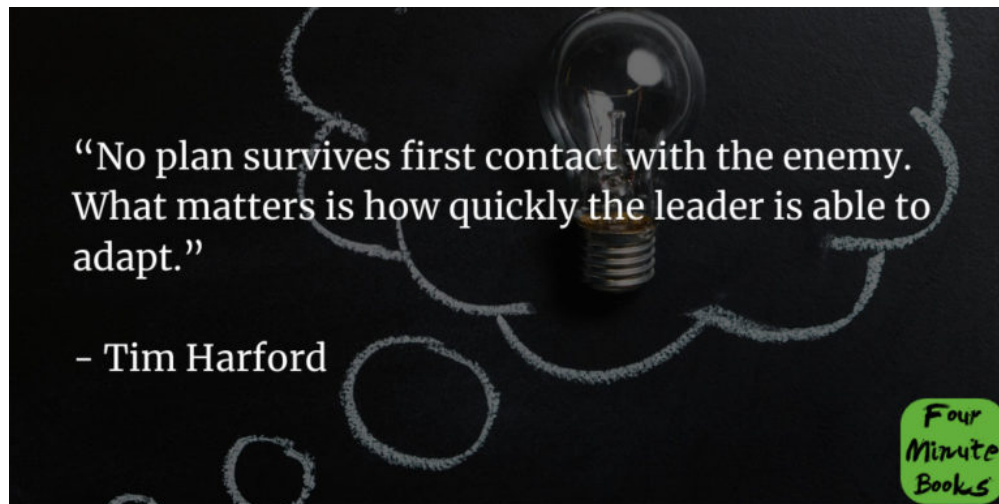# Adapt Summary

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**1-Sentence-Summary:** *Adapt proposes a surprising approach to accepting failure as a part of the innovation process.*

**Read in:** 4 minutes

**Favorite quote from the author:**



Growth implies an ongoing process of trial and error and gradual maturity. Whenever we face an opportunity, a challenge, or maybe just an experience that might turn into a life lesson, we are going to experience a few changes in our personality. And because we face all kinds of occurrences, we are constantly changing and growing.

Using actual, legitimate examples, *Adapt* centers around the idea of accepting failure as a natural part of life, and more importantly, as an opportunity to grow and learn from it. Moreover, it is essential to understand that no one can predict the future and that we can only try to <u>shape it with our current circumstances</u>. We can do this by trying out different solutions to our problems. During this process, we will most likely fail a few times. However, this should not disappoint us, but rather encourage us to carry on and try different approaches.

The book offers a multitude of valuable lessons. Here are three of my favorite ones:

1. Most predictions are wrong and the only thing we can do is manage our expectations and reactions.
2. Trial and error processes harness innovation, while centralized authorities stifle it.
3. Presents and patents are some of the best ways to encourage innovation.

But what do these lessons really mean?

## Lesson 1: Expectation beats disappointment when forecasts go wrong.

A study conducted by economist Paul Ormerod states that the extinction rate of companies and species are quite similar over a time frame of 500 million years. Who could've predicted that?

In another experiment from the book, experts tried to forecast the future of different companies, events, or even states, and they rarely came true.

**Therefore, predictions are lucky guesses, and they should not be treated as facts. Most likely, they will fail to come true, and we have to learn how to manage our emotions when it happens. But how do we do that?**

Harford suggests that <u>we should consider failure a natural part of any process or plan</u>. And rather than being disappointed, you should just eliminate that variable from then on and try again. Moreover, you should expect to fail many times before you encounter a successful approach to your problem. By following this mentality, whenever failure happens, you won't take it too bad.

## Lesson 2: Bureaucracy and authority hold back innovation processes.

Most of the time, organizations and leaders feel like they have more control over a problem than they actually do. This feeling of false know-how combined with formal authority often empowers them. Therefore, they make utopic decisions under the impression of total control.

The book points towards centralization and its capacity to hinder <u>innovation</u>. Given the example of a top-down organization, the author explains how high-level managers cannot make better decisions than local executives that are accustomed to the place and problem.

Another example is the Gulf War in Iraq. A general on the battlefield suggested that the army won over some employees of Saddam Hussein, but the high-level American authorities ignored them. Faced with this issue, individuals defied orders and formed a successful collaboration between citizens and troops.

**These examples teach us that there are certain situations when the innovative instinct surpasses the rational one. To be innovative, you have to think outside the box, even though you may fail.** This doesn't mean that you should defy authorities, but rather experiment with your <u>creativity</u> outside your usual framework.

## Lesson 3: Gifting prizes or awards can boost innovation and critical thinking.

Innovation relies heavily on creativity and critical thinking. Therefore, we have to find ways to harness the creative process, brainstorming, and underline reasoning skills. We've seen how organizations often fail to do so due to high levels of centralization and bureaucracy. Now, let's see how to achieve the opposite!

Hartford suggests that if you want to enhance innovation, there are two ways to do this. The first one is *patenting*. By giving monopoly over an idea to the one that came up with it, you encourage that person and the people around them to be more innovative. Why? Because through a patent they can benefit personally from it.

Another way to stimulate innovation is by *awarding goal-oriented prizes*. Not only will they be a source of praise for the researchers and their results, but they will also enhance competition and the discovery of new findings. Usually, the most effective innovation boosters are money prizes, research-specific awards, or titles.

**Creativity lays the foundation for development. The world we currently live in is the result of many creative processes and innovations.** Therefore, we have to harness, nurture and protect all processes that have the potential to become discoveries, as they are the engine that drives our world towards better things.

## Adapt Review

Tim Harford introduces the reader to a series of surprising concepts, focusing specifically on the importance of accepting failure as part of our lives.

*Adapt* suggests that trial and error are necessary for any process and that without them people cannot discover the solutions they so desperately need in the world.

He addresses some key matters humanity is finding hard to overcome, such as climate change, poverty, financial crisis, or innovative processes.

This book reveals essential lessons, suitable for any type of reader, as he confronts universal problems that we struggle with every day. The paper is a guide for thriving in our ever-changing world.

## Who would I recommend the Adapt summary to?

The 30-year old who wants to explore universal reads and learn about earthly concerns, the philosophy or psychology student who wants to gain a deeper understanding of their topics of interest, or anyone who wants to learn how to overcome failure.