



## **Hit Refresh**

*Satya Nadella*

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## Hit Refresh Satya Nadella

As told by Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella, Hit Refresh is the story of corporate change and reinvention as well as the story of Nadella's personal journey, one that is taking place today inside a storied technology company, and one that is coming in all of our lives as intelligent machines become more ambient and more ubiquitous. It's about how people, organizations and societies can and must hit refresh—transform—in their persistent quest for new energy, new ideas, relevance and renewal. At the core, it's about us humans and our unique qualities, like empathy, which will become ever more valuable in a world where the torrent of technology will disrupt like never before. As much a humanist as a technologist, Nadella defines his mission and that of the company he leads as empowering every person and every organization on the planet to achieve more.

## Hit Refresh Details

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Author : Satya Nadella

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## From Reader Review Hit Refresh for online ebook

### Graeme Roberts says

In the first half, I despaired of any value in this book, though I did enjoy hearing about Mr. Nadella's youth in India, his family, and his love of cricket, which would endear him to anyone from the Commonwealth, including me. Like all companies that have owned a powerful franchise (DOS/Windows and Office) Microsoft had lagged in innovation, and come too late to the Web and mobile, and almost too late for the Cloud. This is central to the very nature of technology business, and not a failure of management, in my opinion. I experienced, as an employee of Kodak, the political and technical difficulties of developing new business as your key technology (silver halide imaging in our case) gradually loses its monopoly. Political infighting often takes over, because new technologies often threaten the livelihood of existing employees and partners.

My heart sank as Mr. Nadella began to spout chillingly familiar bullshit about the need for listening to customers and learning from them, employee empowerment, and empathy, culminating in a mission that was meant to excite the employees soon after his appointment:

We exist to build products that empower others.

Shit. And, of course, he then nobly emphasized diversity and inclusion, imperatives for political survival, if not success.

Suddenly, the book changed. On page 119 he mentioned "rose petals in a field of shit," and we were off and running. He began talking in active terms about the need for leaders to generate energy and make things happen—to deliver success. He very quickly started to **do things** and all the sloganeering and empty words were left behind in a cloud of dust. He focused the company on the few businesses and technologies with the greatest potential for growth, and expanded Microsoft's partnering efforts, meeting with Sundar Pichai, CEO of Google and fellow Indian, and building on his own intense business development background with Windows NT, the first of Microsoft's server products. Microsoft also acquired LinkedIn, finding that the two organizations shared many values and a commitment to honor, essential ingredients of trust. Nadella credits the economic success of the United States to innovation and the existence of the political and economic institutions that support business growth. He seems a deeply honorable man, highly intelligent and even scholarly, influenced profoundly by his late mother, who was a scholar of Sanskrit. The political and economic institutions of his native country are relatively weak (although rapidly improving) but his sense of honor, love of family, and fundamental decency that were formed there are central to his success in the United States.

Satya Nadella described the painful process of setting new directions for the business, with strong emphasis on the Cloud, mobile, artificial intelligence, and quantum computing, but always centered on the fundamental needs of human beings. I bought some Microsoft stock not long after he was appointed, mostly just to keep track of him, and I am very glad that I did. I think that there is an excellent chance that the company will be great again under his leadership.

I would suggest this book to investors, tech industry followers, and business historians. No one ever became a great leader by reading about it, but aspiring executives might get some ideas.

## Vinayak Kesarwani says

Ranging somewhere around 3.5 stars, this book is Satya Nadella's manifesto. His worldview on how technology is going to shape up the world in coming times. The beginning parts present stories from his life - school, Microsoft, transitions etc. The end parts however contain more of his manifesto, about how technology and society should interact etc which makes this difficult to read at times. Still not a bad read from one of the new CEOs of a tech giant. 1 time read for sure. Also, follow the sources listed at the end of the book.

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## Du Nguyen says

Why does Microsoft exist? And why do I exist in this new role? That was the questions Nadella asked of himself when he was offered and appointed as the CEO of Microsoft - only the third CEO in its 40-year history. Why am I writing this book is another question that I think Nadella should have asked himself.

Hit Refresh is according to Nadella, not a biography, nor is it a book solely about himself. It's not really a book about technology although that does feature a lot. Nor is it a book about the challenges of leading one of the most valuable companies in the world. In fact I find it very strange as a book. Nadella wanted this book to be about the transformations happening in him, Microsoft and technology and he half-manages to write about these subjects.

The first few chapters are about him. His upbringing in India where he grew up loving cricket but finding a second love in computers. His move to the US where he worked his way up through Microsoft. And then about how he became a father to three children. It's a very broad picture of his life and clearly he didn't really want to go into details, preferring to skirt through formative years and only mentioning specific events that would portray him in the culture that he wants to bring to Microsoft.

Transformations in Microsoft is also dealt with swiftly and superficially. He acknowledges how Microsoft lost its leadership and have to catch up. This part of the book is partly super interesting material about the inner workings of Microsoft and some of the executive decisions you rarely hear of and part of evangelizing the Microsoft mission. Nadella writes a lot about how he brought a culture change to Microsoft after his appointment as CEO and how quickly it turned around things.

Lastly transformation in technology. Nadella switches to long term thinking and writes how Microsoft is focusing on three particular technologies: mixed reality, AI and quantum computing. This is the part of the book I found most interesting, simply because it seems to be more genuine than the rest of the book. Nadella is clearly passionate about the changes in technologies and how it will affect society.

Overall the book is not really that bad. It's not really that good either. Why it was written, I have no idea. On some level, it seems like a way for Nadella to legitimize his position as CEO as he writes about how his life seemingly brought about the right kind of qualities needed to lead Microsoft. On another level it's a bit of a sales pitch, trying to convince the world that a new Microsoft is here. And for employees it seems like it's written to convince them of the culture which can sometimes be seen as corporate kool aid. I didn't enjoy the parts about his life as it didn't seem like he really wanted to tell the reader about it. The Microsoft politics and executive decisions are really interesting but again, it's very superficial, only mentioning negativity whenever it's something that posterity would agree with Nadella's view (as in the Nokia acquisition perhaps wasn't the best idea). The part I really liked was the forward-looking chapters. This is where Nadella is at his most lucid. In fact, writing an entire book about that would probably have been better than this book.

I would recommend reading the last 4 four chapters and treating it like a really long read on Nadella's vision and thoughts about the future. For Nadella's life and career at Microsoft, hopefully he'll get down to really

writing a tell-all biography when he at some point decides to retire.

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## Shaina Magat says

Really loved the first half of this book. Overall information was really good but it got a little too technical and regulation based in the back half.

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## Venky says

Mixed Reality, Artificial Intelligence and Quantum Computing. These are the three most passionate exhortations one finds in "Hit Refresh" by Satya Nadella, the CEO of Microsoft. An autobiography subtly disguised as an expression of the current cultural ethos prevailing inside the world's largest tech behemoth, "Hit Refresh" is an alarmingly thought provoking book. Emphasising his reluctance in writing a memoir ("I'll save that for my dotage"), Satya Nadella briefly traces his origins and adolescence spent primarily in the South Indian City of Hyderabad. The son of an Economist father (a believer in Marxism) and a scholarly mother, Nadella - as is invariably the case with a teeming multitude of Indians - was strongly addicted to the thralls and throes of cricket. Representing his school as an off spin bowler, Nadella egregiously confesses his adoration for M.L.Jaisimha, a former Indian batsman known for his languid grace and flamboyance, both on and off the pitch.

The hustle and bustle of Hyderabad makes way for the serene environs of Redmond as Nadella leaves India at the age of twenty to chart his destiny in the United States of America. A move to Microsoft exposes him to the turbulence and tumult of the advancements in technology and he soon becomes absorbed, assimilated and seeped into the cauldron of innovation. "Hit Refresh" lends itself to impression at various levels. Citing his own personal experience, Nadella elucidates how technology can play a pivotal role in improving the quality of life. Zain, his first born was an unwilling victim of a complication at birth, which led to him suffering from Cerebral Palsy. However, exponential leaps in technology has ensured that even when wheelchair bound, Zain enjoys a quality of life that is refreshing, cheery and almost happily bespoke.

Nadella expresses his beliefs, vision and hopes in an ingenious fashion by taking recourse to self devised equations. For e.g.

$(\text{Education} + \text{Innovation}) * \text{Intensity of Tech Use} = \text{Economic Growth};$

$E + SV + SR = T/t$  which translates to Empathy + Shared Values + Safety and Reliability = Trust over time.

But the racy part of the book is reserved for what seems to be Nadella's three pet peeves - Mixed Reality; Artificial Intelligence and Quantum Computing. Conjuring heady possibilities if these three concepts that could have a profound influence on mankind in the future, Nadella left me reeling with exultation and fear! We are at a crossroad where paradigm shifts in technology assumes moralistic, ethical, social, scientific and cultural challenges that determine our very existence. Nadella without shying away from the hard and harsh facts pulls all punches to reassure us that when computer learning equals or even transcends human learning, we will come face to face with euphoria rather than calamity. He makes his point by choosing as his accomplices an eclectic mix of books and movies. Notable examples being "Machines of Loving Grace" by John Markoff, Rod Sterling's "The Twilight Zone"; "Westworld" starring Yul Brenner and Disney's "Big Hero 6".

Quoting Goethe, Nadella writes "he who does not know foreign languages does not know anything about his

own". We can safely say that by reading "Hit Refresh", one can certainly know that mankind now knows that there is still a lot more left to know!

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### **Sanjay says**

Recommended for only Microsoft employees.

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### **Caroline Berg says**

Another reviewer says this is "Recommended for only Microsoft employees" but I disagree. This book isn't even for all Microsoft employees, for it leaves out a very large percentage us - the contractors. In fact, I wouldn't have read this book at all if my boss, who is a full-time employee and not a vendor contractor, hadn't picked up a number of these (the Employee Edition was given away on the Microsoft campus for free - but not to contractors) and dispersed them about the team so that everyone could read them.

I do not want to minimize the challenges Mr. Nadella faced and had the strength to write about in the book. He went through some tough times with an optimism that, quite frankly, I'm not sure I would have had in the same situations. That said, I believe it is very hard to change the culture of a corporation when a good number of its employees are treated like second-class citizens. And by no means is Microsoft the only tech company to do so; contractor culture is a problem at Amazon and Google and other tech giants within the industry.

The book mentions wonderful events like the Hackathon, but it is like reading about a feast we can only look at through a window. Contractors can't participate in the Hackathon. It's not that we don't have the coding chops, or lack ideas; it's that we literally do not have access to even sign up for the event. And I understand the reasons behind some of it - NDA agreements, possible access to secrets, leaks could occur. We aren't "real" employees of Microsoft, we just happen to work there doing full-time jobs without the full-time benefits... which only hurts more when all the blue badges go off for a week to create and share awesome prototypes while the rest of us do business as usual because we are still expected to hit our metrics.

To give credit where it is due, being a contractor at Microsoft has improved since 2015, but it still has a long way to go. It is admirable that Mr. Nadella is looking ahead to building economic growth around the world, but perhaps he should look a little closer to home.

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### **Vartika says**

A VERY long memo to Microsoft employees - I didn't get the sense that the book's purpose was anything more than explaining to the employees why Satya was a great CEO choice, how he is on top of knowing what will take Microsoft to the next level and how some of the initiatives he has taken since joining are all "first of its kind"/ "never heard of"/ "ones he has a knack for".

I also didn't like the tone of superiority and 'look I have growth mindset, but I will still go ahead and proclaim this will work and wow this is working' all along. A more humble, more vulnerable, more anecdotal, and more relevant to non MS folks narrative is what I kept missing all along this read..

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## **Bharath Ramakrishnan says**

This is a story about how Satya Nadella, CEO of Microsoft sought to change Microsoft's culture and rediscover it's soul. It makes for interesting reading, especially with his emphasis on empathy being the bedrock of his thinking – trying to move public perception of Microsoft being a big uncaring giant falling behind competitors like Apple, to a more forward-looking organisation which invests in research, it's people and it's culture.

The culture change which Satya talks about does come across as real and significant especially if you have a close view of the industry. He talks of his learnings of empathy from his personal life (with a child with special needs) and the progression of his thoughts and plans for Microsoft. While the theme of empathy seems to repeat too often through the pages, it is certainly an important one – especially for large organisations.

The other theme is one of a collaborative ecosystem – working together with competitors where necessary. The discussion around privacy in the later part of the book (where Microsoft stood on the same side as Apple) makes for interesting reading. And there is the episode he describes where he walks onto the stage at an event holding an iPhone (he does soften the blow by saying most of the applications on the phone were from Microsoft!). Microsoft's new approach to how it deals with it's competitors, is now seeing it develop more and more solutions which run on iOS and Android.

I wish there was more material on how he sees Artificial Intelligence will pervade our personal lives and businesses. While there is a bit of that, it is mostly public knowledge. It would have also been good to read more about his earlier years in Microsoft.

Overall, a book I liked for it's simplicity and especially the values it emphasises.

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## **Frank says**

It is difficult capture how one speaks in one's writing. Satya, however, does exactly that; he has a distinct composure when he speaks in public; he does not rush over sentences, or become overtly enthusiastic with his facial expressions; he conveys his emotions through the eloquence of his speech to the way his eyes "light up" when he is talking about his passions.

If you've ever heard any of Satya's speeches, you can literally hear his voice while reading "Hit Refresh". He writes with the same literal elegance as he talks, and his composure is expressed through his philosophical take on what it means to build an institution that lasts, to create a culture of empathy, and to persevere through the hardest times.

A good leader draws not only from their own personal experience, but from the experiences of the greats who came before; Satya is standing on the shoulder of giants, from cricket players to German philosophers to Austrian poets to MIT professors. At the same time, he is a great expository writer, explaining the concepts

of Distributed Systems and Quantum Computing so clearly that anyone with a basic understanding of English can comprehend.

Lastly, Satya values empathy, and he makes an active effort to illustrate his point about empathy in leadership. One of his reasoning behind the new Microsoft mission statement is that Microsoft does not strive to be that "cool" company with brilliant people who are all geniuses, closed off from the world; rather, Microsoft wants to be the company that makes things to help other people make things and make things happen.

G.K Chesterton once said, "There is a great man who makes every man feel small. But the real great man is the man who makes every man feel great.". Satya is the real great man.

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## Pericles says

I'm a Microsoft employee, but this opinion is my own.

This book describes three topics, at a high level:

- Satya Nadella's career and personal life: from a student in India to becoming the CEO of Microsoft, and everything in between, including his personal challenges
- Microsoft's transformation under Satya's tenure
- Industry trends, policies, regulations and how tech companies should enable people to become more productive

Satya's story is encouraging. This is the true story of someone who is talented, works very hard and gets to the top of one of the most influential companies of our times. He explains how his parents influenced him and how his passion for cricket helped shape his leadership style. Then he elaborates on his move to the United States and how none of this could have happened in case his wife (who was his girlfriend back then) did not get a visa. In fact, Satya went as far as giving up his green card to make this happen. I learned a lot from his examples and felt encouraged to take on challenges if that is what my heart tells me I need to do.

On the Microsoft transformation, if you follow Microsoft (as an employee, enthusiast or any other role) it is super fun to see the internals on how the CEO search went from his point of view, and the inside stories on projects like HoloLens, Office for iOS, the quantum computer and others. Satya took a 180 degrees turn with the company focusing on a massive culture change that encourages us all to have more empathy, ask more questions and learn more (be a learn-it-all, not a know-it-all). He describes how partnerships with companies like Samsung, Adobe and Apple strengthened recently and gives the company a clear focus on three big technology trends: artificial intelligence, mixed reality and quantum computing.

The last part of the book focuses on regulations and how our laws need to be modernized in a digital world. He cites how Microsoft Chief Legal Officer, Brad Smith, describes that laws that were written when a simple "adding machine" was available. The same way technology evolved, our laws need to respond to that evolution and it makes no sense to apply centuries-old laws on our current reality. We all need to care about public safety and security, but writing backdoors into software is like giving authorities a master key to all safes ever built. Satya gives guidelines on what those policies should look like and where to start.

In summary, there's lots to learn from this book. I recommend it to anyone interested in the future of technology, in leadership, and to any Microsoft enthusiast.

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## Rajesh CNB says

For the first time in 2016 Microsoft offered a free upgrade to Windows 10. That was surprising to me as I had never seen Microsoft offer anything for free. But at that time I didn't pay much attention to the fact and happily upgraded to Windows 10 and encouraged others to do so as well. I checked out the new Internet Explorer and Bing for a month before I decided to switch back to Google Chrome and Google search. I now realize that unwittingly, I was a part of the Microsoft's new campaign and I am not sad I was.

What gripped me from the beginning of this book was the tone of honesty and integrity with which the transformation story of Microsoft was narrated. Satya Nadella is a candid writer and has a deep grasp of Microsoft and its history. He brings forth the challenges facing Microsoft when he took over as the CEO and in a totally uncharacteristic and 'unMicrosoft' way he picks out Culture as the starting point of change. The people angle he brings out has deep set roots in his brought up and his own personal experience as a father, a husband and a son and above all a human being. All the while one can see the humanitarian working in the foreground with a hint of the technologist at the back ground.

Don't mistake Satya as a humanist without a grasp on technology. As Satya outlines his personal challenges and how his specially abled Son was able to use Microsoft's technology to his advantage, you see how deeply Satya understand technology and its utility in human transformation. Later on when he outlines Microsoft's strategic plan, he focuses on those areas where Human Computer Interactions are bringing about transforamtion. Satya has his eyes set out on AI, ML and the Cloud and he has taken strides to propel Microsoft to take concrete steps in that direction. These chapters read like a technologists vision while the humanitarian always remains in the background.

From a managerial point of view, Satya, brilliantly outlines and weaves both his humane approach and his technological vision into a profitable business strategy that has propelled Microsoft into the frontlines in technology and is transforming it into a leader that it once was. In the process we discover some of the brilliant projects that weren't paid attention to earlier and the leading edge that Microsoft could get, if they begin using the same and weave into its strategic pattern.

Finally, Satya talks about building sustainable business by helping both Private and Public Sector enterprises and Governments. His discussion on Privacy is deep and some of his solutions truly are a balance between legal requirements and user privacy.

I am thrilled to know that Satya reads Science Fiction and there are many books we've read in common. Some of the ideas that he has enjoyed and thought possible were enjoyed by me too. It's a good book, although it gets into a skim read towards the end. Recommended for those who are interested to read business strategy, tech savvy enthusiasts and those who want to know where Microsoft is headed in the near future

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## Wen says

This read was entirely for work; I nevertheless decided to write a review for those thinking about picking up the book.

To me this book was the written form of an inspirational speech by Satya Nadella, the current CEO of Microsoft, who succeeded Steve Ballmer in 2014.

The book consisted three parts. Nadella first gave a brief description of his background: growing up in India, obsessed in cricket, studied EE in college and moved to the U.S. to obtain masters in CS, joined Microsoft shortly after graduation, traded his green card for H1-B visa to bring his Indian wife along, and that his first-



## Scott Lerch says

As a current Microsoft employee I now like Satya even more after reading his book: Hit Refresh. He comes across as more humble and thoughtful than any other current CEO in the tech sector, yet is just as driven and intelligent. I particularly like his mantra of having empathy for our customers and colleagues. Listen first and seek to understand before making any judgement, but be willing to challenge long held beliefs. Satya convinced me changing culture from the top-down and bottom-up is critical to Microsoft's future growth and success. Genius technical and strategic decisions from the top is not enough.

Anecdotes about Satya's severely disabled son, mother and wife's sacrifices, and employees with disabilities really illustrated Satya has learned the importance of empathy. I was particularly struck by one anecdote when he first interviewed at Microsoft. He was asked "Imagine you see a baby laying in the street, and the baby is crying. What do you do?". As a young engineer without children he answered the question exactly as I would have 10 years ago: "You call 911". I love the interviewer's response: "You need some empathy, man. If a baby is laying on the street crying, pick up the baby." This is a "yeah, duh!" moment where Satya started to learn the importance of empathy.

On the literary side of things the book wasn't quite as strong. Some of the themes felt forced as he bluntly repeated certain phrases over and over from chapter to chapter without much finesse. Obviously, I'll cut him some slack as writing books isn't his full-time job and he's an engineer at heart (or at least a cricket player).

His technical vision also worried me a bit due to lack of details and questionable insight when talking about the future of AI. I thought the three big bets of AI, mixed reality, and quantum were excellent choices but I would have liked more details. What the heck is "topological quantum computing"? It would have been nice to at least have some sort of high level overview or analogy instead of just throwing out a term I've never heard and say "Microsoft's doing this and it's going to be incredible, trust me!". I also thought his glossing over of the singularity was off when he described it as "the moment when computer intelligence will surpass human intelligence, [which] might occur by the year 2100". Um, almost all singularity proponents think it will almost certainly happen by 2100, the question is more will it happen by 2050. It then becomes a much more pressing issue, especially when it comes to jobs displacement which Satya covered extensively. Finally, this statement with no further explanation baffled me: "A worthy target for quantum will be advancing AI's ability to truly comprehend human speech and then accurately summarize it." I've never heard any credible AI researcher say quantum computing would be necessary, let alone useful, for doing such a task. As far as we know the human brain doesn't use quantum computing and we can do that task just fine.

Even with Satya's questionable understanding of what technological singularity proponents/alarmists like Ray Kurzweil, Elon Musk and Stephen Hawking are saying, I really like his paraphrasing of Alan Kay that he believed we should "Stop predicting what the future will be like; instead, create it in a principled way." That's the most important sentiment and I suspect as AI advances even faster than Satya realizes he'll quickly adapt with his growth mindset. That combined with his empathy and belief that "We can't do business effectively in 190 countries unless we prioritize the creation of great local economic opportunity in each of those countries", I think Microsoft and the world will be just fine. Satya is a great CEO and he makes me proud to work for Microsoft.

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