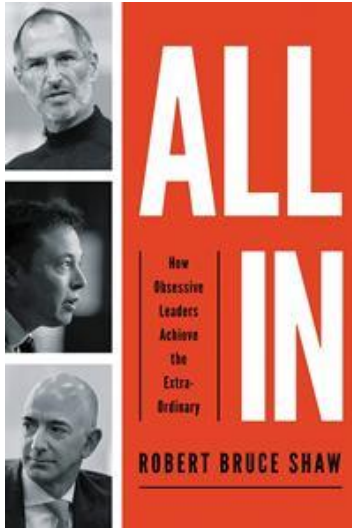


## PM WORLD BOOK REVIEW



Book Title: ***ALL IN: How Obsessive Leaders Achieve the Extra-Ordinary***

Author: **Robert Bruce Shaw**

Publisher: HarperCollins Leadership

List Price: \$27.99

Format: 209 pages, Hardback

Publication Date: 2020

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Reviewer: **Jason Loman**

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### Introduction

“ALL IN: How Obsessive Leaders Achieve the Extra-Ordinary” is, in short, about the benefits and drawbacks of obsessive leaders with beneficial insight on how to yoke obsessiveness. To begin, Shaw defines obsession through descriptive means and contrasts it with grit. Then he recounts the experiences of Steve Jobs, Elon Musk, Travis Kalanick, and Jeff Bezos. Shaw compares the different obsessive styles of each leader and contrasts them against a more standard commitment to employment.

### Overview of Book’s Structure

“ALL IN: How Obsessive Leaders Achieve the Extra-Ordinary” consists of 7 chapters divided into 3 groups, an unnamed opening group, *Profiles in Obsession*, and *Making Obsession Work*. Within *Making Obsession Work* the author includes notes, acknowledgements, index and finally an about of the author. The book flows from concept to concept well and uses quotes directly from the main subjects to illustrate various points. It reads easily and doesn’t portend an air of pretension.

### Highlights

Shaw takes the reader through each chapter by building on the previous chapter. Chapter 1 describes obsession in a way that gives the reader a working definition for the rest of the book. Shaw provides five caveats which help bound the limits of obsession:

1. Obsession is not the only factor needed to achieve something significant.
2. Obsession is not always needed.
3. Obsession is not entirely understandable or manageable.
4. Experiences in an individual's life do not inevitably result in a productively obsessive personality.
5. There is a risk of glorifying these leaders and their achievements, which can distort what we can learn from them.

After providing a list of caveats Shaw begins to unpack what is beneficial for a firm and unhealthy for it, remove the glorification bestowed on famous obsessives and provide a clue for how society can benefit from obsessives. Companies need the benefits provided by obsession without the drawbacks and Shaw aims to help them achieve it. Leaders such as Musk and Bezos have demonstrated what can be achieved with a leader who is consumed with their work, but many don't know, or forget, the downsides inherent to these types of leaders. Both Musk and Bezos freely admit their companies are not for everyone. Kalanick and Jobs were fired by their own companies for just cause. Shaw uses examples such as these as a balance to the benefits and a warning to companies seeking the same rewards.

### **Highlights: What I liked!**

I enjoyed how the author described various situations involving the book's main subjects and then drew his conclusions. It appeared to be balanced and presented in a manner designed to illustrate a point which was neither flattering nor damning. When news articles are written it's difficult to recall details of the events that led to whatever became newsworthy and it's the details that make the lesson salient. Most of us are not imminently interested in Travis Kalanick or Elon Musk, or a whole host of other leaders that we could learn from if we had the time to gather a decade's worth of publicly available data and process it as one set. Shaw does this for us, presents his case and conclusions and thereby allows readers a perspective they would not have otherwise had. If information is power, and business leadership is your game, Shaw's book is a valuable conductor.

### **Who might benefit from the Book?**

This book would benefit anyone in a leadership position but it's uniquely positioned for those rare people looking to grow their company and who want to understand the difference between obsessives and people with grit. Additionally, anyone with an obsession for their work and more than a little introspection would benefit from an outside perspective.

### **Conclusion**

*ALL IN: How Obsessive Leaders Achieve the Extra-Ordinary* is not a biography of Steve Jobs, or Jeff Bezos, or any of the other individuals profiled in it. It's a description of the benefits and drawbacks of the obsessive and unique personalities of those

individuals. Its a warning for people looking to court an obsessive personality and maybe a positive indicator for managers who are concerned about obsessive culture in their company. Shaw brings his expertise and multiple years of experience in the business industry and uses that to color the experiences of the individuals represented within his book. Along the way he sprinkles a bit of humor with a healthy dose of quotes from Elon Musk et al. and people close to them. *ALL IN* is a great resource for the fast paced business environment without being a exhaustive autobiography of the individuals.

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For more about this book, go to:

<https://www.harpercollinsleadership.com/9781400212200/all-in/>

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## About the Reviewer



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**Jason Loman** is a husband and father to an adorable family as well as a business owner and entrepreneur. He earned his BS in Technical Management from Embry-Riddle University with a major in Project Management. He holds a CAPM with an eye on the PMP certification and an interest in achieving a master's degree in engineering management. Jason has been a project manager since 2009 in the aviation industry. Jason can be contacted at [jasonpropm@gmail.com](mailto:jasonpropm@gmail.com)