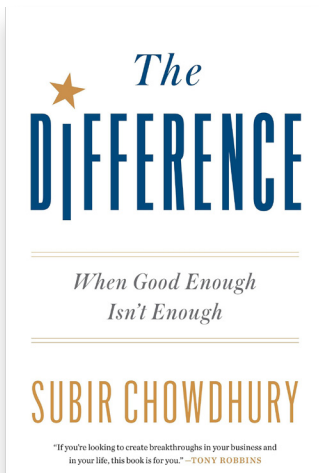


# EXECUTIVE BOOK SUMMARIES

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Subir Chowdhury is a management consultant and the author of a number of books including *The Power of Six Sigma*.

## The Difference

### THE NUTSHELL

Crown Business 2017

#### Introduction: When Good Enough Isn't Enough

This book is aimed at overcoming a fallacy that too many of us, in today's hectic, demanding times, have succumbed to—that good enough is good enough. Making a genuine difference in the world is the responsibility of each one of us. We cannot sit back and rely on the good intentions of others. We must commit to act. If we do that, and practice the four attributes of a caring mindset, I believe we can transform our workplaces, strengthen our family ties, reinvigorate America, and transform the world.

#### Chapter 1: What a Toothpick Can Teach Us About Caring

Too many people just don't care. The danger of an indifferent mindset is not just that it is a problem for large businesses. I believe it is endemic in our country. We are suffering an epidemic of dissatisfaction with our organizations and the institutions that we rely on. This epidemic is driven by a nationwide mindset of indifference.

There are four facets of a caring mindset—what I sum up as *the difference*. They are (1) being *Straightforward*, (2) being *Thoughtful*,

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(3) being *Accountable*, and (4) having *Resolve*. I challenge each of us to develop a caring mindset, because caring is everyone's business, everywhere and all the time. That, in the end, is the difference.

## Chapter 2: The Importance of Being Straightforward

The first of the characteristics of a person who has a caring mindset is being straightforward. By *straightforward* I mean someone who is honest, direct, open, candid, transparent, and fair.

As adults, adopting a caring mindset is a life choice that we make. It requires honesty, openness, candor, and straightforwardness, in every conversation and interaction that we have with colleagues, bosses, and customers, with friends and family. Without the ability and intent to be straightforward, we cannot create and sustain a caring mindset, or achieve a healthy organization, family, or community.

## Chapter 3: The Power of a Glass of Water

The second characteristic of a person with a caring mindset is being thoughtful. By *thoughtful* I mean that the person is attentive to others, considerate, unselfish, and helpful. When we place ourselves in another person's shoes, or see things from another's point of view, and then act for their benefit we are practicing what it means to be thoughtful.

If we don't listen to others, we cannot possibly be thoughtful. Listening to others purposefully involves not just hearing what they have to say, but trying to put yourself in their shoes. It involves empathy and understanding. Empathy means kindness. Kindness is an *action*. It is the *doing* part of empathy. I try to practice it in my work every day.

## Chapter 4: Taking Responsibility

I use the term *being accountable* to mean accepting responsibility for one's action or inaction, in matters for which you are obligated or answerable. When you take responsibility for your actions, good or bad, you are being accountable. We need to put the emphasis on ourselves by asking, "What can I do?"

There are five factors involved in being accountable: (1) being aware that something needs to be done, (2) taking personal responsibility for it, (3) making a choice or decision to act, (4) thinking deeply about the potential consequences of that choice, and (5) setting high expectations.

## Chapter 5: Never Give Up

Resolve, the fourth characteristic of a caring mindset, means having the passion, determination, and

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perseverance to find a solution to a problem or improve a situation. To me, resolve requires humility and a willingness to change.

I've found that in most organizational settings, innovation and change are met with a great deal of resistance. Our colleagues disagree with us or our bosses are on the fence about a new idea. When we encounter resistance, most of us have a tendency to give up. That's why having a firm sense of resolve or unflagging determination is so critical in getting things done.

## **Chapter 6: The Coin or the Pen: Choosing to be the Difference**

I believe it is essential that each of us adopt the STAR mindset if we want to truly make a difference at work, in our families, or as part of our communities. There is no question in my mind that practicing the principles of being straightforward, being thoughtful, being accountable, and having resolve will surely enrich your life.

Practicing a caring mindset is first and foremost about selflessness meaning making a difference for others. Ask yourself at the end of each day, "Did I do something today selflessly for another human being, or to better the world I live in?" If you can answer yes, acknowledge that accomplishment. Commit to encouraging others to make a difference. If your answer is no, devise a game plan to make a difference tomorrow. *You* can be the difference.