

M&A Strategy Playbook

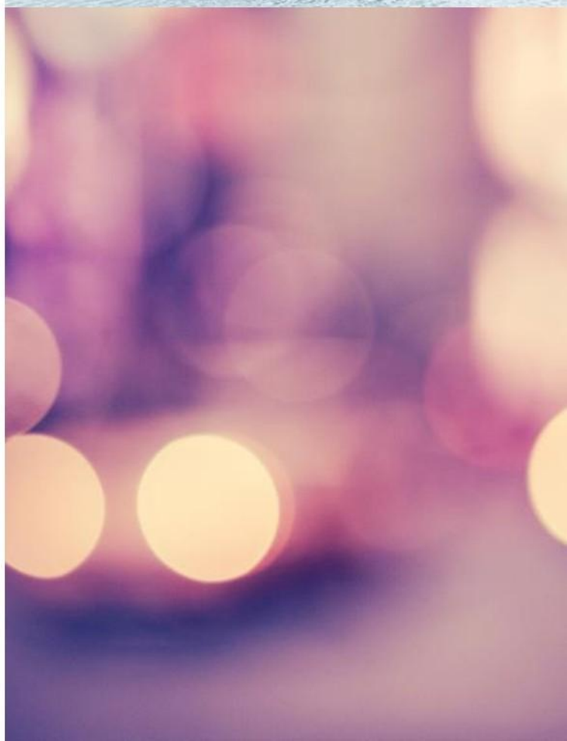
From Strategy Design to Board-Ready Report

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Section

1. Introduction: Understanding M&A Strategy [3 topics]
2. Strategic Context & Growth Gap Analysis [4 topics]
3. Build vs. Buy Assessment [3 topics]
4. M&A Focus Themes and Deal Patterns [8 topics]
5. Target Screening and Capital Guardrails [4 topics]
6. Execution Roadmap and Operating Capstone [3 topics]





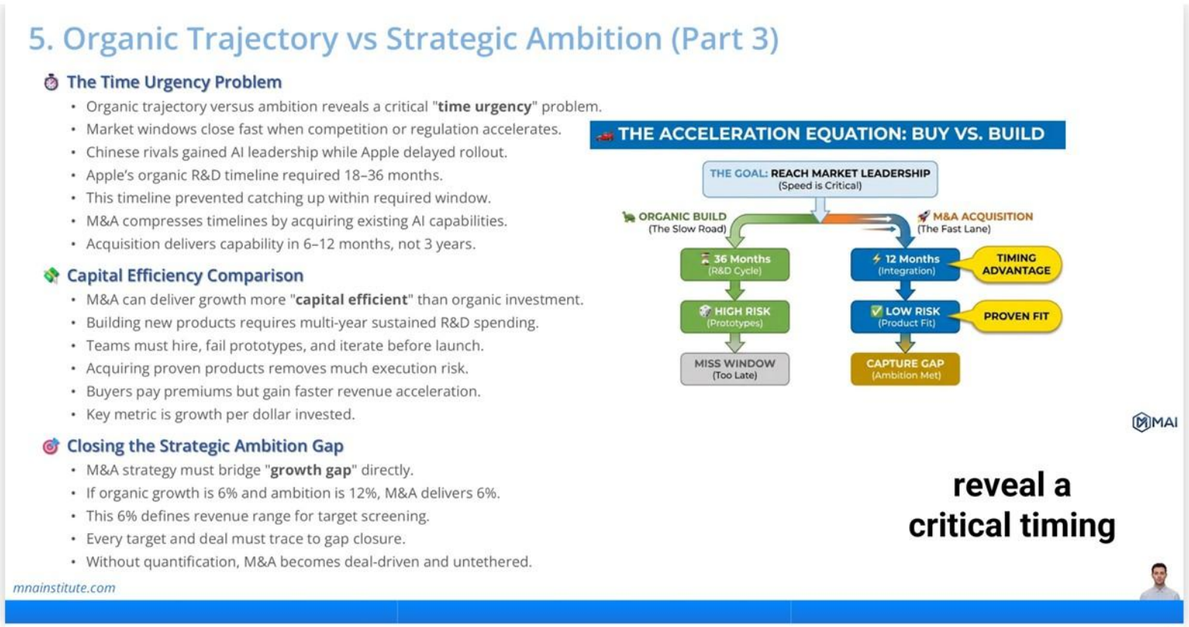
What This Course Covers

🎯 The Core Problem

- Most deal failures begin long before the first NDA is signed.
- Organizations pursue acquisitions without a strategic mandate, a quantified growth gap, or screening discipline.
- This course fixes that.

📚 What You Will Build: 6 Sections · 25 Topics · 51 Modules

- Section 1: Learn what M&A strategy actually is and why most organizations get it wrong.
- Section 2: Diagnose your strategic context and quantify the revenue, EBITDA, and FCF gaps.
- Section 3: Work through the build vs. buy vs. partner decision using capability gap mapping.
- Section 4: Master 6 deal archetypes: horizontal scale, vertical integration, diversification, adjacent expansion, tech/talent, and geographic entry.
- For each archetype: learn the synergy blueprint, integration risks, and value-creation KPIs.



From Investment Themes to a 30-60-90 Day Execution Roadmap

🔎 Section 5: Target Screening and Capital Guardrails

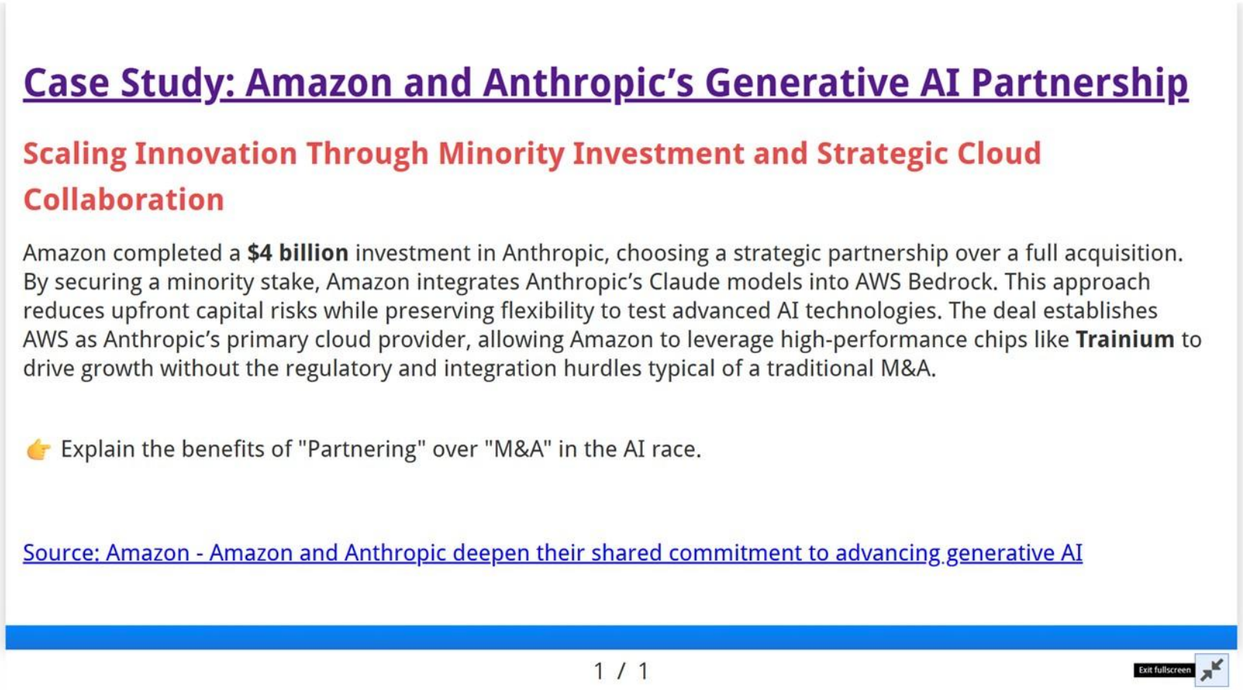
- Define financial guardrails, set exclusion criteria, and analyze capital capacity.
- Construct a deal scorecard that forces strategic clarity before any target conversation begins.

🚀 Section 6: Execution Roadmap

- Design the M&A governance engine and establish a deal committee structure.
- Build a 30-60-90 day roadmap from strategic intent to active deal flow.

⚖️ How You Will Learn: 5-Stage Learning Cycle

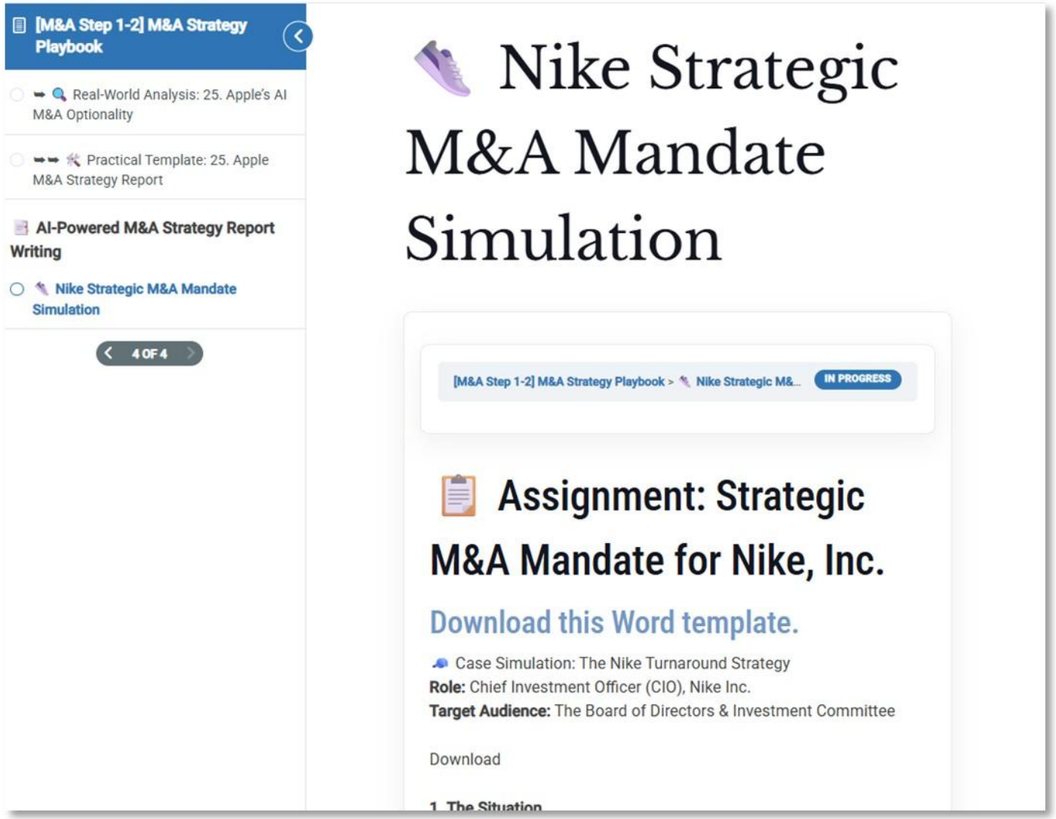
- ① Core Framework → ② Retention Quiz → ③ Real-World Case Analysis → ④ Template → ⑤ AI Report
- Case studies are drawn from actual reported transactions, not summaries.
- AOL-Time Warner collapse · Apple's AI pivot · Amazon/Anthropic · Coca-Cola/Costa · T-Mobile/Sprint
- Each case requires you to apply the frameworks you just learned to real strategic outcomes.
- Professional judgment is built through repeated application, not memorization.



The Capstone: Write a Board-Ready M&A Strategy

📋 AI Report Writing Capstone: Nike Strategic M&A Mandate

- Role: Chief Investment Officer, Nike Inc.
- Audience: Board of Directors and Investment Committee
- Task: Write a 2-3 page Strategic M&A Mandate Memo.
- You will apply the full course framework across 4 phases:
- Phase 1: Quantify Nike's growth gap vs. its organic trajectory
- Phase 2: Build the build vs. buy argument using capability gap logic
- Phase 3: Select 2 investment themes with deal archetype reasoning
- Phase 4: Set financial guardrails with specific numbers and exclusion criteria
- Submit your memo → receive instant AI feedback on diagnosis, thematic clarity, and feasibility.



🏁 What You Walk Away With

- You will quantify growth gaps, design investment themes, and build governance roadmaps.
- These are the exact outputs boards and investment committees expect before any acquisition begins.
- This separates professionals who react to deal flow from those who create it.