

The Top CEO Books for Executives to Read in 2022

7 min read



Being a successful business leader requires much more than good instincts.

Key Takeaways

- **Developing Business Acumen: How Much Time Should Business Leaders Spend Reading?:** According to research published in *The Harvard Business Review*, successful CEOs spend about 15% of their time reading...
- **Top 10 CEO Book Recommendations:** Instead of letting the everyday problems in a business run you, this system can help you take charge of your business, eliminate the daily problems, and...
- **How CEOs Can Continue Developing Their Business Acumen and Leadership Skills:** Excellent leadership – the kind that gets to write and sell books – takes a combination of exceptional business acumen, outstanding communication skills, and...

Although good instincts can come in handy, to be a successful and well-rounded business leader, you must also possess business acumen, communication skills, and emotional intelligence.

While some of these traits you might have picked up in business school or developed naturally during the course of your life, you might need to put time into working on others more deliberately.

Developing Business Acumen: How Much Time Should Business Leaders Spend Reading?

According to research published in *The Harvard Business Review*, successful CEOs spend about 15% of their time reading [1].

This time is typically split between studying industry-specific literature, economic news, and reading books that help executives develop their business management and leadership skills.

Top 10 CEO Book Recommendations

1. *Traction: Get a Grip on Your Business* by Gino Wickman

In this book, Gino Wickman defines and outlines the Entrepreneurial Operating System. This system was designed specifically to help business owners get a grip on their businesses to improve focus, productivity, growth, and enjoyment in operations. Instead of letting the everyday problems in a business run you, this system can help you take charge of your business, eliminate the daily problems, and create a workflow and culture that's perfectly aligned around short and long-term goals.

[Traction](#) is the perfect read for any CEO who is looking to vastly improve their management skills while overhauling and streamlining operations for an overall better business model.

2. *Braving the Wilderness: The Quest for True Belonging and the Courage to Stand Alone* by Brené Brown

This guide from noted author, research professor, and lecturer, Brené Brown, illuminates a path to authentic leadership that comes from a place of empathy, honesty, and strength. The guide helps readers understand, define, and defend their own principles while mustering the courage to stand up for those beliefs – even when facing disagreement, dissension, and criticism.

[Braving the Wilderness](#) is an excellent choice for business leaders looking to increase their emotional IQ and empower their own voice while finding a refreshed leadership perspective.

3. The Ride of a Lifetime: Lessons Learned From 15 Years as CEO of the Walt Disney Company by Robert Iger

Gleaning from the wisdom he gained over a decade and a half at the helm of one of the world's most beloved, profitable, and well-known companies, in his New York Times Bestselling book, Robert Iger presents a collection of lessons on leadership. Among these lessons is the importance of understanding "the power of respect," "betting on talent," and innovation. He also touts core leadership values such as decisiveness, optimization, fairness, and courage, and provides a roadmap for instilling values like these in your leadership style and company.

If you want to be educated and entertained while bolstering your business leadership, then [*The Ride of a Lifetime*](#) is the right CEO book for you.

4. It's the Manager: Moving From Boss to Coach by Jim Clifton and Jim Harter

From the CEO (Jim Clifton) and Chief Scientist (Jim Harter) of the world-renowned research company, Gallup, comes this science-backed book on the vital role of managers in businesses. The book provides sweeping business management advice that covers everything from hiring, onboarding processes, and employee performance evaluation to managing your middle managers.

If you want to supercharge your company's growth, starting with its leadership, then we suggest taking a page out of – or just picking up the whole book – [*It's the Manager*](#).

5. Invent and Wander: The Collected Writings of Jeff Bezos by Jeff Bezos and Walter Isaacson

This book is a collection of Jeff Bezos' letters, interviews, and speeches with a forward written by Walter Isaacson, an American author, CEO, journalist, and Aspen Institute leader. This book offers a behind-the-scenes look into the formation, growth, and success of Amazon. Plus, it's a great read for busy business owners who enjoy reading in short doses.

If you love success stories and want to take a look inside another entrepreneur's head, then pick up a copy of [Invent and Wander](#) to get a glimpse into one of the most successful entrepreneurial brains.

6. *Shoe Dog: A Memoir by the Creator of Nike* by Phil Knight

This straightforward memoir from Phil Knight is honest, open, remarkable, and sprinkles absolutely zero sugar-coating on the hardships that he struggled through in order to build a business around his creation, one of the most famous brands in the world, Nike. In his book, Knight shares the lessons he learned from his experiences and personal leadership journey.

If you're looking to learn about starting and growing a business – and all the honest, gory details of the failures and struggles that happen along the way – then you'll enjoy [Shoe Dog](#), an honest story with a happy ending.

7. *Business @ the Speed of Thought: Succeeding in the Digital Economy* by Bill Gates

This book from Bill Gates was published just before the turn of the millennium, but it is still highly relevant today. In the book, Gates reflects on the impact technology has on businesses and its place in business, while forecasting the future of business tech. Additionally, he discusses the importance of business leaders being willing to continuously learn, adapt to, and adopt new technologies.

If you're looking for a retro yet relevant read from one of the world's most successful entrepreneurs, pickup [Business @ the Speed of Thought](#).

8. The First 90 Days: Proven Strategies for Getting Up to Speed Faster and Smarter by Michael D. Watkins

This book is written with first-time or new CEOs in mind. Drawing from the past experiences of thousands of executives, the book is designed to help professionals transition into new leadership roles while taking on more responsibility. While focusing on shifting into a leadership mindset, jumping into an accelerated learning process, practicing self-management, and building key professional relationships, this book also points out the common mistakes new business leaders make and helps readers take steps to avoid falling into avoidable problems.

If you've recently been promoted to your first position in the C-suite or are an aspiring executive, then [*The First 90 Days*](#) can help ensure a smooth transition into your new leadership position.

9. Rework by Jason Fried, David Heinemeier Hansson

The authors of [*Rework*](#) were once just like you, at the helm of their own startup company, Basecamp. With Basecamp no longer a startup but a fully-fledged and successful company, the authors are here to share their wisdom and experience with you. Their book includes simple strategies that can be applied in any industry for simplifying your business, eliminating procrastination, maximizing productivity, and achieving success. The solutions the authors present are both simple, efficient, and successful.

If you're thinking about starting a business or are already an entrepreneur with your very own startup company, then now is the time to read *Rework* for advice when the odds of business success are stacked against you.

10. The Biggest Bluff: How I Learned to Pay Attention, Master Myself, and Win by Maria Konnikova

Most CEO book recommendations are written by successful CEOs, this gem comes from a professional gambler who wins her bets around the poker table. The book provides a crash course in the art of persuasion and human psychology as it teaches you how to read people and hold your cards close, so to speak.

If you're in the mood to take a break from the board room and step into the cardroom to learn skills that translate seamlessly from poker to negotiation, then take a break with [The Biggest Bluff](#).

How CEOs Can Continue Developing Their Business Acumen and Leadership Skills

When running a company, good instincts can only go so far. Excellent leadership – the kind that gets to write and sell books – takes a combination of exceptional business acumen, outstanding communication skills, and finely honed emotional intelligence. In order to continue developing yourself as a business leader, it's good to maintain a growth mindset with which you realize that you are never done learning and that there is always room for improvement.

As a business leader, be sure to schedule ample time to continue developing your own leadership skills, sharpening your business acumen, and learning how to increase your emotional IQ. By continuously improving these three aspects of yourself, you can become the kind of boss you would want to work for and the kind of boss that's capable of leading a company to a highly successful future.

[1] <https://hbr.org/2018/07/how-ceos-manage-time>