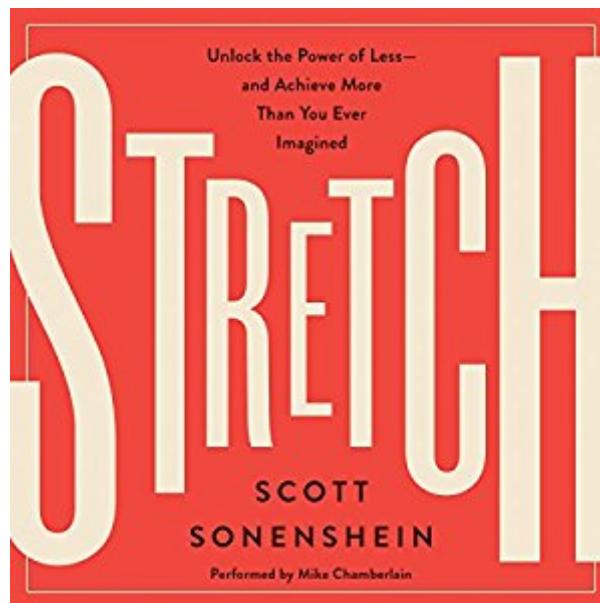




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# Stretch: Unlock The Power Of Less – And Achieve More Than You Ever Imagined



## Synopsis

A Rice University social scientist teaches you to rethink what you need to succeed, and do more with what you already have, in this counterintuitive, evidence-based guide to changing the way you work and live. *Stretch* identifies key ways for people and organizations to work beyond their resources to achieve higher performance. Based on in-depth research in psychology and management, Scott Sonenshein shows how to accomplish goals, find professional and personal success, and live a richer life. Two different mindsets drive achievement, creativity, and innovation: "stretching" and "chasing". Stretchers embrace what they have, finding unconventional ways to use resources already at hand. A competitor is someone who improves your own work; a floundering brand becomes trendy; and forgotten workers become star employees. Chasers get trapped in convention. They mindlessly accept other people's definitions of resources and often feel they are missing what they need to succeed. Sonenshein teaches a four-part framework that activates the stretching potential we all have but may not fully recognize: Diversify experiences. Act immediately without over planning. Expect the positive. Build unique combinations. Sonenshein reveals that while we rarely have all we think we need, we usually have more than we imagine. Whether leading organizations, launching careers, or raising families, *Stretch* teaches us how to achieve more by acting resourcefully at work and beyond.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

*Stretch* is one of the most impactful books that I have ever read. As a PhD scientist who has worked in both small start-ups and large corporations, Sonenshein's insights resonated with me. I

highly recommend this book for anyone in business or academics who wants to develop a more innovative culture. I especially appreciated his points about avoiding the temptation to over-resource and to focus on action. This book is well researched with several novel examples that support his hypotheses. I especially enjoyed the chapter on food truck culture. I am not sure if this was intentional, but throughout the book Sonenshein referred to several examples of his wife, an extraordinary stretcher. As a working mother in a dual career family I appreciated how Sonenshein drew from his own personal examples highlighting his wife's decisions and successes. We need more examples of couples who support each other with high powered careers and thrive by supporting each other! I could not put this book down and look forward to sharing this book with colleagues and friends. I hope that Sonenshein is working on his next book because I cannot wait to read it.

Have you ever watched, or been involved in, a business failure, where, despite the best efforts of hardworking people, the business doesn't survive? Scott Sonenshein lived through it, as he describes in the Introduction to his engrossing book *Stretch*. (In some books, the reader can skip the intro- not this one; the introduction is a must-read part of the book.) He was hired by start-up Vividence in Silicon Valley at the very apex of the tech boom. Despite prestige VC backers, top-tier hires and \$50 million, Vividence didn't make it. As his career continued, that experience led to an interest in why some well-funded operations don't succeed, while other, more resource constrained, do. Peter Senge wrote about reinforcing cycles as part of his book *The Fifth Discipline*, which I consider one of the finest business books ever penned. In it, Senge describes the downward cycle that some companies fall into, and why it is so difficult to reverse. Sonenshein explores those cycles from different point of view- an organization and resource perspective- and develops concepts for the reader to consider on how organizations and individuals- can take a fresh look at resource availability and achieve much more success with fewer resources. In full disclosure, I had the pleasure of working with Randi Sonenshein, Scott's wife, who is a highly-accomplished executive in her own right (and a delightful person) and assisted Scott in writing *Stretch*. And I met Scott on a few occasions. (He is now a Professor of Management at Rice University). Further, while I wasn't part of Silicon Valley, my employer at that time he was at Vividence was a product and service provider to numerous established tech firms as well as start-ups, and thereby I had a first-row seat as some of our customers flourished and some vanished. Those experiences clearly shape not just one's thinking but entire career. The core concept that the author develops is that of opposing approaches and mindsets: one that we

might label as the conventional U.S. approach of more and better results are obtained by having or acquiring more or better resources. He labels that approach chasing, and the practitioners chasers. The alternative approach is stretching (and stretchers) which requires looking at the available resources in unique and thoughtful ways to get better results from better utilization. Mr. Sonenshein explores those two viewpoints and the effect each has on society, enterprise and the individual. The book title likely gives away that he concludes that stretching is almost always better. The book is liberally peppered with examples of business leaders who've employed stretching to optimize resources. While some stretched from lack of an alternative – the beautiful example of young black woman Sarah Breedlove Walker, born in the post-Civil War-South, lifting herself, and then other black women, out of abject poverty by starting a business from almost nothing; other examples feature enterprises like D. G. Yuengling and Son, which could have afforded to devote additional resources to launch a growth strategy, but chose instead to stretch existing resources, acquire used equipment and the like. As opposed to some of its competition at the time – Sonenshein calls out Stroh brewery's aggressive growth via acquisition strategy only to crash- Yuengling remains as America's oldest continually operating brewery. In closing chapters, he provides various techniques to examine existing resources to ferret out alternative uses, warns of traps to avoid, and how stretching as individuals can lead to personal growth. Stretch is not only useful, it is an entertaining read. I totally enjoyed it, and it goes in my personal library of business books worth keeping as a reference. Probably next to The Fifth Discipline.

I work a lot with nonprofit organizations, and I find that the tools and concepts here are as useful, if not more useful than the corporate-side strategy. Based on thoughtful examples in a number of different fields to understand different strategies and tactics to support and thrive through creatively dealing with resource "adversity." Good business, personal, life book. Strongly recommend.

Not sure about this one. There are definitely some good insights, ideas and recommendations; for example, the key distinction between a stretch (make the most of the resources you have) vs. chase (acquire resources systematically) mindset, a variation on the classical dilemma of exploration vs. exploitation. However, the whole thing feels a little bit unfocused, with different strands of psychological research put together in what is not always a coherent narrative. Moreover, the examples used are sometimes weak or cherry-picked; for example, yes, we can attribute the demise of many companies to a chasing mindset, but we can also find examples of success (for example, strategy itself of acquiring more and more to become the leader in online retailing). My

overall impression is that a good idea got stretched to the point of becoming too thin.

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