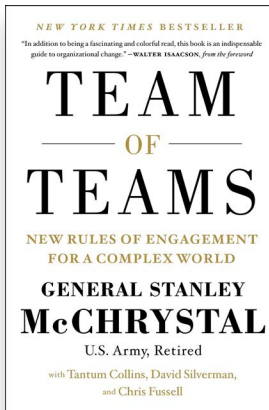


EXECUTIVE BOOK SUMMARIES

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General Stanley McChrystal retired from the U.S. Army as a four-star general after thirty-four years of service. His last assignment was as the commander of all American and coalition forces in Afghanistan.

Team of Teams

THE NUTSHELL

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Introduction

This isn't a war story. The genesis of this story lies in the transformation of an elite military organization, the Joint Special Operations Task Force ("the Task Force") in the midst of a war. We hope to help the reader understand what's different in today's world, and what we must do about it.

Chapter 1: Sons of Proteus

The Al Qaeda in Iraq that our Task Force confronted in 2004 looked on the surface like a traditional insurgency. Under the surface it operated unlike anything we had seen before. In the place of a traditional hierarchy, it took the form of a dispersed network that proved devastatingly effective against our objectively more qualified force. To win we had to change.

Chapter 2: Clockwork

The pursuit of predictability—carefully delineated instructions, easily replicable procedures, fastidious standardization, and a tireless focus on efficiency—is foundational to the military's struggle against the chaos always threatening to engulf combat operations. At the scale of the U.S. armed forces, standardization is a necessity.

Team of Teams

Chapter 3: From Complicated to Complex

In Iraq, we encountered unprecedented levels of disruption. This unpredictability is fundamentally incompatible with reductionist managerial models based around planning and prediction. The new environment demands a new approach.

Chapter 4: Doing the Right Thing

We were stronger, more efficient and more robust, but Al Qaeda was agile and resilient. To confront a constantly shifting threat in a complex setting, we would have to pursue adaptability. Our foe, Al Qaeda, appeared to achieve this adaptability by way of their networked structure. We realized that in order to prevail, our Task Force would need to become a true network.

Chapter 5: From Command to Team

Our Task Force was used to clean lines and right angles thinking, so Al Qaeda's networked structure had puzzled us. It took us too long to recognize that we were seeing the connectivity of small teams scaled to the size of a full enterprise. Our challenge, now that we understood it, was to find a way to reshape our structure to create a team-like oneness across an organization of thousands.

Chapter 6: Team of Teams

The solution we devised was a "team of teams"—an organization within which the relationships between constituent teams resembled those between individuals on a single team. We needed the SEALs to trust Army Special Forces, and for them to trust the CIA, and for them all to be bound by a sense of common purpose which was winning the war, rather than outperforming the other unit.

Chapter 7: Seeing the System

We did not want all the teams to become generalists. SEALs are better at what they do than intel analysts would be and vice versa. Diverse specialized abilities are essential. We wanted to fuse generalized *awareness* with specializing *expertise*. We dubbed this goal—this state of emergent, adaptive organizational intelligence—shared consciousness, and it became the cornerstone of our transformation.

Chapter 8: Brains Out of the Footlocker

Our daily Operations and Intelligence (O&I) briefing was at the core of our transformation. We were pumping information about the entire scope of our operations out to all members of the Task Force, offering everyone a chance to contribute. Technically it was complex, financially it was expensive, but we were trying to build a culture of sharing.

Team of Teams

Chapter 9: Beating the Prisoner's Dilemma

While systemic understanding was a valuable first step, we needed to build more trust if we were to achieve the fluid, team-like cooperation that we needed across our force. If each agency would cooperate, we would have the best possible outcome. Where systematic understanding mirrors the sense of “purpose” of a team and bonds small teams, lateral connectivity mirrors the second ingredient to team formation—“trust.”

Chapter 10: Hands Off

In 2004 Iraq, the risks of acting too slowly were higher than the risks of letting competent people make judgment calls. The wait for my approval was not resulting in better decisions, and our priority should be reaching the best possible decision that could be made in a time frame that allowed it to be relevant. Whoever made the decision, I was always ultimately responsible.

Chapter 11: Leading like a Gardener

In the Task Force, we found that, alongside our new approach to management, we had to develop a new paradigm of personal leadership. The role of the senior leader was no longer that of a controlling puppet master, but rather that of an empathetic crafter of culture. The leader acts as an “Eyes-On, Hands-Off” enabler who creates and maintains an ecosystem in which the organization operates and remains viable.

Chapter 12: Symmetries

There is no such thing as an organizational panacea. The details will always be different for different people, places, and objectives, but we believe that our model provides a good blueprint. As our Task Force transformed itself, both our speed and precision improved dramatically. To defeat a network, we had become a network. We had become a team of teams.