



no more *BUSINESS AS USUAL*

By Greg Wiens

Rework

By Jason Fried and David Heinemeyer Hansson
Crown Business, 288 pp. \$22.00

Rework by Jason Fried and David Heinemeier Hansson is probably not at the top of your reading lists, if it is on it at all. After reading this little gut-puncher of a book, may I suggest that it should be. If you want to understand the mentality of the young adults in your congregation, if you want to find out what motivates church planters, or if you simply want lead your church to be a dynamic and flexible organization—which will be the key to growing a healthy church over the next decade—then you should read *Rework*. As our culture continues to change rapidly around us, what we learn to use today, will have a very short shelf life.

PRACTICE WHAT YOU PREACH

Rework author Jason Fried is also the founder of web-design company, 37Signals. Co-author and business partner, David Heinemeier Hansson built success by listening to customers, speaking plainly and –here’s the revolutionary part—sticking to their word. To get an idea of their mindset, here are a few of 37Signals guiding principles:

“Useful is forever: Bells and whistles wear off, but usefulness never does. We build useful software that does just what you need and nothing you don’t.

Clarity is king: Buzzwords, lingo, and sensationalized sales-and-marketing-speak have no place at 37signals. We communicate clearly and honestly.

Long-term contracts are obscene: No one likes being locked into something they don’t want anymore. Our customers can cancel at any time, no questions asked. No setup/termination fees either.”

I work with a lot of churches and organizations that espouse lofty values that they do not actually carry out. Fried and Hansson saw this same scenario played out across the marketplace and decided that they were going to do things differently. *Rework* is not about the values themselves, but about creating a leadership culture that upholds the values. Many principles shared in the book fly directly in the face of what is taught in MBA programs and Christian management courses.

The book covers about 70 subjects including Progress, Productivity, Competitors, Hiring, Damage Control and Culture. No more than three pages are dedicated to each subject, and the writing is pithy and humorous. The language is surely not redeemed, but their insight is. I found myself laughing and crying as they expose so many truths about the business management world that were contrary to what I had previously believed.

THROW OUT THE RULEBOOK

When reading the book you must intentionally suspend any preconceived notions you have based on what you have been taught or experienced in business. As I let this book inform what I learned in my MBA and leadership study, it felt like the ground under me was shaking. Fried and Hansson are quick to support their “heretical” leadership positions with research or real-life proof, but they can still be hard to accept. Upon contemplation and application, however, I began to feel liberated from much of the rigid, arbitrary principles that govern the organizations I have led.

Take, for instance, the standing meeting. Almost every company has one: the weekly staff meeting, the monthly management meeting, you name it. Fried and Hansson say that you should cancel every standing meeting on your calendar, and only schedule meetings to deal with a specific problem or need, and only invite the parties relevant to that need. I decided to take their advice and cancel our staff meetings, which had been a struggle for years: Someone always felt left out, bored or otherwise unproductive. I had never admitted to myself or others that the meetings were ineffective, but in my gut I felt it.

Life without the weekly staff meetings has been wonderful. We still have meetings, but they are on an ad hoc basis, and only the people who need to know are in attendance. Even when we just need to catch up, I will call everyone into the conference room for 15 minutes or so for some connection time. This method is so much more efficient and freeing, but is so contrary to current business practices.

A FEW CHOICE MORSELS

Here are some more of the principles outlined in *Rework* that challenge the status quo.

- Failure doesn't teach you how to succeed. It only teaches you how to fail. Success teaches you how to succeed.
- Build what you need, not what you think others want.
- If you want it bad enough, you will make time for it regardless how busy you are.
- Make everything as simple as you can. Don't add too many details. Details can be added later if they are needed (and often they won't be).
- Shorter is better. (The 57,000-word *Rework* manuscript was reduced to 27,000 words!)
- Interruption is the enemy of productivity. If you are staying late and working long hours, it isn't because you have too much to do, it is because you are allowing interruptions to keep your productivity low.
- Creativity is the first thing to go when you lose sleep.
- Make small to-do lists, and keep them small.
- It is much better for people to be happy using someone else's services or product than being disgruntled using yours.

- Be happy with obscurity, you can take risks without anyone noticing.
- Don't be afraid to show your flaws, no one likes plastic flowers.
- Here are the questions that you should continue to ask yourself:
 - What are you doing?
 - What problem are you solving?
 - Is it useful?
 - Are you adding value?
 - Will this change behavior?
 - Is there an easier way?
 - What could you be doing instead?
 - Is it really worth it?

REWORK IN THE CHURCH

As you can see, some of these principles apply directly to churches and their leadership. For instance, pastors often complain to me about disgruntled people who have left their church for another, but what they must accept is that if those people are happier elsewhere for the sake of the Kingdom, then they must let it (and them) go. Another common occurrence is small churches trying to behave like mega-churches. If you lead a smaller church, highlight the advantages of your size instead of trying to act like a big church. There are plenty of believers out there who feel much more at home among a smaller congregation instead of being just a face in the crowd.

Very few books have made as big a difference in the way I view leadership as *Rework*. My staff meetings are a thing of the past, my to-do lists are shorter, and I am a much different, hopefully more effective leader today than I was a year ago when I read this book. Read it and see how it changes you.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT GREG WIENS, PLEASE VISIT WWW.LEADERSTHATLAST.ORG