
Drinking from the Fire Hose: Making Smarter Decisions without Drowning in Information.

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Valuentum's subscriber base enjoys reading the latest and greatest investing books. As a result, Valuentum requests and receives business and investing books before they are officially released. Our editorial staff took a look at the following book, and here's what we thought after reading it:

Drinking from the Fire Hose: Making Smarter Decisions without Drowning in Information.

By Christopher J. Frank and Paul Magnone. Portfolio, 2011. 256 p. ISBN 978-1-5918-4426-6.
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Frank (vice-president of business-to-business and communications research at American Express) and Magnone (director of global business development and alliances at Openet) offer their take on the information overload facing organizations, and suggest that with a few simple questions it is possible to sort through the flood of data and focus on the most important information, that information which leads to better decisions in less time. The authors present seven "Fire Hose questions" ranging from "who are your swing voters?" to "should you believe the squiggly line?" The most important of these questions however, are the first two, "what is the essential business question?" and "where is your customer's north star?" By keeping the focus on the customer's needs instead of the organization's pocketbook and by determining the one essential piece of information needed to move forward, organizations can sort through the meaningless data by "asking the right questions at the right time."

Valuentum's Take: The introduction presents the seven questions that are the focus of the remainder of the book. Each chapter tackles one of the questions, how to apply it, and provides practical application through case studies and exercises. The introduction does an adequate job of explaining the questions and the importance of sorting out the data that just measures from data and information that leads to real insights and enables decision making. The subsequent chapters get a little repetitive as the authors repeat what has already been covered, but the case studies of well-known companies like IBM, Microsoft, Starbucks, and Zappo's will add value for readers.

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