

First Break All The Rules Summary

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1-Sentence-Summary: *First, Break All The Rules* shows with research and examples why everything you think you know about managing people is wrong and how to challenge the status quo so that you and those you lead can reach your full potential.

Read in: 4 minutes

Favorite quote from the author:



If you're a manager or have ever been one, you know how difficult it can be. There's a lot of pressure to lead from the front and set a good example while at the same time making your superiors happy.

But you want to succeed not only for your sake but for the entire company's benefit. Maybe you even care about your team members on a personal level. And while you might have tried management advice in the past, you're frustrated because most of it just doesn't work.

So how do you sift through the weeds of all the tips and tricks out there to find what will really make your team happy and successful? In the interviews and research conducted by Marcus Buckingham and Curt Coffman, they've found that to really make a difference, you need to challenge your assumptions and try new things.

They summarize their findings in *First, Break All the Rules: What the World's Greatest Managers Do Differently*. It's not just based on what the authors think will work, but what actual successful managers do to help their people reach their full potential.

Here are 3 of the most insightful lessons about managing people from this book:

1. Successful businesses have happy employees and managers have the power to make sure team members are satisfied.
2. To be a great leader, let people choose how to reach outcomes, but do set baseline standards of performance.
3. When you want to improve employees' performance, look to the top performers on your team, not mistakes or averages.

Let's get right to it and see how much we can learn!

Lesson 1: Satisfied employees are the only way to long-term success and managers control how happy employees are.

How many different ways have you tried to improve the profits of your company? Perhaps you've cut costs, restructured, or emphasized innovation. These might work for a time, but they will never bring consistent success.

To have that, you must make sure that your employees are satisfied and engaged at work. And this responsibility rests on the shoulders of managers at every level.

Running a successful company requires sustainable revenue, which means you have to have loyal customers that love your products and services. The key to this is getting employees to put their heart into your offerings by making them happy.

How does this work?

When a team member is satisfied, they become more engaged. Their commitment makes them more productive. **They're also more likely to negotiate prices, save energy, and stay longer.**

Engaged employees even treat customers better because they actually care about the company's image.

Managers determine whether this happens or not because they control the culture that team members work in. Even though company-wide policies and procedures may affect individuals, it's up to leaders to see how to implement these. This means that getting it right is crucial for creating an environment of trust.

You have to invest in your employees. You must care about their progress and happiness if you want any chance of improving it. Intentionally design the atmosphere to encourage self-expression, trust, enjoyment, and productivity.

Lesson 2: Lead effectively by setting baseline standards and letting your team members decide how they'll accomplish outcomes.

To be a great manager, you have to accept the truth that you can only be as successful as your team members. The key to this is understanding that processes don't matter as much as outcomes.

Do identify the basic rules that everyone must follow, though. These include safety, accuracy, and industry standards. When I was an engineer, for example, I had to adhere to the code standards, so it made sense that my bosses held me to that.

Once you hit these baselines, the way your employees get results is really out of your control. But you do decide how much you emphasize the process or the results.

If you micromanage by telling people how to reach the company goals, they'll resent you and become less engaged.

Instead, define, as clearly as possible, what outcomes your team needs to reach. Then, leave it up to individuals to figure out how they'll get there. If you're a sales manager, you might choose how many sales employees need to get and let people decide how to get there.

This is much more efficient because it keeps you from having to create a training plan that you must enforce. It also encourages them to be proactive and responsible, and attracts people with those traits. Even better, it helps people discover their talents, which will make them happier and more productive than almost anything else.

Lesson 3: Look to the most productive and successful employees when determining the standard everybody should strive for.

If you want to help your people grow, you've got to get to know them on a personal level. And if you want to know what standard you should hold everybody to, you need to look at your top performers and spend a lot of time with them.

It takes an understanding of all aspects of somebody's life to help them improve. You need to know their talents and values if you want them to reach their full potential.

Say you want to reward an employee for their hard work. Wouldn't it be awkward if you gave them a gift they hated? Or worse, what if you didn't realize how shy an employee was and publicly recognized their efforts? They'd be embarrassed and even worse, lose trust in you.

Looking to top employees is crucial when determining standards for a lot of reasons. For one, you make poor assumptions when looking at past mistakes.

Imagine you work with nurses that form emotional relationships with patients but who also get overwhelmed. You might determine that those connections with patients are bad. But you might only be watching ineffective nurses, so it's an incorrect conclusion!

If you only look at what's the norm, you also severely undermine the opportunity for everybody to exceed expectations. By looking to the best, in contrast, you pave the way for everyone to reach new heights!

First, Break All The Rules Review

First, Break All The Rules is a fantastic book and one that I would highly recommend. It goes beyond the typical advice you hear in management books and is really thorough. I can think of a few of my past bosses that I wish had read this book, but I'm glad that at least I know about it now!

Who would I recommend the First, Break All The Rules summary to?

The 39-year-old who just became a manager and feels overwhelmed, the 58-year-old executive that wants to learn and play to their employee's strengths, and anyone that would like to become a great leader at work.