

Work The System Summary

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1-Sentence-Summary: *Work The System will fundamentally change the way you view the world, by showing you the systems all around you and giving you the guiding principles to influence the right ones to make your business successful.*

Read in: 4 minutes

Favorite quote from the author:



Sam Carpenter has been the CEO and president of Centratel, one of the US's top providers of phone answering services – the ladies and gents who handle your customer service via the phone – for the past 30 years. During those years, he developed what he calls 'a systems mindset.' He started spotting systems everywhere, and subsequently, optimizing the ones he could control.

He turned this approach into a business philosophy, taught it to many corporations as a consultant and, in 2008, turned it into this book. *Work The System* is a wholistic descriptions of the nature of systems, their ubiquity in life and nature, and how you can use systems for yourself to optimize your life.

Here are the 3 key things you should take home from it:

1. The world runs on systems, and they work in spite of humans, not because of us.
2. Start focusing on the systems you can control, and stop complaining about the ones you can't.
3. To analyze the systems in your life, take a step back.

Ready to oil the machinery? Let's go!

Lesson 1: The world runs on systems, and they work in spite of humans, not because of us.

Do you sometimes feel like the captain of a tiny sailboat, constantly being thrown around by winds, waves, storms, and other forces outside of your control?

There's no reason to.

Look at the world. Why doesn't the entire planet blow up every other day?

Why don't we have a nuclear war yet, even though there's been plenty of opportunities for one?

It's because of systems.

A system is any composition of several components, which work together to accomplish a single goal.

The beauty of systems is that they're naturally inclined to be both stable and efficient.

There are millions and millions of systems working in the world right this second, and they're the reason we don't need a CEO of the world and can still go to bed at night, resting assured that the world won't end tomorrow.

Now you might think we did a good job in making it so, but actually, we're not responsible for everything working so well.

In fact, we're rather responsible when things go wrong, because **whenever chaos wrecks a system, there are usually humans at fault.**

For example a BMW pricing manager might decide that the US prices for their cars are too cheap, because the cars cost more in Germany, and slap on an extra 30%. That will likely lead to an outrage with US customers, dealers, and sales managers, and they might end the cooperation altogether.

The reasons we humans constantly put errors into perfectly fine systems, is that **our view of whether a system runs well is very subjective.**

That means to mess up less and make the most of the systems in your life, you first have to see them, and then understand how they work.

Lesson 2: Start focusing on the systems you can control, and stop complaining about the ones you can't.

Now you might look around and say: "Yeah, yeah, that's all fine, but there are so many systems I can't control!"

True.

But then why complain about them?

You can spend all day moaning about the oil price, the stock market, or the political party who's in charge.

But that won't make oil cheaper, your stocks go up, or change who's president.

What you can do is get a car with less fuel consumption, or give it up altogether, buy an investment book and go vote in the election.

The truth is that **no one has control over all the systems in their life**, which means you're not especially disadvantaged.

Most of the time, the only reason things don't go your way is because *you don't even try*. Just because their vote doesn't decide the election, many people don't vote at all – a huge mistake.

Can I influence how many people sign up for Four Minute Books or get a Blinkist subscription because of me? No.

But I sure can get up in the morning and write another summary.

This is the hand you've been dealt. Start playing it.

Lesson 3: Take a step back to analyze the systems in your life.

The way to find out what you can and can't control is to take a step back and look at the systems in your life from the outside.

A gear inside a machine never knows of anything more than the gears it directly connects with.

But when you take some time to think and reflect, you can see how the individual gears relate to the rest of the machine and how the whole mechanism works.

This will let you break down systems into step-by-step processes (it's what I do), and help you spot the individual parts that need fixing.

Take some time to step back, **look at the systems in your life from outside**, and you'll get a much better grasp of where you need to use your wrench to fix things.

Work The System Review

Work The System actually has a lot of business advice, but I loved the philosophical aspect of Sam's systems approach so much, I tried to break it down for the average Joe, like myself. I think it's more valuable than specific tips and hopefully, this way, you can get the most out of it in your own life.

Just like *Start With Why* or *Choose Yourself*, this book takes a top-level approach and shoots to change your entire perspective, not just a single behavior. I really like that. That's how profound change happens and you have a shot at true, clicking, aha-moments.

The summary on Blinkist was quite short and I would've loved to go into more detail about how to apply the systems approach in business, but I guess you'll have to find that out for yourself. Recommended read!

What else can you learn from the blinks?

- Why you want your mechanic to be a good systems manager
- Two steps you need to take to become a good systems manager yourself
- How many of the systems you are a part of you can really influence (it's a lot more than you think)
- What your job is when you run a business
- How to run your business like a well-oiled machine, even when you're not doing everything yourself
- Where misunderstandings really come from & how much quality you should shoot for

Who would I recommend the *Work The System* summary to?

The 29 year old, who feels frustrated about not having control over a lot of things in her life, the 50 year old company CEO, who wants to streamline his business for growth, and anyone who knows they complain too much.

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