



THE HARD THING ABOUT HARD THINGS SUMMARY

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SUMMARY : BOOKISH TALKS

This book initially deceived me with its title, and I am glad it did because I expected the book to offer calm, cool encouragement, preparing the reader for hard times in life, similar to an ordinary self-help book. Contrary to my expectations, Ben Horowitz throws the reader straight into the hard-core life of a CEO. If you are expecting this book to make you feel good about yourself, pat you on the back, or comfort you about your life, then you should stay away from it. This book is a roller coaster ride from the very start and it will never let you breathe calmly.

After reading this book, you realize that an apparently successful CEO does not live an easier life, as is commonly believed. I previously held the firm belief that as you rise in rank, your privileges and physical luxuries increase, however, the book shows that the stress increases, the burden of responsibility grows, and decision dilemmas constantly haunt your mind. These mental pressures never

leave you, regardless of success. Certain persistent questions in business and leadership never stop: What should you do when a top-performing employee starts leaving? Should you fire your honest manager when the company grows manifold? Should you hire someone else to manage the company that has now become bigger than what you previously managed? These dilemmas follow leaders all the time.

Do not get me wrong: this book is not limited to CEOs or only for people aspiring to become CEOs. The core lesson is simple and universal: every time you expect things to go smoothly, life throws a sudden blow that catches you off guard and places you into another dilemma. This cycle never ends until you take decisive action.

I had been a huge fan of the quotation that said we are the average of five people with whom we spend our time, and this book taught me the practical answer to that. Ben Horowitz talks about how different groups of people he was part of would react differently to the same news. His calculus class fellows would be least interested in what new music albums looked like, and similarly, his football team gang cared least as to what Ronald Reagan had to do. Because of these different interests and approaches, it is very important to form the right part of the group to focus on the right sort of things.

During the course of the book, Ben Horowitz takes you into his mind and approach when it comes to decision-making. Though outwardly it appears that he is just telling about how he went through this or that difficult situation as a CEO, he indirectly gives so much value to the readers. He teaches them out of his own life as a CEO that it is an uphill battle where you have to face so many situations where your decision would be affecting the lives of hundreds and thousands, which is really tough.

To a person who has recently started a company, an employee might come and ask what he should be doing to get promoted to the next position. A normal CEO would consider that as a positive move from the employee and give him some recommendations, only to come to know later on that he had told his senior that you have assigned him to learn the job so as to replace him. These are the issues that every business owner has to face, and very few dive so deep into management issues and give you the practical steps to deal with them better than "The Hard Thing About Hard Things".

Ben Horowitz believes that the most important job of a CEO is to develop a "Communication Architecture" in the company. A company exerts a lot of effort to recruit the best possible minds, but what happens with most companies is that there is no proper mechanism for the proper utilization of those fertile minds. Therefore, it falls upon a CEO to create an atmosphere where ideas can easily flow from cabin-to-cabin and office-to-office in the company. If a CEO

is able to achieve that, that will be his biggest contribution to his company.