
Amp It Up

Leading for Hypergrowth by Raising Expectations, Increasing Urgency, and Elevating Intensity

by **Frank Sloodman**

John Wiley & Sons, 2022. 184 pages

reviewed by **Dr Claude Diderich**

Springtime is coming on March 20th. Frank Sloodman's recent book *Amp It Up – Leading for hypergrowth by raising expectations, increasing urgency, and elevating intensity* is an interesting read for a sunny afternoon on your balcony (or your front-yard, a coffee shop terrace, or a bench near a lake, or any other place where you feel comfortable, your choice). The book is based, according to its author, on a popular post he wrote about how organizations can considerably improve without having to make extensive changes to their talent, structure, or fundamental business model. The calls his framework *Amp It Up*.

The presented framework is built around five pillars of focused change:

1. Raise the standards by making the organization mission driven and putting execution ahead of strategy.
2. Align people and culture, ensuring that employees are drivers rather than passengers of the bus to success.
3. Sharpen the focus of the organization by putting problem analysis ahead of thinking about solutions and align incentives with customer success.
4. Pick-up the pace by ramping-up sales, focusing on growing fast, and staying scrappy during scaling.
5. Make the strategy ready for the future by materializing opportunities, opening the aperture, and swinging the fences.

Sloodman, originally from The Netherlands, spent all his careers in the United States, which, from my perspective, plays a key role in shaping his line of thinking. In addition, *Amp It Up* is based on insights from his tenure as CEO of three technology companies, DataDomain, ServiceNow, and Snowflake, which are all active in fast growing markets. As such, I am unsure to what extent the framework presented is applicable to more mature industries as well as non-technology sectors.

Business success is built on two primary dimensions, that is, *growth* and *change*, supported by a solid *mission foundation*. This may be true in fast-paced industries, like software, but I would challenge these premises in other industries, like transportation, energy, or food.

The author gives the educated reader numerous anchors for critical thinking. As such, the book contains multiple statements that I do disagree with. For example, the author argues that execution is more important than strategy. “If you don’t know how to execute, every strategy will fail, even the most promising one.” While this may sound intuitive, I would counter that argument by “if you don’t have a promising strategy, any execution will be random.” Both statements contain relevant insights, but none represents the wholly truth. Success depends on a sound combination of strategy and execution. Similarly, the author claims that group thinking and confirmation biases are incredibly dangerous, a statement that I agree with. But only two pages later, he argues that companies should develop strategy on their own, rather than seek external critical support (to avoid group thinking and confirmation biases). Furthermore, the author claims that operators in charge of business must also be strategists. This, to me, is a fallacy, as people good at execution are typically poor at strategic thinking and vice versa.

These are only a few of the challenges I spotted in this nevertheless interesting book to read. To me, this book is a *yes, but* book. It contains a lot of critical observations. Correlations are often taken for causalities. Insights cannot be relied upon holistically. They need adaption to specific businesses, markets, and industries and even sometimes fact-checking! This requirement is especially relevant to the nine takeaways presented in chapter 14.

Amp It Up is a book written by a successful CEO whose home-turf is the high growth technology sector. With its 182 pages and use of large fonts, the book is a lightweight read. To me, it is an in between read, with entertainment value but little more. It is well suited for a sunny Sunday afternoon but fails to offer sufficient meaningful value to its readers. It will definitely not hold a top spot on my reading list.

As always, this is my personal subjective assessment of the book *Amp It Up* with which you may or may not agree. Any well-argued opinions, whether in agreement or not, are welcome!

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#intensity #strategy #execution #management #leadership #mission #vision #values
#competition #technology #ceo #trust #sales #career @DataDomain-inc @ServiceNow
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