
PM WORLD BOOK REVIEW



Book Title: ***Extreme Teams: why Pixar, Netflix, AirBnB, and other cutting-edge companies succeed where most fail***

Author: **Robert Bruce Shaw**

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Introduction

EXTREME TEAMS, ET for short, is a well-organized and thorough analysis of cutting edge firms that exist today. More specifically, it's about AIRBNB, WHOLEFOODS, PIXAR, NETFLIX, PATAGONIA and ALIBABA.

Overview of Book's Structure

The book highlights the reasons why these firms are so cutting edge. From the Teams working within the company to the philosophy adopted at the top of the company. ET describes why and how these firms stand the test of time, deal with competition and manage to keep the employees and teams empowered through the policies adopted or not adopted.

ET is a book that gives great insight for companies looking to maximize their footprint in their respective industry. It also gives ideas for those firms and teams that would like to hire the best employees and motivate them to perform at the highest level they can.

Highlights

A company's philosophy and culture are ways that sustain a company. For Patagonia, the company that specializes in making gear for outdoor enthusiasts, they market to the "Dirt bag" individual. This individual loves the outdoors and doesn't mind getting dirty. Their gear is durable and long-lasting and made with great quality.

Whole Foods has really developed the ultimate Team dynamic. They take serious attention to the teams that make up the store, both at the local/neighborhood level also at the corporate level.

These Extreme teams believe in creating an individual Culture of their own. A culture that is not copied but one that is created from within. It speaks of Culture as originating from a Cognitive angle and from an Emotional angle. Team members are thought of as being both

Result and Relationship driven. There exists a deep passion for the work they do, some would call somewhat obsessive compassion. What makes a company of cutting edge caliber is the unified passion that is demonstrated.

Highlights: What I liked!

Will this person be a good FIT? This is a question ET asks. While most mediocre firms/teams look to hire and make sure that each position remains filled, cutting edge firms seek to only bring in individuals who fit within their culture. If there is no fit, they will not be hired. This is because of 2 reasons, first, this person will ultimately not contribute in the long run and secondly, the team will end up lagging behind. In a scenario where Teams are rewarded based on performance metrics, this is the way in which they remain competitive. Eventually, only hiring individuals that make a good fit leads to quite a homogeneous group, some will say they all behave in a Clone-like manner.

Who might benefit from the Book?

The ability to focus is what separates Extreme teams from average teams. Cutting out all noise and assigning certain individuals a single project as opposed to several creates better results. Also Productive defocusing is also a means in which ET look to maximize the return on investment i.e. project undertaken. Failing fast remains to be top priority, as firms should not be afraid in trying new things, if they do not work, learn from it and move on. They believe in Fast Failures.

Wholefoods prides itself on Transparency which is believe builds Trust. Everything from Salaries to Team performance are displayed for the company to seek. This Transparency, Wholefoods, believes creates an environment where there is no need to hide anything and starts conversations on an even playing field.

Conclusion

What makes a Team an EXTREME TEAM, is that the desire to strengthen relationships amongst the employees. ET believes in creating a FAMILY dynamic in which we treat each other as a family member, we are not afraid to provide the brutal truth, criticize - good or bad, this eliminates a phenomenon called the “Little white rabbit” coined by Jack Ma, founder of Alibaba. This is a situation where everyone on the team gets along well, but no one challenges the other. This only destroys and undermines the team in the long run. It also stifles the team’s potential. “Face-saving” by Goffman a sociologist and Terminal niceness, by an executive named Burns, are both terms that describe ways in which team members use to avoid conflict, ultimately doing a disservice to the team.

For more about this book, go to:

<http://www.amacombooks.org/book.cfm?isbn=9780814437179>

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