

# Extreme Ownership Summary

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**1-Sentence-Summary:** *Extreme Ownership* contains useful leadership advice that two Navy SEALs learned from experiences in high-stakes combat scenarios.

**Read in:** 4 minutes

**Favorite quote from the author:**



War sounds scary and brutal. We watch depictions of it on the movie screen for entertainment, but we often don't consider what really happens on the battlefield. One of these aspects that you probably didn't consider is the leadership skills that soldiers learn while bullets are whizzing past their ears.

Being a leader sometimes feels as extreme as leading a company of troops into a war zone. Thankfully, many of us don't have to go into battle. But we still must make decisions that affect our clients and employees. What can a Navy SEAL's experience while protecting their country teach you about how to get better at those decisions?

That's what authors Jocko Willink and Leif Babin are here to do in *Extreme Ownership: How U.S. Navy SEALs Lead and Win*. These two will bring the management lessons of the battlefield right into your workplace. That means you don't need to dodge bullets in another country to learn how combat experiences can help you become a better leader.

Here are 3 lessons I've learned about leadership from these Navy SEALs:

1. A leader bearing responsibility for failure is vital to the success of a team.
2. Pressure is inevitable as a leader, and remaining calm and effective comes from establishing priorities and taking action.

3. Managing risks before they pop up suddenly is a key attribute of great leaders.

I hope you're looking forward to learning from some of the top leaders in the world, let's go!

## Lesson 1: A team's success depends on the leaders willingness to take blame for failure.

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It's 2012 and Jocko Willink finds himself in Ramadi, Iraq leading a SEAL task unit. When the team starts taking heavy fire from what they thought was the enemy, a soldier loses his life. To their horror, the group later learns that bullets from their assumed enemy were actually friendly fire from another unit. What was Willink to do seeing as he was the ranking officer in the operation?

Of all the things he could have thought about this tragedy, this man knew for certain that the accountability for what had happened rested on him. Interestingly, his level of responsibility for the event ended up saving Willink's job. **Because his superior's knew that leaders make mistakes but the best ones take accountability for them, they let him remain in command.**

In Navy SEAL training, the lowest performers in worst-case-scenarios are those that blame their subordinates or the scenario instead of carrying the burden themselves. In contrast, those who do the best not only take on the onus for mistakes but seek correction from their superiors.

The principle to remember in leadership here is that the attitude of a leader usually passes down to their team members. If management won't take responsibility for mistakes, then their employees won't either, and nobody goes anywhere. But for those leaders that wholly take accountability for problems, their team members are willing to do the same. Everyone becomes more efficient when a leader has a positive outlook on their role in the good and the bad.

## Lesson 2: Identify priorities and take action on them one at a time to remain efficient when the pressure mounts.

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Imagine that you're deep in enemy territory and a comrade suddenly falls 20 feet after stepping on a tarp that he thought was a roof. Now you've got an injured soldier and your team is at risk of being harmed. What's more, there's an enemy bomb at the exit of the building you're in. What do you do?

You might think "don't panic" and you'd be right. But how do you go about that? It's as simple as "prioritize and execute" as the SEAL training teaches. **This principle is further explained by the SEAL's mantra of "relax, look around, make a call."**

The key to executing effectively under pressure is to take a look at each priority and handle them one at a time. That means your first act will be to decide what must be taken care of first. In the scenario above, Babin prioritized his team's safety, then taking care of the soldier that fell, and finally making sure all of his men were present. His process of slowing it down and taking a step back mentally helped him do his job in spite of intense pressure.

Business is the same way. When the tension mounts and you have to make decisions quickly, start by identifying your highest priority. Then, make sure that your team knows what this is and seek their input for solutions. Finally, concentrate your efforts on the implementation of your plan.

## Lesson 3: Effective leaders mitigate risks before a mission or project begins.

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One experience one of the authors had was a mission to rescue an Iraqi taken hostage by Al-Qaeda. Not long before the mission, his intelligence officer let Babin know that the hostage was guarded by machine guns in bunkers and surrounded by explosives.

What would you have done had you suddenly learned that the risk of your operation had escalated? Amazingly, Babin was already prepared for such risks and continued with the mission. His planning already included the risks presented to him before he even knew they were actually present.

As a leader, Babin knew and acted on his responsibility to determine and plan ahead for the potential risks. **Because of his diligence to his position, the team was ready to move ahead with the operation without any delay.** Babin now uses this as a training scenario when bringing up new soldiers.

In a management position, you are responsible to know the hazards ahead of any project you take on. Your preparation for these inevitable inconveniences will help guarantee success for your team. And even though some risks are more difficult to plan ahead for, you can still win by focusing on what you can control.

## Extreme Ownership Review

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Wow, this is a really fascinating and intense read! I really enjoyed the stories of their experiences on the battlefield that the authors share in *Extreme Ownership*. I'm grateful for their sacrifices and service not only to protect their country, but also to teach us these valuable lessons of leadership.

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## **Who would I recommend the Extreme Ownership summary to?**

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The 36-year-old entrepreneur who would like to have their business proposals taken seriously, the 46-year-old manager that wants to become better at taking charge in a way that isn't offputting to her team, and anyone who would like to develop their leadership skills.