep coming back to is simple: if I succeed at work but the people I love only ever get the exhausted leftovers of me, what exactly did I win?

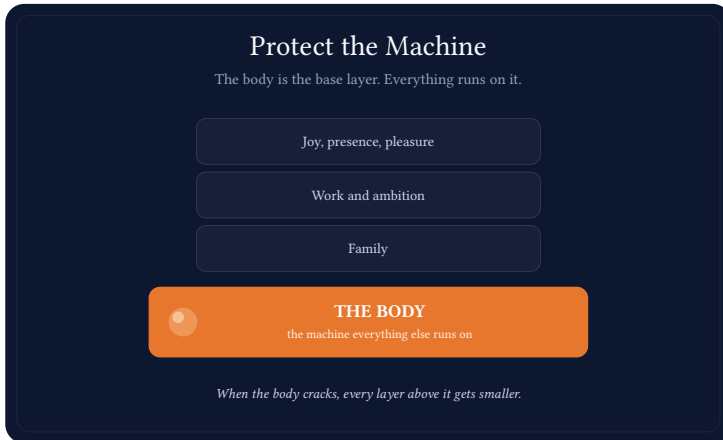
CHAPTER 5

Protect the Machine

My father died because of obesity and complications connected to that.

I do not write that sentence as a judgment. I write it as a fact, and it is the fact that changed how I see the future. When you see a family history like that, health stops being abstract. It is no longer a generic recommendation from a doctor, a podcast, or an article. It becomes a possible path, one you can repeat without noticing or interrupt on purpose. I do not want to repeat the same history.

That is what this chapter is about. The body is the machine that produces things and enjoys life. The sentence can sound mechanical, but for me it is deeply emotional. Without a healthy body, everything gets harder: family time, work, ambition, patience, even pleasure. The body is not a side project, it is the base layer.



Protect the Machine means taking care of the body before pain, exhaustion, or disease force the issue. And I want to be clear, this is not the shallow idea that you should exercise so you can grind more hours. Maybe sometimes that is true, but it is not the point. The body matters because life is lived through it. You hug through it, you play through it, you sleep through it, you think through it, you carry your child through

it. You recover through it and you suffer through it. When the body becomes fragile, the world gets smaller.

I started by losing 26 kg in 10 months. That was before the back saga even began, and it was the part I could control with simple repeated decisions, what I ate, how I moved, how I slept. I am telling you the number because the number is the point. Health is not a feeling you have once, it is a count of small choices that add up while nobody is watching.

And honestly, it did not start with a plan or a diet. It started with a dog. Mimosa had just arrived at our house, still new, still learning where she lived, and a puppy does not wait for the right mood, she needs to go out. So twice a day I took her out and walked, and that walk was the first domino, the small repeated thing everything else ended up stacking on. I was not trying to lose 26 kg. I was trying to walk Mimosa, twice a day, because she needed it.



That taught me something I now look for on purpose: the habits that last are usually the ones that are good for me and good for someone else at the same time. A walk only for my own waistline is easy to skip on a tired day. A walk because Mimosa is waiting at the door is not. When a healthy choice also takes care of someone you love, even a dog, it stops running on willpower and starts running on showing up for them, and that is a much stronger engine.

Now, that does not mean I believe everything is under personal control. Bodies are complicated, genetics matter, and so do environment, stress, money, medical systems, and plain luck. People do not get sick only because they failed morally, and I reject that simplistic view. But I also reject the opposite lie, that because not everything is under control,

nothing is my responsibility. Protect the Machine lives between those two extremes: control what can be controlled, respect what cannot, and do not pretend the consequences are theoretical.

My back made the model even more real. For about two and a half years I lived with lower back pain, a herniated lumbar disc pinching a nerve, the pain radiating down into my calves so that even sitting and standing became negotiations. Daily pain changes a person. It does not only hurt in the place where the pain appears, it leaks into sleep, mood, patience, work, family, movement, optimism, identity. Creative work suffers too, recording a video is hard when part of your head is busy managing pain instead of the idea you are trying to explain. When pain stays for a long time, you start negotiating with life in smaller terms. You ask less from the day because part of your energy is already being spent just existing with the discomfort. That is not the life I want.

I had the surgery two weeks ago, and the calves are finally starting to ease. That is recent, and I am writing it while it is still fresh, because I do not want to clean it up into a tidy after-the-fact story. Two and a half years is a long time to feel a wire running down your legs, and the relief is not dramatic, it arrives quietly, one normal movement at a time.

So back surgery, Pilates, gym, mobility, recovery, none of these are isolated health tasks on a checklist. They are investments in future capacity, attempts to restore the ability to play with Lucas, work with clarity, move without fear, travel, sleep, think, and enjoy the life I am trying to build.

This is where Protect the Machine connects to Family First. If I say family is first but ignore my health until I cannot be present, I am contradicting myself. If I want to be around for Lucas, and still have energy for him, health is not optional. If I want to be useful to my family over decades, I cannot treat my body like a disposable tool.

There is a heavier reason this matters to me, and I will not pretend it away. I was diagnosed with cancer, neck metastasis, in March 2022. I had surgery, I recovered, and I do my checkups. The honest framing is the one I have carried since: it can come back, and if it does we will fight again, but it will not stop me. I am not telling you this for drama, I

am telling you because it is part of why I respect the machine instead of taking it for granted.

It connects to business too. Entrepreneurs love to glorify intensity: long hours, stress, sacrifice, heroic pushes, sleeping less, answering everything, always being on. Some of that is real, building is hard and there are moments when the work demands more. But if the machine breaks, the output disappears. A body is not cloud infrastructure where you replace a failed instance in seconds. There is no automatic scaling group for your spine, your heart, your sleep, your nervous system. You can push for a while, but the debt accumulates, and health debt is not always paid on the schedule you would prefer.

So Protect the Machine means exercise is not what happens after the work is done. Recovery is not what happens after everyone else gets what they need. Medical follow-up is not optional admin. Sleep is not empty time. Movement is not cosmetic. Food is not only pleasure or convenience. Pain is not something to ignore until it becomes unbearable.

The model is simple, but the execution is hard, because the reward is usually invisible. If I go to Pilates, nothing dramatic happens that day. If I choose a better routine, there is no applause. If I avoid a worse future, nobody sees the timeline I escaped. That is why this one requires faith in compounding. Small physical decisions repeat, and they build capacity or they take it away. You do not get stronger by thinking about health once. You get stronger through repeated respect for the machine.

There is a psychological part too. I do not want health to become only fear. I do not want to live obsessed with avoiding death, because that is not a full life either. The goal is not to become anxious and rigid, the goal is freedom. Freedom to move, to play, to work without constant pain, to be present, to keep building without sacrificing the body that makes building possible.

My father is in this chapter because love and fear often teach together. I loved him, and I also saw a warning, and I carry both. I still watch Palmeiras every week, every game, mostly to stay connected to him even though he is gone. Protect the Machine is my answer to that

warning. Not perfect control, not denial. A decision to not drift into the same ending if I can choose differently, one repeated action at a time.

CHAPTER 6

Two-Way Door Asymmetry

I want to take risk without worshiping it. That is the whole point of this model. You put a limited part of your income, time, and attention into bets where the downside is controlled, the upside can be unusually large, and there is a reasonable way back if the thesis is not working.

Most of those bets will not matter, and that is fine. I am not trying to be right every time. I am trying to be near outcomes that can change the game, without getting trapped for years in something that is clearly not working.

I like this model because it protects two things that usually fight each other: ambition and survival. Avoid all risk and you keep what you already have, but you cap the future. Pour everything into one fragile bet and you might create a huge upside, but now family, health, reputation, and freedom are all on the table. Neither extreme is attractive. So the rule is simple: take the bet, but design the door.

A two-way door is a decision you can reverse, reduce, pause, delegate, sell, or stop without destroying your base. An asymmetric opportunity is one where the upside is much bigger than the cost of testing it. Put them together and you get small controlled experiments with potentially huge upside. That is how I look at several parts of my life and work.



Before I show you the bets I have on the table today, let me show you the ones that made me believe in this. I did not learn this model in a course. I learned it by walking through doors, some of them on purpose, and watching which ones I could walk back out of.

The first big one was a door most people would have killed to keep shut. I had passed a public exam, a concurso, to become a teacher, a stable government job for life in Brazil, and I refused it. I had also studied hard to get into a master's at Unicamp, and I walked away from that too, after about four years pointed straight at the academic path. Master's, PhD, tenure, it was all right there, the safe and respected road, and I chose to stay "just a programmer." People thought I was throwing it away. But that exam and that title were one-way doors dressed as prizes. Coding was the two-way door. I could always go back to study later, the world would still have universities, but I could not get those years of building back if I spent them inside a guaranteed cage.

The next one I got partly wrong, and it taught me more than the ones I got right. I turned down Chaordic, a very promising 12-person startup where I would have been one more employee, and chose another company that offered me a business-partner role and remote work, which sounded like the bigger bet. The "partner" part turned out more fake than real on their side, the promise was nicer than the reality. But I behaved as a true owner anyway. I sat in front of big customers like Toyota and Harley-Davidson and carried it like it was mine, and I learned

an enormous amount doing that. That fake partnership is a big reason Quave today is radically transparent, with no false promises. When someone hands you a one-way door painted to look like a partnership, you do not forget it. You build the opposite.

Then there was Provi. Provi already had a product, two years in, around 200,000 students impacted, and I joined to accelerate building it. My thesis was specific: get into an advanced product with good market conditions. I stayed about nine months. Then the market turned, there was a war, VC money froze, and the conditions I had joined for were gone. For the founders it still made sense to keep going, it was their company and their long game. For me it did not, because the exact reason I came, an advanced product riding a good market, was the part that broke. So I used the two-way door and left while leaving was still clean, no drama, instead of marrying a thesis the world had already voted against.

And the newest one points forward, not back. AIProofDev, preparing developers for AI, is a bet on where durable value sits. The same logic as QuaveONE being resilient to AI: figure out what the wave does not wash away, and stand there early. I do not know exactly how it pays off yet. I know the reasoning, and I know the cost of testing it is small next to the upside if I am right about where things are going.

Now, the bets on the table today.

QuaveONE is the main dedication. It is a cloud solution, and the thesis is that it is resilient to AI, because AI also needs systems to run somewhere. Software may change. Development may change. But applications still need infrastructure, deployment, observability, support, billing, security, and real operational reliability. QuaveONE is not a short-term product idea, it is a bet on where value may stay durable.

Quave Services is a different animal. It is a profitable business, it has real customers, and it is going well, but I do not treat it as the same kind of asymmetric bet. It is defense. It works, it produces, it pays for the larger game. I just do not want to confuse a good defensive business with my highest-upside offensive bet.

Quave Run is the AI for non-tech companies bet. It tests several real-world industries at once: real estate in the US, compounding pharmacies in Brazil, and maybe construction in Brazil. They share one technology capability but live in different markets. The model here is to not fall in love with one vertical too early. Learn, compare, reuse, and watch where the mix of pain, distribution, willingness to pay, and execution makes the best game.

In every one of these, the real danger is not failure. Failure is **clean** compared to certain kinds of success. A failed experiment teaches you something and ends. A mediocre commitment eats years. Provi ended clean. The fake partnership did not, it dragged, and that is exactly the kind of slow success that costs you more than a fast failure ever could.

That is the trap this model is built to dodge. A small bet can quietly become a life-consuming obligation when there is no explicit review point. A project stops being promising but keeps going anyway, out of ego, sunk cost, unclear ownership, or fear of admitting the thesis was wrong. The door was supposed to be two-way, and emotionally it became one-way.

So the exit matters from the beginning. Before I enter a bet, I want to ask:

- What is the downside?
- Is the downside bounded?
- What would make this clearly not worth continuing?
- How do we stop, reduce, or delegate it?
- What is the upside if it works?
- Does this damage Family First, Protect the Machine, reputation, or freedom?
- Are we testing a thesis or feeding excitement?

That last one is the important one, because excitement can dress gambling up as strategy. A real asymmetric bet has a thesis. It has some logic behind why the upside could be much larger than the cost. It does not need certainty, and if there were certainty the opportunity probably would not be asymmetric in the first place. But it needs a reason beyond "this is new and shiny."

I also like putting a real slice of resources aside for this. Around 20% of income, time, or attention can go into smart, different bets, as long as the base is protected. The exact number can move. The principle does not: do not let risk take over everything, and do not let preservation take over everything either.

This is personal for me because I do not want a life that is only defense. I want to build. I want to create upside. I want to stand near possibilities that can compound. But I refuse to confuse courage with recklessness. My family should not pay for every experiment. My body should not be the hidden collateral. My reputation should not get burned for a quick shot. My freedom should not be traded for a bet I never honestly looked at.

Two-Way Door Asymmetry gives me permission to be bold without being careless. I left a concurso, a master's, a fake partnership, and a startup that ran out of road, and I am still here, still building, with the base intact. Yes, enter the game. Just know the door.

CHAPTER 7

Get Into the Weeds

Get into the weeds means I refuse to stay superficial on anything important I am part of.

I do not need to execute every task myself, that would be a bad use of my time and a sign of poor delegation, but I do need to understand the details well enough to judge quality, guide direction, ask sharp questions, and challenge a weak assumption when I see one. You can delegate execution. You should not blindly delegate judgment on the things that matter. That line is central to how I work.

There is a comfortable version of leadership where everything arrives as a summary. The numbers are summarized, the customer conversations are summarized, the product problems are summarized, the legal issues are summarized, the technical tradeoffs are summarized, the team dynamics are summarized, the investment thesis is summarized.

Summaries are useful, but a summary can also hide reality. It removes the friction, the weird detail, the emotional tone, the edge case, the part that does not fit neatly into the story. It often reflects what the summarizer noticed, understood, or wanted you to emphasize. If the decision is small, a summary is fine. If the decision matters, I want to see the underlying material.

So I read the numbers, look at the contract, open the product, and read the code if the code matters. I listen to the customer and understand the operational flow. Then I ask why the thing works this way, what happens when it fails, who owns the next step, and what assumption would make the plan wrong.

Maybe you are thinking, "Filipe, that is just micromanagement." It is not, when you apply it to the right problems. It becomes micromanagement when a leader gets into everything regardless of leverage, and that is not what I mean. The right place to get into the weeds is in bottlenecks and important decisions, where being close to the detail helps you unblock, decide, challenge, or improve the outcome.

The model matters in Quave Run. We are exploring verticals, including compounding pharmacies in Brazil, real estate in the US, and possibly construction in Brazil. It would be easy to say "AI for non-tech companies" and stay there, but that phrase is too generic to build anything from. The real opportunity is in the details: how the business actually operates, where the pain shows up, who makes the decisions, what the current workflow looks like, what customers trust, what data exists, what regulations or habits shape behavior, and where software can actually help.

It matters in QuaveONE. A cloud platform is not a pitch. It lives in infrastructure, deployment, billing, support, customer trust, reliability, and the thousand small details that decide whether a user feels safe. Stay too high-level and you make strategic decisions that sound good and break the moment they touch operational reality.

It matters in Quave Services too. That business came from my own thinking, so I need to stay aware of how it works and why it works. A profitable business can be misunderstood by its own owner, when the owner only looks at the result and stops understanding the engine.

It even matters in investing. A minority stake gets passive fast when the investor does not understand the product, the customer, and the quality of delivery. If the point is only to put money in and hope, that is one kind of investment. But if our knowledge can improve the product, then getting into the weeds becomes part of the value.

This also protects me from a specific mistake: outsourcing taste. Experts are useful, I want experts, I want people who know more than I do, but there is a difference between learning from someone's expertise and surrendering all your judgment to it. When I say "I trust the expert" and I do not understand the core tradeoffs, I am usually just avoiding responsibility.

The goal is never to become the expert in every domain. The goal is to understand enough to ask a better question. Good questions are leverage. They reveal weak assumptions, expose missing ownership, clarify constraints, and force reality into the conversation. Bad questions

are just noise, they come from ego, from anxiety, or from wanting to prove you are smart.

Getting into the weeds takes humility, because sometimes the details show that my initial idea was wrong, and that is one of the reasons people avoid the details. High-level thinking lets you keep your theory clean. Reality makes it messy. But messy reality is where the better judgment comes from.

I hate being wrong. I will be honest about that, because the humility I am describing did not come naturally, I had to learn it, and one moment taught me more than any feedback at work ever did. I was at a child's birthday party, sitting at the table with my father and a doctor from Embrapa. The doctor and I had built a water-in-soil simulator together, a real project, and we had a lot to talk about, so we talked. We went deep into the technical part, the model, the data, all of it, and the conversation ran on between the two of us. My father sat there. I did not mean to leave him out, I just did, completely, without noticing.

Afterward my father told me, quietly, that he did not need to be excluded. He said he could talk about anything, that he could have taken part in that conversation too, with less depth, sure, but still part of it. He was right. I had assumed the topic was over his head and I had talked past him, at his grandchild's party, with him sitting right there. I apologized. It is the only time I truly had to ask my father for forgiveness for a mistake that was mine.

That is the part people miss about getting into the weeds. The details are not only the numbers and the code and the contract. The people are the details too. The moment you decide someone cannot follow, you stop talking to them, and you are almost always wrong about the line you drew. Never underestimate people, never talk past them, and never confuse depth on a topic with permission to leave someone out. My father could not build the simulator. He could absolutely sit at the table with us, and I should have kept him there.

This connects to my childhood and the ball more than it seems. When you play, the game is not a concept. The ball moves, the surface changes,

the other team reacts. You cannot understand the game from the stands. At some point you have to be close enough to feel the speed.

Business is similar. Investing is similar. Health is similar. Family is similar. If something matters, do not just admire it from above. Get close enough to know what is actually happening, the numbers and the people both, and then decide.

CHAPTER 8

You Only Have 24 Hours

In my first year at TecSinapse, Joe stepped back. He was the partner and co-founder, and he decided to leave the technical and product side to me and Rafa. Before he handed it over, he told me something I have never forgotten. He said I was very good, but that I had to learn to be a leader, because I would always have only 24 hours, and the only way to multiply my time was by leading people.

That line is the whole model. You do not get more hours. Nobody does. The day does not stretch because you are talented or because you care more than the next person. So the question is not how to work harder inside your 24 hours, it is how to multiply them, and the answer is people, trust, and judgment. Leadership is leverage on finite time.



I did not learn this from Joe first, honestly. I learned the shape of it as a kid, on a Counter-Strike team, where I was the one calling the plays. The in-game leader, the caller. I did not have a word for it back then. I just knew that five people doing their own thing lost to five people moving together, and that somebody had to hold the picture of the whole round in their head while everyone else focused on their corner. That was leadership before I had ever heard the term. Joe just gave it a name and a reason years later.

So let's be clear about what this model is and what it is not. It is not about being in charge, it is not about a title, and it is definitely not about being the smartest person in the room. It is about taking the thing you can do well and making it happen through other people, so that the output is no longer limited by your own two hands and your own 24 hours. A leader is a multiplier. That is the entire job.

Over the years I have led 70+ people. And every time the math is the same. You cannot get into the weeds on everything. You physically cannot. So you choose the few things where your own hands matter most, and for everything else you lead, you trust, you multiply.

That is where this model meets **Get Into the Weeds**. Those two are not enemies, they are partners that need each other. Get into the weeds on the few things that decide everything, and lead so that the rest gets done at a scale your hands could never reach. If you only got into the weeds, you would be stuck doing one thing at a time forever. If you only led, you would be a manager talking about work you no longer understand. You need both, and the trick is knowing which moment is which.

Now, people will tell you that leading means letting go and never looking closely, that watching the work is "micromanaging." I was told I was micromanaging once, and it hit me hard, until I actually thought about it. As I said in **Get Into the Weeds**, looking closely is not control. Leadership is a transfer of trust, the same way sales is a transfer of enthusiasm. So when I get close to someone's work, it is almost never because I want to control them, it is because a skill is missing or trust is still being earned, and both of those are my job as the leader, not a flaw in the person.

And once the trust is there, I get out of the way completely. The best example I ever lived was at Tiny. As CEO of Meteor under Tiny, I had total autonomy. Real autonomy, not the kind people put on a slide. The joke I always make is that the only thing I could not change was my own pay hahaha. Everything else was mine to decide. Andrew Wilkinson talks about this openly, how they buy great companies and then let great people run them, and my experience matched his words exactly. Freedom and responsibility, together, in practice. That is what

good leadership feels like from the inside, and it is what I try to give the people who work with me.

This is also why I care more about people than process. When people are mature and capable, the process matters less, because they will make the best decision regardless of what the rulebook says. When people are new, the process is a safety rail so they do not walk into known problems. But the real factor is never the process, it is trust. Do you trust that your team is trying to make the best decision for the company, rules or no rules? If you do, relax the process and let them decide. If you fill the place with rules for everyone just because of a few bad actors, you end up like the public restrooms in Brazil with signs saying "do not pee on the floor." Do not run a company like that.

A few things I believe about leading, plainly:

- People over process, always. People are more intelligent than any hard-coded rule.
- Freedom and responsibility come as a pair. You do not get one without the other.
- Work with friends and curate talent without mercy. Friends trust, friends do not fake, and that alone cuts most of the pressure at work.
- Lead as yourself, not a softened, careful, corporate version of you. The softened version fools no one and helps no one.

That last one matters more than people think. There is a temptation, when you become the leader, to sand yourself down into something safe and agreeable. Do not. The people worth leading can smell a costume. Lead with your real opinions, your real standards, your real laugh. You are not multiplying your time so you can become a blander person, you are multiplying it so the real you reaches further.

Here is the part that keeps this whole model honest, and it is where it bumps into **Protect the Machine** and **Family First**. The reason you multiply through people is precisely so you do not multiply by burning more of your own hours. That is the cheating answer, and it always loses. You can squeeze a few more hours out of yourself this week, sure, but you cannot do it forever, the machine breaks, and you are back to losing the war you were trying to win, only now with less of yourself to spend.

Leadership is the honest way to get more done without stealing it from your sleep, your health, or your family. You still only have 24 hours. The whole point is to stop trying to win by spending more of them.

So if you find yourself drowning, working longer and longer, doing everything yourself because nobody does it quite like you do, hear Joe's voice the way I still do. You are very good. That was never the question. The question is whether you will learn to be a leader, because you will always have only 24 hours, and the only way to multiply them is through people you trust.

Go build that. And then go home. The hours you save are not for more work, they are for the people who don't last forever, and neither do you.

CHAPTER 9

Aggressive Momentum

Important things need pressure. They need a deadline, an owner, and a short loop back to reality. And here is the part people resist: that pressure does not have to be real to be useful. It is fine, often good, to create urgency on purpose, so decisions happen faster, milestones arrive sooner, and problems show up while they are still small. That is Aggressive Momentum.

I know how this sounds, because urgency gets abused all the time. People use it to manufacture panic, to cover for bad planning, to push others into sacrifice that was never necessary. I am not defending that. When everything is an emergency and nobody can breathe, the urgency is fake and it turns toxic.

But the opposite failure is just as dangerous, and it is much quieter. Important work dies from politeness. From vague timelines. From waiting until everyone feels ready, from analysis that never turns into a decision, from nobody wanting to set a date that might be wrong. Aggressive Momentum is my answer to that.

So I will say it plainly: optimistic deadlines are a virtue. Better to be optimistic and wrong than pessimistic and right. Being wrong is not the goal, the goal is movement and contact with reality, and an optimistic deadline buys you both.

An aggressive deadline forces the questions a comfortable one lets you hide from:

- What really needs to happen first?
- Who owns it?
- What is blocking us?
- What can be cut?
- What do we still not know?
- What is the next test?
- What would prove this is harder than expected?

And when you miss an aggressive deadline, that is not failure, it is information. Maybe the scope was too big, maybe ownership was unclear, maybe you were waiting on a dependency, maybe the quality bar was higher than you thought, maybe the market just did not respond, maybe the plan was fantasy. Good. Now you know, and you know early.

The real danger is treating a missed deadline as shame, because shame makes people hide reality, and hiding reality is the one thing this whole model exists to prevent. If a deadline is a tool for learning, missing it should produce an adjustment, not a performance. The team should be able to say: we missed it, here is why, here is what changed, here is the next date, here is what we learned. No theater.

I have seen this work most clearly in QuaveONE. We moved to bi-weekly aggressive planning and the rhythm changed. Planning got more assertive, progress got more visible, and after a few weeks running that way the company could see real improvement, because the pressure created clarity.

It matters in Quave Run too. AI verticals can stay in exploration forever, there is always more to understand, more industries to compare, more prompts to improve, more workflows to map, more customer conversations to have. Exploration is valuable, but with no deadline it becomes a comfortable fog. Aggressive Momentum cuts through it: decide the next test, set a date, give it an owner, and let reality answer.

This leans on Two-Way Door Asymmetry. If a bet is reversible and bounded, speed gets a lot more attractive, you do not need perfect certainty to move, you need enough logic to justify the experiment and enough discipline to actually review the result.

And it leans on Get Into the Weeds. Aggressive deadlines without detail are just empty pressure. But when the person setting the momentum understands the work, the pressure gets smarter. You push on the actual bottleneck instead of standing there shouting "faster."

There is a personal side to this one. I can think deeply, and I like it, I like models, I like analysis. That is useful right up until it becomes a hiding place. A person who enjoys thinking can always find one more

angle, one more possibility, one more reason to wait, one more way to dodge the discomfort of committing.

Aggressive Momentum protects me from that version of myself. It reminds me that action creates information thinking never will. A draft teaches more than an idea for a draft. A customer call teaches more than a theory about customers. A prototype teaches more than a meeting about a prototype. A deadline teaches more than an open-ended intention. This is not moving blindly. It is moving before the illusion of full certainty shows up, because full certainty usually arrives too late, if it arrives at all.

Waiting is one way to hold back. Going soft is the other, and it is the one that cost me more. My time at Provi is where I see it most clearly. In the stretch before my cancer surgery, the part I count as a failure is not the market or the timing, it is me. I was soft, not fully myself, and I did not act with conviction. I am not calling Provi a failure, the company was real and the work was good, what I regret is that I held back the person who should have shown up. That was not the only time in my career I held back, and every time the lesson was the same: it is not worth it. You water yourself down to keep the peace, to be agreeable, to not rock the boat, and the thing you were holding back was exactly the thing that needed to show up.

Then I had surgery to remove the cancer and took fifteen days of medical leave. When I came back, I told Mario, one of Provi's founders, that I would only keep going if I could be myself. No softer version, no holding back to fit. Mario backed me on that. Then the market turned and the funding froze, the conditions I had joined for were gone, and I left, so the story does not get a clean happy ending. But Mario choosing to work with me today, after all of it, tells me the correction was right. Act as yourself, with conviction, and the people worth keeping stay.

That is why momentum and conviction are the same model for me. The fog is not always overthinking, sometimes it is fear dressed up as patience, or politeness dressed up as professionalism. Aggressive Momentum says move. Conviction says move as yourself.

There is a moral side too. Vague work is unfair to everyone near it. No owner, and nobody knows who should act. No date, and nobody knows

when reality gets checked. No decision-maker, and everyone just waits. The cost gets paid quietly, in time, by people who never agreed to pay it. Aggressive Momentum makes that cost visible. It says: if this matters, give it pressure. If it does not deserve pressure, then maybe admit it is not a priority.

The failure mode is obvious. You can push too hard, stack too many deadlines at once, confuse activity with progress, or let urgency become the highest value and trample Protect the Machine and Family First on the way. That is why this model cannot stand alone. It needs boundaries.

- Family First says what cannot be casually consumed.
- Protect the Machine says the body is not infinite fuel.
- The Infinite Game says speed today is not worth destroying trust, stamina, or reputation tomorrow.

Inside those boundaries, I want momentum. I want important things to move, I want reality sooner, I want decisions instead of endless fog, and I want pressure used as a tool, not as a personality. And I want all of it done as myself, with conviction, because holding back is just a slower way of losing.

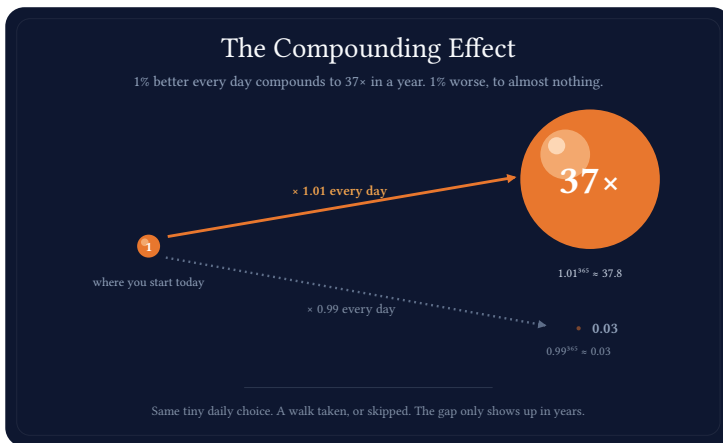
That is Aggressive Momentum.

CHAPTER 10

The Compounding Effect

One Pilates session does not transform a body. One customer conversation does not build a company. One documented lesson does not create an operating system. One small product improvement does not make a platform dominant. One investment writeup does not create judgment. One morning with Lucas does not define fatherhood. None of it looks like much on the day you do it, and that is exactly why people give up on it.

The Compounding Effect is just this: small repeated gains end up much larger than they look at the start. Knowledge, reputation, product quality, customer trust, health, money, almost none of it improves in a straight line. When the same useful effort repeats long enough, each layer starts building on the layers under it, and the base you act from keeps getting higher. That is the whole magic, and it is boring before it is impressive, which is why it is easy to respect and hard to actually live.



This does not mean you avoid new things. It means you prefer new work that uses what you already have: skills, relationships, code, infrastructure, customer knowledge, judgment. The best opportunities usually come from pointing a new direction at an old base.

Let me make this concrete with the academic version, because that is where my own compounding really started. On the last day of my first year in college, in the parking lot, my statistics professor, Faccenda, told me I had a lot of potential but joked around too much. That was it. He was not being cruel, he was just honest, and that one sentence echoed in my head all vacation. From the second year on I became the best student in my class, my lowest grade was an 8.5, and most of them were 9.5s and 10s. Nothing changed about my ability between December and February. What changed was that I started repeating the right effort, and once the curve began, it never stopped.

Java was the same bet, played long. In college I told Lu that Java would be our livelihood, and I was right, it paid the bills for years. Then around 2016 I shifted my focus to JavaScript, but I did not throw the old base away, I stood on it. Years of thinking in one language made the next one cheaper to learn, and the next one after that.

QuaveONE is a clear example. It compounds everything Quave already learned in cloud, DevOps, Meteor, deployment, customer support, and running production software. It exists because my experience as CTO and CEO of a cloud business, plus Edimar's deep DevOps knowledge, opened a clearer opportunity to build a cloud platform. It is not a random idea detached from history, it grows from previous layers, and a new company built on old learning is a very different animal from a new company built from zero.

It was also a deliberate bet, not a lucky one. We tried other segments first, like a product for creators, but we did not know much about creators and it did not work as well. So we returned to what we knew deeply: I was Meteor's CEO and CTO for about three years, I had been doing servers, deploys, and CI/CD for many years, and Edimar had great ideas on how to build an affordable cloud. The product everyone celebrates today is just the segment where the base we already had was deepest. We did not pick the newest idea, we picked the one with ten years under it.

Same thing with Quave Run. Treat each vertical experiment as its own island and the work scatters. Capture the shared AI, software,

workflow, sales, and customer-learning pieces, and each vertical starts feeding the next one. A real estate workflow can teach you something about pharmacies. A pharmacy discovery process can teach you something about construction. A prompt library, a code module, a sales script, a workflow map, a customer memo, any of those can turn into reusable infrastructure instead of dying with the project.

This goes back to TecSinapse, where we changed how we built new modules. We used to begin every client from zero, a blank page, every single time. Then each client got a portal where we composed tools we already had instead of rebuilding them. The work we did for the last client became the head start for the next one, the base kept rising, and starting from zero became the one thing I tried hardest never to do again.

So the question I keep asking is simple: what should this effort leave behind? If the answer is nothing, compounding is weak. If every effort leaves behind better judgment, better assets, better relationships, or better systems, compounding starts.

Relationships compound the same way, and they are the slowest curve of all, which is exactly why people underrate them. In 2018 I helped a friend at ClearSale International with two developers, a small project through Quave. Those two are still with me in 2026. During that small ClearSale project, over lunch in New York, I casually mentioned to Jordan, one of Pathable's founders, that we were helping ClearSale. That one offhand sentence turned into a multi-year contract that made Pathable, by far, Quave's biggest client at the time. I did not plan any of that. I just kept showing up for people over years, and one day a casual mention paid off in a way no cold pitch ever could.

This is also why documentation matters to me. It can look like administrative busywork, but it is really memory made reusable. A lesson that lives only in conversation has a short half-life. A lesson written down can be found, challenged, improved, and used by someone else later.

I have a private repo called mental-models where I collect the mental models I use to think, decide, and explain things to myself. Each definition, action, and question turns a temporary thought into a durable object. The repo is not valuable because every file is perfect, it is valuable

because it gives thinking a place to pile up. This book works the same way. A chapter written today becomes material I can edit tomorrow, a personal story added later gives a model emotional weight, a model clarified in one chapter quietly changes how another chapter works. The book compounds because writing makes thinking visible.

Health compounds too, and that is one of the hardest places to apply it. The cleanest proof I have is the one I already told you about: walking Mimosa twice a day. No single walk moved the scale, nothing dramatic happened on any given afternoon, and ten months later it was 26 kg gone. That is the curve exactly, invisible on the day, undeniable in the rear-view mirror. The same logic carries the harder seasons. After surgery, recovery is not one heroic comeback, it is repeated body-compounding actions, Pilates, gym, mobility, strength, and eventually playing with a ball again when the body allows it. The body gets more capable by default only if the right actions keep repeating.

There is a strange humility in all of this. You have to accept that today's action may not feel important. You have to act without immediate proof, keep going before the curve becomes visible, and resist the urge to constantly start over, because starting over feels exciting and compounding feels slow.

That is where most people fail. They switch too early, chase the novelty, abandon the previous layer before it had time to produce. They treat every customer, product, or investment decision as a one-off, they never systematize the lesson, so the same learning has to happen again and again. The hidden cost of not compounding is repeated forgetting. A company that does not document repeats its mistakes. A person who does not reflect repeats their patterns. A body that is not trained slides back to fragility. A reputation you do not protect consistently stops being reliable. A family that gets only occasional attention does not feel secure because of one grand gesture.

So respect the small repeated action. Not because small is enough on its own, but because small, repeated long enough, becomes a different category entirely.

This also changes how I think about opportunity. The best one is not always the newest. Sometimes it is the one that uses ten years of accumulated context in a way that suddenly turns valuable, and the person hunting only for novelty walks right past the power of the base they already built.

The question I want to ask more often is: what am I doing now that future Filipe will be grateful was repeated? And the opposite one: what am I repeatedly doing that future Filipe will wish I had stopped earlier?

Because compounding works both ways. Good habits and bad ones, trust and resentment, health and neglect, they all compound. So the model is not only optimistic, it is a warning. Every repeated action is a vote for a future base, so pick the votes you actually want to win.

CHAPTER 11

The Infinite Game

A short game tells you exactly how you did. Win the argument. Close the deal. Hit the number. Ship the feature. Beat the competitor. Get the customer. Maximize the negotiation. Extract the value now. The feedback is instant and clean, and that is exactly why it is so seductive.



The Infinite Game is the other one. You play to keep improving and stay in the game, not to win a single fixed round. In business, family, health, reputation, and knowledge, the rules change, the players change, and there is no final scoreboard that ends it. There are milestones, sure. Deals, launches, months, quarters, surgeries, birthdays, contracts, crises, wins. But none of them is the final point. What you are actually building is a life and a company that can keep going:

- Stronger relationships.
- Better judgment.
- A healthier body.
- A better team.
- Better products.
- Enough financial strength to keep making good decisions.
- A reputation that opens future doors instead of closing them.

I am not against winning. Winning can be useful, revenue matters, execution matters, competitive intensity matters, and a company that never wins any short game probably does not survive long enough to play the infinite one. The danger is winning one round in a way that makes the whole game worse. Winning a deal is not worth it if the customer relationship becomes toxic, winning an argument is not worth it if trust is damaged, winning a sprint is not worth it if the team burns out, and winning more work is not worth it if Family First and Protect the Machine are quietly destroyed.

So the Infinite Game gives me a way to weigh cost over time. QuaveONE is a long-term platform bet, and the goal is not to win one customer or one sprint, it is to build infrastructure, process, and team capacity that keep improving. That takes patience, but not passivity. It takes Aggressive Momentum inside a longer horizon.

Support is one of the clearest places you can see this. We help customers with all their questions no matter how big or small the customer is, and that is not just customer service, it is **relationship proof**. It says we are not here for a quick make-money scheme, we are here for the long term. Measured only in the short term that kind of support can look inefficient, but trust compounds and reputation compounds. Customers remember whether you showed up when the question was small, not only when the contract was large.

The Connect Plan fits the same way, because it creates a closer relationship. Quave sits inside the customer's cloud provider account, which takes more trust and more responsibility. A short-game mindset sees only expansion. An infinite-game mindset sees stewardship: if the customer lets us closer to their infrastructure, our obligation to be careful goes up.

It also changes how I think about people. Quave's profit sharing gives more weight to the people who have been with Quave longer, on purpose, rewarding the ones who shared risk over time. That is not just compensation design, it is a belief. People who stay through the harder phases and help the company survive should matter differently from

people who show up only when things are easy. Long-term contributors are part of the game continuing.

None of this means you keep every relationship forever. Some customers, partners, investors, or employees make the game worse, and saying no can be infinite-game behavior when the relationship would damage trust, stamina, culture, or your options over time. That is one of the hardest parts. The Infinite Game is not always soft. Sometimes it requires boundaries, refusing quick money, ending a relationship, slower growth, telling the truth earlier than is comfortable, protecting the body when work wants more, or preserving family time when an opportunity looks exciting. It is not about avoiding hard choices. It is about choosing with the longer game visible.

Let me tell you about the hardest one. We spent an intense year working almost entirely for a single client, fully in it, and along the way that client started talking about acquiring Quave. This was not a small thing. For many people on the team it could have been a life-changing amount of money, the kind that pays off a house, the kind you do not get a second offer for. I will not pretend I was calm about it. Of course I thought about what it could mean for everyone.

Then the deal stalled. The delays kept coming, and I could not tell whether the intentions behind them were good. That was the part that ate at me. The acquisition might have changed lives, it really might have, but it might also have compromised those same people's quality of life for the next two, three, four years, locking us into someone else's game on terms we could not read. I had a windfall on one side and a fog on the other, and I could not see through the fog.

So we walked away.

I still get second thoughts about it, honestly. Sometimes I wonder if it could have worked, if I read the delays wrong, if I cost good people something they deserved. I am not going to write that down clean and pretend I am sure. But every time I sit with it, the answer comes back the same: the price simply looked too high. Not the money. The price in time, in autonomy, in the next few years of our lives, traded for a maybe.

That is the Infinite Game choosing the long, trustworthy path over a short, uncertain windfall, even when the windfall is staring right at you.

I also like this model because it shrinks the ego. If the game is infinite, then being the best today matters less than getting better every month. A fixed-game mindset asks, "Did I win?" An infinite-game mindset asks, "Did this make the system stronger?" And that one question changes what failure even means:

- A failed experiment that improves judgment can serve the infinite game.
- A missed deadline that reveals reality can serve the infinite game.
- A painful health episode that leads to better routines can serve the infinite game.
- A difficult customer conversation that protects trust can serve the infinite game.
- A business that never becomes the final winner can still compound learning for the next one.

This does not make pain pleasant or failure romantic. It just gives them a place on the larger map.

The model goes deepest in family, because family is an infinite game. There is no final scoreboard where you declare victory as a father, husband, son, or brother and stop playing. Relationships are kept through repeated presence, repair, attention, sacrifice, and joy. One great vacation does not replace daily absence. One apology does not replace repeated neglect. One generous moment does not build trust on its own.

Family compounds too, and so does health, so does reputation, so does wisdom. The Infinite Game asks me to protect the conditions that let all of them continue.

The personal rule I want to keep refining is this: do not win today in a way that makes it harder to keep playing tomorrow.

CHAPTER 12

The Models Working Together

A mental model is useful right up until it starts pretending to explain everything, and then it gets dangerous. That is why I do not want you to read these chapters as eight separate commandments. Family First, Protect the Machine, Two-Way Door Asymmetry, Get Into the Weeds, You Only Have 24 Hours, Aggressive Momentum, The Compounding Effect, and The Infinite Game are at their strongest when they check and balance each other.



Take any one of them alone and it has a failure mode. Family First can turn into an excuse to dodge hard ambition. Protect the Machine can turn into fear and rigidity. Two-Way Door Asymmetry can turn into gambling with a nicer name. Get Into the Weeds can slide into micromanagement. Aggressive Momentum can become pressure with no wisdom behind it. The Compounding Effect can harden into stubbornness. You Only Have 24 Hours can turn into a control freak who never lets anyone else carry anything. The Infinite Game can become a vague word you hide behind to dodge being accountable today. The models need each other.

Each one answers a question the others cannot. Family First gives me direction: what is the point of building anything if the people closest to me get the worst version of me? Protect the Machine gives capacity: what happens when I ignore the body that makes all of this possible? Two-Way Door Asymmetry gives exposure: how do I create upside without putting the base at risk I cannot accept? Get Into the Weeds gives judgment: how do I stop making important decisions from summaries and illusions? Aggressive Momentum gives movement: how do I get out of analysis paralysis and make reality visible sooner? The Compounding Effect gives patience: why keep repeating small useful actions before the result shows up? You Only Have 24 Hours gives leverage: how do I multiply my finite time and lead people without burning out? And The Infinite Game gives horizon: how do I win without making the long-term system worse?

A good decision usually needs more than one of those answers at the same time. Imagine a new business opportunity lands on your desk. Two-Way Door Asymmetry asks whether the downside is bounded and the upside is worth it. Get Into the Weeds asks whether you actually understand the customer, the workflow, the numbers, the constraints, or whether you are guessing. Aggressive Momentum asks what test can run quickly and who owns it. The Compounding Effect asks what reusable asset or lesson the experiment leaves behind even if it fails. You Only Have 24 Hours asks who else can carry this so it does not all land on your own calendar. The Infinite Game asks whether it builds or burns your reputation, your team's capacity, and your future options. Family First asks what it costs at home, and Protect the Machine asks what it costs your health. The decision gets a lot better when all eight are in the room.

That is the real operating system. Not one sentence, a conversation between principles.

Sometimes they disagree, and that is fine. Aggressive Momentum wants a faster deadline while Protect the Machine says this pace will break you. Two-Way Door Asymmetry wants to take the bet while Family First says the hidden cost is too high. Get Into the Weeds wants

more investigation while Aggressive Momentum points out the investigation has quietly become avoidance. The Infinite Game argues against a quick financial win, and The Compounding Effect argues for staying with the boring routine right when the shiny new thing looks more fun. You Only Have 24 Hours pulls toward delegating while Get Into the Weeds pulls toward the detail, and the honest answer is usually both.

That argument is not a bug, it is the whole point. The models fight it out inside your head before reality fights it out in the real world, and I would much rather have the argument inside the operating system than find out too late that one value quietly ran the show while I wasn't looking.

This matters to me because I am ambitious, and ambition warps how you see things. It makes every opportunity feel urgent, makes work feel morally better than rest, makes the cost to family look temporary, makes health debt feel like something you can pay off later, makes details seem less important than the vision, makes you believe you are the only one who can do it right, and it turns a reversible bet into part of who you are. The models are there to discipline ambition without killing it. I do not want a small life, but I also do not want a life that gets large in the wrong way.

The goal is not balance in the weak sense, where everything gets equal time and nobody is ever uncomfortable. The goal is integration: work, family, health, risk, learning, leadership, and reputation holding each other up as much as they can. When they collide, the collision should be out in the open. Explicit tradeoffs are adult decisions. Hidden tradeoffs are how people wake up inside a life they never chose.

That might be the deeper reason I love mental models. They drag hidden assumptions into language, and once something has language you can question it, and once you can question it you can improve it. A person without models still has models. They are just invisible, showing up as habits, reactions, fears, defaults, and the same mistakes on repeat. Writing mine down is how I take responsibility for them. This book is part of that responsibility.

CHAPTER 13

How to Use This Book

If you finish this book only knowing more about me, I failed. I want it to work as a mirror instead.

Your life is not mine. You were born somewhere else, with different parents, different pain, different opportunities, different fears, different responsibilities, and different ambitions. A personal story is not useful because it matches yours. It is useful because it hands you a structure to look at your own.

So do not read this and try to agree with every model. Ask what your version would be.

What is your Family First?

- Who or what should get your best energy before the world eats it?
- What does your calendar say you actually value?
- Where are you telling yourself family matters while you hand it only leftovers?

What is your Protect the Machine?

- What history do you refuse to repeat?
- What health signal are you ignoring because the bill is not due yet?
- What would future you beg you to start taking seriously today?

What is your Two-Way Door Asymmetry?

- Where are you avoiding risk too much?
- Where are you pretending a one-way door is still reversible?
- What small bet could create real upside without endangering the base?
- What commitment should you exit because the thesis stopped working?

What is your Get Into the Weeds?

- Where have you outsourced judgment because the details are boring, technical, uncomfortable, or slow?
- What important decision are you making from summaries only?

- What would you understand differently if you opened the numbers, the product, the contract, the code, the customer conversation, or the medical report yourself?

What is your You Only Have 24 Hours?

- Where are you trying to win on hours instead of leverage?
- Who could you trust and grow so your time multiplies instead of running out?
- Where is a people problem actually a leadership problem you are avoiding?

What is your Aggressive Momentum?

- Where are you waiting for clarity that only shows up after you move?
- What needs a date, an owner, and a smaller next step?
- Where are you using realistic timelines as a disguise for moving slowly?

What is your Compounding Effect?

- What small action, repeated for twelve weeks, would improve the base of your life or work?
- What are you doing over and over that compounds in the wrong direction?
- What lesson should you write down so you do not have to learn it twice?

What is your Infinite Game?

- Where are you trying to win a short round in a way that makes the long game worse?
- What relationship, reputation, body, or opportunity needs protection from short-term optimization?
- What would it mean to keep playing better for decades?

These questions matter more than my answers.

My answers are here for one reason: a model without an example is too easy to admire and too easy to ignore. But do not copy my life. Get more deliberate about yours.

And I hope the book shows that a mental model does not have to be cold. It can come from love. It can come from grief. It can come from a father who died earlier than he should have, a child who deserves your

morning energy, a body in pain, a team that trusted you, customers you want to serve for a long time, or a ball hitting your face until you stop being afraid of it.

A model is a story compressed into a tool. A good one helps you act when life gets noisy.

That is why I am writing mine down. Not because they are perfect. Because I need them.

And maybe one of them helps you build your own.

CHAPTER 14

Closing: The Operating System Is Never Finished

This is a draft of a life, not the final version of one. I want to be honest about that before you close the book.

When you write something like this, there is a pull to make it all look cleaner than it was. You can edit stories until they sound inevitable, turn mistakes into lessons too fast, make pain more elegant than it actually felt, write the models with more confidence than you had in the moment you needed them. I tried to avoid that, because the truth is I am still building this operating system, today, while you read it.

Family First is still tested by work. Protect the Machine is still tested by pain, routine, fear, and convenience. Two-Way Door Asymmetry is still tested by excitement and ego. Get Into the Weeds is still tested by the comfort of a nice high-level summary. You Only Have 24 Hours is still tested by the urge to do everything myself instead of trusting people with it. Aggressive Momentum is still tested by the risk of pushing too hard or waiting too long. The Compounding Effect is still tested by impatience, and The Infinite Game is still tested by short-term wins that look very attractive in the moment.

The models are not trophies. They are tools I need precisely because the opposite tendency is still alive in me. If I were naturally perfect at all of this, I would not need a single one of them.

A model exists because there is a recurring danger sitting right next to it. The model is just the reminder, placed exactly where I tend to fail.

There is one layer under all of these that I only named for myself after 30. I am stoic. I did not learn it from a book first, I looked back one day and saw it had always been running in me, quietly, since I was a kid taking a ball in the face on purpose. What it looks like in practice is this: when something goes wrong, I almost always assume it is my fault, and I assume everything depends on me. I refuse to blame other

people. I insist on being the protagonist of my own story and never the victim. And even when something is clearly outside my control, I still go hunting for the angle where I could have done something differently.

I want to be honest that this is a demanding, double-edged way to live. Taking responsibility for everything makes you strong and it can also crush you, because you carry weight that is not always yours to carry. I am not selling it to you as the answer. I am telling you it is mine, and I keep it on purpose, because for me the cost of feeling like a victim is much higher than the cost of feeling responsible.

Two phrases hold the edges of this for me, and I repeat them like code I do not want to lose. The first: "The worst thing evil can do to you is make you evil" (A pior coisa que o mal pode lhe fazer é te tornar malvado). The second: "I can only give what I have, and I will not pay back evil with evil" (Eu só posso dar o que eu tenho, não vou retribuir o mal com o mal). Responsibility for everything does not mean becoming hard. It means I do not let what is done to me decide what I become.

Some of this got clearer to me from a book, *When Bad Things Happen to Good People*. It did not give me a tidy answer, and I did not want one. What it gave me was permission to stop demanding that suffering be fair before I deal with it. Bad things happen, to good people, with no invoice and no explanation. The only real question left is what you do next, and that is a question I can actually work with.

This book will change as I change. More stories will get added, some chapters will get sharper, some ideas will probably turn out wrong, and some models may get renamed or thrown away. That does not make this version false. It makes it **alive**. A static operating system goes obsolete; a living one updates. But the updates should not be random, they should come from reality: family life, business results, what my body tells me, customer trust, the team, investment outcomes, pain, love, grief, and the slow repeated evidence of what actually makes life better.

That is why I want to keep writing. Writing is not only communication. Writing is debugging. When an idea stays in my head, it can feel clear without being clear. The moment I write it down, the weak

parts show up, the missing example becomes obvious, the contradictions surface, and the model either gets stronger or admits it was never ready.

This book started from a doubt that maybe an autobiography was not the right container, and I still think that. A chronological life story may come later, or pieces of it may keep leaking into these chapters. But the deeper story was never "what happened to me." The deeper story is:

- What did I learn to see?
- What did I decide to protect?
- What games did I choose to play?
- What histories did I refuse to repeat?
- What risks did I choose to take?
- What did I build from the material life handed me?

Those are the questions that matter to me now. If you reached this point, I hope you do not walk away just knowing more about me. I hope you walk away with a few sharper questions about yourself.

Because the goal was never to build a monument. The goal was to reverse engineer one operating system so another person could improve theirs.

And I mean one. I have never tried to reach a crowd, I have always worked to reach and change one life. The clearest proof is Codeftw, a free project I have run since 2017, and the whole time I kept telling myself the same thing: I am here for just one person. If only one person shows up and it changes their life, it was worth all of it. That person turned out to be Denilson. He showed up, his life changed, he is still with me today, and he is now a personal friend, not a statistic. That is the entire model in one name.



So if this book reaches one person, it was worth writing. If that person is you, let me know. And if it helped you, share it with the people you love and anyone you think it could help. Then go be with them. They do not last forever, and neither do you.

filipe@quave.com.br

CHAPTER 15

Changes Over Time

In the closing I told you this is a draft of a life, not the final version of one, and that it would change as I change. This page is where I keep that honest. Every time I add a story, sharpen a model, change my mind, or fix something I got wrong, it gets a dated line here, so you always know which version you are holding and what moved since the last one.

It also anchors the book in time. I wrote the first version in the present tense of my own life, so it carries sentences like "I had the surgery two weeks ago" and "as I write this." I kept them on purpose, because the freshness is part of the truth and I did not want to sand every living moment down into a flat, dateless line. But a relative sentence needs a fixed point, so here it is: unless a later entry says otherwise, read "now," "today," "recently," and "two weeks ago" as relative to the date of the first version below.

A static operating system goes obsolete. A living one updates. So will this one.

June 18, 2026: First version

The first complete version, and the one every later change is measured against. It has the origin chapters, the eight models and how they check each other, how the models work together, how to use the book, and the closing. Every "as I write this" inside it is as of this date.

And the date is not a flourish: it really is June 18, 2026 right now, as I wrap up this first version. The book opens on June 18, 1988, the day I was born, so this first version goes out exactly thirty-eight years after my hello world, to the day. A good day to start counting.