

Extreme Ownership

“Extreme ownership” the topic itself tells us about the concept of the book. A leadership guide penned by Jocko Willink and Leif Babin. We can understand that meaning of it as taking the complete responsibility for everything that we do and everything that happened in our life. If something goes wrong, we should not blame others instead we should take the ownership and you ask “What could I have done better?”. Similarly the book written by two former U.S. Navy SEALs. They share us the lessons that they learned in combat and showed how that lesson can be used in business and our day to day life. The authors share their real life experience from a dangerous mission in Iraq and learned about leadership during that war.

Chapter 1 – Extreme Ownership.

Jocko Willink was the leader of Navy SEAL team in Iraq. They went to a mission to a dangerous city, something bad happened during that mission. The mission is to clear the dangerous terrorist hiding in the building and they also did that with the help of sniper team. Jocko’s team was well trained and they made their plan. But during the operation something really unexpected thing happened. The sniper team was already in one of the buildings when the SEAL team went in, they don’t know their teammates were already inside. Suddenly there was a gunfire, The SEALs thought they were shooting the enemy, but what really happened is they actually shoot their own team members. One Iraqi soldier was killed. It was called blue – on – blue incident in military means friendly fire. Everyone was shocked by this incident. This kind of mistake is one of the worst thing that can happen in war. After this mission, Jocko had to report to his commander and explain what happened in the field. Before that he gathered his team. Everyone in the team had their own justification. They were blaming each others, one said the map was unclear, one said he was in the wrong building, SEAL machine gunner told no one told me that they were in that building, one told that his radio had issues. Jocko listened to all of the response. Then he thought about it, many small things went wrong. So in the meeting, Jocko said, “it was my fault”. He didn’t blame for telling radio didn’t work or the Iraqi soldiers. He said, as the leader, he should have made the clear plan and make sure everyone knows the plan, who was where, how to approach and check the communication carefully. And he took the full responsibility of what happened. This is what the Extreme Ownership was. the thing happened next was really surprising. His commanders didn’t punish him. They respected him even more. they saw that he was a true leader. he took control, admitted the mistakes and promised to fix things. From that day on, the whole team worked on things and got better. They were more careful, they communicated more clearly. The mistakes like this didn’t happened again, because the leader showed what is to take ownership.

Jocko and Leif share a story about a company they worked after leaving the military. They worked as a leadership consultants. In that company one department was missing the deadlines, not doing the projects properly and making others frustrated. When the company’s leader looked into it, they found that the teams manager keeps on blaming others. Like other teams or not giving us what we need, timeline was not fair, the employees

are not up to with their works. Now Jocko stepped in and taught them about the extreme ownership he gained from the military. He told the manager, you are the leader. If the team is failing, its your responsibility to fix the process, communicate properly and guide the team better and no more blaming. At first the manager didn't like the thought. But once they accepted it, things started to change and they have become better. They meet the deadlines and was doing really good. The mindset of leader changed the whole team improved and got better.

This chapter teaches us the leaders must take the full responsibility for everything the teams mistakes. If something goes wrong we should not blame others. That will not work, it will not make the individual or team better. A true leader must look what mistake they made and how could it can be done better and learns from it. When Jocko's team make a series mistake during the mission, he didn't blame anyone. Instead he said "It was my fault". That is what the extreme ownership is – taking the total responsibility for your team. This builds the trust, respect and a stronger team. If I was a team leader, I should take the full responsibility of whatever happens in the work. If something goes wrong I should blame other for doing it, as a leader I should take responsibility. Also I should maintain a proper communication with the team about what we are working on. We should be rectify the mistake and learn from it to make it better next time.

Chapter2 – No bad teams, Only bad leaders.

Jocko Willink and Leif Babin were training new Navy SEALs in a tough program called basic Underwater Demolition / SEAL training. It is one of the toughest military training course. They were in charge of how the trainees work, testing their teamwork and building the future leaders. During the part of training, the students were split into teams called boat crews. Each team will be having seven men and one leader. The teams have race again and again by carrying boats on their heads, paddling through the waves and running across the sand. One of the teams Boat crew VI was always coming last during the race. They were tired, angry and fighting among themselves. Their leader was struggling to lead the team. He blamed others and they had no motivation to win the race. There was another team Boat Crew II, led by different trainee, was winning the every race. This leader stayed calm, he encouraged this team and he make sure that the ream was working together. So Jocko and other instructors decided to switch the leaders of the two boat crews. The result was really shocking, Boat Crew VI which will be always last came in the second place. Their teamwork improved in time. They stopped fighting among themselves and started helping each other and they began to win the upcoming races. They realized that "there are no bad teams only bad leader." The team was not a problem. The leader was responsible and made the difference.

In the company, there was a team that fails – missing deadlines, making mistakes, and not working together. The manager thought the employees were the problem. But what Jocko and Leif explained that the real problem was not with the team and it was with the leader , just like in the SEAL training. Like that in business also if the team didn't have proper guidance they will be backing with their works. They taught the leader to take the responsibility for every thing the team did and stop blaming others. Once the leader

accepted and changed his way of thinking and working, by giving clear explanation about work, communicating with the team members often, solving the problem then and there. The team started to perform better.

This chapter teaches that leaders are like tone of the team. If a team is not performing well, it doesn't mean that team members are not doing well, its because the leadership needs to improve. A good leader must build trust, makes the team to believe in themselves, should have a proper communication between them and should take the complete responsibility of whatever happens. The leader should take the ownership of everything, should have clear roles and expectations to each team member, started to solving the problems and instead of blaming others. The leader should motivate the team to reach their goal. "There are no bad teams, only bad leaders." A good leader can turn the struggling team to be successful just like in the SEAL training.

Chapter3 – Believe.

Leif Babin was a Navy Seal commander, shared his view from the deployment in Ramadi, Iraq. Leif and his team were working with Iraqi soldiers and Army tank units to clear out the parts of the city. Their mission is to take control of the enemy territory. The operation was the team had to go into a hostile area where the enemies had a strong positions. His SEALs would clear the building and stay inside those building and waits for the enemies to attack. But this was very dangerous and put a question mark to life of soldiers. The plan was not agreed by the tank unit commander and didn't support to the SEALs. They didn't understand why there are taking such risks. Ther were worried about safety. So they refused to support the operations with their tanks. This became the problem. Because without the tanks, SEALs could not able to go to field. Leif got angry, he knew the mission is very important. He don't know why others didn't trust him. Then he remembered something that Jocko Willink had taught him. He told "if the team doesn't understand or believe in the mission, it's the leader's responsibility to make them believe. Then he explained about the mission clearly to the tank commander. He explained about the goal of the mission, described how to win the fight in Ramadi and also tells what roles the tanks would play to keep everyone safe. Once the commander understood the plan and the purpose behind it, he agreed to help with the mission. They joined the operation and completed the mission successfully.

Jocko and Leif were helping the company that was trying to change the way it worked. The company came up with a new strategy that came from the CEO and the board members. It was a big change and required all the teams to do the work differently. But the managers who were in charge of the teams didn't really believe in the new plan. They didn't understand why the change was needed, will it help the company and so on. Because of this the managers didn't delivered the idea properly to the team members. And the team members didn't believe in the idea either. So it didn't worked properly. The team members were confused about the idea, was not able to follow the plan. The leaders thought the teams were being difficult, but that was not the problem. Now Jocko and Leif stepped in and explained the real problem was leadership. They told that, If you don't believe in the mission, you team won't either. And if your team doesn't understand the why behind the strategy, they won't follow it. Then they helped the leaders to understand why the new plan

was important and explained it clearly to their teams. Once the leaders or managers believed in the plan and have a clear vision about it can make the plan to become succeed.

This chapter teaches that a leader must believe in the mission before others. If the leader does not believe, the team will also not believe. So we can't expect the team to follow the instruction just because the leader said. The leader must help them understand the purpose. Only then will give their full effort. Even if the mission is tough, the leader must explain why it is important. If the team members don't understand the purpose, they won't support it. So it is the leader's responsibility to give the clarity and confidence. Before convincing the team, as a leader we must believe in that mission. Once we believe in what we are doing, we can lead a team to perform at high level. Just like in the war and in the company, a leader should believe themselves first and let the team to perform at high level by making them believe in the mission.

Chapter 4 – check the ego.

Jocko Willink was leading the Navy SEAL in Ramadi, Iraq. It is one of the most dangerous cities during the war. His team was working with Iraqi soldiers and army units. These groups had different way of doing things, and sometimes it was hard to work together. Everyone thought their method was the best. SEALs thought the army didn't know anything what they were doing. Some army leaders thought the SEALs were too aggressive. During a mission, a disagreement occurred between them. The Army commander wanted to do things on his own way, and Jocko's team had other way of doing things. Every team thought they were doing right. But Jocko paused and asked himself, is this argument really helping the mission. He realized that ego was getting inside. So Jocko stood back and listened what the army leader was saying. Then he explained his own thoughts calmly. Instead of arguing we are best at what we do. They worked together to build a plan so that used the best of both ideas. the mission was successful and everyone worked together smoothly. Jocko learned and taught his team "check the ego". That means do not let the stubbornness to ruin teamwork. In war, we should let go the ego. We should work together as team to win.

Jocko and Leif explains that ego is not a problem in war, it is also a big problem in business. Ego means when someone thinks too high about themselves, doesn't listen to others, or even refuse to accept that they did wrong. In a company, this can lead to poor teamwork, bad decisions and failures. The Jocko and Leif helped a business where leaders from different departments weren't working together. Each department thought they were more important than the other teams. The marketing team thought they understood the customers better than anyone. The product team might think that marketing team does not know anything about the technical side. Every team was protecting their own name, blaming each other, and arguing in meetings. Because of this the company was not growing, the deadlines were not meet and the customers were unhappy. So They explained the leaders, If you let ego control you, your team won't work well together. You won't learn, you won't grow and you won't win". They taught the leaders to stay humble, listen to what others say instead of arguing with others, Focus on the goal and admit the mistakes when needed. Once the leaders letting go their egos, they will begin to work better as a team.

This chapter teaches that a good leader has to be humble, listen to others, always do what is best for the team and not what makes them look good. That is how the leader can lead with strength and win together. Just like war in business the mission should come first. A good leader must set aside the ego, and do what makes the company grow better. If we didn't let go of the ego, we can't win anything in life. As a team we should not have ego clashing, that doesn't make the team work better. Instead of arguing with others that they were wrong, ask how can we fix this together. So the trust will be built on each other. Listens to what others say, they might have a valid point that can make the things better. If something goes wrong, don't just defend yourself try to solve the problem together as a team. When leaders control their ego and focus on the bigger goal, everyone wins.

Chapter5 – Cover and Move.

In Iraq, Jocko Willink and his SEAL team were doing dangerous missions in the city of Ramadi. One night, they had to move through the dark streets to help another group of soldiers. Jocko's team had to cross a big road, but there were enemies nearby. If the team was not careful enough, they could get shot. To cross safely, the team used a method called cover and move. It means that while one group moves forward, the other group watches the surrounding and protects them. They take turns moving and covering each other, so no one will be in danger. It's a basic, but powerful rule in military teams work together, support each other and protect each other. In the mission, Jocko's SEALs used cover and move perfectly. One group moved across the street while other keeps watching around and provided protection. Then other team was watching around so that team could get on the other side of the street. By working together like this, the mission was safely completed. But later Jocko saw different problem not on the field, but inside his own unit. Two of small teams in his unit were not working well together. One team said that's not our job and the other said they are slowing down. There was a tension and they were pointing each other. That's when Jocko reminded everyone of the lesson from the battlefield you win as a team, not alone. Everyone in the unit must help each other, even if it is not your job. He told them, we all have the same mission. If one team fails, we all fail. It does not matter whose job it is, here we help each other so the mission gets done. He make sure that teams stopped thinking about their own tasks and instead started to work as a team.

The company was having trouble in making the different departments working together. Jocko and Leif was helping them to overcome this problem. They observe that lack of cooperation between them, pointing each others for doing something wrong. Blaming each other department, they focus on individual success instead of overall mission. Each team thought that their job was more important than others. They started blaming each other. This caused a conflict, bad communication and poor performance. Instead of focusing on the mission of the company, they all were trying to protect themselves. Then, Jocko and Leif explained to the company leaders that they are not separate departments, you are on one team with one goal. When one team struggles, the other team must support them instead of blaming them. Once the teams accepted this, automatically they can perform even better to achieve the goal.

This chapter teaches that when we work as a team, we should not only focus on the what we are assigned to do. Two teams on the same side forgot the importance of teamwork and started acting like they were separate. So the lesson we should learn as a team is success only comes when everyone supports each other, even when it's not their responsibility to do. The teamwork in the book teaches that it was not optional. It's a key to winning. No team wins alone. If we didn't help each other, minding our own work will never help us to reach the goal faster. Helping each other, sharing responsibility and focusing on the overall mission can only make the mission done successful. So, Cover and move is not just for war. It's about teamwork. Whether in war or inside office or in daily life, no one succeeds alone. You must help, support and work with others, that's how great teams win.

Chapter 6 – Simple.

In Iraq, Jocko's team was preparing for a dangerous mission. The goal was to get into the part of the city where enemy fighters were hiding. The mission could be so hard to complete. So planning is very important, even the best plan can fail if people didn't understand the plan. For this mission, Jocko and his team had to work with other groups like American soldiers and even Iraqi soldiers who didn't speak much English. The mission was very important and the plan was also complex as it had many teams and they should be working separate functions. It had many steps and lots of detailing. There were different groups going into the buildings at different times, other teams give support to them and one team has to keep moving vehicles in different directions. The people started asking questions like who's supposed to go first, where to park vehicles. Some didn't understand where they were supposed to go and what to do. Even his own teams were confused. That's when Jocko stopped and thought, If the people on the team don't understand the plan, they won't be able to do their work. If they mess up, people could hurt or even die. So he decided to simplify the plan. He removed the unnecessary details. He used simple and clear words and made sure that the plan had less main steps. He gave everyone clear roles and explained what to do. Once he did this, everyone understood what to do and the mission was a success. Jocko explains that this idea of keeping things simple is one of the most important lessons he learned in the war.

In business world, leaders often make plans that are too difficult to understand. They include too many details, long instructions and tough ideas. When a plan is complicated, people cannot understand what to do. They will get confused and it may cause mistakes, delays or even failure. Jocko and Leif say that just like in war, a business team also needs clear and simple plans. If people don't understand the plan, they can't follow it. Then they cannot succeed. As a leader, their job is to make sure the plan is easy to understand. It should be short and clear. Everyone in the team must know what the goal is, what their job is, what to do if something goes wrong. Even if the business is large and complex, the plan should be very simple. So that everyone can remember and explain it to others. That's when the team can work better together, solve problems faster and can succeed.

This chapter teaches that simple = clear. This doesn't mean the job is easy, but it means people know what to do. As a leader, one must make sure that the team clearly understands the mission. We can't expect people to follow something that is too complicated. Simple plans

are easier to follow, they make the team more confident even in tough situations. So simple communication is very important. Using easy words, not technical or complicated ones. Make sure everyone understands, not just the experienced ones. This helps to avoid mistakes and keeps the whole team moving in the same direction. This doesn't apply to the field alone, it can be applied to any team whether school, business, sports or in our day to day life. Clear instructions help everyone to do their work better. Simplicity builds success.

Chapter 7 – Prioritize and Execute.

The Jocko Willink tells a true story from a mission in Ramadi, Iraq. He and his team were involved in an operation to clear buildings and secure an area filled with enemy. The fighting was very high. There were bombs, bullets and the pressure was very high. One night, his team was set up on a rooftop, suddenly everything went wrong. One of their teammates got injured. The building was about to collapse. On the other side the enemies are moving from different directions. The radios were filled with questions and the team could feel the pressure and it was completely a mess. In moments like this, the leaders should use their knowledge. It was easy to panic, freeze or could not be able to make fast decisions. Then he remembered a rule that every SEAL leader learns in training "prioritize and execute". Jocko immediately prioritized. The first important thing was getting the wounded man to safety. So he gave his team an order to move him to a safe place. Then he focused on the next problem, making sure that the team was set to defend themselves from enemies. By staying calm, thinking clearly and giving simple instructions, Jocko helped his team survive a very dangerous situation.

In business, just like in war, there are times when companies face many problems. Maybe a project is late, a client is upset, a main employee quits and systems are not functioning properly and it happens in the same day. It can be very frustrating. Some leaders panic or try to solve everything in the mean time. But this usually results in confusion. That's why Jocko and Leif teach the same lesson they used in the battle, Prioritize and execute. They explain that will work well in business teams. It could be any problem, it's the leader's job to keep the team focused and moving forward one task at a time. The leader must give clear instructions, help the team understand the top priority, and make sure everyone is working on the right thing. Once that's under control, they move to the next priority, then the next.

This chapter teaches that leadership under pressure is very difficult. Not only in war, also in life we often face too many problems at once. When the leader panics and tries to do something, they get overwhelmed and fail. A stronger leader should stay calm under pressure, look into the situation, and need to prioritize the thing that is first most important, then next and then next. Then executes the clear plan with clear conversation with team members. Prioritize and execute is one of the most useful for a leader. It's not just in battle, also in business, schools, sports and in life. First step back, stay calm, list out the problems, pick the most important problem that needs immediate action, solve that first and then move to the next. This mindset helps people lead teams, solve problems, and stay focused—even when everything seems to be going wrong.

Chapter 8 – Decentralized Command.

Jocko Willink shares about another mission in Ramadi, Iraq. His SEAL unit had many teams working in different areas at the same time. It was complex operation with a lot happening all at once. Jocko was the main leader, during the mission he couldn't talk to everyone at the same time, The radios were busy. People were under high pressure. He realized that if the teams waited for him to give orders for everything, they would fail. There was no time for one person to make every decision. That's when he trusted his junior leaders. Each small team had a leader, and those were trained to make decisions on their own. These leaders didn't ask Jocko what to do every minute. They already understood the mission, the goal, and what needed to be done. This is called "Decentralized Command". It means leaders do not control everything. Instead, they train and trust others to lead. Every person in a leadership role must know what the overall mission is and be able to make decisions on their own.

In business, some bosses try to do everything themselves. But this causes delays and frustration. People feel like they are not trusted. Everything will be stuck until the boss says yes or no. That when Jocko and Lief said that, don't do that. Instead leaders should give their teams responsibility of their tasks. They should make sure each person knows the company's goal and what success looks like. Now the team leaders can make decisions without waiting for the boss's approval. This makes the company faster, smarter and stronger also builds trust. When people are trusted to lead, they take their work more seriously and they lead better too.

This chapter teaches that One person can't do everything. Even the best leaders need help. A good leader should share the leadership, give responsibility to others and trust them to make the right choice. If a team can't lead a work without the leader, they lack in works and completes the tasks delayed, get confused and makes mistakes. But if they train the team and explain the mission clearly and trust them to lead. They will go ahead and make good decisions. When comes to decentralized command, it about everyone in the team must know about the goal, leaders explain why the mission matters. They can make choices faster because they know what needs to be done. So to become great leader, they need to explain the mission, train their team, let them lead. That how teams win in everywhere.

Chapter 9 – Plan.

Leif was leading a operation in Ramadi, Iraq to the mission. The situation was intense. The enemy was well armed, the field was confusing and there were many moving pieces. Leif and his team had to work with multiple units including tanks, soldiers and Iraqi force. The plan involved entering enemy territory, clearing buildings and coordinating attacks. But because there were so many different teams involved, there are many ways that things could go wrong. Leif know from experience that even a small mistake in planning could lead to a big mess. So he followed a key rule from SEAL leadership, The mission must be planned down to the last detail and the plan must be simple and clear. Leif and SEAL leaders sat down carefully made the plan for the mission. They asked tough questions like what happens if the team takes heavy fire, what do we do if a vehicle stuck, how do we talk to other units if the radio fails, what is the backup plan if something goes wrong. Once they built the plan, Leif didn't just explain it to the senior leaders, he made sure every single team

members knew the plan. And when the mission started, chaos did happen. Iraqi soldiers didn't show up on the correct time. The enemy fired back very hard than they expected. So the miscommunication occurred. But what really happened is the SEALs had planned carefully and clearly so they were able to manage it. Each person knew their job. They didn't just freeze or panic. They adjusted and finished the mission successfully.

Leif and Jocko were working with a company that had many departments. The company was trying to launch a new product. It was a big project and different teams had to work together to make the things done. But actually the things were going really bad. The teams were confused, missed deadlines and so on. Some teams didn't even know what the main goal was. Leif quickly realized the problem there was a plan that is too complicated. The seniors were only able to understand it. The employees doing the actual work didn't understand the plan. That when Leif taught the leaders the SEAL lesson, A plan only works if everyone understands it. And the plan must be simple, clear, and communicated with everyone. So the business leader sat down and made the plan simpler. They told every team making sure everyone knows the plan.

This chapter taught that good planning prevents bad results. The plan must be very simple and clear. The leader must explain it to everyone in the team. Everyone must understand the plan. Poor planning is a leadership failure, not a team failure. If the team messes up because they didn't understand the plan, it is the leaders fault. They team should know what was the main goal was, what is their role in it, and what to do if things changed. When this is done the team works better. They will be in the track , supports each other and complete the mission successfully. We should always have a backup plan if anything fails in the plan. They should not panic, or freeze they should be calm and do the back up plan.

Chapter10 – Leading up and down the chain of command.

Leif shares a experience from a mission in Ramadi, Iraq. His teams was preparing for the night time operation to support the other units with a big operation. His team had to move through a dangerous area to get into a position and help the main team. But to go to that area, he needs approval from higher command. Leif kept asking for permission, but he was not getting a quick response. The mission was getting delayed and the situation was becoming more serious. At first, he felt frustrated. He thought that his higher officials weren't paying attention or didn't understand how important it was. Then he realized the problem was not with them alone, it was also with him. He didn't explained the situation clearly to their higher officials. So instead of requesting repeatedly he gave a full and clear explanation why they needed to move, what all the risks is there and what is the success of that mission. After that, the higher commander understood and gave him the permission. The mission continued and the plan was successful. This experience taught hime that good leaders just don't lead their own team, they also have to communicate clearly with the leaders above. If the people above you didn't understand the plan, its our responsibility to make it clear. And at the same time you must lead you team.

Jocko and Lief talks about the company they were working. One of the mid-level managers was having many problems. He was leading a team and was upset because his team was under too much pressure. They were not getting support from the senior management. He

felt like the bosses didn't understand what his team was going through. Deadlines were tight, resources were low, and people were stressed. But Jocko and Lief told him that, It's your job to make your boss understand. The manager realized that he had not communicated with the boss. He didn't clearly explain the problems his team was facing. So he changed the approach. He started giving the updates, explaining what his team needs. Once he did this, the senior understood better and gave the support. At the same time, the manager also had to keep leading the team, giving the support they need and what was the work expected from them.

This lesson teaches that leadership isn't about giving orders to your team (leading down the chain) it also about communicating clearly with the bosses (leading up the chain). Leadership is not just giving the command to people under you. It is also very important to explain clearly and calmly to those who are above you. A leader must be full responsibility for the communication both sides. The communication must be simple, honest and timely. Only if you update the higher ones they will know the importance of what the team need, should keep them updated everything. If something goes wrong we should not just complain about it. A leader should take responsibility or ownership and fix the communication in order to succeed the goal.

Chapter 11 – Decisiveness Amid Uncertainty.

During a mission in Ramadi, Iraq, Leif Babin and his SEAL team were supporting an Army unit that was attacking an enemy stronghold. Leif's SEALs were positioned in overwatch, providing cover and watching for enemy fighters who might try to ambush the Army soldiers. As the mission unfolded, reports started coming in over the radio that enemy fighters were trying to move around and attack. But the reports were confusing. Different soldiers were saying different things. Some thought the enemy was moving on foot; others thought they were in vehicles. The information was not clear, and in a real battle, every second matters. Leif knew he couldn't wait until he had every detail perfectly clear. If he waited too long, the enemy could attack and cause heavy damage. So even with limited and unclear information, Leif made a quick decision: he repositioned his SEAL team to block the possible enemy movement and protect the Army soldiers. His fast action helped stop the threat and saved lives. From this, Leif explains that in combat—and in leadership—you often don't get perfect information. You must be ready to make the best decision you can with what you know at that moment. Waiting too long, trying to be perfect, or doing nothing can cause failure. Leaders must stay calm, think quickly, and act decisively even when things are uncertain.