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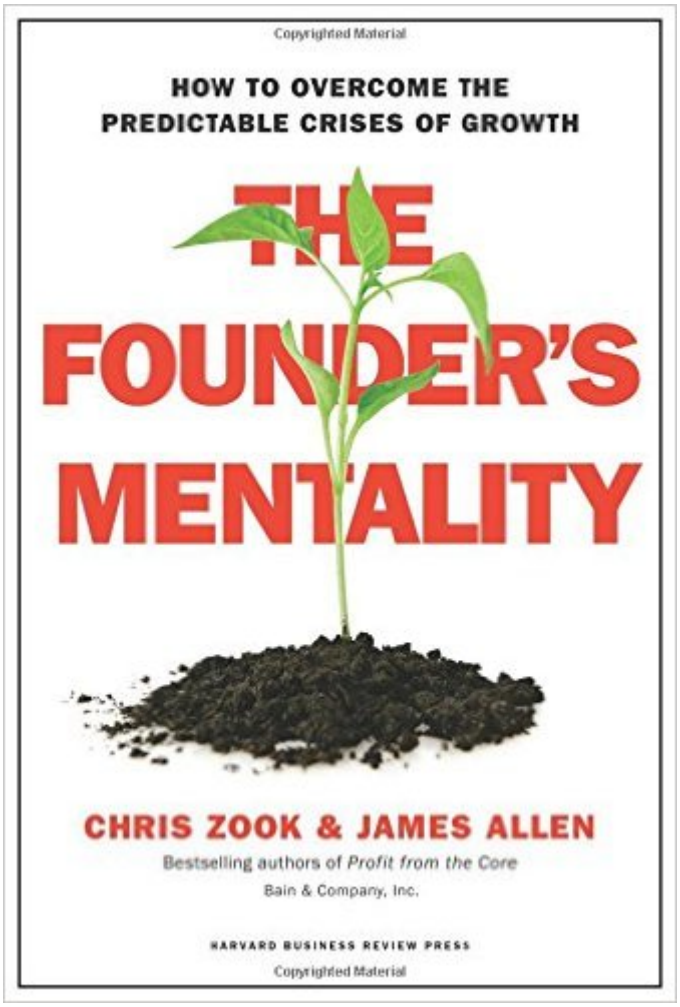
The Founder’s Mentality: How To Overcome The Predictable Crises Of Growth



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Synopsis

Three Principles for Managing—and Avoiding—the Problems of GrowthWhy is profitable growth so hard to achieve and sustain? Most executives manage their companies as if the solution to that problem lies in the external environment: find an attractive market, formulate the right strategy, win new customers. But when Bain & Companyâ ™s Chris Zook and James Allen, authors of the bestselling Profit from the Core, researched this question, they found that when companies fail to achieve their growth targets, 90 percent of the time the root causes are internal, not external—increasing distance from the front lines, loss of accountability, proliferating processes and bureaucracy, to name only a few. Whatâ ™s more, companies experience a set of predictable internal crises, at predictable stages, as they grow. Even for healthy companies, these crises, if not managed properly, stifle the ability to grow further—and can actively lead to decline.The key insight from Zook and Allenâ ™s research is that managing these choke points requires a “founderâ ™s mentalityâ •—behaviors typically embodied by a bold, ambitious founder—to restore speed, focus, and connection to customers:• An insurgentâ ™s clear mission and purpose• An unambiguous owner mindset• A relentless obsession with the front lineBased on the authorsâ ™ decade-long study of companies in more than forty countries, The Founderâ ™s Mentality demonstrates the strong relationship between these three traits in companies of all kinds—not just start-ups—and their ability to sustain performance. Through rich analysis and inspiring examples, this book shows how any leader—not only a founder—can instill and leverage a founderâ ™s mentality throughout their organization and find lasting, profitable growth.

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Customer Reviews

I liked it, but it was only a so-so book. A lot of research went into the writing, and the content will provide value to the reader if they are part of the book's target audience: CEO, Board Member, or investor. All companies that make it past their first year and continue onward in a growth mode are likely to be faced with one, two, or all three of the following problems: management overload, growth stall-out, and company free-fall. What this book is good at is reminding the book's target audience that their growth company that is still young can easily fall prey to these problems, and the reader is put on notice that they better strategically plan to avoid them. Because once one of these problems show their ugly face, the company is in big trouble.I did not agree with the authors' approach to hinge the theory in their book on the concept of â œfounder's mentality.â • Founder's mentality as they define it is great for startup mode, but not so great after a company gets past that. The skill set required of a founder is often totally different than the abilities required of someone running an established company. This is proved by the facts of many successful startups founded in the last 20 years being taken over by venture capital firms and the founder is dumped so a more seasoned professional can take over the helm of the company. In the real world there are very few founders who enjoy all the traits described in Figure 1-1 at page 19 of the book. So let's get real.I liked the list of things to consider included at page 2 of the book:1. Building the business2. Mobilizing the people3. Learning from experience4. Strengthening the company culture5. Upgrading the systems6. Holding down costs7.

In 1865, a German physicist, Rudolph Clausius (1822-1888), coined the term entropy during his research on heat. The wordâ ™s meaning â œa turning towardsâ • (in Greek, en+tropein), â œcontent transformativeâ • or â œtransformative content.â • Claudius used the concept to establish a mathematical foundation for the second law of thermodynamics: without the injection of free energy, all systems tend to move (however gradually) from order to disorder, if not to chaos.Chris Zook and James Allen may have had this phenomenon in mind when writing this book, one in which they ecxamine the paradox of growth, a process that besets all companies as they mature that growth creates complexity and complexity, is the silent killer of profitable growth. That is why only 1 in 9 achieves more than modest levels of profitable growth and hit their targets over a decade and why 85% of executives say their biggest challenges are internal and self-inflicted.They

identify and discuss three predictable crises that can result from growth. Each of the three occurs at a different phase of an organizationâ ™s lifecycle. Here they are:o â œThe first crisis, overload, refers to the internal dysfunction and loss of external momentum that management teams of young, fast-growing companies experience as they try to rapidly scale their businesses.â •o â œThe second crisis, stall-out, refers to the sudden slowdown that many successful companies suffer as their rapid growth gives rise to layers of organizational complexity and diluted the clear mission that once gave the company its function and energy.â •o â œThe third crisis, free fall, is the most existentially threatening.

"The Founder's Mentality" by Zook and Allen makes a significant contribution to the managerial sciences by pointing to critical factors for an organization's continued success. The essence of the book is that employees internalize the principles and entrepreneurial approach of the founders. The authors set forth the details to accomplish this feat by pointing to things like having a bold mission, limitless horizons, relentless experimentation, front line empowerment, customer advocacy/perspective, a cash flow focus, action orientation and an aversion to too much bureaucracy in favor of continuous streamlining.Most importantly, the authors cover the classic stumbling blocks in an organization. Examples are too much complexity, endless debate with no-one having the authority to decide an issue, excessive organization layers, ambiguity around core ideas/principles, trapped resources, unresolved conflicts, goal incongruencies and large corporate staffs.In the engineering art, too much complexity slows down throughput and processing time. Too much organizational hierarchy is in contrast to the organic organizational structure with a quicker response time. Resources may be trapped by having multi-disciplinary specialists functioning in just a single area to avoid organizational contention and turf struggles.Overall, "The Founder's Mentality" covers the classic stumbling blocks which hold back an organization from accomplishing its full potential in the marketplace. The authors only cover tangentially; such things as, building a moat around the firm's profitability and product processes. For instance, Coca Cola has the unique fizzle and an enticing aftertaste. The Parker Pen produces classic penmanship with each stroke of the pen.

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