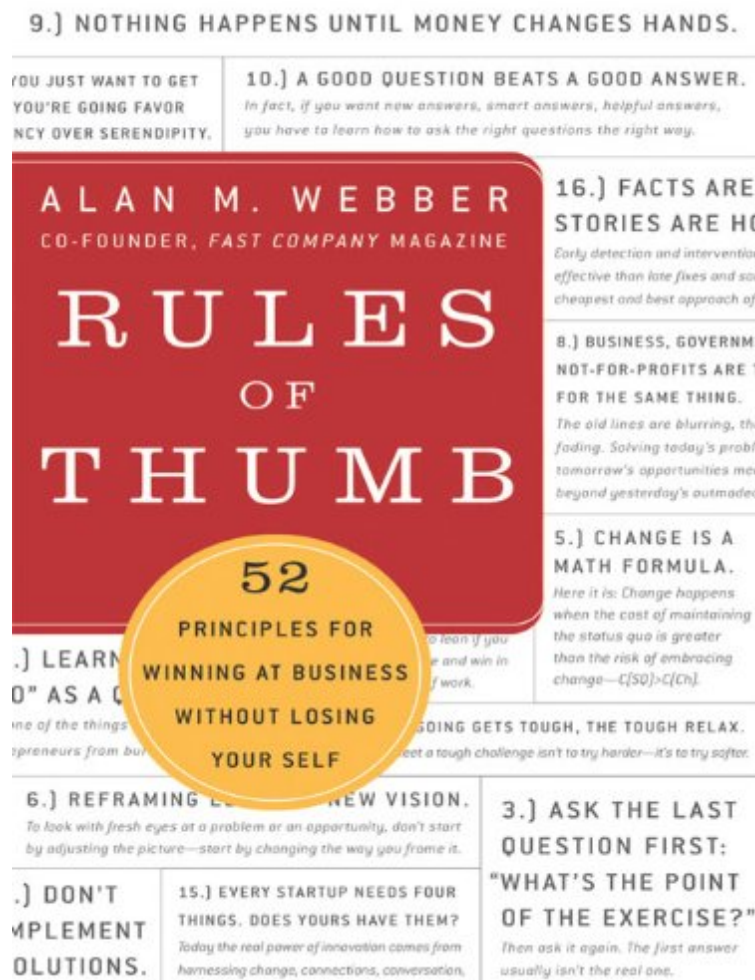


# Rules of Thumb: How to Stay Productive and Inspired Even in the Most Turbulent Times

Alan M. Webber

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**Alan M. Webber : Rules of Thumb: How to Stay Productive and Inspired Even in the Most Turbulent Times** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Rules of Thumb: How to Stay Productive and Inspired Even in the Most Turbulent Times:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. The Rules I Will Take With Me, or Already Do By Daniel W. Rasmus A friend of mine recently recommended Rules of Thumb, here is my take, and my rules. I like that he approached the key topics of management through these rules. I know in Management by Design: Applying Design Principles to the Work Experience, you can read for a while to see what I'm getting at. This isn't an issue for Alan. Once you get past the occasionally too pithy rules, the narrative is straight forward and consumable. In the era of the Twitter and Facebook, you need to grab people quickly or they move on. Alan does a good job of grabbing the reader.

I think this format is also good in that it lets the reader's curiosity decide where they want to wander, and what they should be grabbed by. I don't need to read the entire book to get value (which is the approach we discussed for the new book I pitched called *Uncertainty*). So here are the areas that I really resonated with, perhaps it is because versions of them exist in my own talks, but we can't have too many people on the side of change is good, embrace it, deal with it and let's go co-create the future...\*

- \* *New Realities Demand New Categories*\* A good question beats a good answer\*
- \* We've move from an either/or Past to a Both/and Future\*
- \* Speed=strategy\*
- \* Learn to See the World Through the Eyes of Your Customer (would probably still be at Microsoft and be a VP if they got this one)\*
- \* If You Want to Change the Game, Change the Economics of how the Game is Played (thus my harping on the US getting over itself and trying to reinvent the economy rather than playing all the old games: Strategic Measures-Toward New Measures for a Sustainable, Knowledge Economy[...])\*
- \* The soft stuff is hard (thus my leaning that the future of IT will end up seeing automation cost reductions offset by investments for people to use collaboration technology in an effective way)\*
- \* Good Design is Table Stakes. Great Design Wins. (I would also add that it matters what you design, thus the emphasis on Management by Design around designing workplace experiences)\*
- \* Words matter (and putting names on things matters too. If you can't refer to it, you can watch it or change it)\*
- \* Content isn't king. Context is King. (Amen)\*
- \* Everything is performance (I like that everything isn't productivity, and that performance has more than one meaning, for all of us players)\*
- \* Simplicity is the new currency (entire chapter on simplicity in Management by Design - most managers create complexity in the name of oversight and compliance, just to discover, when it is too late, that they made their own job harder)\*
- \* Technology is about changing how we work (and how we live)\*
- \* Don't confuse credential with talent (thus my push in my education work to de-emphasize traditional degrees in favor of recognizing life-long learning and experience, in an official way -- thus reinventing one of the primary functions of colleges. They may evolve so they aren't about teaching, but about recognizing learning)\*
- \* On the way up, pay attention to your strengths; they'll be your weaknesses on the way down (I would offer a caveat, that this is true only if you climb down the same mountain. If you shift mountains, the rules change)\*
- \* Take your work seriously. Yourself, not so much (should be on the boardroom bathroom wall in all Fortune 1000 companies, well, all companies, because if you need it by the time you make it to the Fortune 1000 it is probably too late)\*
- \* Stay Alert! There are teachers everywhere (which watching the labor discussions at a local college, really bothers teachers. This has always been my mantra and if I didn't believe it, I would be where I am today. Just-in-time-Learning, however, doesn't fit with the American education system, and learners who decide who they trust, where and when, is very disruptive to traditional education).

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Entertaining as well as informative results from world-class mulling

By Robert Morris

This book is as difficult to describe as it is easy to appreciate. What we have here is a series of 52 mini-commentaries, each devoted to an insight or conviction that Alan Webber has formulated throughout his life thus far. As I worked my way through them, I was reminded of Isaac Asimov observation, "The most exciting phrase to hear in science, the one that heralds new discoveries, is not 'Eureka!' (I found it!) but 'That's odd...'" Presumably Webber has encountered situations that struck him as odd and wondered about them, finally reaching conclusions that he characterizes as unofficial "rules" or "truths" about human nature. I suspect that are probably viewed by most people as guidelines. Although Webber suggests that they can be applied to "winning at business without losing your self," I think they are relevant whenever and wherever there is human interaction. After about the first 12-15, I began to connect rules to specific situations. For example:

Rule #10: "A good question beats a good answer." This offers excellent advice to job candidates whose questions tend to reveal more about their abilities than their responses to an interviewer's questions do.

Rule #13: "Learn to take no as a question." Sometimes, no means no. However, on frequent occasion, no is a tentative rather than terminal response. Politely request an explanation and be well-prepared to respond to the reasons offered.

Rule #18: "Knowing it ain't the same as doing it." This reminds me of a book with an eponymous title, in which Jeffrey Pfeffer and Robert Sutton discuss what they call "The Knowing-Doing Gap." Long ago, Thomas Edison said, "Vision without execution is hallucination."

Rule #43: "Don't confuse credentials with talent." Make no mistake, credentials can have substantial value but (as #18 suggests) they offer evidence of nothing more than what obtaining them required. With regard to talent, I agree with Anders Ericsson and his research associates at Florida State University that its importance also tends to be overrated. Darrell Royal once observed that "potential" means "you ain't done it yet." In my opinion, the best credentials are redundantly verifiable accomplishments that are relevant to the given needs.

Rule #45: "Failing isn't failing. Failing is failing to try." I agree, presuming to add that that failing is also failing to learn anything of value from whatever is considered a failure. Back to Edison who cherished every setback in his Menlo Park research center as a precious learning opportunity. After you read Alan Webber's book, he invites you to formulate your own Rule #53 and then share it with him ([alan@rulesofthumbbook.com](mailto:alan@rulesofthumbbook.com)). I hope you do. Here's the one I came up with: "You better be there when your name is called," perhaps inspired by Woody Allen's assertion, "Eighty percent of success is showing up."

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. A Truly Excellent and Helpful Book

By John B. Spence

I read a lot of business books... roughly 120 a year, every year since 1989 - and this is one of the best ones I've read in a very long time. I have been a management consultant and business advisor to companies worldwide for the last 14 years and I can tell you that Alan Webber has done a spectacular job of capturing some of the most important and relevant business and life

improvement ideas in this wonderfully enjoyable book. It would be impossible to read Rules of Thumb and not come away with dozens of powerful ideas and insights. There is superb advice, engaging stories, timeless wisdom and life-changing ideas in Rules of Thumb. I'm a really tough critic on business books, but I can only find positive things to say about Rules of Thumb -- so I highly recommend this book. I enjoyed it immensely, found it truly valuable... and I'm sure that you will too!