



The Power of Habit: Why We Do What We Do in Life and Business

By Charles Duhigg

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NAMED ONE OF THE BEST BOOKS OF THE YEAR BY
The Wall Street Journal • Financial Times

NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER

A young woman walks into a laboratory. Over the past two years, she has transformed almost every aspect of her life. She has quit smoking, run a marathon, and been promoted at work. The patterns inside her brain, neurologists discover, have fundamentally changed.

Marketers at Procter & Gamble study videos of people making their beds. They are desperately trying to figure out how to sell a new product called Febreze, on track to be one of the biggest flops in company history. Suddenly, one of them detects a nearly imperceptible pattern—and with a slight shift in advertising, Febreze goes on to earn a billion dollars a year.

An untested CEO takes over one of the largest companies in America. His first order of business is attacking a single pattern among his employees—how they approach worker safety—and soon the firm, Alcoa, becomes the top performer in the Dow Jones.

What do all these people have in common? They achieved success by focusing on the patterns that shape every aspect of our lives.

They succeeded by transforming habits.

In *The Power of Habit*, award-winning *New York Times* business reporter Charles Duhigg takes us to the thrilling edge of scientific discoveries that explain why habits exist and how they can be changed. With penetrating intelligence and an ability to distill vast amounts of information into engrossing narratives, Duhigg brings to life a whole new understanding of human nature and its potential for transformation.

Along the way we learn why some people and companies struggle to change, despite years of trying, while others seem to remake themselves overnight. We visit laboratories where neuroscientists explore how habits work and where, exactly, they reside in our brains. We discover how the right habits were crucial to the success of Olympic swimmer Michael Phelps, Starbucks CEO Howard Schultz, and civil-rights hero Martin Luther King, Jr. We go inside Procter & Gamble, Target superstores, Rick Warren's Saddleback Church, NFL locker rooms, and the nation's largest hospitals and see how implementing so-called keystone habits can earn billions and mean the difference between failure and success, life and death.

At its core, *The Power of Habit* contains an exhilarating argument: The key to exercising regularly, losing weight, raising exceptional children, becoming more productive, building revolutionary companies and social movements, and achieving success is understanding how habits work.

Habits aren't destiny. As Charles Duhigg shows, by harnessing this new science, we can transform our businesses, our communities, and our lives.

Praise for *The Power of Habit*

"Sharp, provocative, and useful."—**Jim Collins**

"Few [books] become essential manuals for business and living. *The Power of Habit* is an exception. Charles Duhigg not only explains how habits are formed but how to kick bad ones and hang on to the good."—***Financial Times***

"A flat-out great read."—**David Allen, bestselling author of *Getting Things Done: The Art of Stress-Free Productivity***

"You'll never look at yourself, your organization, or your world quite the same way."—**Daniel H. Pink, bestselling author of *Drive* and *A Whole New Mind***

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

A Q&A with Author Charles Duhigg

What sparked your interest in habits?

I first became interested in the science of habits eight years ago, as a newspaper reporter in Baghdad, when I heard about an army major conducting an experiment in a small town named Kufa.

The major had analyzed videotapes of riots and had found that violence was often preceded by a crowd of Iraqis gathering in a plaza and, over the course of hours, growing in size. Food vendors would show up, as well as spectators. Then, someone would throw a rock or a bottle.



When the major met with Kufa's mayor, he made an odd request: Could they keep food vendors out of the plazas? Sure, the mayor said. A few weeks later, a small crowd gathered near the Great Mosque of Kufa. It grew in size. Some people started chanting angry slogans. At dusk, the crowd started getting restless and hungry. People looked for the kebab sellers normally filling the plaza, but there were none to be found. The spectators left. The chanters became dispirited. By 8 p.m., everyone was gone.

I asked the major how he had figured out that removing food vendors would change peoples' behavior.

The U.S. military, he told me, is one of the biggest habit-formation experiments in history. "Understanding habits is the most important thing I've learned in the army," he said. By the time I got back to the U.S., I was hooked on the topic.

How have your own habits changed as a result of writing this book?

Since starting work on this book, I've lost about 30 pounds, I run every other morning (I'm training for the NY Marathon later this year), and I'm much more productive. And the reason why is because I've learned to diagnose my habits, and how to change them.

Take, for instance, a bad habit I had of eating a cookie every afternoon. By learning how to analyze my habit, I figured out that the reason I walked to the cafeteria each day wasn't because I was craving a chocolate chip cookie. It was because I was craving socialization, the company of talking to my colleagues while munching. That was the habit's real reward. And the cue for my behavior - the trigger that caused me to automatically stand up and wander to the cafeteria, was a certain time of day.

So, I reconstructed the habit: now, at about 3:30 each day, I absentmindedly stand up from my desk, look around for someone to talk with, and then gossip for about 10 minutes. I don't even think about it at this point. It's automatic. It's a habit. I haven't had a cookie in six months.

What was the most surprising use of habits that you uncovered?

The most surprising thing I've learned is how companies use the science of habit formation to study - and influence - what we buy.

Take, for example, Target, the giant retailer. Target collects all kinds of data on every shopper it can, including whether you're married and have kids, which part of town you live in, how much money you earn, if you've moved recently, the websites you visit. And with that information, it tries to diagnose each consumer's unique, individual habits.

Why? Because Target knows that there are these certain moments when our habits become flexible. When we buy a new house, for instance, or get married or have a baby, our shopping habits are in flux. A well-timed coupon or advertisement can convince us to buy in a whole new way. But figuring out when someone is buying a house or getting married or having a baby is tough. And if you send the advertisement after the wedding or the baby arrives, it's usually too late.

So Target studies our habits to see if they can predict major life events. And the company is very, very successful. Oftentimes, they know what is going on in someone's life better than that person's parents.

Review

**NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER • NPR BESTSELLER • WASHINGTON POST BESTSELLER •
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"Cue: see cover. Routine: read book. Reward: fully comprehend the art of manipulation."—**Bloomberg Businessweek**

"A fresh examination of how routine behaviors take hold and whether they are susceptible to change . . . The stories that Duhigg has knitted together are all fascinating in their own right, but take on an added dimension when wedded to his examination of habits."— **Associated Press**

"There's been a lot of research over the past several years about how our habits shape us, and this work is beautifully described in the new book *The Power of Habit*."—**David Brooks, The New York Times**

“A first-rate book—based on an impressive mass of research, written in a lively style and providing just the right balance of intellectual seriousness with practical advice on how to break our bad habits.”—***The Economist***

“I have been spinning like a top since reading *The Power of Habit*, New York Times journalist Charles Duhigg’s fascinating best-seller about how people, businesses and organizations develop the positive routines that make them productive—and happy.”—***The Washington Post***

“An absolutely fascinating . . . book [that explores] a startling and sometimes dismaying collision between the increasingly sophisticated scientific understanding of habits—how they’re formed, how they can be disrupted and changed—and, among other things, companies’ efforts to use that knowledge to steer your habits and money their way.”—***Wired***

“If Duhigg is right about the nature of habits, which I think he is, then trying to *get rid* of these bad habits won’t work. Instead, what is needed is to teach the managers to *identify the cues* that lead to these bad habits and rewards, and then learn alternative routines that lead to similar rewards, i.e. business and personal success.”—***Forbes***

“*The Power of Habit* is chock-full of fascinating anecdotes . . . how an early twentieth century adman turned Pepsodent into the first bestselling toothpaste by creating the habit of brushing daily, how a team of marketing mavens at Procter & Gamble rescued Febreze from the scrapheap of failed products by recognizing that a fresh smell was a fine reward for a cleaning task, how Michael Phelps’ coach instilled habits that made him an Olympic champion many times over, and how Tony Dungy turned the Indianapolis Colts into a Super Bowl-winning team.”—***Los Angeles Times***

“Duhigg clearly knows that people do not like, or even buy, the idea that we’re not creatures of choice. He carefully explains each step of habit building, using science and—the best part—a slew of interesting anecdotes.”—***The Seattle Times***

“Duhigg argues that much of our lives is ruled by unconscious habits, good and bad, but that by becoming consciously aware of the cues that trigger our habits and the rewards they provide, we can change bad practices into good ones.”—***Pittsburgh Post-Gazette***

“Duhigg’s revelation that Target had developed a model to predict whether female customers were pregnant ignited a firestorm after an excerpt from his book, *The Power of Habit: Why We Do What We Do in Life and Business*, was published.”—***USA Today***

About the Author

Charles Duhigg is an investigative reporter for *The New York Times*. He is a winner of the National Academies of Sciences, National Journalism, and George Polk awards, and was part of a team of finalists for the 2009 Pulitzer Prize. He is a frequent contributor to *This American Life*, NPR, *PBS NewsHour*, and *Frontline*. A graduate of Harvard Business School and Yale College, he lives in Brooklyn with his wife and two kids.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Ellen Garcia:

Reading a e-book tends to be new life style with this era globalization. With reading you can get a lot of information that could give you benefit in your life. Along with book everyone in this world can share their idea. Textbooks can also inspire a lot of people. A great deal of author can inspire their own reader with their story or their experience. Not only the storyline that share in the publications. But also they write about the information about something that you need case in point. How to get the good score toefl, or how to teach your kids, there are many kinds of book that exist now. The authors these days always try to improve their proficiency in writing, they also doing some study before they write with their book. One of them is this The Power of Habit: Why We Do What We Do in Life and Business.

Linda King:

In this time globalization it is important to someone to get information. The information will make anyone to understand the condition of the world. The health of the world makes the information simpler to share. You can find a lot of references to get information example: internet, classifieds, book, and soon. You will see that now, a lot of publisher which print many kinds of book. The actual book that recommended to you is The Power of Habit: Why We Do What We Do in Life and Business this reserve consist a lot of the information in the condition of this world now. This specific book was represented so why is the world has grown up. The language styles that writer value to explain it is easy to understand. Often the writer made some research when he makes this book. Honestly, that is why this book acceptable all of you.

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