

Rework
by
Jason Fried and David Heinemeir Hansson

Jason Fried and David Heinemeir Hansson are the cofounders of 37 Signals. The company is renowned for their incredible products AND for being incredibly lean. In Rework they share what they have learned about building and running a business.

In this summary I've distilled down each of their points to a single sentence or two. However, nothing can replace actually picking up a copy of this book and reading it yourself. They do a wonderful job of providing examples, bringing the concepts to life and providing a motivation behind each of their points. In addition, just like their business, they keep things to a bare minimum. As a result, you can easily go through 10-20 pages of the book in a half hour and come away with some actionable information. While I hope that you enjoy the review, I hope even more that you pick up a copy of the book AND put their wisdom in to action.

Part One: First – They start with a basic premise that permeates the book. Things have changed and that provides incredible opportunities.

- The New Reality -- Anyone can be in business today / the rules have changed.

Part Two: Takedown – In the second part of the book they challenge the reader to question what they have been taught about how to approach business and life. By “taking down” our traditional way of thinking an entirely new world of possibilities is opened to us.

- Ignore the real world – Don't let others tell you it's not possible.
- Failure is not a rite of passage – Build on your successes and strengths.
- Planning is Guessing – Forecasts are always wrong. Be careful about wasting time on them.
- Why grow? – There is nothing wrong with being a small or life style business.
- Workaholism – It's better to be efficient and enjoy life.
- Be a Starter – Take a shot and start your own business.

Part Three: Go – There's a widely known expression about a good plan violently executed defeating the perfect plan still on the drawing board. In part three, they challenge the reader to get off their backside and start moving.

- Make a dent in the universe – Don't do it for money. Do it because it matters.
- Scratch your own itch – Focus on a problem that is important to you.
- Start – Quit planning and take the first step.

- Draw a line in the sand – Do something you believe in.
- Live it or leave it – You need to eat your own dog food.
- Outside money is plan Z – Do not take external financing. It will mess things up.
- You need less than you think – Bill Gates started in a garage.
- Start a business, not a startup – You need to focus on profit from day one.
- Building to flip is building to flop – If you believe in it and live it, why would you sell it?
- Less mass – Don't add people, brick and mortar, or other overhead until as late as possible.

Part Four: Progress – In part four they turn their attention to what actions you need to be taking. The emphasis is on taking little steps to start things in motion.

- Embrace constraints – Bailing wire and duct tape can solve a lot of problems and inspire creativity.
- Build half a product, not a half-assed product – Build a high quality, functional product first.
- Start at the epicenter – Build a product that does one thing well. Then expand.
- Making the call is making progress – Avoid paralysis by analysis.
- Be a curator – It's what you OMIT that matters. Be focused on the important.
- Throw less at the problem – It doesn't need to be complex. Quit making it so.
- Focus on what won't change – Think black cocktail dress. Focus on something timeless.
- Tone is in your fingers – It's not about the equipment, it's about you!
- Sell your by-products – Your fans trust you and want you to offer them related products.
- Launch now – Waiting won't make it better. Once you have a solid core, go!

Part Five: Productivity – Once you have started moving, you can look at moving more efficiently. And the authors present a number of great ideas on improving your productivity in this section. Read them and put them in to action. However, almost all of them – and more! – can be found in Darren Hardy's [The Compound Effect](#). My recommendation is to make sure that you add Hardy's book to your must read list as well.

- Illusions of agreement – Build a prototype so people can see the REAL product.
- Reasons to quit – Ask why repeatedly.
- Interruption is the enemy of productivity – Distractions are death. Eliminate them.
- Meetings are toxic – Meetings are an interruption → see the point above!
- Good enough is fine – You will have a chance to improve later.
- Quick wins – Establish small milestones and hit them.
- Don't be a hero – Sometimes you need to step away and move on
- Go to sleep – If you doubt the value of a good nap, try it and you will understand.
- Your estimates suck – Break things down as small as possible to avoid errors in estimates.
- Long lists don't get done – If you do three things every day, you'll make progress.

- Make tiny decisions – This avoids paralysis by analysis.

Part 6: Competitors – All too often we think of business as a zero sum game. That’s hardly the case. We each have our own unique way of approaching things that will appeal to some and not to others. In this section the authors challenge us to build our own unique business and trust that it will resonate with our customers. If we do this, competition is a non-issue.

- Don’t copy – People want the original, so be it!
- Decommoditize your product – Put your personality in to the product
- Pick a fight – Take a unique position in the market and defend it.
- Underdo your competition – Simpler is better.
- Who cares what they are doing – Too much focus on them distracts from your uniqueness.

Part 7: Evolution – Over time things will change. However, you need to continue to focus on your customers and their needs. If you do this, the changes that you make will be the right kind of changes – the kind of changes that your customer needs.

- Say no by default – Focus on your niche.
- Let your customers outgrow you – They may change. You can’t. Stay focused.
- Don’t confuse enthusiasm with priority – Just because your excited does not mean your customers will be.
- Be at-home good – Deliver on your marketing.
- Don’t write it down – The key requirements will be obvious and don’t come from data analysis.

Part 8: Promotion – While marketing is certainly critical to the success of any business, you need to realize that it is not a separate function within your company. Rather, marketing is all about making sure that you have true understanding of what your customers need, letting them know that you have the ability to satisfy that need, and delivering on your promises. Focusing on delivering incredible value to your customers will provide the best promotion available to your business.

- Welcome obscurity – Starting small allows you to get it right without a huge cost.
- Build an audience – Share information freely to build your tribe.
- Out-teach your competition – Great teachers are remembered (think about your best teacher ever).
- Emulate chefs – Great chefs have no fear about sharing everything. Neither should you.
- Go behind the scenes – People want to see what is behind the curtain.
- Nobody likes plastic flowers – Things are never perfect. That’s OK - the most beautiful things in life have imperfections.
- Press releases are spam – You need to be personal with your messaging.
- Forget about the Wall Street Journal – It’s about your niche, not about the entire world.

- Drug dealers get it right – Give free tastes of a product that is addictive.
- Marketing is not a department – Everything you do is marketing so do it well.
- The myth of the overnight sensation – It's a romantic image that very rarely exists. Don't be seduced by the idea.

Part 9: Hiring – There will come a time when you need to expand your team. However, that time is LONG after when most people think it is necessary. You need to make sure that you grow slowly AND add people that share the passion. If you try and grow in any other manner, it won't end well.

- Do it yourself first – You need to understand the nuts and bolts to be successful in the long run.
- Hire when it hurts – Only when you are at total wits end do you bring in more staff.
- Pass on great people – Only hire when you have a need, NOT because it's someone you can't afford to lose.
- Strangers at a cocktail party – Your co-workers need to know each other personally if you want to have the right environment for success.
- Resumes are ridiculous – Does anyone put the bad stuff on a resume? Think about it...
- Years of irrelevance – Do they have 30 years of experience or one year of experience 30 times?
- Forget about formal education – It's about ability, not intellect.
- Everybody works – Managing people alone is not enough. Everyone needs to contribute.
- Hire managers of one – You want people that are self-motivated.
- Hire great writers – With the internet, content is king.
- The best are everywhere – Technology allows us to build global teams. Do it.
- Test-drive employees – You would not buy a car without a test drive, why would you hire someone?

Part 10: Damage Control – Failure is part of life. When things go wrong, admit it, fix it quickly, and move on to the next task. It's a simple, albeit very effective, recipe.

- Own your bad news – Like Dale Carnegie says, "When you are wrong admit it quickly and emphatically".
- Speed changes everything – People respect a quick response even if it is "I don't know". Alternately, in the absence of information, people will create their own story.
- How to say you're sorry – Again as Dale Carnegie says, "When you are wrong admit it quickly and emphatically".
- Put everyone on the front lines – All employees should have contact with your customers as it keeps them connected to reality.
- Take a deep breath – Sometimes it is not as bad as it seems.

Part 11: Culture – You do not create a culture. You do make decisions and take actions. These decisions and actions will shape the culture. Make sure that the decisions and actions you make are consistent with the culture you want to create.

- You don't create a culture – Culture is based on behaviors. What are yours?
- Decisions are temporary – You need to be willing to change AND to have people that are willing to change.
- Skip the rock stars – Take care of all your employees versus doting on a few “rock stars”.
- They're not thirteen – Do you really think treating employees like children is a good idea?
- Send people home at 5 – Successful people are successful outside of work as well.
- Don't scar on the first cut – Creating a bunch of policies is a recipe for a disaster.
- Sound like you – Use your own voice in communications and avoid communicating like a lawyer.
- Four-letter words – Avoid words such as need, must, can't, easy, just, only, fast.
- ASAP is poison – Is it really an emergency?

Part 12: Conclusions – Just as the authors started with a brief chapter, they end with an equally brief chapter. Their message is simply that you need to act on what you have just read otherwise you will have wasted your time.

- Inspiration is perishable – You need to act now as you will get distracted if you delay taking action.