



What It Takes: Seven Secrets of Success from the World's Greatest Professional Firms

By Charles D. Ellis



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Expert insights on what sets the great professional firms apart from all the rest

Having devoted a career that spans fifty years to consulting with and studying professional firms in the Americas, Asia, and Europe, author Charles Ellis learned firsthand how difficult it is for an organization to go beyond very good and attain, as well as sustain, excellence. Now, he shares his hard-won insights with you and reveals "what it takes" to be best-in-class in any industry.

Enlightening and entertaining, *What It Takes* explores firms that are leaders in their particular field and the superior people who create and maintain them. Along the way, it identifies the secrets of their long-term success and reveals exactly how they can put your organization in a better position to excel when properly executed.

- Contains many stories of achieving excellence, and addresses the obstacles that top-ranking organizations face in sustaining it
- Includes insights on leaders in their particular field—from McKinsey & Company in consulting and Cravath, Swaine & Moore in law to the Mayo Clinic in healthcare
- Written by one of the most experienced and respected business consultants/advisors of our time

What It Takes skillfully shows you how innovation and a commitment to excellence can drive success, while also revealing how easy it is to fall behind. With it, you'll discover what separates the great firms from the good ones and learn how to attain, and maintain, organizational success throughout the years.

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Editorial Review

Review

“This is the best book about corporate leadership that I've ever read. Charley Ellis really knows what he's talking about.”—**John Whitehead**, former Co-Chairman, Goldman Sachs & Co., former Deputy Secretary of State

“Clear, crisp, and actionable insights on leadership, which can only come from a well experienced scholar and practitioner like Charley Ellis in his usual wise simple and riveting story-telling style. And yes, simple doesn't mean easy.”—**Abdullatif A. Al-Othman**, Governor, Saudi Arabia General Investment Authority

“*What It Takes* is Ellis' finest work on organizational excellence. He has distilled the essential principles of organizational excellence, illustrating them with potent examples and memorable anecdotes. His intimate knowledge of the organizations, deepened by 300 interviewers with insiders, imparts powerful insights and lessons for those aspiring to build and sustain great and enduring organizations.”—**Ng Kok Song**, Chief Investment Officer, Government of Singapore Investment Corporation

“Charley Ellis has taken an incisive look under the hood of some of the world's greatest professional organizations and has put his perceptive finger on not only what has made them succeed but has also led them to endure.”—**D. Ronald Daniel**, former Managing Partner, McKinsey & Company

“Once, again, Charley Ellis has delved into the mysteries of leadership with clarity and insight.”—**Jim Rothenberg**, Chairman, Capital Research and Management Company

“Charley Ellis looks hard at how great firms succeed in fields as different as law, consulting and medicine . . . and finds what it takes that they have in common.”—**Jeff Bewkes**, CEO, Time Warner

“Charley Ellis takes us through a series of master classes on corporate leadership. This is an outstanding contribution to help us understand that which divides winners from losers.”—**Lord Myners**, former UK Treasury Minister

“A very interesting study of the similarities and differences in the leadership of five very different professional firms. Should be required reading for other firms in those professions.”—**Samuel C. Butler**, former Presiding Partner, Cravath, Swaine & Moore

“*What It Takes* is a clear-eyed view into the complexities of building and sustaining great organizations. Charley Ellis' artful storytelling imparts insights that would benefit anyone aspiring to thoughtful, effective leadership throughout markets and histories.”—**Lei Zhang**, Founder and CEO, Hillhouse Capital Management Group

“I cannot imagine anyone better qualified than Charley Ellis to analyze, identify and describe those characteristics which separate outstandingly successful professional firms from the merely very good ones. This fascinating book should be recommended reading for anyone wishing to become a leader in any of the professions described and indeed for anyone with an ambition to succeed in business.”—**Peter Stormonth Darling**, former Chairman, Mercury Asset Management

“Of course everyone knows of the five great institutions which are the subject of Charley Ellis' latest book. But what is it that made them outstanding? Charley in this searching and unsentimental if admiring analysis provides answers: A good idea transformed into a novel business model, passion, commitment, good judgment particularly in the early years and great people. Another Charley Ellis book to treasure.”—**Sir Winfried Bischoff**, Chairman, Lloyds Banking Group

From the Inside Flap

What It Takes is the story of what sets the great professional firms, the acknowledged leaders in their industries, apart from all the rest. It is a blueprint for how to create, build, and maintain such a firm.

Having devoted a career that spans fifty years to consulting with and studying professional firms in the Americas, Asia, and Europe, and developing Greenwich Associates from start-up to global leader, author Charles Ellis learned firsthand how difficult it is for an organization to go beyond very good and attain, as well as sustain, excellence. Now, he shares his hard-won insights with you and reveals "what it takes" to be best-in-class in *any* industry.

Enlightening and entertaining, *What It Takes* explores firms that are leaders in their particular field—from McKinsey & Company in consulting, Cravath, Swaine & Moore in law, Capital Group in investment management, the Mayo Clinic in healthcare, and Goldman Sachs in investment banking—and the superior people who create and maintain them, in order to identify the secrets of their long-term success.

While you might expect to find major differences, from industry to industry, in how the great firms set themselves apart, the principles they follow are few and nearly identical. *What It Takes* breaks them down and reveals exactly how they can put your organization in a better position to excel when properly executed. The stories of the people, their decisions, and their interactions found throughout these pages bring these seven keys to success to life:

- Defining an inspiring mission
- Recruiting the right people onto the team
- Developing people—from early accelerated training through career-long coaching
- Establishing a strong culture that unites all in teamwork to serve clients
- Assuring a strong client focus
- Innovation at all levels—from tactics to grand strategy
- Providing leadership that brings all six together and identifies problems and corrects them quickly

And while *What It Takes* contains many stories of achieving excellence, this book also addresses the obstacles that top-ranking organizations face in sustaining excellence. It examines how several of these firms have handled—and mishandled—recent mishaps and are struggling to right themselves. It also includes an instructive tale featuring Arthur Andersen & Co., a leader that stumbled and never made it back.

What It Takes skillfully shows you how innovation and a commitment to excellence can drive success, while also revealing how easy it is to fall behind. With it, you'll discover what separates the great firms from the good ones and learn how to attain, and maintain, organizational success throughout the years.

From the Back Cover

praise for WHAT IT TAKES

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Users Review

From reader reviews:

Gregory Phipps:

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Duane Harden:

The experience that you get from What It Takes: Seven Secrets of Success from the World's Greatest Professional Firms is a more deep you looking the information that hide inside words the more you get thinking about reading it. It does not mean that this book is hard to recognise but What It Takes: Seven Secrets of Success from the World's Greatest Professional Firms giving you excitement feeling of reading. The article author conveys their point in specific way that can be understood by simply anyone who read the idea because the author of this book is well-known enough. This book also makes your vocabulary increase well. Making it easy to understand then can go to you, both in printed or e-book style are available. We propose you for having this specific What It Takes: Seven Secrets of Success from the World's Greatest Professional Firms instantly.

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