



The Founder's Mentality: How to Overcome the Predictable Crises of Growth

By Chris Zook, James Allen

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A *Washington Post* Bestseller

Three Principles for Managing—and Avoiding—the Problems of Growth

Why is profitable growth so hard to achieve and sustain? Most executives manage their companies as if the solution to that problem lies in the external environment: find an attractive market, formulate the right strategy, win new customers.

But when Bain & Company's Chris Zook and James Allen, authors of the bestselling *Profit from the Core*, researched this question, they found that when companies fail to achieve their growth targets, 90 percent of the time the root causes are internal, not external—increasing distance from the front lines, loss of accountability, proliferating processes and bureaucracy, to name only a few. What's more, companies experience a set of predictable internal crises, at predictable stages, as they grow. Even for healthy companies, these crises, if not managed properly, stifle the ability to grow further—and can actively lead to decline.

The key insight from Zook and Allen's research is that managing these choke points requires a “founder's mentality”—behaviors typically embodied by a bold, ambitious founder—to restore speed, focus, and connection to customers:

- An insurgent's clear mission and purpose
- An unambiguous owner mindset
- A relentless obsession with the front line

Based on the authors' decade-long study of companies in more than forty countries, *The Founder's Mentality* demonstrates the strong relationship between these three traits in companies of all kinds—not just start-ups—and their ability to sustain performance. Through rich analysis and inspiring examples, this book shows how any leader—not only a founder—can instill and leverage a founder's

mentality throughout their organization and find lasting, profitable growth.

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Editorial Review

Review

“While speed, innovation, big data, and disruption are the business buzzwords of the day, the best books of 2016 argue for a more considered and considerate, human-centered, inclusive, and deliberately constructive approach to business. Change is in the air and technology is on the rise, but business is still a human pursuit, and should be humane. In a media climate dominated by Twitterstorms and sound bites, it is important to dive deeper into the issues and inform ourselves more fully before taking action. These books help do that.”

— **Editorial Director Dylan Schleicher on the 800-CEO-READ 2016 Business Book of the Year**

Longlist, which includes THE FOUNDER'S MENTALITY

“As a founder myself, I get it. I care about my company so much. I understand what it means to have a founder around. … I think your book is so interesting, so right on.” — **J.J. Abrams, MSNBC's “Your Business”**

“In a good book, I look for people who have made a ton of mistakes, so I can learn from them. One of the observations in *The Founder's Mentality* [by Chris Zook and James Allen] is that founder-led companies in general perform better on the stock market.” — **Chieh Huang, cofounder and CEO of Boxed on what he reads at 30,000 feet, as seen in Forbes**

“Chris Zook and James Allen have done a fine job of putting this theory into words. Their book, *The Founder's Mentality* is the product of a lot of research, and thousands of hours of experience by these two senior Bain partners.” — **Management Today, UK**

“Fascinating and worth noting.” — **Amanda Lang, Bloomberg GO**

“If your company isn't soaring as anticipated, look inside not out. Chances are your problems aren't due to market forces but rather issues such as a distancing from core principles, becoming deaf to your consumer's voice and sometimes a founder not empowering his people. These are some of the insights gleaned from *The Founder's Mentality*.” — **USA Today**

“Summer is here, and everyone needs a business book or two to read. I'm recommending *The Founder's Mentality: How to Overcome the Predictable Crises of Growth* by two very senior partners and strategy practice heads at Bain & Company—Chris Zook and James Allen. — **Forbes.com**

“Excellent … Zook and Allen's book focuses on how to manage the following dilemma: How can we manage growth without destroying what made us great? … *The Founder's Mentality* causes us to appreciate the brilliance of an IKEA and to take practical steps to keep the Founder's Mentality at the forefront of the way we define strategy, the way we hire front line people, and the way we design compensation systems.” — **Psychology Today**

“Chris Zook and James Allen are known for their books on strategy … Their new book [*The Founder's Mentality*] is a departure in the sense that they turn their attention, for the first time, from external strategy to *internal*, but it continues their now fifteen-year bent of focusing on companies' roots in the process of helping them in periods of growth. … In that sense, Zook and Allen are staying true to their own core—their

core research on how companies grow, which is immense and impressive, and their core purpose of helping leaders through that process. The other consistency across all their books is the great blend of research and storytelling.” — **800-CEO-READ (Editor’s Choice)**

“The founder mentality mixes passion with chutzpah for success... The result of this mentality is a bonus for shareholders. When Mr. Allen and Mr. Zook looked at shareholder returns in the S&P 500 over 15 years, they found firms with strong founder influence performed 3.1 times better.” — **Financial Times**

“This is a very thoughtful and assured exploration of a key challenge that faces all organisations as they scale that will interest founders and those concerned about the long-term health of their organisations.” — **The Irish Times**

“If you are a business in the early-growth stages or believe that having an “early-growth” mindset will be crucial to helping your business, then *The Founder’s Mentality* will provide the vision that you need to begin planning. The book ‘s authors conducted extensive research on companies in the U.S. and abroad and use that information to provide basic, down-to-Earth principles that can immediately shift your brain (and that of your employees) into a new way of thinking.” — **Small Business Trends (smallbiztrends.com)**

“The duo Chris Zook and James Allen have delivered a bull’s-eye. With *The Founders Mentality* they have written a book that is both practical and technically sound, six out of six stars...Buy this book.” — **Borsen (Denmark)**

“...filled with examples of how large companies like Apple, Haier, Google, IKEA, and Nike have managed to stay in touch with their core values, even as they’ve grown massive.” — **Inc.**

ADVANCE PRAISE for *The Founder’s Mentality*:

Carlos Brito, CEO, Anheuser-Busch InBev—

“The concept of the ‘founder’s mentality,’ and in particular our ‘ownership’ culture, has been central to our evolution and growth as a company. Remembering how we became successful in the first place has helped us act boldly and quickly with an insurgent mindset. This book offers great insights for business owners and leaders.”

Michael Dell, founder and CEO, Dell Inc.—

“As a founder I resonate strongly with the themes of *The Founder’s Mentality*, especially with regard to the overwhelming importance of speed, singular focus, and the ability to invest for the long term.”

Adrian Gore, founder and CEO, Discovery Group—

“Zook and Allen share invaluable insight as to how to preserve a company’s founding purpose, perspective, and energy, while preventing institutionalization from diluting it. Their work has been instrumental in the way my leadership team and I think about our culture, our structure, and our business model.”

Linda Rottenberg, cofounder and CEO, Endeavor Global—

“In this heavily researched and compelling book, Zook and Allen provide a road map for winning growth. Companies that build and maintain healthy cultures scale with speed and sidestep avoidable stall-out. Whether you are a start-up entrepreneur, an investor, or a *Fortune* 500 manager, you need *The Founder’s Mentality!*”

Les Wexner, founder and CEO, L Brands—

“As companies grow, scale and complexity can become a real threat to momentum. Zook and Allen’s *The Founder’s Mentality* offers useful insights to help leaders maintain agility in order to sustain their success.”

About the Author

Chris Zook is a partner at Bain & Company and has been co-head of the firm’s Global Strategy practice for twenty years. He is based in Boston and Amsterdam and specializes in helping companies find new sources of profitable growth.

James Allen is a partner in Bain’s London office. Co-head of the firm’s Global Strategy practice, he is founder of the Bain Founder’s Mentality 100, a global network of high-growth companies.

Zook and Allen are the authors of five bestselling books on strategy, including *Profit from the Core*.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Mark Maney:

The book The Founder’s Mentality: How to Overcome the Predictable Crises of Growth can give more knowledge and information about everything you want. So why must we leave a good thing like a book The Founder’s Mentality: How to Overcome the Predictable Crises of Growth? A few of you have a different opinion about publication. But one aim this book can give many facts for us. It is absolutely suitable. Right now, try to closer together with your book. Knowledge or facts that you take for that, it is possible to give for each other; it is possible to share all of these. Book The Founder’s Mentality: How to Overcome the Predictable Crises of Growth has simple shape nevertheless, you know: it has great and massive function for you. You can seem the enormous world by open up and read a reserve. So it is very wonderful.

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David Lau:

Often the book The Founder’s Mentality: How to Overcome the Predictable Crises of Growth has a lot info on it. So when you make sure to read this book you can get a lot of advantage. The book was written by the very famous author. The writer makes some research before write this book. This specific book very easy to read you can get the point easily after reading this article book.

Jeremy Windham:

The reason why? Because this The Founder's Mentality: How to Overcome the Predictable Crises of Growth is an unordinary book that the inside of the e-book waiting for you to snap this but latter it will distress you with the secret it inside. Reading this book beside it was fantastic author who else write the book in such remarkable way makes the content inside easier to understand, entertaining approach but still convey the meaning completely. So , it is good for you because of not hesitating having this ever again or you going to regret it. This phenomenal book will give you a lot of advantages than the other book possess such as help improving your ability and your critical thinking method. So , still want to hold off having that book? If I were being you I will go to the publication store hurriedly.

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