



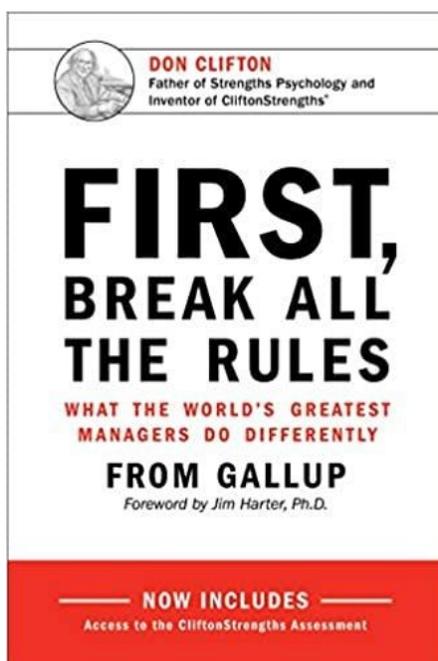
Book Summary: First, Break all the Rules by Marcus Buckingham

What is First, Break all the Rules About?

How great management differs from conventional management is demonstrated in the book First, Break all the Rules. According to the authors, some common perceptions about careers and management are false. The book introduces its readers to the key notions' great managers – those who achieve performance excellence for their employees – use to do their jobs, based on interviews conducted by the authors for Gallup.

Who is the Author of First, Break all the Rules?

Curt Coffman and Marcus Buckingham both have backgrounds in business consulting and research. The authors worked for Gallup Organization, an international performance management consulting firm at the time the book was published. In addition to writing other bestselling business books, Buckingham and Coffman have started their own consulting and management training businesses.



Introduction

Managerial responsibilities are not easy in a workplace. Performance is, at the end of the day, the primary factor that impacts the success of a business, and it is the manager's job to make sure that performance reaches its highest level.

Managers have been discussed extensively regarding how they can fulfill their role effectively, but what if conventional wisdom about management is incorrect? First, Break All the Rules examines the strategies used by truly great managers rather than taking them for granted as age-old adages.

It explains on a practical level how managers can select employees who are right for their jobs and keep them happy. As you learn how to guide and control your employees, you will also learn how to tread the fine line between promoting employee independence and ensuring quality work.

Lesson 1: A successful business depends on employee satisfaction

Although there are several ways to increase revenue, most of them result in short-lived growth. A successful business is one that can sustain growth only if it consistently delivers good performance, which has more to do with managing the organization.

A strong and high-performing workplace is the core of any successful business. Businesses can only be successful if they have a revenue stream that is robust and sustainable. A stream of this kind is not generated by cutting prices or opening new locations, but rather by having many loyal consumers. It is critical for a company to deliver excellent products and services to its customers to build such a loyal customer base.

What are the steps a company can take to create such a high-performing workplace?

An employee's satisfaction is the key to building and maintaining a strong workplace: the happier an employee is, the more she will contribute to it.

What is the reason for this? Employees who are satisfied with their work are more committed to their jobs, and their higher commitment contributes to a higher level of productivity.

Another reason is that employees' commitment often affects company profits in an indirect way. Employees who are engaged and satisfied are more likely to save energy (for example, by turning off the lights at night) and negotiate prices, and to be less likely to steal from their employer.

Finally, such engaged employees may also stay longer with the company and may also be more friendly towards customers, as they care a great deal how the company is perceived.

Companies must build strong workplaces in which performance is consistently high if they wish to achieve long-term success. To create a positive work environment, it is paramount to ensure that employees are happy in their positions.

Lesson 2: Managers determine employee satisfaction

For a business to be successful, its employees must be satisfied, but what makes employees satisfied? It is the manager. Managers have the responsibility of defining the work environment of their employees, creating an environment that ensures employees' satisfaction.

It is true that an employee's satisfaction is greatly impacted by her direct manager, rather than by the overall policies and procedures of the company, because managers translate the company's work ethic into guidelines and practices. For example, this transformation involves defining concrete goals for employees based on new company strategies. Large technology companies, for instance, are no longer concerned with creating innovative products, but rather with making their standard. The sales manager, for instance, needs to make sure his salesclerks tell customers how the product can be used with other gadgets when developing this new strategy into concrete guidelines.

Accordingly, when it comes to guidelines, managers who know their employees, trust them, and invest in them will reap benefits that outweigh employee-unfriendly regulations in the workplace.

Suppose the manager of a large media company did not raise designers' pay unless they were promoted to management positions. This was a problem because the designers who performed well did not receive a reward.

To address the issue and reward high-performing employees, the manager created an entirely new job role in which designers could continue to design while also sharing their insights with other designers – thus presenting the job as a management position.

These examples demonstrate that managers have the power to turn the workplace into more than just a place for workers to earn a living. Although no one should want to work for a company that pays poorly,

what is more important is a work environment that offers employees purpose and a sense of self-expression.

Lesson 3: The role of the manager is primarily to mediate, not to lead

To become an excellent manager, you have to let go of popular management principles and learn what your job actually entails.

Managers are not leaders, as the first thing to understand is that. Leaders and great managers share many similarities, but they differ significantly in their focuses: Leaders tend to look into the future, whereas managers tend to focus on what is already in place and what can be turned into performance.

The best managers are empathetic, as opposed to visionary leaders. Essentially, managers are concerned with people, and their duties include finding, focusing on, and maintaining quality employees.

But what exactly are managers if they are not leaders? Managers act as mediators. Their concern is both for the company and for the employee, and they address both concerns. They strive to create a work environment that not only meets economic targets, but also makes each team member feel productive and valuable. Business demands and employees meet at a point of convergence when managers negotiate with both sides.

The manager can be characterized as a catalyst. As a catalyst in chemistry, the manager facilitates a reaction between two elements, which (even though they are just two parties) still need an additional catalyst to get going. The key to a successful business lies in successfully balancing the needs of employees and companies. By finding, focusing, and keeping good employees, managers play a pivotal role in this regard.

Lesson 4: Each person has unique and unchanging characteristics that can be classified as talents

There is one central maxim that all great managers share, regardless of their style of management: Everyone is unique. Everyone has their own way of thinking and relating to the world, as well as their own motivations.

Several studies have found that people's brains are carved in a highly individual way during the first 15 years of their lives, and that people are not capable of making significant mental changes after that time. Additionally, we all have gifts and "non-gifts" that make us unique. Having talent is not a special ability that only gifted people possess. It would be inappropriate to use the word "talent" to describe Mozart or Einstein. In other words, a talent is every recurrent pattern of feeling, thinking, or behavior that is capable of being used productively. People with a naturally outgoing nature, for example, would make excellent sales representatives.

In addition to talents, people also possess "non-talents" – the absence of such recurring patterns. While some people are unbelievably messy, this does not mean that they will miss their deadlines because they cannot keep a clean desk.

Striving, thinking, and relating are three types of talents. Competitiveness is one of the traits that characterize a person's striving talents. People with this trait strive to be the best. People's thinking

talents determine how they approach any mental task. Some people are talented at focusing, but others are good at leaving options open.

Additionally, communication habits are defined by relating talents: some people are talented in confronting others, while others prefer to avoid confrontation. People of the first kind can cause friction in a work environment, while people of the latter kind can contribute to a pleasant working environment. For example, she might bring homemade cake to work.

It is impossible for someone to become everything they desire. A fact all great managers understand and take advantage of is that each person has a set of unique talents.

Lesson 5: When creating a high-performing workplace, managers should take into account each employee's unique skills

Since every individual has a unique set of behaviors that cannot be changed, managers must translate these characteristics into management guidelines.

The reason for this is that each person's unique personality has a huge impact on his or her job performance.

Even though accumulated experience contributes to an increase in performance, it is actually the individual's unique talents that will determine how well they perform. Only when talent and job requirements are well matched can a job be performed at its maximum potential.

Nurses often administer injections as part of their duties. Nurses become better at performing injections as they make more of them. However, if a nurse lacks the needed empathetic skills, he may never be able to relate to his patients in the same way that care workers do. Consequently, his lack of talent makes him an unsuitable nurse.

What are the best ways for managers to deal with employees who are naturally talented in different ways? It would be wise for them to utilize them. Focusing on a person's natural talents and then utilizing them is key to effective management. Instead of neglecting these unique qualities and force-fitting employees into a particular mold, managers must develop techniques which let their employees use and develop their innate talents.

However, great managers do more than capitalize on the unique talents of their employees; they also prevent non-talents from developing into weaknesses, which is exactly what great managers do.

Here are four general guidelines managers can use so they can harness the natural talents of their employees:

- Choose talent
- Identify the desired outcomes
- Put the focus on the strengths
- Finding the right fit

Great managers realize that everyone has unique, natural talents. From this insight, we can deduce certain strategies for successful management, including how to choose the right person for the job.

Lesson 6: Great managers hire people with the right skills

A tight fit between an employee's talent and the needs of the company is a major contributor to good performance. Great managers need great employees, but how do they find them? What do they look for in the people they hire? By understanding the different types of talents needed for different job positions.

At least one critical talent should be considered for each position in each of the talent categories (striving, thinking, and relating). A great manager does not consider only the job title and description when selecting a new employee, but also the company's culture and ethos, as well as the team to which the new hire will join.

Each team requires distinct roles, for example. When a team has people who tend to avoid confrontation, it is beneficial to have someone who can bring issues to the surface. A great manager conducts a job interview in a way that allows the candidate's personality to emerge. Therefore, they do not stress candidates, only evaluate them according to the candidate's appearance, or make snap judgments about them. Exceptional managers know that people need time to adjust to an interview setting that is sometimes uneasy, and that putting them under stress will end up evaluating whether the candidate can perform well under stress.

Certainly, such a talent is important for some jobs, but not for all. In addition, the manager can blind herself to other, possibly complementary qualities a candidate possesses by focusing only on this one quality.

In addition to asking open-ended questions, great managers elicit personal responses from the interviewee. The best managers look for specificity and "top-of-mind" answers when evaluating a candidate's answers, since these are indicators that their answers are more personal.

In summary, managers must ensure that, whatever jobs need to be done, they are performed by the employees most likely to succeed at them.

Lesson 7: Good managers provide employees with alternative career paths, so they stay in the most appropriate jobs

A manager must ensure that the talents of their employees are put to good use, not just assemble a team of talented employees.

Traditional career paths often impede this – they are flawed models of progress. How do you fix those flaws?

An employee's success in a particular position does not imply their success in a higher one. There is no guarantee that one rung of the career ladder will lead to another. Furthermore, conventional paths limit prestige to those who succeed in climbing the ladder, which leads to conflict as coworkers vie for limited, high-level positions.

In addition, this system overvalued experience, causing a "hunt for marketable skills and experiences"; if an employee has climbed the ladder and gains marketable skills, this is interpreted as a positive development.

Traditional career paths are rarely used by great managers. Alternative paths are then established by using a variety of techniques that are better suited to the employee. Great managers create an environment where prestige and money are equally distributed within the company, and, as a result, the employee is much freer to make career choices based on her talent.

Defining graded levels of achievement is one of these techniques. The promotion process is used in many law firms, where prestige and salary are affected but not the work. The pay structure can also be broad banded: pay for positions at a lower level overlaps the pay for positions at a higher level. Hence, a position at a lower level becomes more lucrative with excellent performance than a position at a higher level with poor performance. They also understand that conventional career paths are filled with wrongheaded assumptions, so they cater their work to their employees' strengths while giving them the opportunity to climb up the career ladder.

Lesson 8: Great managers don't control their employees; they focus on reaching desired outcomes

In the end, the performance of employees is what matters most to management. As a result, great managers focus less on controlling their employees and more on monitoring their performance results. Managers are aware they have a limited amount of control over their workers. The first thing to realize is that managers are not actually doing the work that will lead to results they desire. In this case, they can only provide motivation to their employees. In this way, the manager's control can be re-conceptualized as a form of mediated control – or as "remote control."

However, managers remain responsible for performance results, even though they do not directly control them. Therefore, they should concentrate on the desired results of the work.

Managers who define these goals for employees and let them come up with their own strategies for reaching them are great managers.

Achieving such goals is not always easy. Therefore, rather than defining rules that need to be followed by salesclerks, for example, the manager should define only what she wants. By doing this, her salespeople can choose a selling style that is most comfortable to them.

This approach offers many benefits.

One is that it is efficient, since the manager does not waste time devising and enforcing a style of working.

Taking responsibility also encourages employees to do so, and thus attracts qualified workers. Managers who define what they want their employees to achieve create a work environment where employees feel motivated to reach their goals without being told how.

In addition, the work environment helps employees discover their strengths, since their abilities are put to the test.

A great manager understands that achieving a goal does not involve formulating a rigid, clear method. At the end of the day, what matters most is that the desired outcome is achieved.

Lesson 9: The best managers create a set of basic rules that guarantee a basic level of customer satisfaction

Managers who allow their employees to be themselves do not mean they can do what they want. Employees must, in fact, follow certain rules when it comes to certain aspects.

The first step is to follow any safety and accuracy rules. To ensure that money is handled with security and precision, banks comply with regulatory steps and follow strict internal guidelines.

Second, any standards and regulations essential to the industry or company must be adhered to since this will ensure the legitimacy of the company and its ability to compete with other companies on the market. Engineers, for example, must ensure the product operates at the standard electrical frequency, and accountants must know and apply the rules of double-entry bookkeeping.

Customer expectations revolve around accuracy, availability, partnership, and advice, so these rules are the minimum standard for meeting and satisfying them.

There are two basic factors here that must be met to satisfy customers: accuracy and availability. In addition to having ready-made wheels in stock, a workshop must employ mechanics who can do the job properly if a customer wants her car's wheels changed.

Great managers insisted their employees follow those two basic rules. Employees still have a large role to play in achieving customer satisfaction. If the mechanic offers advice on how to prolong the life of the wheels or engages the customer in a nice conversation while waiting, a customer wanting her wheels exchanged may become a maximally satisfied customer.

The motor mechanic may even be able to turn a customer's waiting time into a pleasant one if they have the additional talent of being outgoing.

These basic guidelines ensure minimum customer satisfaction and performance results. Employees should also be allowed to pursue their passions.

Lesson 10: Managers who are great focus on developing and learning from their employees

They do this by establishing successful, personal relationships with their employees, which helps those employees grow.

Furthermore, they dedicate a great deal of time to understanding their best employees, not just their talents, but the entire picture of their lives. Great managers are only able to develop their employees effectively when they know them well.

To motivate or reward employees appropriately, managers must know what is important to them. Is there anything more awkward than rewarding a worker with something she dislikes? Excellent yet shy employees may feel uncomfortable or misunderstood by a very public display of appreciation.

Great managers refer to their excellent employees when it comes to finding out how to improve their performance. They do not look back at mistakes they've made or average employees.

What is the reason? It is possible to make wrong assumptions when learning from mistakes.

Consider a nurse who has emotional relationships with patients but becomes so overwhelmed that she cannot do her job. The idea of forming emotional relationships could seem counterproductive. You would be wrong, however. Excellent nurses possess a key talent that allows them to form strong emotional bonds with their patients. There is a problem here, since you observed only poor nurses, and with those nurses this ability to connect emotionally can develop in the wrong way.

Second, establishing business goals based on average employee performance can lead to underestimating your potential. To discover what makes a skilled employee, one must learn from them: excellent nurses demonstrate the importance of building a trusting relationship with patients, and excellent workers show that performance can be continuously improved.

From what we have seen, high-performing employees deserve to be studied. By doing so, employees can improve their performance, and managers can gain a deeper understanding of how to achieve excellence.

Lesson 11: Successful managers closely analyze their employees' poor performance and work to overcome it

When the performance of a manager falls short of their expectations, great managers address the problem immediately.

Great managers analyze the situation first before jumping to conclusions about poor performance. As an example, they will look for ways to improve performance, such as teaching teachable skills or increasing knowledge. This will likely be enhanced by the right training.

Additionally, they question whether their own management made a mistake when an employee performed poorly.

However, what if poor performance was caused by the employee's incompetence, and not their lack of skills? Since no one is perfect, nor does everyone have the requisite skills to excel in a certain field, this may not be out of the ordinary.

In those cases, what should a great manager do? The manager should try to work around the non-talent.

By building up support systems, managers can eliminate or make irrelevant a worker's weakness (for example, a spell check software for a bad speller). The company can also find a complementary partner for the employee, forming a team where the member's specific non-talent is supported by his or her talent.

Great managers, however, do not hesitate to let go of untalented employees when they prove to be a real weakness. It is better for an employee who lacks a particular talent to leave a position in which this talent is essential.

Nevertheless, this does not mean he or she is a generally useless employee. They are simply able to better use their talents elsewhere. It is not the manager's fault if he or she is tough since they do not blame the employee. In fact, they are the only ones to blame, because they made a casting mistake.

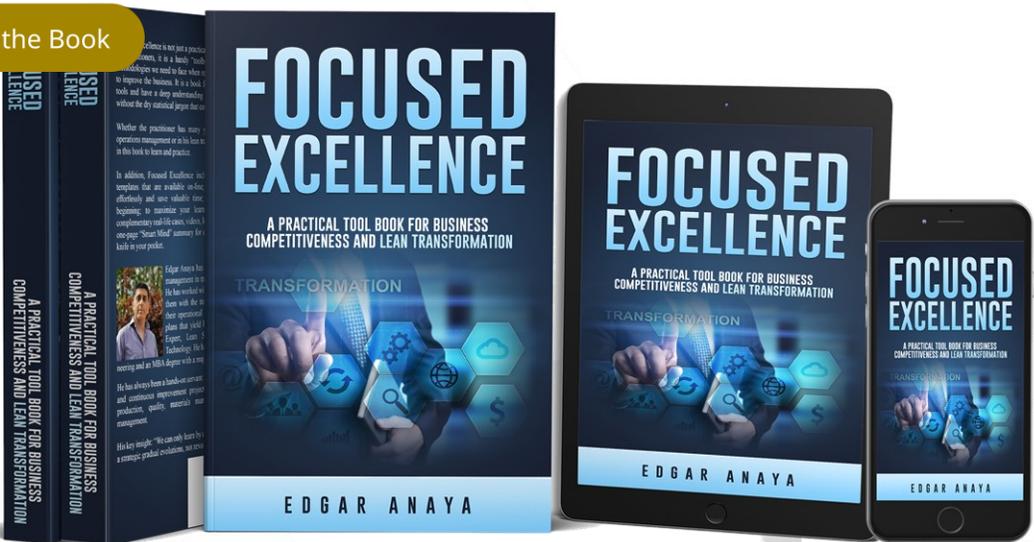
Final Summary

The right fit for a particular job depends on a person's unique set of talents. Managers who succeed develop their employees' innate talents and help them improve on what they are already good at because it is part of their nature.

Recruiting is all about selecting the best talent. Candidates' unique skills must align with the position they are applying for. During the interview, listen to the candidate's answers and ask open-ended questions to discover his or her talents.



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