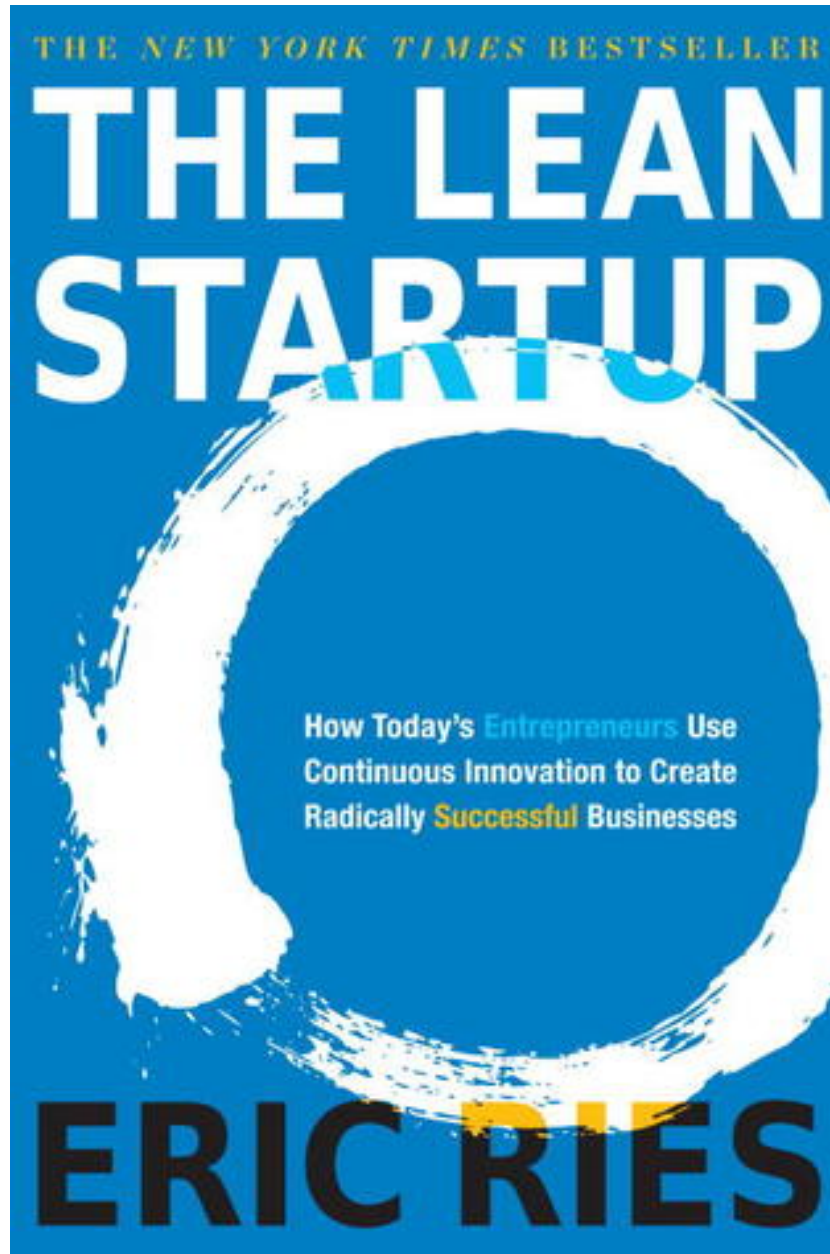


# The Lean Startup: How Today's Entrepreneurs Use Continuous Innovation to Create Radically Successful Businesses Book PDF Download



By:  
Eric Ries

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### Herve

After reading Clayton Christensen, Geoffrey Moore and Steve Blank, I was expecting a lot from The Lean Startup by Eric Ries. I was disappointed. It could be that I did not read it well or too fast, but I was expecting much more. But instead of saying what I did not like, let me begin with the good points. Just like the previous three authors, Ries shows that innovation may be totally counterintuitive: "My cofounders and I are determined to make new mistakes. We do everything wrong. We build a mi

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This is the Build-Measure-Learn process. He goes on by explaining why start-ups fail:

- 1- The first problem is the allure of a good plan. "Planning and forecasting are only accurate when based on a long, stable operating history and a relatively static environment. Startups have neither."
- 2- The second problem is the "Just-do-it". "This school believes that chaos is the answer. This does not work either. A startup must be managed".

The main and most convincing lesson from Ries is that because start-ups face a lot of uncertainty, they should test, experiment, learn from the right or wrong hypotheses as early and as often as possible. They should use actionable metrics, split-test experiments, innovation accounting. He is also a big fan of Toyota lean manufacturing.

I loved his borrowing of Komisar's Analogs and Antilogs. For the iPod, the Sony Walkman was an Analog ("people listen to music in a public place using earphones") and Napster was an Antilog ("although people were willing to download music, they were not willing to pay for it"). [Page 83] Ries further develops the MVP, Minimum Viable Product: "it is not the smallest product imaginable, but

the fastest way to get through the Build-Measure-Learn feedback loop." Apple's original iPhone, Google's first search engine, or even Dropbox Video Demo were such MVPs. More on Techcrunch [page 97]. He adds that MVP does not go without risks, including legal issues, competition, branding and morale of the team. He has a good point about intellectual property [page 110]: "In my opinion, [...the] current patent law inhibits innovation and should be remedied as a matter of public policy."

So why did I feel some frustration? There is probably the feeling Ries gives that his method is a science. [Page 3]: "Startup success can be engineered by following the right process, which means it can be learned, which means it can be taught." [Page 148]: "Because of the scientific methodology that underlies the Lean Startup, there is often a misconception that it offers a rigid clinical formula for making pivot or persevere decisions. There is no way to remove the human element - vision, intuition, judgment - from the practice of entrepreneurship, nor that would be desirable". I was probably expecting more recipes, as the ones Blank gives in The Four Steps to the Epiphany. So? Art or science? Ries explains on page 161 that pivot requires courage. "First, Vanity Metrics can allow to form false conclusions. [...] Second, an unclear hypothesis makes it impossible to experience complete failure, [...] Third, many entrepreneurs are afraid. Acknowledging failure can lead to dangerously low morale." A few pages before (page 154), he writes that "failure is a prerequisite to learning". Ries describes a systematic method, I am not sure it is a science, not even a process. Indeed, in his concluding chapter, as if he wanted to mitigate his previous arguments, he tends to agree: "the real goal of innovation: to learn that which is currently unknown" [page 275]. "Throughout our celebration of the Lean Startup movement, a note of caution is essential. We cannot afford to have our success breed a new pseudoscience around pivots, MVPs, and the like" [page 279]. This in no way diminishes the traditional entrepreneurial virtues; the primacy of vision, the willingness to take bold risks, and the courage required in the face of overwhelming odds" [page 278].

Let me mention here a video from Komisar. Together with Moore and Blank, he is among the ones who advise reading Ries' book. I am less convinced than them about the necessity to read this book. I have now more questions than answers, but this may be a good sign! I have been more frustrated than enlightened by the anecdotes he gives or his use of the Toyota strategy. In an interview given to the Stanford Venture Technology program, Komisar talks about how to teach entrepreneurship. Listen to him!

To be fair, Eric Ries is helping a lot the entrepreneurship movement. I just discovered a new set of videos he is a part of, thanks to SpinkleLab. Fred Destin had also a great post on his blog about the Lean Startup and you should probably read it too to build your own opinion. Lean is hard and (generally) good for you. Fred summarizes Lean this way and he is right: "In the real world, most companies do too much development and spend too much money too early (usually to hit some pre-defined plan that is nothing more than a fantasy and / or is not where they need to go to succeed) and find themselves with an impossible task of raising money at uprounds around Series B. So founders get screwed and everyone ends up with a bad taste in their mouth. That's fundamentally why early stage capital efficiency should matter to you, and why you should at least

understand lean concepts."

## Andy Stager

I'm currently starting a new church as well as helping my wife run a bow tie business. This book is about entrepreneurship, and its examples mostly come from the software development industry. Nevertheless, there was much food for thought here.

Takeaways:

1. Put out a 'MVP'. As fast as possible, put out a 'minimum viable product' and see if anyone is willing to buy it. If you spend forever making the product the best it could possibly be, you may end up with a cool product that no one actually wa

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Takeaways:

1. Put out a 'MVP'. As fast as possible, put out a 'minimum viable product' and see if anyone is willing to buy it. If you spend forever making the product the best it could possibly be, you may end up with a cool product that no one actually wants or is willing to pay for. Throw the product out there, then improve it bit by bit. We accidentally did this with our bow tie biz, and are intentionally doing it with the church.

2. Avoid 'vanity metrics.' Anyone can generate hype and a short-lived interest in just about any product. Real, sustainable success is driven not by hype but by discovering something that people actually want or need, offering it to them, and then continually innovating the product based on a greater understanding of what people want/need. We're trying to do this in both the bow tie biz and with the church: word-of-mouth viral marketing and social media are about the only way we've drawn people to either 'product'. The growth is slower and steadier, but, we hope, more sustainable than using a flash marketing stunt that might give us a lot of temporary excitement.

3. Be lean. Learn from Toyota's manufacturing and respond quickly to customer feedback to provide monthly, weekly, or even daily iterations of your product. Again: don't build it and expect people to come---especially if you're only going to build once a year. Constantly iterate. We're doing consistent minor tweaks with the church and the bow biz rather than working hard at one "big launch". In fact, we're avoiding the notion of a "launch" altogether in the church plant. We're not astronauts, and we

don't need rocket boosters. Momentum can come in other ways than going from land to space in 5 minutes.

## Stephanie Sun

I wasn't too surprised to find that Eric Ries is a great writer: clear, intellectually honest, articulate, and good-humored.

As Ries readily admits in the Epilogue, the theories and frameworks promoted in this book have the danger of being used retroactively to justify what you did in the past, or what you've already decided that you want to do, no matter your industry. Its success no doubt has to do with its

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self-help vibe.

What's most important in this book is not the snappily named tools (MVP, Concierge, pivot, Build-Measure-Learn) but Ries's less sexy advice, like:

Copy, paste, print these lines out, stick them on every wall of your startup: even the bathroom's.

## Adam Bradley

I think this book could have been effectively distilled into one of about a fifth the length -- and provided me with a much faster feedback loop on the ideas it contained. So consider that an example of the author not abiding by his own principles.

Another example of the book not abiding by its own counsel: in recounting case studies, he assures us that the case studies are "successful" by telling us about venture funding and acquisition offers, which seem to me to be examples of the ultimate "va

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Another example of the book not abiding by its own counsel: in recounting case studies, he assures us that the case studies are "successful" by telling us about venture funding and acquisition offers, which seem to me to be examples of the ultimate "vanity metrics" (getting speculators to bet on you is not synonymous with success).

The basic insights of the book are valuable, but they are described with only enough detail for the reader to make a few false starts at applying them, recognize their failures retroactively but probably not predictively (a "vanity metric" is one which, by definition, causes you to make the wrong decision -- but you don't know it's the wrong decision when you choose which metrics to ignore), and probably go one to hire a consultant who can help you actually fill in the blanks of how to apply the concept to your particular business.

## Rick

This is a massively important book that turned out to be much harder to read than I expected, and left me still pretty confused about how to implement much of the advice in the book. But I like what it did to my thinking, even though I was familiar with many of the concepts in the book already.



But boy, I sure do like Five Whys. I am so ready to have kids.

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"Our productive capacity greatly exceeds our ability to know what to build."