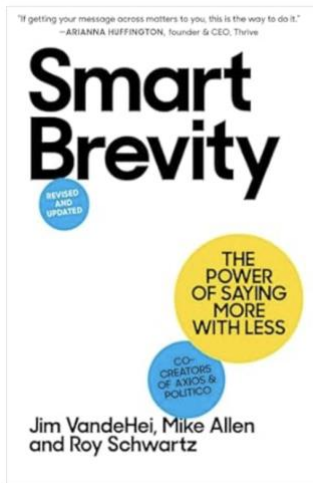


'CliffsNotes' Book Club Recap

DO YOU LOVE BOOKS ON LEADERSHIP, NEUROSCIENCE, AND BUSINESS, BUT NOT HAVE TIME TO READ ALL THE BOOKS?

Join the '**CliffsNotes' club**—where there's no pressure to pre-read the book, no membership required, no cost, and lots of discussion in just 90 minutes. Each month, you will hear a **summary of highlights** from a recently-published business book. This discussion summary is intended to provide a recap of the conversation at Book Club, rather than serve as a thorough book summary. We'll keep you "in the know" on the latest and greatest concepts and models. **Register here** for upcoming events.



February 2026
Smart Brevity

By Jim VandeHei, Mike Allen & Roy Schwartz

Book Summary

AI-generated summary; edited by Rob Hill

What it is

Core insights

Smart Brevity is a modern communication system designed for an attention-starved world. Developed by the founders of Axios, it provides a repeatable method for delivering information that is **clear, efficient, and actionable**—without sacrificing depth or accuracy.

Brevity is clarity.

The goal is not fewer words, but faster understanding. In an era of overload, the communicator's job is to reduce friction between message and meaning.

Chapter Themes

1. The Attention Crisis

Explains why traditional communication fails today and why attention—not information—is the true bottleneck.

Leadership takeaway: If your message isn't immediately clear, it won't land.

2. Brevity Signals Confidence

Shows how concise communication reflects mastery, not oversimplification.

Leadership takeaway: Rambling erodes credibility; clarity builds it.

3. The One Big Thing

Introduces the discipline of identifying the single most important takeaway.

Leadership takeaway: Every message must answer, "What do I want them to remember?"

4. Why It Matters

Teaches how to frame relevance before details so readers understand significance.

Leadership takeaway: Context without meaning is noise.

5. Top-Down Communication

Advocates leading with conclusions, not backstory or chronology.

Leadership takeaway: Start with what matters, then support it

6. Structure as Strategy

Covers the importance of formatting, hierarchy, and visual clarity.

Leadership takeaway: Structure determines whether content gets read at all.

7. Write for Scanners

Acknowledges that most people skim—and shows how to write so skimmers still understand.

Leadership takeaway: Skimmable communication is a design requirement, not a compromise.

8. Kill the Fluff

Focuses on eliminating filler, jargon, clichés, and ego-driven language.

Leadership takeaway: Every unnecessary word steals attention.

9. Brevity Builds Trust

Connects clear communication to credibility, transparency, and trust.

Leadership takeaway: Respecting time earns respect.

10. Smart Brevity at Work

Applies the framework to emails, memos, meetings, and presentations.

Leadership takeaway: Most organizational confusion is a communication failure.

11. Smart Brevity for Leaders

Explores how leaders use clarity to align teams and accelerate decisions.

Leadership takeaway: Leaders are judged by what people understand and act on.

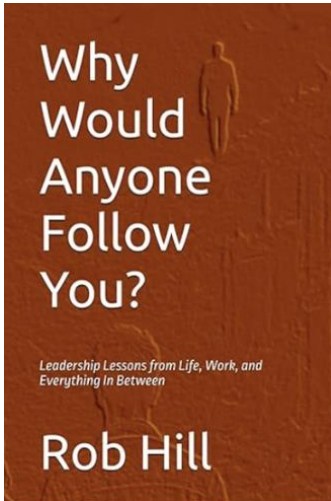
12. Making It a Habit

Closes with guidance on embedding smart brevity into personal and organizational culture.

Leadership takeaway: Brevity is a skill and a discipline—not a personality trait.

RESOURCES

- Jim VandeHei TED Talk, TEDxOshkosh [video](#) (15 min)
- Productivity Game illustrated video summary of *Smart Brevity* [video](#) (7.5 min)
- The Office, “Kevin's Small Talk” short [clip](#) (2.5 min)
- Cheers, “So... How did you break your thumb?” short [clip](#) (1.5 min)



February 2026

BONUS BOOK!

Why Would Anyone Follow You?

Leadership Lessons from Life, Work, and Everything in Between

By Rob Hill

The Big Idea

Leadership doesn't fail because people don't care. It fails because leaders stop reflecting, stop improving, and stop communicating clearly. Leadership is built in quiet moments of reflection, repeated week after week. Written in a conversational, sometimes humorous way with pop-culture references, this book doesn't ask leaders to change everything at once. It gives them a reason to get better—one week at a time.

The Problem

- Leaders are promoted faster than they are prepared
- Mentors, training, and institutional knowledge are disappearing
- Most leadership journals are too vague to drive real behavior change

The Solution: Practice

Why Would Anyone Follow You? combines short, experience-based leadership lessons with guided reflection that turns insight into action.

- 52 weekly sections (one year)
- Three short readings per week
- Space to write and reflect after each reading
- End-of-week prompts that drive application

Not a philosophy. Not a motivational journal. Leadership, practiced. Designed for consistency not intensity.

About the Book Club In this monthly club, a presenter shares highlights from a book related to leadership, business, neuroscience, or coaching. Membership is not required, and there's no obligation to pre-read the book. This discussion summary is intended to provide a recap of the conversation at Book Club, rather than serve as a thorough book summary. [Register here](#) for upcoming events. For the full set of discussion summaries, [click here](#).