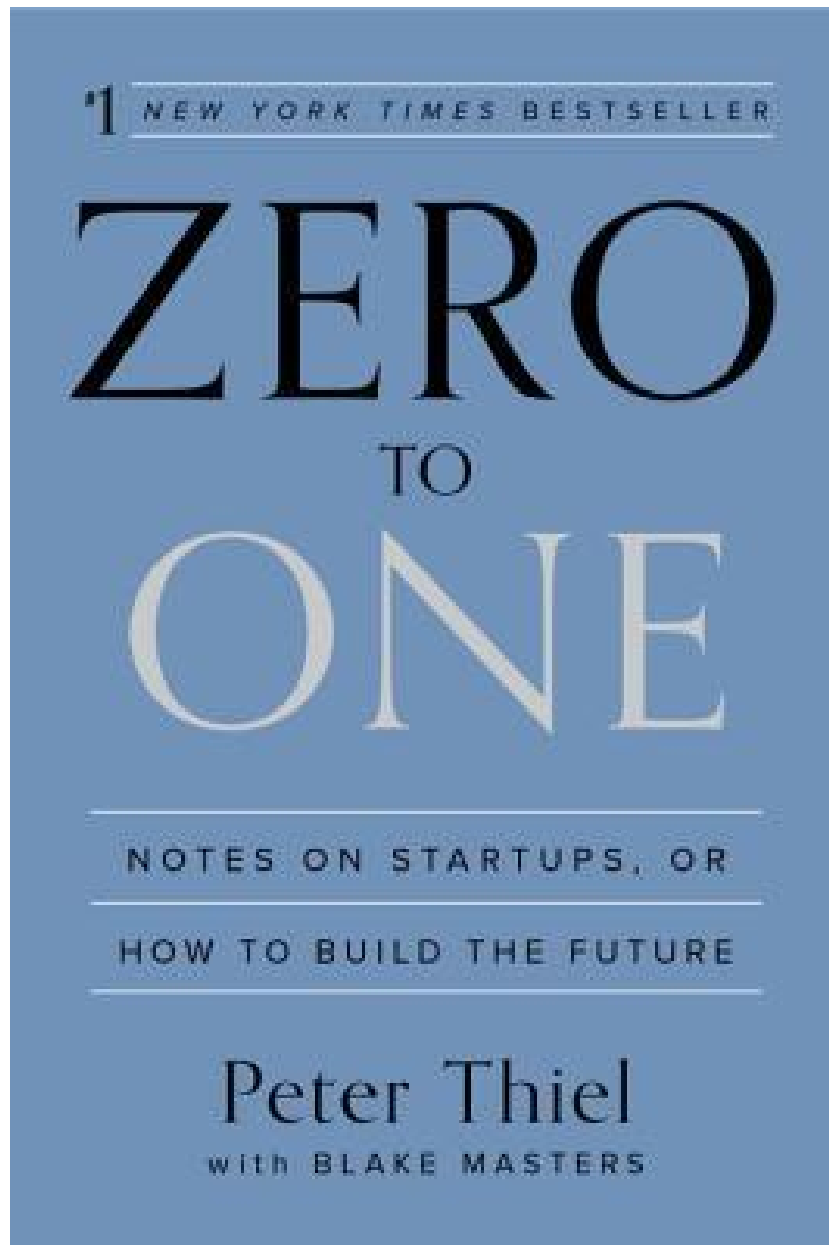


Zero to One: Notes on Startups, or How to Build the Future Book PDF Download



By:
Peter Thiel

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What people Say:

Andrew Garvin

Having worked with Peter - and the PayPal mafia more generally - for almost 10 years now, I have a unique perspective on Zero to One. Indeed, a lot of the ideas contained within are familiar to me. The launching point for the book is Peter's stock interview question - a question I still remember being asked 8 years ago.

'What is something you think is true, but that most people disagree with you on?'

My answer at the time (2006) was: 'There is a bubble in housing.' Of course, that was cheating, si

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'What is something you think is true, but that most people disagree with you on?'

My answer at the time (2006) was: 'There is a bubble in housing.' Of course, that was cheating, since I knew this was a pet idea of Peter's. Not surprisingly, he asked if I had another answer. I didn't, but I extemp-ed some bs about how FDI in Iraq was a good idea. Luckily I was strong enough in other ways to make it through.

His breakdown of this question and why it's so difficult to answer is incisive and in itself reveals a truth that is lying in plain sight. Very few ideas are both contrarian and correct. And, yet, finding that combination is critical to successful investing, entrepreneurship, or even career development.

The book moves at a quick, clear pace with examples generously distributed throughout. Even the Bible quotes (and nerd Bible quotes - i.e. Lord of the Rings) feel natural or at least refreshing. Moreover, as Peter is wont to do, there are several easter eggs or dog whistles in the text which hint at some of Peter's more unique ideas. Of course I am biased, but particularly in the 'business' category, Zero to One is a special and thought-provoking book. Highly recommended.

Jacek Ambroziak

I thoroughly enjoyed the book even if I have found myself in violent disagreement with many of its thoughts. The book opens up with these words.

I thoroughly enjoyed the book even if I have found myself in violent disagreement with many of its thoughts. The book opens up with these words.

Initially, I kind of liked this quote. It is indeed hard to imagine a new business to threaten the dominance of Google Search or Facebook's social network. But the fact that Google search dominates is not really a zero-to-one effect, but a decisive improvement over previously existing internet search engines. Facebook was not originally conceived of as a dominant social platform; it so happened that it turned out to be well liked by millions of people beyond the original community of Harvard students. In operating systems we already have Linux and Android (using Linux) which have way more deployments than Windows. So it is not the case that "every moment in business" happens only once, unless in a very literal sense.

Peter discusses "copying" with disdain, but not all "copying" is just copying, a lot of progress happens via semi-continuous improvements. This civilization does not only progress by one-off disruptive inventions. A lot of it is steady improvements. And these improvements occasionally lead to

zero-to-one (or dominating) developments.

Peter asks "What company is nobody building?" Like the previous quote, this question has some charm, but I think it too is misleading. Well, maybe nobody is building this "company X" yet, because it is not yet

. Eg. voice over internet existed in the lab (IBM?) since mid 70's, but Skype made sense only much later when lots of people got access to personal computers and these computers started being connected to the Net all the time.

Bottom line: it is not all "zero to one", nor it can be or should be.

I still give the book 5 stars as I enjoyed its thought provoking character; it was an engaging reading: disagreeing, agreeing, learning new perspectives. Highly recommended but please don't treat it as Gospel :-)

Nick

The first book since Antifragile that had me hooked beginning to end. The definite/ indefinite paradigm had me thinking long after the book was finished. Fantastic.

Ch. 1 The challenge of the the future

The first chapter is an introductory piece on the creation of new value (going from nothing to something) thus zero to one as opposed to logarithmic and or incremental changes one to n.

- He argues that spreading old ways to create wealth around the world will only further globalize the world into

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The first chapter is an introductory piece on the creation of new value (going from nothing to something) thus zero to one as opposed to logarithmic and or incremental changes one to n.

- He argues that spreading old ways to create wealth around the world will only further globalize the world into sameness. This sameness means a universal current state. The downside to this is that everyone will now have a North American live style which requires a lot more energy and competition for the same resources. Thiel calls for a pursuit of new growth not a desire to spread the sameness around.

- He argues that old technologies still pervade our society and that new technologies will and should come from startups because large scale bureaucracies move slowly and entrenched interests in these organizations shy away from risk. In a lot of organizations signaling that your work is completed is more important than the work itself.

Ch. 2

Yevgeniy Brikman

This book fluctuates between brilliance and madness. When it focuses on the mechanics of start ups, it's great. When it focuses on Thiel's philosophies, it's a bit whacky. Thiel enjoys being a contrarian too much. Doing something new and valuable may require being a contrarian, but just being contrarian doesn't mean your ideas are new and valuable. Worth reading if you're interested in startups, but be prepared to skim and shake your head.

Pros:

- * Great chapters on how to build a monopoly, approach

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Pros:

- * Great chapters on how to build a monopoly, approach markets, luck, hiring, culture, and sales.
- * lots of contrarian views that will force you to reconsider your own ideas
- * Interesting outlook on the future of technology and humanity
- * Clear writing

Cons:

Sindy Li

I heard about this book when it came out and thought that there was no way I would read a book on startups. Not that I don't see great things coming out of some startups, but I am not the only one who has developed a fatigue of the many random startups founded by fellow Silicon Valley dwellers who are engineers, MBAs, or a little bit of both, and of the many other Valley dwellers who claim they want to do a startup without knowing what it will be about!

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After my dad bought a copy in Taipei I decided to take a look. I ended up enjoying it much more than I expected. This is a book of solid, sensible advice on startups, coming from economic principles and common sense. (I have no experience and little knowledge of startups, so I am

merely speaking from an economist's perspective.) I wouldn't generalize Thiel's wisdom to fields outside of startups (just like the case with Paul Graham) -- indeed he made some claims that were not well thought out -- but the main points of the book were valuable. I would recommend it especially to those currently or thinking of working in a startup, and hopefully this will lead to less and on average better startups being founded.

Below are a few ideas I liked from the book. They are not necessarily original but are pretty good. Note that I read the Chinese version and translated the phrases back into English so they are probably different from the book.

Chapter 1: The difference between horizontal progress/globalization and vertical progress/technological innovation. The latter is needed to solve problems challenging our future. (However the former is not trivial!)

Chapter 3: Innovation and unique technology that the market demands give you profitable monopoly power. Usually economists talk about some extent of monopoly power (e.g. patents) encourages innovation, but Thiel was looking at it from another perspective: that of an entrepreneur choosing which type of business to start. His answer is to choose one that makes differentiated products (that the market demands) and gives you monopoly power.

Chapter 4: Again, competition vs. monopoly. Traditional businesses provide similar products and compete by cutting prices/costs, advertising etc.; innovative businesses make products that no one else makes.

Chapter 5: What are the features of a business that can create and sustain monopoly power, growth and cash flow? 1. Unique technology (at least 10 times better than the existing alternative--otherwise it won't be noticed--or entirely new products). 2. Network externality. 3. Economies of scale. 4. Brand. How to create one? Start by monopolizing a small market (that needs to actually exist, unlike the market of British food in Palo Alto) through winning the most important group of users in this market, then expand in size or variety (i.e. into related markets). Don't focus on DISRUPTION; make the pie bigger instead of playing a zero sum game.

Chapter 6: Have a purpose, a vision and long-run planning, instead of a lean startup and minimum viable product to be driven by whatever comes up on the way. This idea is related to the one on an "authoritarian" business presented in the last chapter. (The philosophical discussion in this chapter is not particularly great.)