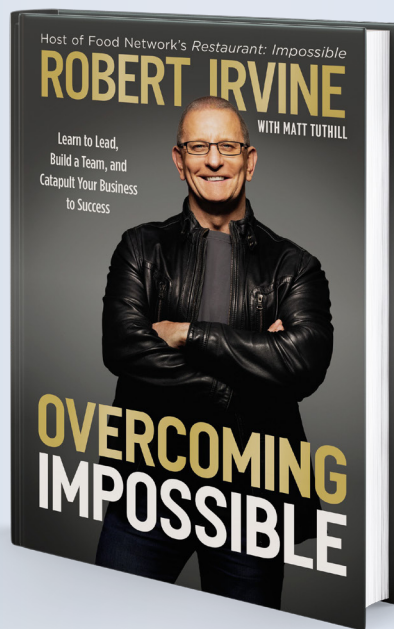


# BOOK SNAPS™

Zooming In On Your Next Read



## Overcoming Impossible

Learn to Lead, Build a Team, and Catapult Your Business to Success

By Robert Irvine

**Robert Irvine** is a world-class chef, entrepreneur, and tireless philanthropic supporter of our nation's military. The host of Food Network's hit show *Restaurant: Impossible*, he has given struggling restaurateurs a second chance to turn their lives and businesses around in over 200 episodes and counting. He would know a thing or two about running a successful business.

## Achieving Your Goals Isn't Impossible

Robert Irvine has countless hours of experience helping reinvigorate struggling restaurants and bringing them back to their prime. In addition, he has launched numerous successful enterprises on his own. Through all of this, he has developed techniques and has gained insight that can help other business owners thrive in areas where they are faltering. He shares that wisdom in his book, *Overcoming Impossible: Learn to Lead, Build a Team, and Catapult Your Business to Success* which combines solid teaching with numerous case studies of failing restaurants, most of which were able to successfully change their trajectory and gain both clientele and profit. Irvine breaks his book up into two sections. The first section is about overcoming seemingly impossible situations in business, and the second section talks about overcoming seemingly impossible barriers in one's mindset. Nowhere in his book does Irvine say that successful businesses can be built without hard work. In his introduction, he calls the work Herculean. His hope is that his book will help people recognize obstacles and then "approach, avoid, or overcome them."

## Trust and Accountability

One of the obstacles Irvine is insistent on helping his reader overcome is that of micromanaging. He refers to this tendency as the number one business killer. He believes that it is important for business owners to trust their employees. In his words, "I trust that my employees will call upon all their creative faculties and passions and bring them to the table every day." In order to ensure that the employees he hires are trustworthy, he makes sure to use every tool he has before hiring them to ensure that they can do the job properly. In general, he does not believe in hiring people on a trial basis as he believes that denotes a lack of trust in the person. He believes that in people with high character, being trusted actually increases their work ethic. Micromanaging these same people, however, diminishes the amount of benefit they can provide for the company.

Along with hiring high caliber people, Irvine believes it is important to both set high expectations and to lead by example. He reproaches the owner or manager who believes they are above the most menial of tasks. He says that he, himself, is known for mopping floors and cleaning grease traps as necessary. He believes that participating in this work helps increase bonding between

upper and lower levels of employees. Along the same lines, he believes that it is important to invest in his employees. He makes sure to ask them about their lives; this, he believes, will help get employees then invested in the goals of the boss. Sometimes after investing a lot in employees, they will leave and go elsewhere, but this does not bother him. These people will then go praise the owner and business in their new spheres.

Irvine also sees the value in accountability in business. He says he is not looking for apologies when someone makes a mistake. Rather, he wants people to come up with and present solutions to the problem. On the flip side, he also believes it is important to praise employees who do well. This ensures that “you treat both sides of accountability – the good as well as the bad – with the same amount of attention.” Irvine understands that being the boss can make it hard for a person to truly understand what is happening in an organization because people will want to hide certain things. In order to understand what is truly going on with people, bosses have to have conversations with people at all levels and push them to share as much information as they can.

## Business Growth

Next Irvine moves on to discuss growing a business. In professional situations, he always prefers to be prepared or even over prepared than to have to scrape by at the last minute. He understands that oftentimes with big projects, the people working under him may know more than he does about what is happening. In these situations, he finds it imperative to go in and ask how he can be of help. He sees this as a sign of strength and that it shows his people that he has faith in them. Part of being able to run a business in this manner involves the proper training of staff. He believes in training specialties. He believes it is less helpful to train large numbers of people in large training sessions than it is to train on a smaller scale. People can retain more information in these smaller sessions. Irvine believes that it is important to sample and have the employees sample everything they do because just because someone learns how to do something does not mean they can always stay consistent.

Irvine cautions about the pitfalls of scaling up. He says that scaling is not just a matter of doing what a company is always doing at a larger scale. Oftentimes this will not work, and he draws a comparison to scaling up a pancake recipe that just does not work in larger batches. When it is not possible to simply do the same thing on a larger scale and when time constraints do not allow for doing the same small scale operations much more frequently, it is important for business owners to rely on their experience. He believes people’s instincts have taken them far, and they should trust them when appropriate. He advocates without hesitation against taking shortcuts.

## Unexpected Obstacles

Writing this book in the wake of the Covid-10 pandemic, Irvine is ever cognizant of the possibility of unplanned interruptions and setbacks. In the face of these, he gives some best practices. Among these are

“Don’t Panic.”

“Stay Engaged with Your Customers”

“Engage with Your Employees”

“Secure Your Data.”

“Be prepared.”

## Selling and Social Media

Irvine starts his next session by discussing an encounter he had with a friend after a television network turned down Irvine’s proposal. The friend said that it sounded like a good idea and said that the network just didn’t get it. Irvine explains that in such situations, it is not the job of the recipient to get it; rather it is the part of the salesperson to sell it. When it comes to sales, he believes that data is key as he says that decision makers do not get to where they are simply by trusting their gut. Salesmanship can help close a deal, but data is what is really needed. He believes that everything done in an organization can be turned into data. For people who are hesitant about selling, he encourages them to turn their pitch into a story and tell the story of why they love the product and company. This will feel less like slick tricks, he says. Honesty, he says, is crucial. If a product is not right for a company or individual at a time, he encourages people to be honest about that. While it could lead to the loss of a sale, the good will could prove beneficial in the long run through an increase in goodwill.

Irvine then turns his attention to social media. Irvine believes it is important for a person to find their voice on social media. He says, “I’ve found that the more honest you can be, the better your chances are of connecting with, and eliciting a response from, your audience.” He thinks opportunities to blend the personal and professional are beneficial. About social media he says, “You are blessed with owning a business in the age of social media – a golden time in history when you can reach anyone on the planet in an instant.” He encourages trying to garner highly engaged followers, and he explains how this is more difficult for businesses than it is for celebrities because celebrities are already known and do not have to generate attention on social media like less well-known people do. He believes that people value vulnerability online. He also believes that positivity is a trait that the most popular social media accounts have. He does not advocate getting involved in social media wars or chiming in on the issue of the day unless it directly affects the business. After all, those comments, while popular today, can come back to haunt a business in the future. It is okay, he says, to say nothing on social media when nothing of value can be added to a conversation even if followers are demanding a response.

In his final chapter in the first part, Irvine discusses money, and he begins by recommending that people do not get into business relationships with people they are close to. Problems arise and more money is frequently needed for projects, and this could ruin a relationship. But he also believes that people need to surround themselves with positive people who encour-



## The community helps the business, and as such, the business should then turn around and help the community.”

age their goals. If a person speaks negatively against a person's goals, it is best that the recipient of the criticism attempts to distance themselves from the other person. Within this topic of money, Irvine believes it is important to give back to the community at a level appropriate for the business. The community helps the business, and as such, the business should then turn around and help the community.

### Knowing Your Why

Irvine then moves on to his section of “Overcoming Impossible in Your Mindset.” He begins this unit by encouraging his reader to know their why. He says that “Starting a business requires time, energy, and expertise, but the driver behind all those factors is passion.” He wants people to pursue paths they truly believe in. He encourages his reader not to get distracted by what other people are doing. In addition to passion, he encourages people to find what they are good at as people can get off track by chasing trends. That being said, passion and talent are not always enough. Products can fail anyway. He says that failure is part of the endeavor and that people should give themselves room to fail. He also believes that it is important not to broadcast opportunities or success too early on as deals can fall through for any number of reasons.

Irvine then moves on to discuss managing ego. He wants his reader, as well as the people who come on his television show for help with their restaurants, to consider what necessary changes they have avoided making because of their ego. He encourages people to consider this in their personal lives as well as in their professional lives. He acknowledges that people, including himself, work incredibly hard, but he also maintains that every person who has been successful has also had a lot of help along the way.

### Risks and Goals

After discussing some cliches that he wishes people would forget, he begins to discuss daily goals. He says, “In short, the micro becomes the macro.” By this he means that people must pay attention to their small habits, and he wants people to consider how they can obtain wins each day. He suggests that people begin their day with gratitude, set their intentions for the day, and make sure to get physical movement each day. He then tackles procrastination and says that procrastination is simply fear. Sometimes people fail to bring their ideas to fruition or they learn that they were a bad idea. He says that what matters at that point is the story people tell themselves about their failures. If a person does not find a way to put failure in the proper perspective, they may be more likely to procrastinate more in the future. He encourages people to put into practice a bias

towards action and then to work with persistence.

Irvine acknowledges that there are real risks involved in starting new ventures. These prices can be paid by both the individual as well as by others in their sphere such as spouses, children, and parents. He urges people to make sure that all of the people who stand to lose are willing to pay the price of potential failure. People, he says, need to take inventory of those around them and make sure they are supportive.

### Moving Toward Success

Irvine then moves on to talking about work-life balance. Irvine says that being a success takes hard work, and that a solid work ethic can be learned. He suggests that his readers give themselves a pep talk each morning to get themselves ready to work hard throughout the day. He says, “Saying yes to your dream means saying no to a lot of the other little things that you'd also love to have.”

Irvine closes out his book talking about positioning oneself in the path of people who can help with business. He also discusses learning to appreciate the value of adversaries. Throughout the entire book, Irvine maintains that hard work is necessary to building a successful enterprise, and he shares countless examples of how this is true in the restaurants he has helped. Through his short case studies from these restaurants, the reader can see how failing to use his principles can lead to trouble and how those troubles can be remedied. The path to success is not a short one, and he urges his readers to consider the time that must be invested in order to make their business a success and to also consider the regret that could ensue should the reader decide to give up on the dream or decide the dream is not worth the cost. Irvine poses these questions with compassion as well as with hard won insight into their implications. The combination of principles and restaurant anecdotes in his book make this an engaging read with real world practical application.

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