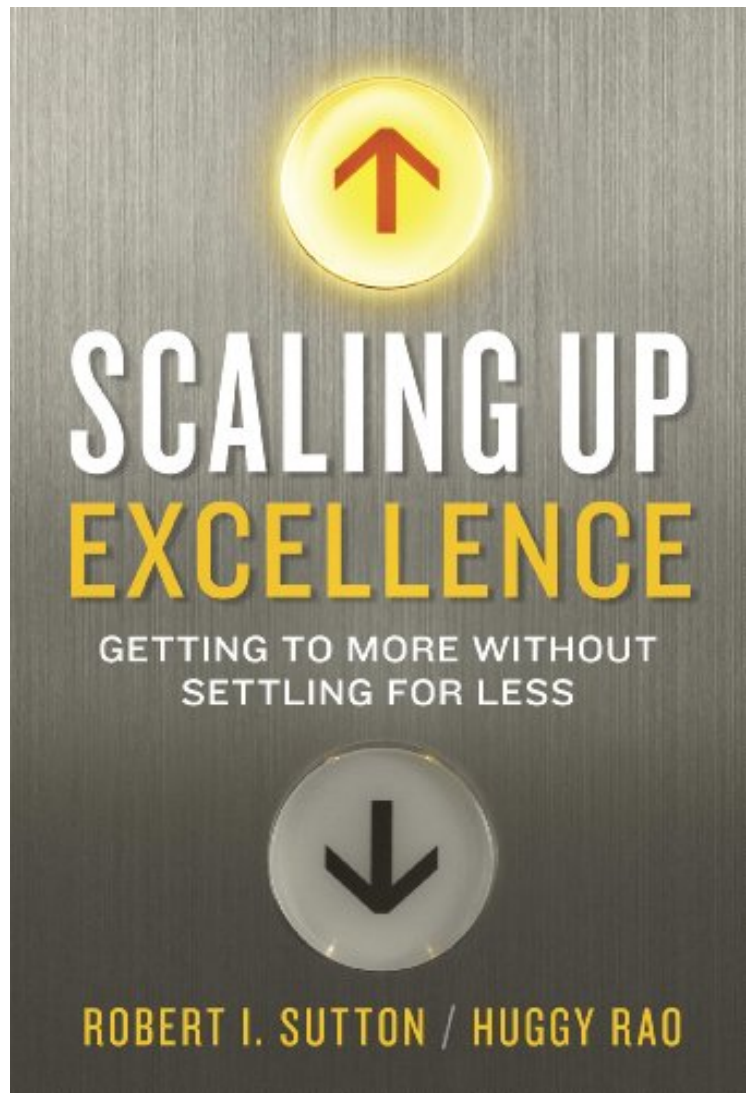


Scaling Up Excellence: Getting to More Without Settling for Less

Robert I. Sutton, Huggy Rao
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Robert I. Sutton, Huggy Rao : Scaling Up Excellence: Getting to More Without Settling for Less before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Scaling Up Excellence: Getting to More Without Settling for Less:

31 of 32 people found the following review helpful. Informative, Compelling, Valuable! By Terri L. Griffith Sutton and Rao offer a comprehensive guide to management in a package of enticing stories, subtly supported by references to high-end research. Their personal history in the Silicon Valley and their global access to interesting organizations provides the backdrop. MAIN THEME WHO SHOULD READ The main theme is that, while many good practices exist in organizations, they either get lost or there are difficulties when attempts are made to spread them (scale them) across the organization. The breadth of this theme means that this book will provide value to anyone who would like

to see organizations improve. The benefits are not limited by industry, functional area, or organizational size.

KEY IDEAS: THE SEVEN MANTRASSutton and Rao are far more direct than most academics; it often takes a lot to get a professor away from an "it depends" answer. In this instance they have enough background to be confident with the following: "We've identified reliable signs that scaling is going well or badly, and we've distilled these signals into seven mantras. If you are embarking on a scaling effort [I'll add if you are doing anything to make your organization better], memorize them, teach them to others, and invent ways to keep them firmly in focus -- especially when the going gets rough. Spread a mindset, not just a footprint. This first one is their, and your, protection against being labeled a fad. Engage all the senses. From my perspective, this is where you consider how to weave together human, technical, and organizational practices such that they work together, not against your goals. It's also where I realize that my presentation of these ideas is much less colorful, and perhaps less likely to scale. Link short-term realities to long-term dreams. Organizations that can do this have mastered ambidexterity -- the ability to both get work done now, and not let that get in the way of great things in the future. (In my mind, this is a precursor to solving the The Innovator's Dilemma.) Accelerate accountability. This one sings to me as a focus on transparency. I've asked in the past, "What evidence, tools, and techniques do people in mainstream organizations think they need to move in this direction?" The examples provided here may move us closer to my ideal. Fear the clusterfug. Yes, they are using a euphemism, but it gets across that we can't allow even mundane bad things to get worse. Speak up. For those wanting to use their business research background: Don't escalate commitments to bad situations. Think about the Denver baggage-handling fiasco and fear a similar outcome on your watch. Scaling requires both addition and subtraction. This ties directly to the idea of managing for now and for the future. Sometimes activities that have worked to create excellence stop working as you scale. As Sutton and Rao note, having an all-hands meeting every week makes great sense for a small organization, but you are likely to have to shift the form of this activity as you grow. Information flow and commitment are still important, but you need to be willing to find new ways that fit your growth. Slow down to scale faster--and better-- down the road. I completely agree. I am wondering why, in my writing, I start with this one (in the form of "Stop-Look-Listen"), and yet they end with it. Perhaps thinking of this as a list is the problem. It's not a list, it's a cycle or a weaving, which also goes along with their borrowing Michael Dearing's image of whether this is Buddhism versus Catholicism (see Chapter 2).

APPLY THESE IDEASMy goal with this review is to get you to read the book. You will benefit. Your organization will benefit. The next time I teach a general graduate management class, *Scaling Up Excellence* will be a required reading. I'm still trying to decide how much experience in organizations you need to have to gain value from their ideas -- and I'd love your opinion. Is this a book to help undergraduates trying to understand the complexities of organizations? If you are a mentor, is this a book you would suggest to a person in their first full-time job? Without a doubt it's a book I'd give to someone taking on a new leadership role at any level.

Disclosure: My review copy was provided by the publisher. I've also purchased a copy to gift to a colleague.

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. One of the Best Business Books I've Ever Read

By Wally BockFull disclosure. You should know that I'm a friend of Bob Sutton's. You should also know that I'm a fan. I'm a fan because of the great work that he does, and *Scaling Up Excellence* is an example of his best work. That's saying a lot. He's done a couple of books with Jeffrey Pfeffer, including *Hard Facts, Dangerous Half-Truths, and Total Nonsense* and *The Knowing-Doing Gap*. He's done books on his own, including the book that *The New York Times* won't print the full title of and *Good Boss, Bad Boss*. All of those books are excellent. *Scaling Up Excellence: Getting to More Without Settling for Less*, written with Huggy Rao, is the best one yet.

Who Should Read This BookIf you're a manager in a mid-sized to large company, this book should be required reading for you. It's how to take the pockets of excellence that form in almost every organization and spread them across the landscape. If you're a manager in a small organization or you're interested in how organizations work, you'll love this book, too. *Scaling Up Excellence* is so well-researched and has so many examples/stories that anyone who is interested in how human beings work in groups will find value here.

In the preface to the book, Sutton and Rao lay out the subject. "We started calling it the Problem of More. Executives could always point to pockets in their organizations where people were doing a great job of uncovering and meeting customer needs. There was always some excellencemdash; there just wasn't enough of it. What drove them crazy, kept them up at night, and devoured their workdays was the difficulty of spreading that excellence to more people and more places." What's in The BookThe preface lays out the basic challenge of the book, after which there are eight chapters divided into three sections. The first section is "Setting the Stage." Chapter one is about what the authors call the most important lesson they learned: "Scaling ought to be treated as a ground war, not just an air war." The ground war analogy is good, because it implies that you must get down in the dirt and do it. You can't do it from afar using technology. The ground war analogy is also good for a reason that the authors don't mention. When you're in a ground war, there are two things you don't know: how or when it will end. The first chapter also includes the authors' seven scaling mantras.

1. Spread a mindset, not just a footprint.
2. Engage all the senses.
3. Link short-term realities to long-term dreams.
4. Accelerate accountability.
5. Fear the clusterfug. (Yes, you read that right)
6. Scaling requires both addition and subtraction.
- 7.

Slow down to scale faster and better; down the road. Chapter two looks at the scaling choices and tradeoffs. The primary distinction the authors make here is between "Catholic" and "Buddhist" strategies. The Catholic model seeks to create organizations that conform to some original model. The Buddhist approach encourages local experimentation and variation. Section two has the next five chapters, which involve key scaling principles. Here's a list of the chapters. Chapter three: Hot Causes, Cool Solutions Chapter four: Cut Cognitive Load But Deal with Necessary Complexity Chapter five: The People Who Propel Scaling Chapter six: Connect People and Cascade Excellence Using Social Bonds to Spread the Right Mindset Chapter seven: Bad Is Stronger Than Good The third section, "Parting Points," has only one chapter about how to put all this to work. This chapter brings together things discussed throughout the book like team makeup and size, and implementation strategies. It seemed to me that there are two important things to keep in mind. First, this is a long-term process. It won't be quick and it won't be easy. Second, there will be times when it seems like nothing is going to work, but just like in a ground war, you strap on your gear and you keep going. Bottom Line I think *Scaling Up Excellence: Getting to More Without Settling for Less* is one of the best business books I've ever read. Period. I read it originally a couple of years ago, but I keep going back to it to dip into the research and the insights and mine the stories for more knowledge. My bottom line is simple: if you read business books, read this one. 2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Going Slower to Scale Faster (and Better) Later By Joe B. Professors Sutton and Rao have created an exquisite work in setting the stage and laying out the principles of scaling in *Scaling Up Excellence*. Those with experience in coordinating teams to accomplish goals, projects, and growth will appreciate the siren song of this book. The contents balance research summaries and anecdotes to make this both an enlightening and fun read. As a Program Manager I felt so compelled after reading that I have shared an outline of concepts with each of my program teams and colleagues. We exercise these principles daily and see them as truths that give those who embrace them a competitive edge. In a recent roll-out of Agile/SCRUM we realized the need to decide which elements of scrum would be mandated (Catholicism) v. negotiated (Buddhism). *Scaling Up Excellence* reminded us of the need to make these decisions up front for efficiency in the roll-out. We are also reminded that for all team changes a day-to-day (Ground war) effort must be initiated, an "Air war" alone will prove insufficient. This has proven to be true. When we implement change there is often a reaction, "oh no, one more thing"; however, *Scaling Up Excellence* reminds us to cut cognitive load and in the midst of change to be vigilant for ways to reduce cognitive load - subtract unnecessary things and add processes or methods to reduce cognitive load. In practice, this approach has afforded improved roll-outs of various changes. Research relayed in *Scaling Up Excellence* tells us that a single bad experience will carry 5x the emotional impact as a single positive experience. This reminds me of gardening. You must get rid of the weeds for the flowers to flourish. Bad is so influential that both teams and management alike must take responsibility to eradicate it before adequacy and subsequently excellence can be achieved. To leverage decades of research; enjoy memorable, illustrative stories; and gain confidence in scaling well, *Scaling Up Excellence* is a must read.

Amazon Best Books of the Year list, Business Investing Inc.com 10 Best Business Books of 2014 Financial Times - The Pick of 2014's Management Books The Globe Mail's list of 5 Best Business Books in 2014 Library Journal's list of 5 Best Business Books in 2014 In *Scaling Up Excellence*, bestselling author Robert Sutton and Stanford colleague Huggy Rao tackle a challenge that determines every organization's success: scaling up farther, faster, and more effectively as a program or an organization creates a larger footprint. Sutton and Rao have devoted much of the last decade to uncovering what it takes to build and uncover pockets of exemplary performance; to help spread them, and to keep recharging organizations with ever better work practices. Drawing on inside accounts and case studies and academic research from a wealth of industries - including start-ups, pharmaceuticals, airlines, retail, financial services, high-tech, education, non-profits, government, and healthcare -- Sutton and Rao identify the key scaling challenges that confront every organization. They tackle the difficult trade-offs that organizations must make between "Buddhism" versus "Catholicism" -- whether to encourage individualized approaches tailored to local needs or to replicate the same practices and customs as an organization or program expands. They reveal how the best leaders and teams develop, spread, and instill the right mindsets in their people -- rather than ruining or watering down the very things that have fueled successful growth in the past. They unpack the principles that help to cascade excellence throughout an organization, as well as show how to eliminate destructive beliefs and behaviors that will hold them back. *Scaling Up Excellence* is the first major business book devoted to this universal and vexing challenge. It is destined to become the standard bearer in the field.

.com Author One-on-One: Robert Sutton and Huggy Rao talk about *Scaling Up Excellence* Robert Sutton: Why don't we start off with why we wrote this book? Huggy Rao: We wanted to give the executives we teach and advise better answers. In 2006, we launched an executive education program at Stanford called Customer-focused Innovation. Executives in the program kept asking us different versions of the same question. Their companies all had

a pocket or two where people were customer focused. The problem was that there just wasn't enough of it. They asked how they could spread such excellence and do it fast. We scoured academic research and practical books on leaders and teams. We found a lot on topics such as leadership and innovation. But we couldn't find a single business book devoted to this problem, which we started calling "the problem of more" or the challenge of "scaling up excellence." We spent the next seven years studying and writing about it. I believe that this is the first major business or leadership book on scaling. We worked hard to write an approachable and useful book, but also one that digs into this vexing challenge in some depth. We offer much hard won advice, but no instant and easy cures. Bob, why don't you tell people about our research? It was quite an adventure. RS: We started by doing interviews and case studies, and digging up the most rigorous studies we could find on scaling. But we also wanted to reach out to people who were in the thick of scaling challenges. So we checked repeatedly with senior leaders such as Kaiser Permanente's Louise Liang (who led a successful information technology rollout in the largest U.S. private healthcare system), Facebook executive's Chris Cox and Mike Schroepfer (who grew the engineering organization), and JetBlue Airlines pilot and executive Bonny Simi (who led a bottom-up effort to create and scale up a better system for dealing with operational challenges caused by bad weather). We wanted to make sure that the challenges we discussed, the stories we told, and advice we offered rang true to these and hundreds of other scaling up veterans we talked to during those seven years. HR: What do you say when people ask you "what do you mean by scaling?" RS: I tell them that we fixed our focus on a simple, but tough, question: If your organization has a bit of excellence, a pocket of goodness, how do you spread it? Early on in the project, I saw an interview with the famous folk singer Pete Seeger. He said something like "Sometimes the only thing wrong with it is there isn't enough of it." A lovely way to describe the main problem we tackled. HR: I was struck by how similar the scaling challenges were that different organizations faced. The challenges of growing Google, of opening 180 highly standardized Bridge International Academy schools for poor children in Africa, and spreading practices for preventing infections to over 3000 hospitals sound quite different on first blush. But they turned out to be remarkably similar in many ways once we looked closely. RS: How so? HR: In every case, successful scaling didn't mean just creating as big a footprint as possible, as fast possible -- it required spreading a shared mindset that guided how people thought and acted. We learned that, especially in cases of fast and effective scaling, the teams that guided these efforts often slowed down at key junctures -- to think about what they are doing and to develop true excellence -- so they could move faster later. Scaling takes both patience and persistence, in concert with an obsessive focus on making progress toward long term goals every hour of every day. RS: We also learned that the key decisions and scaling principles were remarkably similar across different kinds of organizations. For example every organization and project gets more complex as it expands. More processes, layers, locations, and people are required. As a result, scaling nearly always adds "cognitive load" -- increased demands -- on people and teams. If it is not dealt with well, people feel overwhelmed. It becomes hard to get simple things done. In the best organizations, to paraphrase Twitter's head of engineering Chris Fry, leaders use the hierarchy to destroy bad bureaucracy -- to make things easier rather than harder for people. Fry's advice holds in every scaling case we studied. RS: Let's end with the question that EVERYONE asks me about you. Is your name really Huggy? HR: My real name is Hayagreeva, but my family and friends have always called me Huggy. I thought "Huggy" would be easier for people to pronounce and remember. RS: It's been quite a collaboration. Huggy was relentlessly optimistic during even the toughest days. Huggy is among the smartest and most imaginative organizational researchers on the planet. The rate at which he generates ideas astounds me. One minute he might be talking about "linking hot causes to cool solution," the next "scaling is about going from bad to great, not so much good to great." We worked with so many terrific people facing scaling challenges, from entrepreneurs and startups, to senior executives at big corporations, to leaders and teams in nonprofits and large healthcare systems. But we stayed focused on one goal: Writing a book would ring true and be useful to anyone who strives to develop excellence in organizations and spreading it to others.