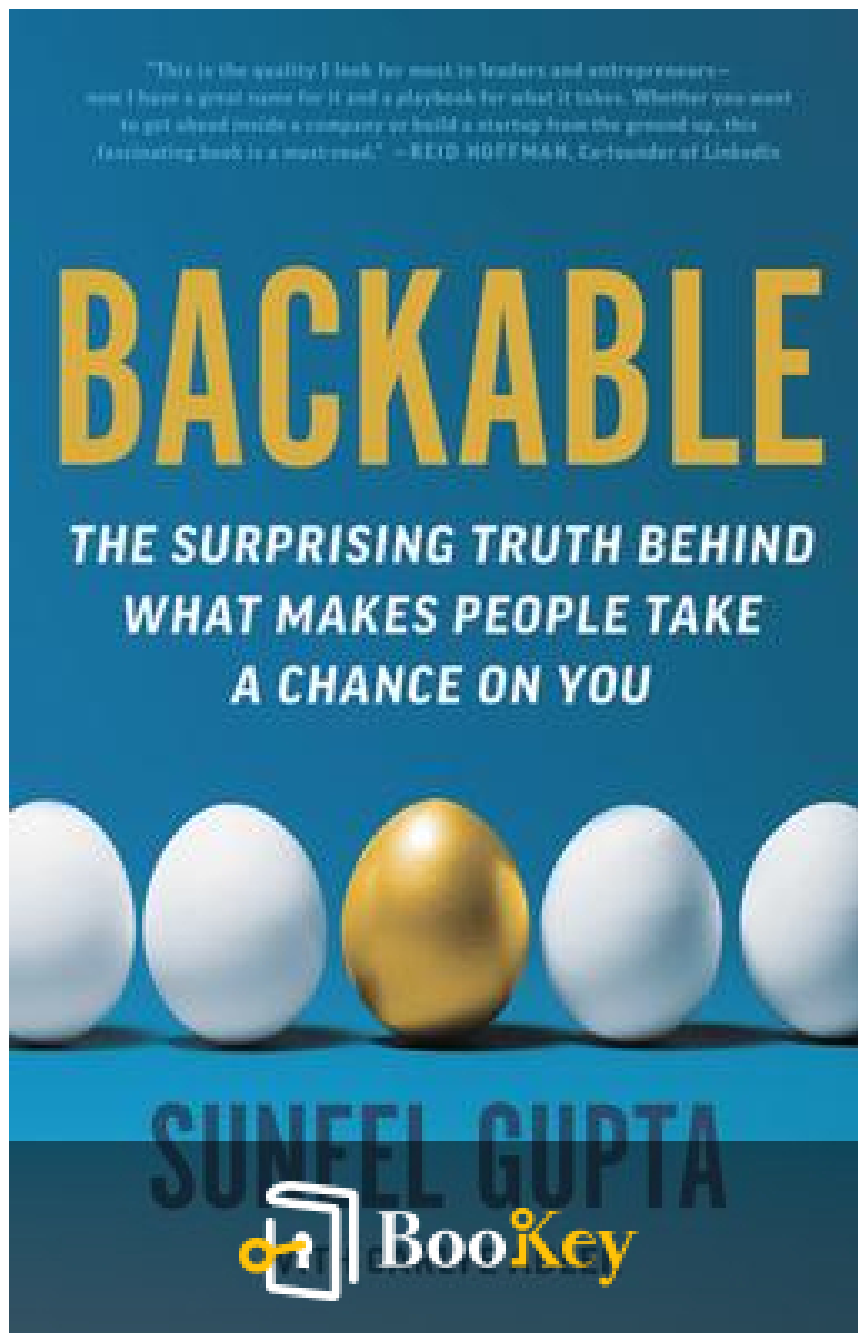


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Suneel Gupta



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Backable Summary

Master the art of gaining support and backing.

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About the book

In "Backable," Suneel Gupta unveils the transformative power of persuasion and the subtle art of rallying support for your ideas, projects, or ventures. Drawing on compelling stories and real-world examples, Gupta reveals that being backable isn't just about having a great idea; it's about cultivating an irresistible pitch that resonates deeply with investors, collaborators, and mentors. This insightful guide teaches readers how to communicate their vision in a way that inspires trust and enthusiasm, empowering them to turn dreams into reality. If you're looking to ignite your potential and learn how to garner the backing you need to succeed, this book is your essential roadmap to mastery.

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About the author

Suneel Gupta is a dynamic entrepreneur, author, and speaker recognized for his innovative approach to helping individuals elevate their ideas and make them compelling to others. As the co-founder of Rise and a prominent figure in the startup ecosystem, he has dedicated his career to empowering aspiring creators and innovators with the tools they need to garner support and funding for their ventures. Suneel's insights into what makes people "backable" draw from his extensive experience in launching successful initiatives, combined with lessons learned from industry leaders and investors. In addition to his business acumen, he is a sought-after speaker, sharing his expertise on storytelling and persuasion across various platforms, making his work both accessible and impactful.

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Chapter 1 Summary: STEP 1:: CONVINCCE YOURSELF FIRST

Summary of Chapters

STEP 1: CONVINCCE YOURSELF FIRST

In 1969, amid budget cuts for the Vietnam War, President Nixon targeted PBS, viewing it as an unnecessary expense. However, Fred Rogers, the soft-spoken host of *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood*, unexpectedly defended PBS in a compelling seven-minute speech before Senator John Pastore, who had been unsupportive of the network. Rogers's apparent lack of traditional public speaking flair didn't hinder his message. His heartfelt conviction resonated deeply, highlighting that true influence comes not from charisma, but from genuine belief in one's message.

The author reflects on their own journey of pitching the idea for *Rise*, realizing they were more focused on surface-level presentation rather than authentic conviction. They learned that backable individuals—like notable figures Sir Ken Robinson, Elon Musk, and Steve Jobs—succeed not through style, but through sincere belief in their ideas. Therefore, convincing others begins with convincing oneself.



Schedule Incubation Time

The chapter introduces Chef Andoni Aduriz and his restaurant, Mugaritz, which famously burned down in 2010. Instead of rushing to reopen, Aduriz took four months to rethink and innovate, leading to a remarkable transformation of the dining experience that prioritized adventurous cuisine. This experience taught him that destruction can lead to creation, an ethos he continued by annually shutting down the restaurant to develop new concepts.

Successful individuals often follow similar principles by allowing ideas to mature during incubation periods. Bill Gates schedules "think weeks" to reflect and absorb new ideas, while entrepreneurs like Paul Graham advise taking time to build a strong understanding before seeking external validation. Premature sharing of ideas can lead to discouragement, demonstrating that incubation is critical for fostering robust concepts.

This approach also applies to companies like LEGO, where Rémi Marcelli advocated for operational pauses to cultivate creativity instead of rushing to market amid declining profits. By carefully nurturing ideas, both Lego and Mugaritz experienced rejuvenation and success.

Steer into Objections

Investor Reid Hoffman emphasizes the importance of directly addressing

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potential objections during pitches. His career began by confronting his lack of experience head-on at Apple, which ultimately earned him respect and support. Similarly, when co-founding LinkedIn, Hoffman anticipated skepticism regarding revenue and preemptively addressed it, which earned him credibility.

The chapter stresses the importance of honesty in communicating weaknesses or uncertainties about an idea. Presenting issues upfront fosters trust and open dialogue, allowing for a more engaging conversation. To prepare, the author suggests writing exhaustive narratives instead of relying on slides, which encourages deeper reflection and better articulates the rationale behind the ideas.

When seeking funding for *Rise*, the author learned to acknowledge objections rather than dodge them. They dedicated time to identify potential barriers to customer acquisition, ultimately discovering viable alternatives. By confronting challenges directly, they enhanced their credibility with investors.

Throwaway Work

The author discusses the concept of "throwaway work," inspired by Salman Rushdie's approach to writing. Rushdie advocates for consistent writing, emphasizing that not all output will be useful, but each effort contributes to



eventual success. This philosophy encourages creativity, understanding that not every draft or idea will be perfect and that trial and error are natural aspects of the process.

Shawn Ryan's journey illustrates this principle in the television industry, where his numerous unsuccessful scripts led to a breakthrough with *The Shield*. His perseverance through "throwaway work" showcases the importance of practice and iteration in developing one's voice and ideas.

Measure Your Emotional Runway

The chapter introduces the idea of "emotional runway," which refers to the stamina and passion necessary to sustain a new idea through challenges. While financial runway is widely discussed in the startup world, emotional investment is critical for long-term success. The balance of rational analysis and emotional connection is essential; founders must be both logically and emotionally aligned with their concepts.

Psychologist Jonathan Haidt's metaphor of a rider on an elephant illustrates this duality—while the rider represents rational thought, the elephant embodies emotional drive. Convincing oneself of an idea's merit requires introspection about passion and personal connection. The author recounts their experience of realizing none of their entrepreneurial ideas excited them, prompting a shift toward those that emotionally resonated and inspired them.

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By aligning passion with purpose, they ultimately rediscovered their drive to tackle challenges and innovatively engage with their concepts.

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Critical Thinking

Key Point: Convince Yourself First

Critical Interpretation: Imagine standing before a room full of skeptics, your heart racing, yet in that moment, you realize that the strongest conviction must first come from within. Like Fred Rogers did, you find the power of your authentic belief is what truly resonates with others. By convincing yourself of your ideas' value before pitching them to anyone else, you unlock an inner strength that transforms uncertainty into passion. This chapter inspires you to embrace your beliefs wholeheartedly, for when you own your message with sincerity, you not only convey confidence, but also inspire trust and intrigue in those around you. In your journey, remember that the most compelling presentations stem not from mere eloquence, but from your genuine commitment to the vision you wish to share.



Chapter 2 Summary: STEP 2:: CAST A CENTRAL CHARACTER

Summary of Chapters: Casting a Central Character

In the competitive realm of startups, Kirsten Green has garnered a reputation as a kingmaker. Since founding Forerunner Ventures in 2010, she has invested in over eighty companies and raised more than \$650 million. Her impactful contributions have earned her accolades like Time magazine's 100 Most Influential People and TechCrunch's VC of the Year.

Green's initial skepticism about investing in a razor-blade startup led her to a pivotal dinner with founder Michael Dubin, where he captivated her with a vivid narrative. Instead of pitching the product's potential, Dubin introduced Green to his central character: a health-conscious young man frustrated by the outdated, embarrassing experience of buying razor blades in stores. This detailed storytelling highlighted the need for disruption in an otherwise mundane industry. Green's emotional engagement solidified her investment in Dollar Shave Club, which would later sell for \$1 billion to Unilever.

The importance of identifying a central character extends beyond just product pitches; it is integral to storytelling itself. Human beings are inherently drawn to personal stories that resonate on an emotional level. Tim

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Ferriss, known for his bestselling book **The 4-Hour Workweek**, learned to write compelling narratives by focusing on specific individuals rather than broad audiences, which led to a more personal connection with readers.

This lesson was crucial for startup founders, as exemplified by Daniel, a first-time founder who initially struggled to communicate his innovative idea aimed at helping millennials tackle student loan debt. By shifting his focus to a specific person—his ex-girlfriend Katie—Daniel was able to relay the heart-wrenching story of how debt affected her family and inspired his entrepreneurial journey. This deepened empathy allowed him to effectively convey the motivation and urgency behind his work.

To further illustrate this concept, the chapter introduces the idea of storyboarding. Successful startups distinguish themselves by presenting a clear, relatable narrative around their central character's journey. Jen Rubio's pitch for Away, a luggage company, stood out because it centered the customer's lifestyle rather than merely aiming to disrupt a market. This technique not only aids in attracting investors but also fosters a shared understanding of the target audience among employees and stakeholders.

Storyboarding serves as an "empathy bridge," allowing investors to grasp the customer experience and motivations. For instance, Airbnb utilized storyboarding inspired by Disney to visualize every step in a property host's experience, enabling insightful decision-making across various departments.

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The narrative emphasizes that a well-told story should complement the factual aspects of a pitch rather than replace them. Successful investors prioritize compelling narratives to draw interest, as demonstrated through various examples where storytelling paved the way for substantial financial support.

Finally, the chapter drives home the idea that maintaining focus on a strong central character is vital for a startup's culture and direction. For instance, Andrew Mason, founder of Groupon, attracted talent through meaningful stories about local business owners rather than simply spotlighting the company's financial success. However, as Groupon expanded, its focus shifted away from its central characters, resulting in trust erosion and downturns in company morale and valuation.

The author's personal connection to the concept of a central character emerges through his father's health struggles, which he integrated into his pitch for Rise, a company aimed at changing dietary behaviors of individuals post-heart surgery. This specific story resonated with investors, underscoring the notion that connecting with a single character can magnify the impact of a larger narrative, ultimately appealing to broader audiences and stakeholders alike.

Through these stories and insights, the chapters illustrate that a compelling

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central character—anchored in empathy and visual storytelling—can be the cornerstone of successful pitches and sustainable business practices in the startup world.

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Critical Thinking

Key Point: Identify a central character to connect emotionally with your audience.

Critical Interpretation: Imagine the power of focusing your narrative on a specific individual whose experiences resonate deeply with you. By weaving their story into the fabric of your own pitch or endeavor, you create an emotional bridge that not only captivates but also inspires others. This approach transforms abstract ideas into relatable journeys, fostering empathy and connection that can galvanize support, drive innovation, and resonate with purpose. By centering your efforts around a central character, you invite others to see the world through their eyes, motivating them to engage and collaborate on a shared mission.



Chapter 3 Summary: STEP 3:: FIND AN EARNED SECRET

Step 3: Find an Earned Secret

This chapter recounts the author's transformative experience during a job interview with a tech startup competing in the activity tracker industry. The CEO, an influential figure in the company, was bound to already know the standard research done by candidates. Realizing this, the author decided to provide unique insights that would stand out. Using UserTesting.com, he sourced feedback videos from real users about the startups' website.

Notably, he discovered a recurring issue: customers were struggling to add the product to their shopping cart. Armed with this insight, he impressively presented the information during the interview, shifting from standard research to revealing a problem crucial to the company's success.

The CEO, captivated by this unexpected preparation, remarked on its uniqueness, leading to a job offer soon after. Although the author chose to pursue his startup instead, he understood the importance of uncovering "earned secrets," a concept later articulated by venture capitalist Ben Horowitz. Horowitz illustrated this idea with the founders of Airbnb, whose initial insights came not from market research but from personal experience when they rented air mattresses during an event in San Francisco, sparking a

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revolutionary business concept.

The chapter unfolds a broader lesson: how an idea is discovered can be as impactful as the idea itself. It underscores the value of deeply understanding one's subject by engaging with it personally. Stories of Sudhir Venkatesh's immersion in gang culture while conducting economic research, and filmmaker James Cameron's profound understanding of the Titanic, reinforce the point that hands-on experiences yield more authentic insights.

The narrative advocates for going beyond simple online research. For instance, investor Brian Grazer emphasizes that ideas lacking depth or surprising insights won't capture attention. Entrepreneurs and creatives are encouraged to gather knowledge through lived experiences, interviews, and community engagement to truly connect with their topics.

Furthermore, once the groundwork of research is laid, the pitch must showcase the effort that went into obtaining the insights. This idea is exemplified through anecdotes of an automotive executive whose comprehensive field experience was overshadowed by data-driven presentations and Jonathan Karp, who captured Howard Stern's attention with a polished manuscript based on extensive research and effort rather than just a proposal.

To solidify ideas into backable propositions, pitches must articulate the

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effort that led to those ideas. The author shares personal experiences, like standing outside Weight Watchers meetings to acquire pilot customers for his startup. Initially, he feared this unconventional approach would be perceived as naive, but recounting the story added authenticity to his presentation, ultimately winning over an investor who initially showed disinterest.

In summation, the chapter emphasizes that the journey to uncover insights—beyond mere Google searches—provides a deeper foundation for ideas, fostering greater connection and engagement in pitches. It advocates that the personal touch not only enriches the narrative but can also transform initial skepticism into support and enthusiasm.

Overall, understanding how you arrive at an idea can be as influential as the idea itself, leading to breakthroughs in various domains—whether tech, film, or entrepreneurship.

Key Concept	Details
Earned Secrets	Insights gained through personal experience rather than standard research; critical for distinguishing oneself.
Case Study: Job Interview	Author presented unique insights from UserTesting.com about customers struggling to add products to a cart, leading to a job offer.
Broader	The process of uncovering ideas is as important as the ideas

Key Concept	Details
Lesson	themselves; personal engagement is vital.
Examples of Immersion	Sudhir Venkatesh's research in gang culture and James Cameron's depth of knowledge about the Titanic illustrate the advantages of firsthand experience.
Investor Insights	Brian Grazer highlights that ideas lacking depth won't capture attention; personal experiences enrich proposals.
Pitching Efforts	Showcasing the groundwork and effort behind insights solidifies proposals; anecdotes from field experiences strengthen pitches.
Personal Engagement	The author's story of attending Weight Watchers meetings for pilot customers added authenticity, winning over an initially skeptical investor.
Conclusion	The path to discovering insights enhances engagement, transforms skepticism into support, and leads to breakthroughs across sectors.

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Critical Thinking

Key Point: Uncovering 'earned secrets' through personal experience is vital for creating impactful insights.

Critical Interpretation: Imagine stepping into the realm of your aspirations with a unique understanding that sets you apart from the conventional paths others tread. By immersing yourself in the experiences surrounding your interest, much like Suneel Gupta did during his job interview, you are not merely gathering surface-level information; you are unearthing 'earned secrets' that give you a distinctive edge. This approach transforms your ideas from commonplace observations to profound insights, compelling others to listen and engage. As you navigate your journey, remember that it's the depth of your understanding through lived experiences—whether it's talking to users, participating directly in the community, or confronting challenges head-on—that can inspire not only your own endeavors but also those around you. In doing so, you incite a spark of curiosity and interest that could turn your concept into a backable proposition, open doors to unforeseen opportunities, and ultimately lead you towards your dreams.



Chapter 4: STEP 4:: MAKE IT FEEL INEVITABLE

Chapter Summary: The Art of Structuring a Compelling Pitch

In this chapter, we explore the intricacies behind making a business idea feel not just appealing, but inevitable. The chapter illustrates how Adam Lowry, co-founder of Method, approached pitching his company amidst dire circumstances. With \$300,000 in credit card debt and a mere \$16 in the bank, he was at a crossroads where traditional methods of securing investment—like a conventional pitch deck—didn't apply. Instead, Lowry presented a trend book showcasing brands that thrived despite economic downturns, underscoring that consumer behavior was shifting toward home styling, not only for living rooms but kitchens and bathrooms as well. His message was clear: the rise of designer cleaning products wasn't just a good idea; it was on the verge of becoming an inevitability.

Lowry's innovative approach is complemented by insights from Tina Sharkey, a successful entrepreneur who emphasizes the importance of adopting a "cultural anthropologist" perspective when presenting ideas. Sharkey argues that understanding current societal shifts is vital for framing a pitch successfully. For instance, identifying that mothers were increasingly engaging online even before advertising dollars followed was key to adding substance to her project BabyCenter. Similarly, Jennifer Hyman's Rent the

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Runway emerged from recognizing the pressures of social media on fashion consumption, affirming that addressing societal shifts justifies an emerging idea's relevance.

Yet, merely identifying trends isn't enough; showcasing momentum is essential to substantiate the idea's inevitability. Momentum converts vague insights into a palpable sense of urgency. Andy Dunn's pitch for Bonobos illustrates this well, as he cited online success stories like Zappos to illustrate that while buying pants online was initially seen as risky, it was already gaining traction. By demonstrating that Bonobos had made early sales through creative methods, Dunn created a narrative that convinced investors of the brand's potential.

Moving on, the chapter delves into the intricate psychology of decision-making, explaining "loss aversion" as per Nobel laureate Daniel Kahneman, which suggests people fear losing more than they value gaining. This psychological understanding leads to the concept of FOMO (the fear of missing out). Effective pitches resonate emotionally; they extend beyond sharing a vision and tap into backers' anxieties about market trends. We see this mutually reinforcing relationship through examples such as autonomous vehicle investments, where perceived competition drives businesses to respond rapidly to emerging trends.

To exemplify vision versus ambition, the chapter highlights the troubling



trajectory of WeWork under Adam Neumann. Despite initial success correlating with evident shifts in work culture, Neumann's grandiose vision began to diverge from solid trends, leading to chaotic expansions and ultimately jeopardizing the firm's stability.

Through these narratives, the author underscores that a persuasive pitch is rooted in examining societal shifts, demonstrating momentum, and leading with inevitability. It's about presenting ideas not merely as opportunities but as foregone conclusions—part of an inevitable progression that backers can either embrace or lament their absence from. Thus, a great pitch weaves a story where the presented idea aligns so strongly with emerging trends that investors feel compelled to act swiftly, lest they risk being left behind.

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Chapter 5 Summary: STEP 5:: FLIP OUTSIDERS TO INSIDERS

Summary of Step 5: Flip Outsiders to Insiders

The essence of creativity lies not just in the development of a great idea and its execution, but in an intermediary step—transforming outsiders into insiders. This process is crucial for garnering support and enthusiasm for innovative concepts. The chapter illustrates this with historical examples, notably the launch of “instant cake mixes” in the 1940s, which initially failed due to their overly simplistic preparation, disconnecting homemakers from the creative cooking experience. Psychologist Ernest Dichter discovered that by adding a single step (cracking an egg), consumers felt more engaged, leading to surging sales. This phenomenon was later termed the "IKEA effect," where individuals ascribe greater value to items they helped create.

Recognizing this dynamic, the author recounts personal experiences pitching ideas, noting that proposals with open questions often sparked greater enthusiasm from backers than overly detailed plans. This highlights the importance of cultivating a sense of ownership and advocacy among supporters. Ideas must resonate deeply for backers, as they often need to champion these concepts to their colleagues to secure funding or approval.



The chapter presents the inspiring story of filmmaker Davis Guggenheim, who, after initially being dismissed when attempting to involve legendary guitarist Jimmy Page in his documentary “It Might Get Loud,” successfully engaged him by emphasizing collaboration over a rigid pitch. This change transformed Page from a potential outsider to an insider, resulting in a meaningful partnership that contributed to the film's success.

Similarly, Joel Stein’s pitch to CBS about an indie rock star sitcom took an unexpected turn when executives didn't buy his initial plot but were drawn to a broader theme he articulated in casual conversation. This lesson emphasizes the significance of sharing potential rather than rigid details.

The narrative proceeds to underscore the necessity of fostering connections; great stories often intertwine the experiences of the pitch initiator, the backer, and what can be achieved collaboratively. John Palfrey exemplifies this principle with his description of candidates at the MacArthur Foundation, who are more appealing when they demonstrate potential growth with external support.

To illustrate the effective partnership aspect, the chapter introduces the dermatologist who successfully pivoted his fundraising strategy by merging his medical expertise with potential investors possessing retail backgrounds. Emily Weiss’s collaboration with investor Kirsten Green represents a



successful union where Weiss adeptly addressed her gaps in product building, leading to the birth of Glossier, valued at \$1.2 billion.

The importance of ensuring backers feel empowered and recognized is encapsulated in Michelle, a designer praised for her collaborative approach, and the fundraising research of Penelope Burk, who demonstrated that expressing gratitude and importance can significantly retain donor relationships.

Further reinforcing this theme, several examples highlight the impact of engaging in open dialogue. Brian Wood exemplifies how incorporating feedback into subsequent pitches can lead to enhanced trust from potential backers. Similarly, the stories of Jake Knapp at Google and screenwriter Dikran Ornekian illustrate that creating space for collaborative ideas—whether through low-fidelity sketches or initial short stories—opens doors for deeper engagement and innovative co-creation.

In essence, the chapter emphasizes that to secure backing for creative projects, it is essential to view potential supporters as integral collaborators rather than distant arbiters of an idea. By turning outsiders into insiders, individuals can cultivate a shared vision, inviting enthusiastic support that can drive ideas toward successful realization.



Chapter 6 Summary: STEP 6:: PLAY EXHIBITION MATCHES

Chapter Summary: Step 6 - Play Exhibition Matches

This chapter details the importance of practice in successfully pitching ideas, drawing from the experiences of Oren Jacob, a key figure at Pixar, and the lessons learned from personal failures and notable figures in communication.

Background and Initial Anecdote:

Oren Jacob, a former Pixar intern, faced unexpected layoffs when the company shifted its focus under Steve Jobs. To his surprise, he returned to work the following Monday as if nothing had happened. This bold decision catalyzed a stellar 20-year career at Pixar, culminating in significant roles in several iconic films like Toy Story and Finding Nemo. Jacob's journey illustrates the power of resilience and active participation in one's field.

Jacob emphasizes that practice is crucial for achieving success in pitches, likening a pitch to a live performance. He recounts his own poor interview experience with Jack Dorsey of Twitter. Despite extensive preparation, he faltered during the interview due to a lack of rehearsal. This experience revealed a common oversight: while individuals often prepare content



meticulously, they neglect the actual delivery through practice.

The Benefits of Practice:

Effective pitches require not just preparation but extensive practice—what the author calls “exhibition matches.” These low-stakes practice sessions should mimic real-life scenarios and can occur in various informal settings, like conversations with friends or family. Real practice transforms how speakers engage their audience, ensuring they’re not just reciting information but performing and connecting. For example, Jacob discusses Andrew Stanton's pitch for *Finding Nemo*, where Stanton performed the story vividly, engaging his audience like a live theater performance.

Overcoming the Fear of Embarrassment:

The chapter also addresses the fear of negative feedback that often holds individuals back. Citing experiences from industry leaders like Reid Hoffman and Eric Schmidt, the author highlights that willingness to be embarrassed during practice is a vital skill. Learning to embrace and recover from mistakes leads to significant improvements in communication and delivery.

Gathering Valuable Feedback:

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Feedback is crucial to refining presentations. Instead of asking vague questions like “What do you think?”, specific queries that probe deeper into audience reactions can yield more usable insights. The author suggests adopting insights from various fields, such as healthcare, where precise questioning leads to impactful improvements in service delivery.

Building a Supportive Network:

Key to achieving backability is forming a circle of trusted advisers—comprising collaborators to hone ideas, coaches to assess fit, cheerleaders for confidence, and critics (or Cheddars) who push back on concepts to ensure readiness for the real audience. Each member plays a crucial role in preparing for high-stakes moments and enriching the development of ideas.

The Rule of 21:

The author shares his realization of needing to conduct at least twenty-one practice rounds before a significant presentation. This number became a marker of mastery through repetition, ultimately leading to greater comfort and adaptability during live performances.

The Importance of Reinventing Style:

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Finally, the chapter underscores that through continuous feedback and practice, one may sometimes discover the need to reboot their approach entirely. Drawing on Barack Obama's evolution from a lackluster congressional candidate to a charismatic national figure, the author illustrates how redefining one's style can be transformative. Undergoing a process of trial and error, failure, and reinvention is the path toward not only personal growth but also achieving broader success.

In conclusion, this chapter drives home the message that practice, feedback, and a supportive network are foundational elements for anyone aiming to present their ideas compellingly and confidently in pursuit of success.

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Chapter 7 Summary: STEP 7:: LET GO OF YOUR EGO

Step 7: Let Go of Your Ego

In this chapter, the author reflects on the idea of letting go of ego to foster genuine connections, both in communication and presentations. This theme is illustrated through a compelling story from 1959 about Dr. George Schaller, a biologist who lived with mountain gorillas in Central Africa. Contrary to the popular belief that gorillas were fierce and dangerous, Schaller discovered their gentle nature and complex social behavior. His success in gaining this knowledge stemmed not from arrogance, but from a lack of weaponry—a metaphor for ego. Schaller believed that the attitude carried by an individual—whether they are fearful or aggressive—can profoundly influence how animals and, by extension, people respond to you.

The author then makes a personal connection, likening his own struggles for acceptance and success to Schaller's experience, describing how his own ego had become a barrier to authentic communication. He realized the importance of transitioning from a mindset of needing to impress others to one of expressing ideas genuinely.

Show, Don't Tell

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Illustrating this point, the author recounts an encounter with a startup founder who was pitching a pizza-delivery app. Initially charming and relaxed, the founder's mood shifted dramatically as he sensed the pressure of impending investors, causing him to resort to a dry presentation style. This shift led to disengagement from the audience until the author intervened by shifting focus back to a more personal, interactive presentation style. By encouraging the founder to showcase his app, they transitioned into an engaging "huddle mode," revitalizing his delivery and ultimately securing investment.

The narrative further explores the concept of the "agent mindset." The author shares experiences of individuals like Jordan Roberts, who also succeeded not by delivering a conventional presentation, but by showing his audience his thought process. Bringing the focus from oneself to the idea being presented invites a richer discussion and connection with the audience.

Forget Yourself

Encouraging a focus on the message rather than the self, the author reflects on the wisdom of communications expert Maureen Taylor, who champions the mantra "forget yourself." This shift allowed the author to communicate more effectively with potential partners for his startup, Rise. He shares Liz's journey, highlighting how her confidence dwindled under pressure, yet transformed when she began to embody an "agent for her customer"



mentality, ultimately leading to a successful pitch.

This chapter also emphasizes a recurring theme: presenting on behalf of others often inspires greater confidence and passion, leading to successful outcomes. The author provides examples of other professionals who have achieved success by focusing less on themselves and more on their missions and the people they serve.

Find the Passionate Few

Transitioning back to individual stories, the author describes Trevor McFedries, who faced over thirty rejections while seeking investment for his AI-generated avatar project. An epiphany drew upon his past experience as a hip-hop DJ, where performing authentically led to success. Realizing his pitch had become too formulaic to appeal to the typical investor, McFedries shifted his approach to be genuine and conversational, ultimately receiving backing from notable investors.

Additionally, the narrative highlights the significance of focusing on the "passionate few" rather than seeking universal approval. By connecting deeply with even one enthusiastic supporter, the potential for success can dramatically increase, leading to wider acceptance and growth.

Conclusion: Letting Go of Ego

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The chapter culminates in the author's personal story of a tense meeting with Apple executives, including CEO Tim Cook. Initially fearful and overwhelmed, the author confronted the hyperbolic stakes his ego had inflated around the meeting's significance. By practicing a technique to examine his fears closely, he was able to defuse the pressure of the situation.

This exercise in analyzing "what if" scenarios allowed him to recognize that the worst outcomes were not as catastrophic as he imagined. This clarity helped him to approach his presentation with renewed confidence. In the end, Rise was recognized by Apple as a Best New App of the Year, showcasing the transformative power of letting go of one's ego to connect genuinely with others.

By sharing these insights, the chapter encapsulates a key lesson: true communication stems from authentic expression rather than performance, reinforcing the importance of vulnerability and genuine connection in professional engagements.

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Chapter 8: CONCLUSION:: THE GAME OF NOW

Conclusion: The Game of Now

In this chapter, the author reflects on their formative trip to Silicon Valley in the early 2000s, a time when giants like Yahoo!, eBay, and Hotmail were reshaping the tech landscape. Being a young aspirant with no connections, they decided to cold-call notable figures in the industry, including celebrated investors. While these attempts were largely futile, the author stumbled upon an article about a restaurant—Buck's of Woodside—considered a hub for tech luminaries. The restaurant's owner, Jamis MacNiven, agreed to meet, leading to an unexpected encounter that would shape the author's perspective.

Upon entering Buck's, the author was struck by the unique décor—a mix of playful and kitschy items, seemingly unbefitting of a professional meeting space. Yet, seated at the restaurant, surrounded by dressed executives and enthusiastic young innovators, they realized the profound dynamic at play: the "hoodies"—the younger, less experienced individuals—were pitching bold ideas to the seasoned "suits." This revelation fundamentally altered the author's understanding of opportunity and ambition.

MacNiven's insight, comparing the aspiring pitchers to characters in *The



Matrix*, crystallized the notion that in the emerging tech frontier, age and experience were not the pivotal factors for success. The realization came down to a critical choice: to play the Game of Someday—waiting for the perfect moment—or the Game of Now—seizing the moment. This dichotomy prompted the author to pursue their own ambitions actively.

Highlighting examples from people in various fields who successfully transitioned from idea to action, such as Hollywood producer Brian Grazer and his serendipitous meeting with industry titan Lew Wasserman, the author emphasizes the transformative power of engagement. An exercise the author conducts with audiences further illustrates this need for action: many have great ideas, yet a significant number refrain from sharing them due to self-doubt or a sense of unpreparedness.

The chapter underscores the importance of playing the Game of Now, with examples from history and personal anecdotes—such as the author’s mother, who carved a path against odds and inspired her sons to embrace opportunities without hesitation. The author recalls their brother, Dr. Sanjay Gupta, overcoming challenges to become a respected journalist on CNN, demonstrating that readiness is often a matter of seizing the chance rather than waiting for the perfect preparation.

Despite setbacks, including the author’s loss in a congressional election, the underlying message remains clear: the pursuit of meaningful ideas and



ambitions shouldn't be deterred by fear of failure. The Game of Now does not guarantee success but prevents complacency and boredom. By encouraging readers to take action and pursue their dreams, the author concludes with a powerful affirmation: "Because you are ready." This call to arms invites everyone to engage in the exhilarating, sometimes painful, yet fulfilling journey of turning ideas into reality.

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is a big plus!

Masood El Toure

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José Botín

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Love it!



Bookey offers me time to go through the
important parts of a book. It also gives me enough
idea whether or not I should purchase the whole
book version or not! It is easy to use!

Wonnie Tappkx

Time saver!



Bookey is my go-to app for
summaries are concise, ins
curated. It's like having acc
right at my fingertips!

Awesome app!



I love audiobooks but don't always have time to listen
to the entire book! bookey allows me to get a summary
of the highlights of the book I'm interested in!!! What a
great concept !!!highly recommended!

Rahul Malviya

Beautiful App



This app is a lifesaver for book lovers with
busy schedules. The summaries are spot
on, and the mind maps help reinforce wh
I've learned. Highly recommend!

Alex Walk

Free Trial with Bookey

