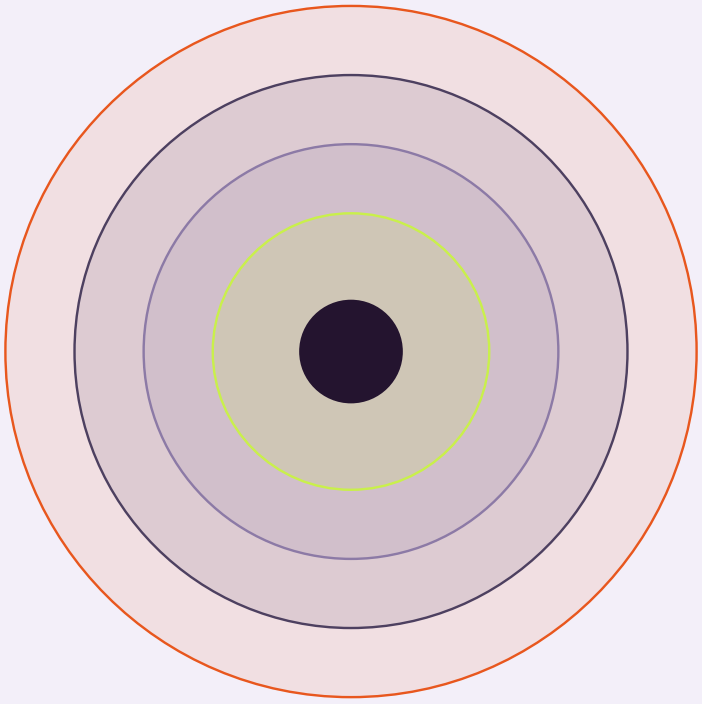


# Shoe Dog: A Memoir by the Creator of Nike

A reading of the book by Phil Knight (2016)

1. ACTION BOOK

CONTENTS

# Inside this edition


**The book in a minute** 3

**The takeaways** 4

**Your action book** 6

**Before you go** 7

PART TWO · THE ACTION BOOK

**The setup checklist** 9

**Log one small step every day** 10

**Answer the people who write to you** 11

**Check the books every Friday** 12


ABOUT THIS EDITION

This is HourLife's reading of Shoe Dog: A Memoir by the Creator of Nike, in our own words. It is not a substitute for the book.

BEFORE YOU START 01

# The book in a minute

Phil Knight is the co-founder of Nike, which began in 1964 as Blue Ribbon Sports, a partnership with his former University of Oregon track coach, Bill Bowerman. Shoe Dog is his memoir of the early years, told year by year from 1962, when he set off for Japan with what he calls his Crazy Idea, to the company going public in 1980. It is less a manual than a confession: a record of doubt, debt, luck and the people who kept the company alive. The problem that comes back every year is cash, because sales kept growing faster than the banks would lend. The stories include selling shoes from a car at track meets, long letters from the first employee, a sole made in a waffle iron, a bitter break with a Japanese supplier, and a trading company that stood by Blue Ribbon when the banks would not.

Below are the 9 ideas HourLife readers vote up most, each in our words with a note on what it asks of you, and then the steps that put them to work.

WHAT READERS KEEP

# The takeaways

1 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

### Nobody hands you permission for a crazy idea, so start before you feel ready.

Knight had no company when he sat down with Onitsuka in Japan in 1962. Asked whom he represented, he named Blue Ribbon on the spot. The company existed because he had already said it did, and he spent the next years making that true.

2 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

### Growth does not pay for itself. It eats cash first.

Blue Ribbon sold nearly everything it ordered and was still always broke, because each bigger order had to be paid for before the shoes sold. Its banks kept telling Knight to slow down. A good year can cost more cash than a bad one, so plan for it.

3 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

### Choose partners who are strong exactly where you are weak.

Bowerman brought what Knight lacked: a coach's eye and an inventor's itch. He took shoes apart, rebuilt them and tried them on his runners. Knight sold, kept the books and found the money. Neither could have built the company alone.

4 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

### A believer who writes too much is worth more than a polished hire who says nothing.

Jeff Johnson, the first full-time employee, sent Knight letter after letter full of customer notes, ideas and complaints, and Knight rarely wrote back. Johnson kept selling and building anyway. He is also the one who came up with the name Nike.

5 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

### Good ideas often start as tinkering at home, not as a plan.

The waffle sole began in Bowerman's kitchen, when he poured rubber into a waffle iron looking for a lighter sole with more grip. It was a mess before it was a product. Leave room in your week for odd experiments.

6 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

## A name or a mark does not need to feel perfect on the day you choose it.

The mark came from Carolyn Davidson, a student at Portland State, and Knight was not sure he liked it. The name Nike was picked against a deadline, from a short list nobody loved. Both earned their meaning through years of use, not through a perfect launch.

7 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

## If one supplier holds your whole business, build a second option before you need it.

Blue Ribbon depended on Onitsuka for every shoe it sold, and Onitsuka began looking at other distributors. Knight quietly lined up other factories and a brand of his own. When the break came in the early 1970s, the company had somewhere to go.

8 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

## Trust built in good years is credit you can draw on in bad ones.

When the banks pulled back, the Japanese trading company Nissho Iwai kept financing Blue Ribbon. That support rested on years of straight dealing between people, and it held when the numbers looked frightening.

9 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

## The finish line can feel smaller than the run that got you there.

The book does not end on a victory lap. Looking back, Knight dwells on the friends he lost and the time he did not spend with his sons as much as on the public offering. The people beside you on the run are the part worth keeping.

PUT IT TO WORK

# Your action book

Do the setup steps once, then keep the habits going. The setup changes your week; the habits keep it changed after the first good one.

The download puts this whole reading and a printable action book in one PDF: the setup checklist, then a page of real calendar days for each habit, starting on the day you choose.

SET UP ONCE

- [ ] Write your crazy idea in one paragraph
- [ ] Name your Bowerman
- [ ] Draw your cash line
- [ ] Find your second supplier
- [ ] Give the idea fixed hours beside the day job

KEEP UP DAILY

- ◯ Log one small step every day
- ◯ Answer the people who write to you
- ◯ Check the books every Friday

30 days · Nov 6 - Dec 5, 2026

Part two, after the reading, prints each of these as a page to fill in by hand.

THE LAST WORD

# Before you go

Pick one step from the action book and do it today. An idea from a book starts to count once it changes what one ordinary day looks like.

PART TWO

# The action book

Change the setup once, then keep it up. 5 setup actions to do once, and 3 habits to mark each day for 30 days.

Nov 6 - Dec 5, 2026

Print it, or write on it in any PDF app.

SET UP ONCE

# The setup checklist

Each of these is done once. Do one a day, and check it off when it is done.

- [ ] SETUP 1

## Write your crazy idea in one paragraph

Write what you want to build, why now and why you.

Keep it short enough to read aloud to a stranger in under a minute.

MY VERSION

DONE ON

- [ ] SETUP 2

## Name your Bowerman

Write down one person who knows the craft better than you do.

Send them a short note this week asking for an hour and one honest critique.

MY VERSION

DONE ON

- [ ] SETUP 3

## Draw your cash line

List money in and money out by week for the next two months.

Mark the week you would run short if things went twice as well as you expect.

MY VERSION

DONE ON

- [ ] SETUP 4

## Find your second supplier

Name the one tool, client, platform or supplier your project cannot live without.

Find one alternative and make first contact this week.

MY VERSION

DONE ON

- [ ] SETUP 5

## Give the idea fixed hours beside the day job

Knight kept paid work in accounting for years while Blue Ribbon grew.

Decide how many hours a week your idea gets and put them in your calendar.

MY VERSION

DONE ON

DAILY HABIT 1 OF 3

# Log one small step every day

Write down one concrete move toward the idea each day, however small.

Nov 6 - Dec 5, 2026 · 30 days · circle each day you do it

SMALLEST VERSION

CUE

WHERE

## November 2026

| MON | TUE | WED | THU | FRI | SAT | SUN |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | | 1 |
| 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 ○ | 7 ○ | 8 ○ |
| 9 ○ | 10 ○ | 11 ○ | 12 ○ | 13 ○ | 14 ○ | 15 ○ |
| 16 ○ | 17 ○ | 18 ○ | 19 ○ | 20 ○ | 21 ○ | 22 ○ |
| 23 ○ | 24 ○ | 25 ○ | 26 ○ | 27 ○ | 28 ○ | 29 ○ |
| 30 ○ | | | | | | |

## December 2026

| MON | TUE | WED | THU | FRI | SAT | SUN |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1 ○ | 2 ○ | 3 ○ | 4 ○ | 5 ○ | 6 |
| 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 |
| 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 |
| 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 |
| 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 | | | |

EACH FRIDAY

WHAT HELPED

WHAT GOT IN THE WAY

ONE CHANGE TO THE SETUP

DAILY HABIT 2 OF 3

# Answer the people who write to you

When someone on your side sends ideas or questions, reply within a week.

Nov 6 - Dec 5, 2026 · 30 days · circle each day you do it

SMALLEST VERSION

CUE

WHERE

## November 2026

| MON | TUE | WED | THU | FRI | SAT | SUN |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | | 1 |
| 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 ○ | 7 ○ | 8 ○ |
| 9 ○ | 10 ○ | 11 ○ | 12 ○ | 13 ○ | 14 ○ | 15 ○ |
| 16 ○ | 17 ○ | 18 ○ | 19 ○ | 20 ○ | 21 ○ | 22 ○ |
| 23 ○ | 24 ○ | 25 ○ | 26 ○ | 27 ○ | 28 ○ | 29 ○ |
| 30 ○ | | | | | | |

## December 2026

| MON | TUE | WED | THU | FRI | SAT | SUN |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1 ○ | 2 ○ | 3 ○ | 4 ○ | 5 ○ | 6 |
| 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 |
| 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 |
| 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 |
| 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 | | | |

EACH FRIDAY

WHAT HELPED

WHAT GOT IN THE WAY

ONE CHANGE TO THE SETUP

DAILY HABIT 3 OF 3

# Check the books every Friday

Spend twenty minutes on cash in, cash out and what you owe.

Nov 6 - Dec 5, 2026 · 30 days · circle each day you do it

SMALLEST VERSION

CUE

WHERE

## November 2026

| MON | TUE | WED | THU | FRI | SAT | SUN |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | | 1 |
| 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 ○ | 7 ○ | 8 ○ |
| 9 ○ | 10 ○ | 11 ○ | 12 ○ | 13 ○ | 14 ○ | 15 ○ |
| 16 ○ | 17 ○ | 18 ○ | 19 ○ | 20 ○ | 21 ○ | 22 ○ |
| 23 ○ | 24 ○ | 25 ○ | 26 ○ | 27 ○ | 28 ○ | 29 ○ |
| 30 ○ | | | | | | |

## December 2026

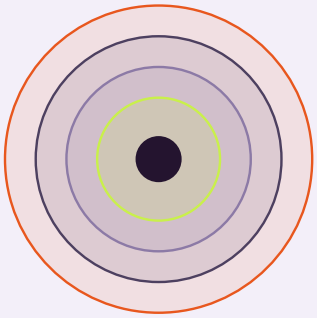
| MON | TUE | WED | THU | FRI | SAT | SUN |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1 ○ | 2 ○ | 3 ○ | 4 ○ | 5 ○ | 6 |
| 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 |
| 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 |
| 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 |
| 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 | | | |

EACH FRIDAY

WHAT HELPED

WHAT GOT IN THE WAY

ONE CHANGE TO THE SETUP



# A crazy idea survives on small steps, honest partners and enough cash to reach next week.

HOURLIFE NOTE AFTER PHIL KNIGHT