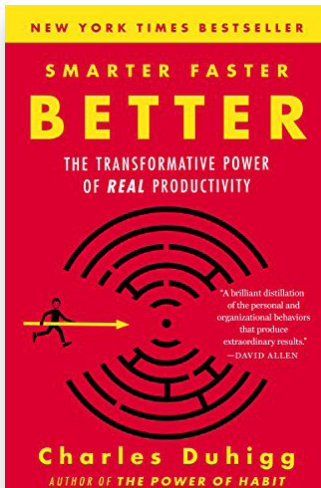


# EXECUTIVE BOOK SUMMARIES

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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*Charles Duhigg is a Pulitzer Prize-winning investigative reporter for the New York Times and author of The Power of Habit.*

## Smarter Faster Better

### THE NUTSHELL

Random House 2016

### Introduction

This book is the result of my investigations into how productivity works, and my effort to understand why some people and companies are so much more productive than everyone else. Productivity isn't about working more or sweating harder. Rather, productivity is about making certain choices in certain ways.

### Chapter 1: Motivation

Motivation is a skill that can be learned and honed. The trick is realizing that a prerequisite to motivation is believing we have authority over our actions and surroundings. Motivation is triggered by making choices that demonstrate to ourselves that we are in control. To self-motivate we need to see our choices not just as expressions of control but also as affirmations of our values and goals. Self-motivation is a choice we make because it is part of something bigger and more emotionally rewarding than the immediate task that needs doing.

### Chapter 2: Teams

Some might hypothesize that "good teams" are successful because their members were smarter. But research shows that good teams succeed not because of the innate qualities of team members, but because of how they treat one another. There were two behaviors that all the good teams shared. First, all the members of the good teams spoke in

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roughly the same proportion of time. Second, the good teams tested as having “high average social sensitivity” toward one another. *How* teams work matters more than *who* is on them.

## Chapter 3: Focus

To become genuinely productive, we must take control of our attention: we must build mental models that put us firmly in charge. When you’re driving to work, force yourself to envision your day. While you’re sitting in a meeting, describe to yourself what you’re seeing and what it means. If you are a parent, anticipate what your children will say at the dinner table, so you’ll notice what goes unmentioned or a stray comment you see as a warning sign. Get in a pattern of forcing yourself to anticipate what’s next.

## Chapter 4: Goal Setting

Making a decision and moving on to the next question *feels* productive. But there are risks associated with a high need for closure. When people begin craving the emotional satisfaction that comes from making a decision, or when they require a sensation of being productive in order to stay calm, they are more likely to make hasty decisions and less likely to reconsider an unwise choice. When people rush toward decisions simply because it makes them *feel* like they are getting something done, missteps are more likely to occur.

## Chapter 5: Managing Others

Employees work smarter and better when they believe they have more decision-making authority *and* when they believe their colleagues are committed to their success. A sense of control can fuel motivation, but for that drive to produce insights and innovations, people need to know their suggestions won’t be ignored, that their mistakes won’t be held against them. And they need to know that everyone else has their back. A culture of commitment and trust doesn’t guarantee that an idea will bear fruit. But it’s the best bet for making sure the right conditions are in place when a great idea comes along.

## Chapter 6: Decision Making

Making good decisions relies on forecasting the future, but forecasting is an imprecise, often terrifying science because it forces us to confront how much we don’t know. The paradox of learning how to make better decisions is that it requires developing a comfort with doubt. How do we learn to make better decisions? We must force ourselves to envision various futures by holding contradictory scenarios in our minds simultaneously, and then expose ourselves to a wide spectrum of successes and failures to develop an intuition about which forecasts are more or less likely to come true.

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## Chapter 7: Innovation

Creativity can't be reduced to a formula. At its core, it needs novelty, surprise, and other elements that cannot be planned in advance to seem fresh and new. There is no checklist that, if followed, delivers innovation on demand. But the *creative process* is different. We can create the conditions that help creativity to flourish. We know, for example, that innovation becomes more likely when old ideas are mixed in new ways. We know that, sometimes, a little disturbance can help jolt us out of the ruts that even the most creative thinkers fall into, as long as those shake-ups are the right size.

## Chapter 8: Absorbing Data

The people who are most successful at learning, which means those who are able to digest the data surrounding them, who absorb insights embedded in their experience and who take advantage of information flowing past, are the ones who know how to use disfluency to their advantage. They know the best lessons are those that force us *do* something and to manipulate information. When we encounter new information and want to learn from it, we must force ourselves to *do something* with the data. Though we can track our spending and cholesterol, we too often eat and spend in ways we know we should avoid.