

The Hard Thing About Hard Things Summary

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1-Sentence-Summary: *The Hard Thing About Hard Things is an inside look at the tough decisions and lonely times all CEOs face, before showing you what it takes to build a great organization and become a world-class leader.*

Read in: 4 minutes

Favorite quote from the author:



When I saw that this book was one of the favorites of our own CEO at coach.me, Tony Stubblebine, yesterday, I knew I had to read this summary next. *The Hard Thing About Hard Things* had been on top of my library for quite some time, but I was a little scared because it was quite long, to be honest.

Today I decided to suck it up and see what Mr. Ben Horowitz has to teach us after selling his company Opsware to HP for \$1.6 billion (that's right, billion) in cash in 2007.

Here's what I learned:

1. The CEO should be the first one to shout when shit hits the fan.
2. There are 2 types of CEOs.
3. Great CEOs must learn to be comfortable being uncomfortable.

Let's look at the what and why of these lessons!

Lesson 1: The CEO should be the first one to shout when a crisis occurs.

Have you ever worked in a place where there was a lot of gossip? If so, it might have been due to a cover-up policy. A lot of companies try to cover up crises or when things go wrong, in order to solve them quietly while the employees think everything is great.

This is a sucker's move for 2 reasons:

1. **Information about a crisis always leaks through**, so eventually, your employees will find out anyway.
2. By trying to solve the problem alone and in secrecy, **you're not allocating the resources to it that it deserves and needs**.

Imagine you're being sued for a technical malfunction of your product.

You could try to hire a great lawyer, go to court and fend off the charges. However, eventually someone will spill the beans about your trip to the courtroom, causing all of your employees to panic about the sudden news and wonder if they'll get fired.

Instead, what if you were the first one to divulge the bad news, and do so as soon as possible? You could rally everyone together and just honestly say you're in trouble.

This will not only ease the burden on your own shoulders as CEO, it'll also help **get the problem in the hands of the people that are most capable of solving it**.

Now an engineer can look at what went wrong and if it was an actual product malfunction or just operated in the wrong way.

Don't think your employees can't handle the truth. **Be honest and upfront about bad news, and your entire company will benefit from it**.

Lesson 2: There are 2 types of CEOs.

Good ones, and bad ones. Joke!

Horowitz makes 2 interesting distinctions, he calls them *Ones* and *Twos*.

This is in no means an order. Ones are the **strategic CEOs**, the visionaries, those who are great at finding a path the company can follow.

They love making strategic decisions and aren't afraid to pivot the company when it needs to. A good example of a One is Bill Gates.

Twos prefer execution and managing over researching and trying to make decisions. They're the **practical CEOs**, who love to implement, direct a team and get stuff done.

For a company to truly shine, you need to have **enough of both qualities**, so if you're a One, get some Two skills and vice versa.

Horowitz calls these *functional Ones*, which are important to have as executives as well. For example, if your marketing director is a functional One, she'll be cool with making strategic marketing decisions (since it's her area of expertise), but would rather just implement what you

tell her is important for the general direction of the company.

So make sure you learn the part you don't do as well, or at least attract the right people for the job.

Lesson 3: What makes a great CEO is to be comfortable being uncomfortable.

This is what it comes down to. As a CEO, you'll always be responsible for everything, whether it's the new product that bombed or Steve's clash with Sally over the last piece of cake.

You might as well just **get used to being uncomfortable**. After all, you'll be in this state for quite some time (more like always).

The job of a CEO is unnatural in so many ways and often you'll have to go against what your instincts tell you, so one of the best things you can do is practicing to leave your comfort zone in advance.

Outside of your comfort zone is where the magic happens.

Now go make some magic!

The Hard Thing About Hard Things Review

This summary was quite longer than usual, 15 blinks total, but it wasn't a drag to read at all. I was expecting more about struggles and obstacles, but found I actually liked the balance between the three parts: the struggle of a leader, how to build a company that lasts and what it takes to be a great CEO.

Lesson 2 made me think a lot, but I think it's impossible to know whether I'm a One or Two until I'll actually be a CEO. I sure love strategy and vision (and getting things done), but have no clue about managing people (yet).

The parts about how to fire different kinds of employees were also interesting, this is something that's uncomfortable to talk about, so I'm glad Horowitz shared it.

If you're a CEO, take a peek at the blinks and if you learn 1 or 2 things and want to learn more about Horowitz's story, get a physical copy of *The Hard Thing About Hard Things*.

[Read full summary on Blinkist](#)

[Get the book on Amazon](#)

[Learn more about the author](#)

What else can you learn from the blinks?

- What “The Struggle” of a CEO really is
- Which 3 things have the biggest impact on making the job of a CEO easier
- Why you must admit that your company failed when you have to fire an executive
- The 2 departments that make sure you take care of your employees
- What criteria you should base on when hiring people
- How to minimize internal politics
- Some examples of great CEOs
- The difference between a peacetime and a wartime CEO (and when you need which)
- What happens inside you when you’re about to sell your company

Who would I recommend The Hard Thing About Hard Things summary to?

The 23 year old who wants to create a startup, but might be doing it just for the sake of having a startup, the 45 year old management executive of a big corporation with lots of inner politics, and anyone who’s a CEO.