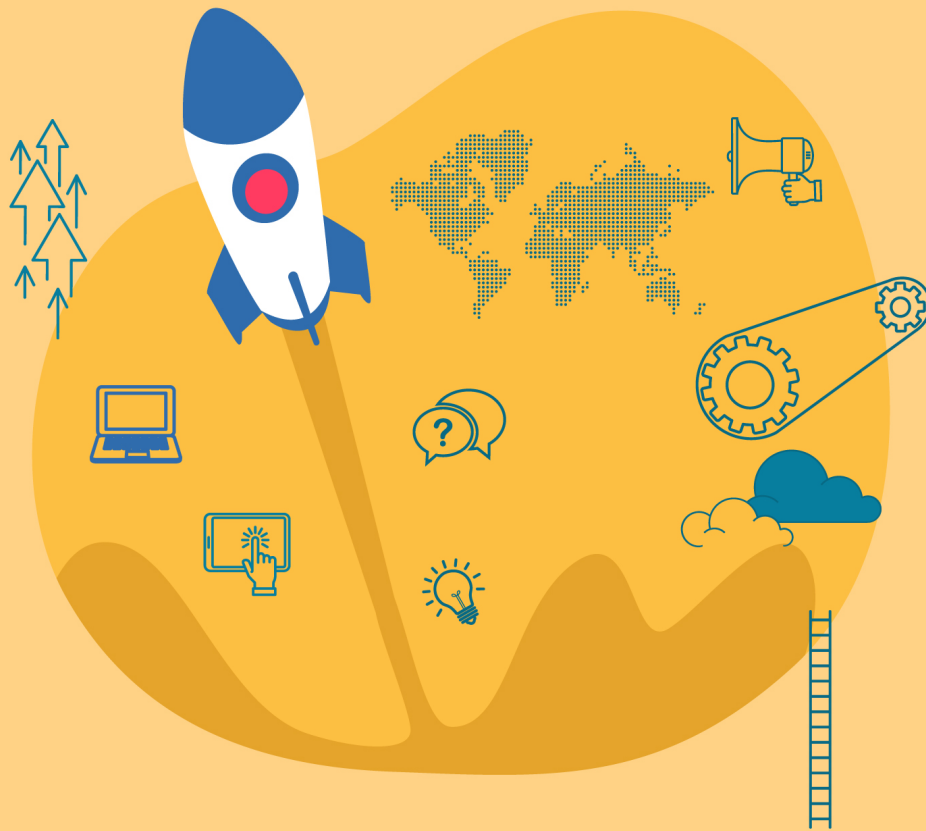


# SUMMARY REWORK

JASON FRIED  
DAVID HEINEMEIER HANSSON



# **Summary of “ReWork” by Jason Fried and David Heinemeier Hanson**

Written by Alyssa Burnette

ReWork (2010) is a new business guidebook which aims to shake things up and throw your old-school manual out the window.

Introduction	5
What Matters to You?	7
You Can be Anything But Boring	9
Bigger Isn't Always Better	11
Keep it Simple	13
Final Summary	15



# QuickRead

F R E E B O O K S U M M A R I E S

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# Introduction

In today's climate, launching your own startup has never been easier. And as more and more success stories are demonstrating, you don't even need a significant amount of money or influence to do it! In fact, if you're willing to do what it takes, you can even start your own business in under 24 hours! But if you want to succeed, you'll need to literally re-work everything you think you know about starting a new business. And that's exactly what this book will teach you. That's why we're going to dive right in, starting with a few of Fried and Hanson's number-one tips for success.

According to the authors, starting small is the primary golden rule of launching your own startup. Many people make the mistake of assuming that you have to start by quitting your day job out of the gate or by working crazy hours to get your business off the ground in its first week. But neither of those ideas are true and they're definitely not what you should be doing! Although the authors completely understand the surge of excitement and commitment that can overwhelm a new entrepreneur as you imagine making your dream reality for the very first time, they recommend siphoning your excitement into small, manageable bursts that will actually help you get stuff done.

This principle of moderation also applies to your finances as well. Because many new business owners are tempted to spend exorbitant amounts of money on their venture-- even to the point of going in debt-- the authors strongly caution against this. Instead of making unwise or extravagant investments, they recommend using the resources that are both least expensive and most accessible to you. And because a laptop and your own creativity is usually all that's needed to successfully launch a business from your living room, Friend and Hanson advocate thinking of external funding only as a last resort.

With these principles in mind, the next step is to concentrate on the core of your business. If, for example, you're the early founders of Dunkin Donuts,

then coffee and donuts are the core of your business. So, start by picking a core that's simple, easily identifiable, and-- above all-- stable. For example, founding a new business with fidget spinners at the core is unlikely to generate long-term success because fidget spinners will eventually go out of fashion. But services like connecting freelancers with prospective clients or products like exceptional coffee and donuts are likely to be in demand for a long time.

And in fact, it really is as simple as these three opening steps! Once you know these keys to re-working your business mindset and you've picked a solid core for your business, you're ready to set up shop! And that leads us to this chapter's last and perhaps most important lesson: don't overthink it. Starting your business is a lot easier than it seems and you don't have to have every single detail perfectly in place before you launch. Instead, (although it might sound like pretty careless business advice), the truth is that once you have those core details in place, you can just go for it and work out the other less important details as the need arises!

# What Matters to You?

This is perhaps the singular question that can make or break your business because it all boils down to motivation. The motivation that drives you to start your business-- and keep it going once it gets off the ground-- is crucial because unless your heart is in the right place, you won't be able to do it. So, if you're getting into the game with the intent to make your first million by the time you're 25 or you're emotionally making a prenup with your business from the get-go (preparing to bail as soon as things get tough), not only will your business not make it, it won't be anything you can be proud of.

Why? Because at its core, your business should really be about something other than money. So, whether you're a family-run operation whose aim is to promote family values through homemade crafts and inherited recipes or you've started this business because you want to use your funding and talents to support disabled children, you ultimately need a cause like this in order to succeed. However, that's not to say that your motives always have to be 100% altruistic; your business doesn't have to be a charity but it should be predicated on heart and passion in whatever form that takes for you. If that passion means opening a bakery because it's all you've ever dreamed of since you were six years old, that's awesome too! Whatever it is, it has to matter to you.

That's because that foundation of passion is what will ultimately drive every decision you make. Take, for example, Charles' food truck in the TV series Brooklyn Nine Nine. A life-long foodie, Charles is delighted beyond words to open his own food truck and share his passion for cuisine with the people of Brooklyn by trying out his own recipes. This passion leads him to create a blanket policy that every meatball sub he serves will only be made to order on the spot when there's a customer ready to eat it. Although it would be far more efficient to make as many meatball subs as possible and have them ready to hand out en masse, Charles' commitment to the quality of food

drives him to sacrifice efficiency-- and possibly even extra revenue-- for the sake of a product he can be proud of.

And even though this example is fictional, the principle still stands. So, whatever that looks like for you, find your meatball sub! And once you fight it, you can strengthen your position by picking an enemy. While comparison is the enemy of growth and you should never judge your own progress by what others are doing, there's nothing wrong with learning what you don't want to emulate and taking a stand against that. If, for example, you're fed up with people who can't tell a Pinot Grigio from a Merlot, then you might characterize your new wine bar as a haven for wine lovers with discerning taste, marketing yourself as the alternative to the casual multipurpose bars who attract customers that say things like, "Oh, I'll just take the house white."

This will not only help you define your competition in your own mind, it will also make you instantly memorable to the customer. Because instead of simply thinking of you as a new business that's popped up, she'll remember you as being different from the other bars in town-- so different, in fact, that she'll recommend you to her friends as the venue for their next book club meeting. However, with that said, it's equally important that you don't define your style only in terms of your competitors. As previously mentioned, comparison is the enemy of growth, so if you allow yourself to get hung up on only beating your competitor, being better than them, or crafting a product that compares to theirs, you'll get in the way of your own progress every time.



# You Can be Anything But Boring

If you build a better mousetrap... somebody will come along and try to copy it. Sadly, that's going to be true no matter what type of successful product or service you design; just take a look at the competition among travel sites like Expedia, Kayak, and Trivago! That's why your only defense against copycats is to infuse your product with so much originality, people will be practically unable to steal it. The authors caution that that unique facet is unlikely to be your product idea itself; anybody can design a clothing store, a video streaming service, or a cool line of sweaters for cats. But you can make yourself stand out in the way you conduct your business.

For example, your thing might be acknowledging that, sure, people can buy clothes from some other company-- but those guys don't have your commitment to customer service. Whether that means you stand out because you're friendly, because you always include free samples with each purpose, or because you make your customers feel so special every time they walk in your store, you can set yourself apart with these simple little details. Cultivating your passion for your business is another great place to start. (Remember our meatball sub?) And one great way to be passionate about your product is to start by making something that you would want yourself.

If, for example, your goal is to fulfill your childhood dream of opening a bakery, then you need to make cakes that you would be proud to eat every single day. And if every cake you make is infused with that goal and passion, then you can guarantee that you'll love what you do and your customers will too! This will also help you go above and beyond when it comes to meeting your customers' expectations. Because if you've ever been a customer yourself (and pretty much everybody has), you know the feeling of getting really excited about a product only to be disappointed with how it functions once you buy it. If you keep this feeling in mind as a business owner, you'll develop and retain a consistent motivation to give your customers a better experience.

And once you've accomplished all these steps-- a business practice that makes you unique, a product you'll be proud to sell, and an experience that re-works what your customers are used to-- you'll not only build a successful business with a loyal base of customers, you'll free yourself from the pressure of worrying about anyone stealing your secrets. In fact, you can openly share your strategies for success and encourage fledgling entrepreneurs because you'll simply be providing others with a roadmap for creating a good business, not offering them a handbook for how to imitate yours. So, above all, be original, but don't be afraid to share your secrets for success once you reach your goals.

## Bigger Isn't Always Better

For many new startups, the grass always looks greener on the other side. Small clothing boutiques dream of becoming the next Macy's or Kate Spade, acquiring hundreds of stores and international acclaim. But believe it or not, that's not always the best option. In fact, in this respect, you can actually take a lesson from your superstore counterparts, most of whom aren't seeking to expand and set up new stores. Why? Because they understand two things: firstly, that sometimes, quantity sacrifices quality. And secondly, they're content with the size they are right now.

Both of these are lessons small businesses should learn because being a small, independent operation offers you some freedoms that many bigger stores would give anything to have again! One benefit of being small is that you have the opportunity to experiment and try out new products and strategies without being exposed to international criticism. If you try something and it doesn't sell well or you lose a lot of money, that information stays within a limited sphere of people. But if, on the other hand, you're WalMart... well, you can imagine. So, if your business takes off overnight, that's fantastic! But for as long as you can, relish the joys of staying small and use this opportunity to grow, experiment, and perfect your strategy.

You can also enjoy the small business perk of improving your connection with your team members. Maybe at the moment, your business is operated by you and your partner and a virtual assistant or a team composed of you and your four buddies from college. At the moment, communication is simple and easy because you're small in number and you know each other. And because your business isn't yet a multi-billion dollar corporation, you have the luxury of keeping your entire team on the front lines. Each of you has the power to be flexible and make decisions in the company's best interests and each of you has the freedom to pitch ideas and communicate with the entire team.

Big corporations don't have that luxury. In fact, entire books are written on how to build effective teams and get past the complicated hierarchy that develops when you have a team of a few thousand people. But because you're all equal at the moment, you have the opportunity to work together to promote your business' core values, like exceptional customer service. And this ability to work together purely and simply is one of the most beautiful facets of a small business. So, in short, don't let it go to waste.

# Keep it Simple

Have you ever listened to a commercial or press release for a big company and found yourself feeling like they used so many words without really saying anything? If you have, you're not alone and you're absolutely right; in many cases, it seems that the bigger a corporation gets, the more their message is lost in meaningless lingo. And that's another key difference between big companies and small businesses that you don't want to emulate. So, as you're drafting your startup's communication policy, go ahead and make a commitment to keeping your communication simple, open, and honest. Don't let yourself get lost in the mindless mumbo-jumbo of big press releases; just spread your message clearly and efficiently so that your customers leave feeling like you're totally transparent with them.

Your attitude will impact your communication perhaps more than anything else, so start by treating every phone call, every email, and every Facebook message with your customers like it's important. Use each of these opportunities as a new way to build lasting connections with your customers. Social media can also be a great tool for forming these relationships because it gives you a platform for sharing information that your customers will find relevant and relatable.

If, for example, you're a lawnscape startup, you can share posts of aesthetically pleasing lawns, tips for yard maintenance and plant care, and in-between, sprinkle messages about how you can help your customers achieve those goals. This is a free and easy way to spread awareness about your company and invite customers to engage and you can do it in two seconds while relaxing in your bathtub. There's no doubt about it-- that's probably the easiest marketing strategy you'll ever find!

However, it's unlikely that you'll start trending on Twitter overnight, so when you want to advertise on a platform that's a little bigger than your startup's fledgling social media accounts, one of the best pieces of advice the authors can give you is: don't try to get on Good Morning America right

away. Not only is it highly unlikely that you'll succeed, it's not even the best marketing strategy for your business at this time. So, instead, concentrate on widening your sphere of influence through partnerships with local outlets like a small bookstore or regional newspaper. This will provide you with a great starting point and effective exposure to viable customers in your area. It will also generate more reliable traffic and revenue than a brief blurb in, for example, The New York Times.

# Final Summary

When it comes to launching your own startup, many new entrepreneurs start off with a variety of misconceptions that ultimately tank their business. Don't let that happen to you! To avoid this fate, all you have to do is simply re-work your mindset and let go of everything you thought you knew about starting a business, replacing it with tried and true advice from the authors.

So, if you thought the key was to spend lots of money from the start, scrap that idea in favor of building with the tools that are the least expensive and the most affordable. Likewise, don't immediately quit your day job in order to devote yourself to your business full time. Instead, build your business little by little while maintaining your day job as long as you need a consistent and secure source of income. You can also get your new business off to a successful start by keeping your communication simple and remembering that you don't always want to emulate big corporations.



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