



Unscalable

Charlie Guo

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In *Unscalable*, startup founder and software engineer Charlie Guo uncovers the lesser-known backstories of failure and success in interviews with some of the most daring founders in Silicon Valley. While much is made of the mythology of brilliant leadership and overnight success stories, these interviews pull back the veil on a much more eclectic mix of strategies and experiments, revealing the longer and less predictable road to success in Silicon Valley.

Guo gives us a look at the edgier moments behind the glamor of the tech boom. To the question Will it scale? this book suggests that more often than not, the answer may be No! especially as fledgling ideas try to shape-shift their way into actual products and companies. Some of those new entities will themselves spawn new startups, while some will fade into oblivion. From vacuuming out hundreds of cars in a green vest to learning that Britney Spears was their newest account, founders share the peaks and valleys that have made startups one of the most riveting stories of the century."

Unscalable Details

Date : Published January 19th 2016 by Inkshares

ISBN : 9781941758557

Author : Charlie Guo

Format : Paperback 160 pages

Genre : Nonfiction, Business, Entrepreneurship

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From Reader Review Unscalable for online ebook

Rob says

So much that is written about startups and founding companies is platitudes and theory. This book is filled with real stories of the not-sexy hustle of the early days of startups. As a founder myself, I haven't read anything else close to as good at illustrating the types of weird, manual things you have to do to get things off the ground.

I started this book skeptical that it was going to be any good, mainly because the title felt a little too close to Silicon-Valley-echo-chamber language.

I was completely wrong. The format is that Guo interviews founders of successful and unsuccessful startups about the unscalable things founders did in the early days of their startups to get things off the ground.

Highly recommended to anyone in tech.

Kathy Heare Watts says

I won a copy of this book during a Goodreads giveaway. I am under no obligation to leave a review or rating and do so voluntarily. I am paying it forward by passing this book along to a business organization that offers business skills, hope, and dreams to be used in their ministry.

Katy Stalcup says

I enjoyed this quick read that gave some real-world stories about the tough early stages of founding a startup. The best parts were the third-person summaries of the companies at the beginning of each chapter, and I wish there had been more of that. The other 90% of the book is in what I would consider "lightly-edited" interview format (e.g. "So we would have, I don't know, let's say incorporation - I can't remember what our actual services were, but we'd have an incorporation service - and we'd set the price"). On pages 1-2, I thought, I can't read like this, the colloquial format will drive me crazy. By page 5, I didn't even notice.

The stories of each startup are interesting, but come to a common theme: if you do "unscalable" things and do them well, you'll eventually find a way to scale them. And also, always start with the customer.

Stephen says

Quite a number of the interview responses were not particularly insightful and most of the case studies were boring as hell to read. If you're curious about startups and their journeys, I would recommended checking out the StartUp podcast by Gimlet Media instead.

Sean Byrnes says

A quick read, its just a series of interviews of startup Founders. The lessons are interesting, but most of the companies have not yet become successful so it is hard to know if their lessons are ones to follow. It would have been better to hear from more successful companies outside of Y Combinator. Still, a useful read.

Liz says

I won a copy of this book in a Goodreads giveaway.

This book is a collection of interviews with the founders/CEOs of 15 small recently created start up companies. Each of the short chapter begins a brief synopsis of the company and its inception and then follows with a short interview . That interview describes the founding process and successes, failures and challenges it encountered. Most chapters contain some significant 'lessons learned'. Many of these companies I was unfamiliar with but I did find the discussions interesting. I am not planning on my own startup but, if I were, I would be sure to read this book since I think there is much to take away from the examples presented. All in all, a quick and enjoyable read. Now we need a followup that tells us where these companies are in a few years and what else they have learned.

Jacek Tomaszewski says

A lot of good case studies and exact stories how were they 'scaled'. Book is full of real useful advices, instead of general quotes like "Thing big" or something like that. I'd recommend to anyone that wants to run a business.

Rupa Obulreddigari says

A great consolidation of startups that scaled from the perceived unsalable ideas

It is a must read for those entrepreneurs looking for direction on evaluating ideas for startups - to think in terms of the problem and quality of the solution as opposed to the scalability of the solution from the get go. It disproves with concrete examples, the perception that solutions ought to be scalable to succeed.
