

**Rework by Jason Fried
and David Heinemeier
Hansson | Book
Summary by Paul
Minors**

INTRODUCTION

Who is this summary for?

Rework is a fantastic read for anyone interested in business, leadership and entrepreneurship. It's very quick and easy to read. Each section is very concise; there's no fluff - just quick tips and actionable ideas. This is one of the reasons I love the book so much! One of the interesting things about the book is that it was written based on the experiences of growing 37 Signals; the company behind Basecamp and other productivity apps. The book is a byproduct of their business (which is one of the ideas they talk about in the book).

About the authors

Jason Fried was one of the co-founders of 37 Signals, or more commonly known as Basecamp. Fried is a well-known keynote speaker, specialising in the topic of deficiencies in the workplace but also well versed in entrepreneurship, management, software, and design. Fried studied finance at The University of Arizona and during his time there he decided that he'd really like to work for himself and became interested in web design. From here, he met a couple of the right people and 37 Signals was born.

David Heinemeier Hansson is a Danish programmer, was a co-founder of 37 Signals and is currently the CTO. Heinemeier Hansson is the man behind Ruby on Rails, an open-source web framework that helps programmers all around the world build beautiful applications. Heinemeier Hanssen is also involved in public speaking, focusing on technology and business. A couple of his favourite hobbies are photography and racer driving.

Together Fried and Heinemeier Hansson have co-authored Rework, a NY Times international best-seller and [Remote](#) which all about the new emerging trend of working remotely.

In this summary

We'll begin the summary with a brief discussion about what Fried and Heinemeier Hansson consider to be the new normal. Next, we'll cover failures, mistakes and the demise of the workaholic. Then, we'll dive into discussing how to get started, covering topics such as mission statements, excuses and money. We'll also cover

some important themes such as progress, productivity, competitors, hiring, and promotions. Finally, we'll discuss the concept of culture and how culture can shape a company.

BOOK SUMMARY

THE NEW NORMAL

Fried and Heinemeier Hansson explain that the business world has been transformed. It looks very different to what it did twenty years ago. The idea that anyone can have their own business is a pretty common thought now. And things that seemed so unreachable, in relation to tools and technology, are so within reach for almost anyone. The cost of these tools is considerably lower than ever, making it so accessible for just about anyone to get into business. Automation and technology now mean that jobs that used to take three or four people, can now be done by one person, or simply done by a machine.

FAILURE, GROWTH AND WORKAHOLICS

Mistakes

We've all been told countless times that we need to learn from our mistakes, that failure is what happens before you succeed. And although there are definite lessons to be learned, Fried and Heinemeier Hansson believe that failure is not a prerequisite for success. And in fact, learning from your mistakes isn't nearly as valuable as it's made out to be. They call upon a study from the Harvard Business School to prove their point. The study shows that those who have already had some success, are likely to succeed again at a rate of 34%. Whereas those who have failed, only have a 23% chance of success. They explain that experiencing success is more likely to help you with future successes.

Growth isn't always necessary

Fried and Heinemeier Hansson emphasise that there is no need to have high expectations of running a large corporation. There is absolutely nothing wrong with wanting to run a small business and to stay small. The constant need to grow and expand isn't for everyone and that's ok. The authors stress that as long as your business is sustainable and keeping you afloat, then it's something you can be proud of.

Workaholics

We all know someone who is a workaholic, that person who seems to be constantly attached to their phone on weekends, first to the office, last to leave and eats lunch at their desk. However, just because they appear to be working all of the time, doesn't mean that they are being productive or achieving any more than everyone else. Fried and Heinemeier Hansson explain that more often than not, the workaholics are wasting time focusing on tiny details that really aren't relative. They tend to struggle to let go of a task and move on to a new one.

"Workaholics aren't heroes. They don't save the day, they just use it up. The real hero is already home because she figured out a faster way to get things done."

GETTING STARTED

A lot of people get caught up with being an 'entrepreneur'. Everyone gets so concerned with meeting the expectations of the stereotype that they don't get on with the work. Fried and Heinemeier Hansson believe that the word entrepreneur should be replaced with the word starter. They explain that absolutely anyone can be a starter, there is no prerequisite of a business degree. All you need is a bit of passion, an idea and some confidence. Their advice is that you need to stop focusing on meeting the expectations of being an entrepreneur and just get started with the work.

Making a difference

Everyone wants to feel as if they are making a difference, having an impact on people's lives. And if you can achieve this, then you can consider the work you are doing great. But Fried and Heinemeier Hansson want everyone to remember that making a difference can be done on many different levels, it's not all about curing cancer. They explain that putting in the effort to meet people's needs is making a difference, no matter what the scale. If you've created a product that makes even just one aspect of people's lives a little bit easier then you are making a difference.

What do you want?

Fried and Heinemeier Hansson believe that you should 'scratch your own itch' in order to create a successful product. They are referring to designing a product or service that you want, finding a problem in your life and solving it. By doing this you'll immediately know if you are on the right track or not. If you spend your time trying to solve a problem you don't have or one you don't know much about you are going to struggle.

Turn your ideas into something

Having an idea is all good and well, but it's the execution of your idea that's important. That's where the proof is. Fried and Heinemeier Hansson explain that having an idea really isn't that valuable, everyone has ideas. It's what you do with your idea that counts. You've got to commit to your idea and turn it into a reality, into something tangible that can be sold. You simply can't sit back hoarding ideas.

Timing

A common excuse is that everyone has no time. You might have a brilliant idea but you just don't have the time to invest in your idea and make it a reality. Fried and Heinemeier Hansson believe that this is no excuse, if you want something bad enough, you do whatever it takes to make the time. They emphasise the importance of holding yourself accountable, don't hold yourself back with excuses. If you have a dream, then it's entirely up to you to make it happen.

"Besides, the perfect time never arrives. You're always too young or old or busy or broke or something else. If you constantly fret about timing things perfectly, they'll never happen."

Be more than just a product or service

Fried and Heinemeier Hansson believe that if you want to build a successful business, you have to have some depth. You can't be all about your product or service, there has to be more to you. Your business needs to have a point of view and have some strong beliefs. And you need to be able to explain to the world what your beliefs are.

This is where mission statements come in. But it's important to actually live and breath your mission statement. It's all too easy to write something down on paper. But it's another thing to actually stand for something and live it.

Money money money

Fried and Heinemeier Hansson explain that they have seen far too many businesses work hard to raise money, only to be unsuccessful or to have regrets. By raising money from the outside, you are giving up some of your freedom. If you have investors and boards of directors, they are all going to want to have a say, and all of a sudden, your business isn't yours anymore. Fried and Heinemeier Hansson explain that getting money from the outside should be your last resort, try everything else before you have to go down that road.

Regarding money, they explain that you often need less money than you think. Everyone thinks you need to go in with plenty of capital, but the reality is you can get started pretty easily with not very much money. Recalling their experience in launching their first product, Fried and Heinemeier Hansson explain that they didn't have their own office, they shared some space with other companies, they didn't pay

for advertising but used free online services to share experiences. they did all of the hard work themselves, all of the customer services. And it all worked out.

Businesses vs. startups

Fried and Heinemeier Hansson explain that you should be aiming to start a business, not a startup. Often, people use the concept of a startup as a safety net from the real world, as a way to protect themselves if they failed, and a way to avoid dealing with the nitty gritty of a real business such as payrolls and profit. Any issues are met with the excuse; it's OK, we are a startup. If you go into your project, treating it as a real business, you are much more likely to succeed. Worry about profit from the get-go, pay people appropriately and ensure that all your bills and deadlines are met. By doing this it will be easier to keep going.

Another issue that Fried and Heinemeier Hansson have is with exit strategies. The idea that you need to know how to get out of the business before you've even started is extremely foreign to them. Why are you planning to fail? You should be planning for success.

MAKE PROGRESS

Constraints and details

When pursuing a new idea, it's likely you'll face constraints and restrictions, whether it's regarding time, money, experience or people. However, Fried and Heinemeier Hansson explain that these constraints are not necessarily negative if you look at them from a different perspective they can be an opportunity. Constraints will encourage you to work with less and get creative, you'll also be more aware of not wasting any time/resources.

The authors also agree that you need to stop worrying about all the finer details early on. Don't get too caught up on the nitty gritty until the generalised plan is complete. Of course, they acknowledge that the details are what makes a difference, but there's no point getting caught up on them in the early stages. By getting distracted by small details you'll likely get distracted from the task at hand and waste precious time. The authors recommend that you get stuck into finalising the basics and can worry about the details later.

*"Whenever you can, swap "Let's think about it" for "Let's decide on it."
Commit to making decisions. Don't wait for the perfect solution. Decide and move forward."*

Building a product

Fried and Heinemeier Hansson have a strong point of view when it comes to building products. They firmly believe that you should build half a product, not a half-assed product. What they mean by this is that it's easy to get overwhelmed with numerous ideas and try to jam them all into one product. You'll rush, try cram as much in as possible and the end result will be a crappy product where nothing really works. Instead of trying to get ten different aspects of the product perfect, start with just one. Consider the time and resources you have available and establish what is possible. It's better to have only one aspect of a product, but have it perfect than it is to have a product with 10, crappy features. And the authors want you to remember that less is more.

"When you start anything new, there are forces pulling you in a variety of directions. There's the stuff you could do, the stuff you want to do, and the

stuff you have to do. The stuff you have to do is where you should begin. Start at the epicentre"

When explaining the epicentre, Fried and Heinemeier Hansson use the example of a hot dog stand. When getting ready to open, you could focus on the design of the stand, the company name, decor and what condiments you'll offer. But what you should really focus on is the hot dog. That is the epicentre. The rest can come later.

Business focus

Fried and Heinemeier Hansson explain that you should build your business about things that will not change. Consider what people are looking for in a business or product right now and what they are going to want in ten years. This constant is what your business should focus on, not temporary fads or things that will change rapidly. They look to Amazon as an example. Amazon's key focus is fast, free shipping and affordable prices. Two things that consumers are always going to want.

Something that Fried and Heinemeier Hansson have noticed time and time again is businesses becoming obsessed over the finer details, what tools or software to use, the location of their office and what furniture it's going to have. The authors remind us that these are secondary to your business, you need to remain focused on the core, what people want and how you are going to get it to them (and make money).

Launching

Most businesses procrastinate the launch of their new product or service for far too long. This is usually down to nerves, fear of failure or a lack of motivation to get started. But Fried and Heinemeier Hansson point out that the reality is, that most people have their product or service ready to launch a lot sooner than they realise. They emphasise the importance of going to market as soon as it is ready to go. Don't get caught up in anything else, the focus should be getting your product/service out there and making money.

BE PRODUCTIVE

Avoiding interruptions

Fried and Heinemeier Hansson explain that interruptions are the enemy of productivity. Countless works find themselves wondering why they are working overtime and work is creeping into their weekends. It probably isn't because there is too much work to be done, it's more likely because you're not getting the work done during working hours due to interruptions. Every phone call, meeting, email or someone asking you questions interrupt your workflow and sets you back.

The authors explain that you should really focus on getting into a work zone, alone and for long periods of time. Dedicate this time to being your most productive.

"Getting into that zone takes time and requires avoiding interruptions. It's like REM sleep: You don't just go directly into REM sleep. You go to sleep first and then make your way to REM. Any interruptions force you to start over. And just as REM is when the real sleep magic happens, the alone zone is where the real productivity magic happens."

Meetings, meetings, meetings

It's so common for your working day to be filled with numerous meetings. And meetings are infamous for going over time and you often walk out without a complete solution. Fried and Heinemeier Hansson point out that a 1 hour meeting for 10 people isn't actually 1-hour of wasted time, it's 10 hours of wasted time. They want you to ask yourself if the meeting is really worth 10 hours of paid working time before you commit! When meetings are needed, they suggest you consider the following things:

- Stick to a timeframe, set a time or something. But once the time is up, leave.
- Have as few people at the meeting as possible, the more people, the more likely you are to get off topic/
- Start with an agenda and stick to it.

- Open the meeting with a specific problem you aim to solve. That is the purpose of this meeting. Don't be general.
- End the meeting with a clear solution. And ensure that the people responsible for enacting this solution are aware of the next steps.

Momentum

Momentum is absolutely key in the business world. It drives your motivation and without motivation, you aren't likely to get very far. Fried and Heinemeier Hansson emphasise the importance of building momentum by finishing one task and moving onto the next as soon as possible. They describe the process as quick wins. There's nothing worse than working on a project that feels like it's never ending. You eventually lose all motivation and want to give up. Therefore it's important to break tasks down so you can have quick wins. Give yourself a sense of accomplishment and then move onto the next thing.

"Keep in mind that the obvious solution might very well be quitting. People automatically associate quitting with failure, but sometimes that's exactly what you should do. If you already spent too much time on something that wasn't worth it, walk away. You can't get that time back. The worst thing you can do now is waste even more time."

Don't make estimations

We've all learned the hard way the estimates are not always accurate. It's all too easy to estimate that a certain task will take 1 hour of your time. Only to find that 3 hours later you are still working on the same task and the other two things you planned to do in that time haven't even been started. A couple of ways to combat this is to break big tasks into smaller tasks. Fried and Heinemeier Hansson recommend doing this because the smaller a task is, the easier it should be to estimate the time it will take.

"Keep breaking your time frames down into smaller chunks. Instead of one twelve-week project, structure it as twelve one-week projects. Instead of guesstimating at tasks that take thirty hours or more, break them down into more realistic six-to-ten-hour chunks. Then go one step at a time."

Similarly, don't write yourself lengthy to-do lists that never get completed. When your list is too long, you'll likely cross off the first few things, but by the time you've done them, you've added to the list and it's even more overwhelming. Fried and

Heinemeier Hansson strongly recommend keeping your lists shorter, be realistic. If you only have 10 items on your list and you get one done, you've done 10% of the work.

COMPETITION

Copycat

Competition is inevitable and when someone else is doing exactly what you want to do the temptation to copy is high. However, Fried and Heinemeier Hansson stress the importance of avoiding copying at all costs. They explain that by copying you are actually setting yourself up for failure. By copying, you miss out on the fundamental step that is understanding a product, why and how it functions the way it does. By simply copying and pasting, you fail to truly understand a product and that is a critical mistake.

Now, just as you realise that copying someone else's product may be tempting, if you create a great product it's likely that someone else will try to copy you. Fried and Heinemeier Hansson offer one way to eliminate that risk. They suggest you make your product part of you, make it unique to you, something that no-one else can offer.

You don't always have to do more

When there's competition in a particular market, it's a pretty common approach to want to do more than they are, add more features to a product or offer more with your service. However, Fried and Heinemeier Hansson explain that this isn't the only tactic, you can try to under-do them. Simplify the problem they are trying to solve and leave the difficult aspects to the competitions.

The authors use the bicycle as an example, for a number of years, manufacturers have focused on producing bikes with the most high-tech equipment, the most gears, fancy suspension, light-weight etc. However, in recent times, the standard one-gear bike with no fancy features have been some of the best sellers. The simplicity is appealing to so many consumers and they end up out-doing their competition by under-doing their product!

"In the end, it's not worth paying much attention to the competition anyway. Why not? Because worrying about the competition quickly turns into an obsession. What are they doing right now? Where are they going next? How should we react? Every little move becomes something to be analysed. And

that's a terrible mindset. It leads to overwhelming stress and anxiety. That state of mind is bad soil for growing anything."

PROMOTIONS

Audiences

Your primary goal should be to get your audience to come directly to you, you don't want to spend all of your time trying to reach them. Once you've established a base of customers who continue to return, who like what you have to say and remain loyal, you've found the most important customers you'll ever get.

Teach

Fried and Heinemeier Hansson point out that selling a product or a service is the primary role of most businesses. There's not many that focus on teaching. However, this is a great option and most companies don't even consider it.

"Teach and you'll form a bond you just don't get from traditional marketing tactics. Buying people's attention with a magazine or online banner ad is one thing. Earning their loyalty by teaching them forms a whole different connection."

The authors recommend you look to chefs for inspiration. Beyond cooking, chefs write cookbooks. They share their knowledge with their audiences which gains respect and loyalty. Consider what your 'recipes' are, what can you share with the world and how can it benefit you?

People want to know

As humans, we are all incredibly nosy, we all want to know as much about everything as possible, just consider the amount of reality television being broadcast these days. So Fried and Heinemeier Hansson recommend you tap into this and explain to your audience exactly how your business works. Give them the insight into what you do and how you do it, this will be exciting for the customers and they'll become more loyal to your brand and your products.

The authors also emphasise the importance of being as real as possible, share the struggles you've faced and any setbacks you've had. This will only make you seem more 'real' and relatable. Customers will love it.

Give a little bit away

Fried and Heinemeier Hansson consider successful drug dealers. How do they sell more of their product? They give a little bit away for free, knowing that the product is good enough to get the customers coming back for more, and paying for it. So they recommend emulating their business model, give something away for free, give your customers a nice taster for your product and ensure that they want to come back to make a purchase!

It's a myth

We've all heard about the fairy-tale overnight sensation. And when you hear how their business took off overnight, you're likely to feel ripped off and like a bit of a failure because your business isn't an instant success. But Fried and Heinemeier Hansson point out that the truth is, these overnight sensations usually have a lengthy backstory with years of work.

"Trade the dream of overnight success for slow, measured growth. It's hard, but you have to be patient. You have to grind it out. You have to do it for a long time before the right people notice."

HIRING

When to hire

First up, Fried and Heinemeier Hansson explain that you should always try the job out yourself before you hire someone for the role. It's important that you understand what the job entails, what the job looks like and how you'd like it to be done. It helps with making decisions around hours, salary and the kind of person you are looking for. It also might make you realise that you are completely capable of doing it yourself and don't actually need to hire anyone new.

The authors explain that hiring should never be done for pleasure, it should only be done to eliminate pain. Don't hire someone simply because it would be nice not to have to do certain elements of the job. And when faced with extra work that is a burden and isn't getting done, consider other alternatives before you jump in and hire someone. Look at different software options, automations and consider the consequences of not doing it all together.

"Problems start when you have more people than you need. You start inventing work to keep everyone busy. Artificial work leads to artificial projects. And those artificial projects lead to real costs and complexity."

What to look for

When you do decide that someone needs to be hired, there are a few things that Fried and Heinemeier Hansson recommend you consider:

- There's not a huge amount of difference between someone with six months experience and someone with six years. A little bit of experience is usually required but don't go overboard demanding years of service.
- Don't get too caught up in education. People who went to the best school, had the best grades and graduated from the best colleges don't necessarily make good workers. It just means that the education system was good for them. Look beyond people's grades and consider what their personality and skills will bring to the job.
- When faced with a few potential employees, always choose the person with the best writing skills. Writing is so important no matter what the role

is. Being able to write well also means that their communication and thinking is clear and they are easy to understand. Good writers fit every role.

- Don't restrict yourself by only hiring someone local. Technology has provided the freedom to work from anywhere, so you can hire the best person for the job no matter where they live.
- If possible, test out your potential employees. Get them on board for a small mini-project or short-term contract. See how they work and what they produce and you can decide if they are worth keeping on long-term or not.

DAMAGES AND APOLOGIES

Own up

Bad things happen and it's incredibly important to own your own mistakes. Fried and Heinemeier Hansson explain that the story is going to get out regardless, so it may as well come from you. This way you can address the problem and ensure that the information you share is correct. This will eliminate the risk of rumours and false information being leaked.

"A good apology accepts responsibility. It has no conditional if phrase attached. It shows people that the buck stops with you. And then it provides real details about what happened and what you're doing to prevent it from happening again. And it seeks a way to make things right."

Customer service

We all know that customers are king, but this is especially important when it comes to customer services. Fried and Heinemeier Hansson emphasise the importance of speed when it comes to addressing customer issues. If you can try and resolve any problems as fast as possible a bad situation can quickly be diffused. Don't let issues fester and get out of hand.

CULTURE IS IMPORTANT

Having a great culture in your business is really important. Fried and Heinemeier Hansson explain that culture isn't created overnight, it develops over time, as a result of behaviour. They explain that the way you treat your staff is how they will end up behaving. Treat them with respect and trust them and you'll cultivate a trusted culture. Show them how you treat your customers and in return, they will treat the customers the same. Here are a few things that Fried and Heinemeier Hansson recommend you take note of when considering your companies culture"

- Don't look for a 'rock-star' employee. These people aren't the people you hire. You create rockstars by providing trust, autonomy, and responsibility to employees. Give them the opportunity to develop themselves and watch them bloom.
- Don't treat your employees as children. When you request approval for just about anything, your staff are left feeling un-empowered and weak. They are also likely to stop thinking for themselves. Instead, give them the freedom and the work they produce will be significantly better.
- Don't overwork your staff. Ensure that they get to go home at 5 pm. You want people to have a life outside of work, if they have things to do after 5 pm then they are more likely going to be motivated to get the work done promptly and efficiently.
- A couple of words you should avoid using in business are: need, must, can't, easy, just, only and fast. These words are dangerous and encourage tension. Eliminate conflict and problems by avoiding these words.
- Also, avoid using the term ASAP. Everyone knows that work should be done as soon as possible so stop pointing out the obvious. By using it too regularly you also eliminate any importance for tasks and when something really does need to be done promptly, people won't take it seriously.

PARTING WORDS FROM THE AUTHORS

"If you want to do something, you've got to do it now. You can't put it on a shelf and wait two months to get around to it. You can't just say you'll do it later. Later, you won't be pumped up about it anymore. Inspiration is a magical thing, a productivity multiplier, a motivator. But it won't wait for you. Inspiration is a now thing. If it grabs you, grab it right back and put it to work."

CONCLUSION

Key takeaways

- The business work looks very different today than it did 20 years ago. So much more is possible with so much less.
- Anyone can be in business.
- Mistakes are likely to happen but they aren't required for success. You don't need to fail before you can succeed.
- You can have a small business and not want to grow.
- Getting started is what's important. Ideas are all good and well but you need to execute them.
- Don't look for outside money unless you really have to. You can do a lot with less than you think.
- See constraints and limitations as an opportunity to be creative and work with what you've got.
- When building a product, focus on doing a really good job. Even if that means you can't do everything all at once. Just do one thing and do it well.
- When building your business, focus on the epicentre, the part that's not going to change. Don't focus on the smaller, unimportant details.
- Being productive is important, avoid interruptions, only have meetings when absolutely necessary and break projects down into smaller, actionable tasks.
- Don't copy the competition, you miss out on the valuable step of learning about the product and how it works.
- Sometimes less is more, instead of trying to offer more features than your competition, focus on offering less, just do it really well.

- Consider teaching as a way to reach your audiences. Also, consider giving away a little for free. Give your customers a taste of your product/service and have them coming back for more.
- Hiring someone should not be your first move, the smaller the team the more productive you can be. First consider doing the job yourself, getting some software or automation to do it or don't do it at all.
- If you do end up needing to hire someone, don't get caught up in qualifications, location, and experience. Look for the right person for the job regardless of their history or location.
- If mistakes happen, own up immediately.
- Deal with customer complaints as quickly as possible.
- The culture within the workplace is important. Set the example you want others to follow.
- Treat your employees with respect, give them freedom and don't treat them like children.

Further reading

By the same two authors, *Remote: Office Not Required* is an examination of the emerging trend of remote working. They discuss the benefits of working remotely for both the employer and employee while examining common excuses. Remote offers plenty of advice on how to get your company started on having remote employees and also advice on how to manage your work if you are a remote employee. A great all-around guide to the new way to work!

The Lean Startup defines a scientific methodology for running startups and launching new products. This new approach has been adopted around the world within startups and established organisations. Regardless of your role or company size, this is a must read for entrepreneurs, marketers, developers and business leaders.

Entrepreneur, Ben Horowitz, has written *The Hard Thing about Hard Things* as a guide to starting and running your own startup. He shares his own journey with many helpful insights on how to be a successful CEO, how to create a company with a vision, how to encourage work culture, how to hire, how to fire and many more

interesting tips. A great read for anyone looking for business hopefuls looking to start their own venture!

Guidelines is my eBook that summarises the main lessons from 33 of the best-selling self-help books in one place. It is the ultimate book summary; Available as a 80-page ebook and 115-minute audio book. Guidelines lists 31 rules (or guidelines) that you should follow to improve your productivity, become a better leader, do better in business, improve your health, succeed in life and become a happier person.

Action steps

- There's a whole load of advice in this book, it's worth selecting a few of your favourites and actioning those.
- Remember the common themes from this book:
 - Anyone can get into business.
 - Getting started is what's important. Don't waste time on minute details. If you have an idea, start actioning it immediately.
 - Don't overcommit, focus on doing one thing really well, rather than doing 10 things badly.
 - Be productive, focus on what your working on, avoid interruptions and break big projects down into smaller, actionable tasks.
 - Less is more.
 - It's important to have a healthy culture within your company.

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