

BOOK REVIEW

The Checklist Manifesto: how to get things right

Author: Atul Gawande
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Atul Gawande is a talented writer. He writes simply with a clear style making this a very easy and enjoyable read. His writings have been universally praised by people from President Obama to Warren Buffet.

In "The Checklist Manifesto", Gawande talks about managing complexity. The practice of medicine is increasingly busy and complex. In today's medical practice there are literally thousands of steps, all of which must be done exactly right every time for a successful error free outcome. The precision and knowledge required for this are beyond any one individual.

Gawande argues persuasively in this book that the solution consists of three steps: a) push power in decision making from the center to the periphery b) design checklist in the critical steps of the process c) have the relevant parties meet regularly to discuss problems.

The checklist he recommends need to short and succinct, meant to aid highly trained professionals at critical junctions. To design a checklist to cover every eventuality would be to miss the point. Most of these checklist should be no longer than one page and be completed in less than a minute. They however need to be designed with great thought and tried and tested before they are implemented.

These steps, first pioneered in the aviation industry have been tried in the medical setting with success that belies their simplicity. The reduction in medical errors, lives saved and reduction in infection rates attained is surprising and unexpected for steps that seem so simple. Further these steps work in hospitals from the most high tech to the most rural. The benefit attained is far in excess of high tech solutions costing millions of dollars that industry would have us implement.

Not to implement these steps in any hospital would almost be negligent.

Highly recommended, a must read.

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