

🕒 2021.05.09

The Hard Thing About Hard Things: Building a Business When There Are No Easy Answers by Ben Horowitz

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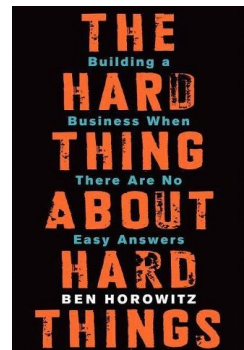
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Category: Management

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Why: I encountered hard things even before registering a company.

Goal: learn hard things about being a tech company CEO.



Action: Follow Your Contribution, Not Passion.

3 Key Concepts

1. Follow your contribution.
2. Take care of people, products and profits, in that order.
3. Have courage, without it other virtues don't manifest.

Summary

How to follow your contribution, and not your passion?

The idea is that your passion changes most likely with time and situation. The other fact is that your passion and your skill might not align. Therefore, it should be your hobby and not something you pursue professionally.

On the other hand, when you are good at something, you are contributing. And people love you because you are useful to them and society. In turn, you'd likely enjoy that people see your value.

Unlike other business books that show you what to do to have good company, Ben shows us what to do when shit hits the fan.

It opens my eyes to the topic that only a few will experience (CEOs). What is the hard thing about being on the top of the company and what to do in wartime?

Take care of people first

Then products and profits, in that order.

As a CEO, you have to

Hire the right person

Prioritize the people that are good at what they are doing, even though they have flaws. Not the well-rounded one. When crisis comes – and the day will come – you need a highly competent employee to through storms.

Manage and promote with a clear principle

Do not let people get promoted unilaterally. Otherwise, you will have most HR on the management level. The process must be as transparent as possible. There is no secrecy, employees talk. Two challenges here

- **Peter Principle:** people raise to their level of incompetence and stuck. It is hard to tell whether someone would be able to handle his/her next higher position, until they are proven incompetent.
- **Law of Crappy People:** all employees benchmark themselves with the worst in higher rank.

You see now why the promotion system in your firm must be strict and transparent.

Fire the wrong person

It is part of the job. I will come back to this section when that day comes. (hopefully never)

. . .

Have courage

Without courage, other virtues don't manifest.

- To be honest, you must have courage to say things against other beliefs.
- To have justice, you must stand against mainstream.



In fact, it matters only when you are taking a position and prevail. It is the only way to generate any value in our society.

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To sum up, this book shows how hard things always happen and how to handle them. It is people's problem that is hard to solve. CEO is tested exclusively on people skill.



The hard thing is Hard.

Goal check: I learned how CEO faces war-time management in the tech company.

Wasu's Review

(4.5 / 5.0)

Get this book on Amazon [here!](#)

Bonus: if it is worth doing, then it is also worth doing right.

Ben talks about the idea of “**technical debt**” and the lesser-known “**management debt.**” While you can borrow time by writing quick and dirty code, you will eventually have to pay back – with interest.

Common management debts are

- Putting two good employees in the same position or level of management.
- Overcompensating a key employee, because she gets another job offer.
- No feedback process

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