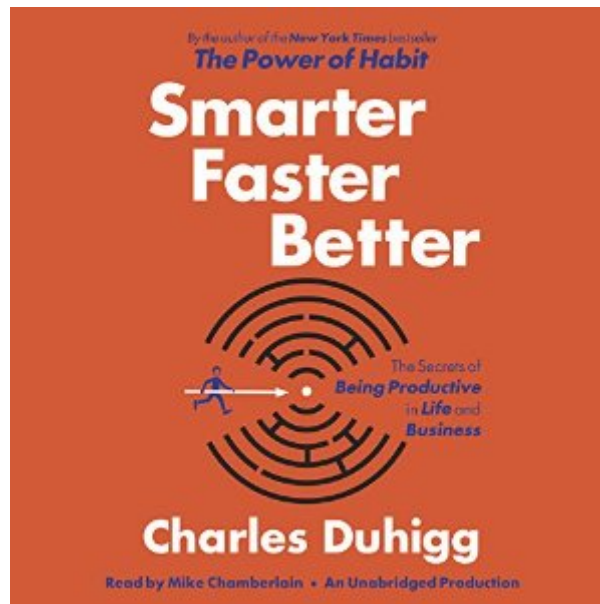


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Smarter Faster Better: The Secrets Of Being Productive In Life And Business



Synopsis

From the author of the New York Times best-selling phenomenon *The Power of Habit* comes a fascinating new book that explores the science of productivity, and why, in today's world, managing how you think - rather than what you think - can transform your life. A young woman drops out of a PhD program and starts playing poker. By training herself to envision contradictory futures, she learns to anticipate her opponents' missteps - and becomes one of the most successful players in the world. A group of data scientists at Google embark on a four-year study of how the best teams function and find that how a group interacts is much more important than who is in the group - a principle, it turns out, that also helps explain why *Saturday Night Live* became a hit. A Marine Corps general, faced with low morale among recruits, reimagines boot camp - and discovers that instilling a "bias toward action" can turn even the most directionless teenagers into self-motivating achievers. The filmmakers behind Disney's *Frozen* are nearly out of time and on the brink of catastrophe - until they shake up their team in just the right way, spurring a creative breakthrough that leads to one of the highest-grossing movies of all time. What do these people have in common? They know that productivity relies on making certain choices. The way we see ourselves and frame our daily decisions; the big ambitions we embrace and the easy goals we ignore; the cultures we establish as leaders to drive innovation; the way we interact with data: These are the things that separate the merely busy from the genuinely productive. At the core of *Smarter Faster Better* are eight key concepts - from motivation and goal setting to focus and decision making - that explain why some people and companies get so much done. Drawing on the latest findings in neuroscience, psychology, and behavioral economics - as well as the experiences of CEOs, educational reformers, four-star generals, FBI agents, airplane pilots, and Broadway songwriters - this painstakingly researched book explains that the most productive people, companies, and organizations don't merely act differently. They view the world, and their choices, in profoundly different ways.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Charles Duhigg is a good journalist (his share of a Pulitzer Prize proves that), and his book *Smarter Faster Better* is a good read. I enjoyed reading it. It's inspiring and insightful. But the book promises to be more than just entertainment. The title takes off the Olympic motto: *Citius Altius Fortius* (Faster Higher Stronger), and its cover shows a runner smartly running directly to the center of a maze. A self-help, self-improvement type of book, it promises "the secrets of being productive in life and business". That I don't think the book delivers. Why not? The book is full of stories. Anecdotes. Case studies. Whatever you want to call them. Charles Duhigg researches a lot of disparate incidents involving various people, and tries to bring them together to show us how to draw on other people's experiences to be more productive. But he fails. That's because you can pull out of anecdotes pretty much anything you want to. I can find an anecdote to support any argument I want to make.

Anecdotes are like statistics. As Simpson's paradox says, often the same statistics can be used to show something and its exact opposite. The same with anecdotes. Take Charles Duhigg's use of the life of Rosa Parks in his book *The Power of Habit*. He says that she shows the power of social habits. He tells of how her husband said she was so social she rarely ate dinner at home, instead eating at the home of friends. That gave her the social strength to start a movement. But Susan Cain (a blurber for this book) in her book *Quiet*, tells the story of Rosa Parks to support her argument of the power of introverts.

First let me tell you where I am at, and then we can better understand where I am going and what a profound impact this book is having on me. So where I am is that I am somewhat of a perfectionist. Consequently I make jobs a lot more arduous than they need to be. While I am pining over every little detail others are soaring ahead in what is essential. I marvel at creating to do lists no matter how trivial and am delighted when at the end of the day I have most of them checked off as accomplished. Sure I have long term goals but I am in reality caught up more in the day to day chores, and the enormous job of maintaining, and restoring my 1955 house. So where does this book take you. It starts out recanting what some others who have achieved an unbelievable amount

of acclaim, having achieved all of these things at the same time. This is not about an increase in "busy"ness but rather a focus on what is essential to achieve our goals. An even better idea is to create stretchy goals to all the more focus on achieving true notoriety and success. Taking time off and spending it with family is all part of adopting the new you. Since this book does not currently have a browse through the pages feature I am going to take a moment to share with you a part of what was written right inside on the first page by the editorial director of Random House for non-fiction. "My conception of what productivity really means has changed. I now understand that it's not about how many things I check off of my checklist on any given day, or how many hours you spend chained to your desk; at heart, it's about making certain choices.

Smarter, Faster, Better is the perfect title for this book by Charles Duhigg. I was simply fascinated by every chapter. Duhigg details how people have the ability to make any job or idea more efficient and creative. Through storytelling, anecdotal examples and research he describes how people get caught in tunnel vision, bogged in negative corporate culture and stuck in projects. For example, one of the interesting findings comes from university researchers who discover that everyday people have an uncanny ability to forecast events when they are versed in probabilistic thinking which is the use of probabilities. Almost in the same vein of the popular Freakonomics, Smarter Faster Better shows how two seemingly different teams, Google and Saturday Night Live, use similar team building plans to create a successful workplace. There are good examples of what these successful entities do and also examples of how others fail. Especially good is the chapter regarding management and how a commitment culture in the workplace has such a high success rate and how other models others fail. The story of the GM plant turnaround is a fine example of how this works in a corporation. These are not just theories that Duhigg is writing about, he gives real world examples of how these approaches work. There are great chapters on motivation showing how Marines have adopted differing strategies in their basic training with very good results, and a chapter on focus with the scary case lesson of tunnel vision and the doomed Air France Flight that crashed into the ocean. One of my favorite chapters involved innovation and how the film makers working on Disney's Frozen had to reconstruct their entire script.

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