

# Zero To One Summary

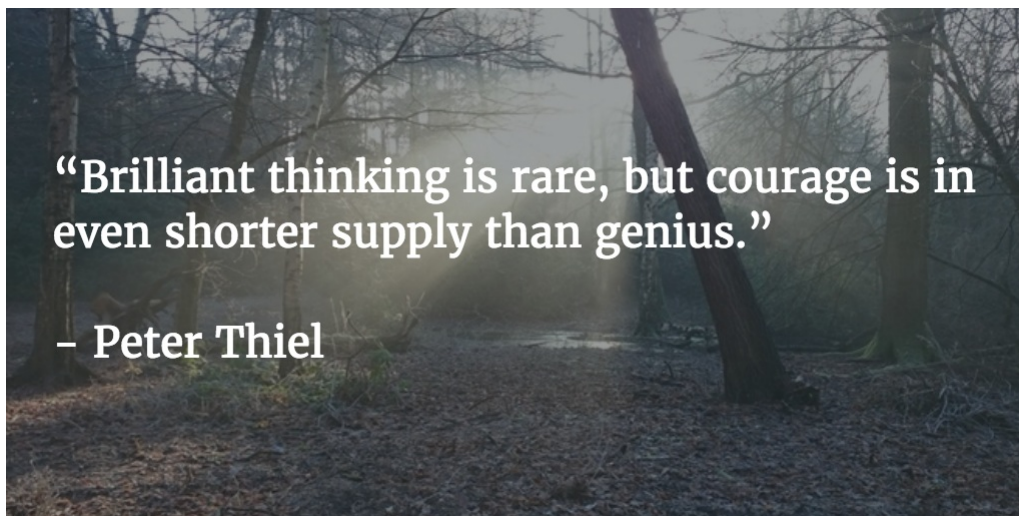
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 [fourminutebooks.com/zero-to-one-summary/](https://fourminutebooks.com/zero-to-one-summary/)

**1-Sentence-Summary:** *Zero To One* is an inside look at Peter Thiel's philosophy and strategy for making your startup a success by looking at the lessons he learned from founding and selling PayPal, investing in Facebook and becoming a billionaire in the process.

**Read in:** 4 minutes

**Favorite quote from the author:**



There are books that give you great strategies for selling, marketing and planning your business. And then there are books that tell you to forget about all of that, so you can take an approach that's so radically different, that you won't even play in the same league as the readers of those other books.

This is one of those books. Peter Thiel is an anomaly, to say the least. A chess master under age 21, a doctorate in law by age 25, and a company sale for \$1.5 billion at age 35.

Zero To One will teach you the way he thinks, how he approaches business, and what you can do to build your startup's own future and shape the future of the world in the process.

Here are my 3 lessons from the book:

1. The biggest leaps in progress are vertical, not horizontal.
2. Monopolies are good, for both business and society.
3. Founders need a vision to take their business from zero to one.

Let's see how the future is made!

## Lesson 1: The biggest leaps in progress are vertical, not horizontal.

Can you imagine what the year 2200 will look like? It's hard, isn't it? That's because you

know the world is making tremendous progress every year, but it's almost impossible to know what that will look like.

But not all progress is created equal. Most of the progress we see on a day-to-day basis is horizontal. **This kind of progress spreads existing ideas and technologies from one to many or 1 to n.** An example would be Apple making the computer personal – with the Apple II it finally became affordable for the masses to own one.

**Vertical progress is what it takes to go from zero to one and create the technology or idea in the first place.** Apple did this too when they came up with the iPhone in 2007 and changed the way we see and use phones altogether.

If you want to create a startup that'll not only improve but drastically change the world, you have to go from zero to one, not one to many. You can only do that by critically questioning a lot of the assumptions you hold about the present.

Can people live on the moon? Is a world without cars possible? Will we be able to fully live off renewable energies?

These are the kinds of questions you should concern yourself with if you want to play (and win) big.

## Lesson 2: Monopolies aren't bad. They're good. For business, and society.

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How often have you complained about something not working the way you want it on a Windows computer? Don't tell me, I've been a Microsoft user, I know. With 75% of the market running on Windows, they're pretty much a monopoly – but is that really a bad thing?

No! Peter Thiel says that a monopoly simply means **one company is doing something so much better than everyone else, that simply no one else can survive.** This is actually good for everyone.

Think about Google. You love to use Google, because you know it's the best search engine out there. Google loves setting its own prices and reaping 25% of their revenue as profit, so it can make its service even better.

And society should love it, because if ever someone came along and did beat Google, it would mean their search engine would probably have to be pretty spankin' fantastic! Monopolies are nothing to scoff at – they're actually what any business or startup should shoot for.

## Lesson 3: If the founders don't have a vision, a company can never go from zero to one.

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But building a monopoly surely doesn't happen over night. Thiel and a 50 person Paypal team spent years getting it to a place where it was the number one payment processor used by ebay customers, so they could finally leverage their monopoly position into selling

the company.

Where did they find the motivation to stick with it? One word: **vision**.

When you look at founders of successful companies, you'll find 90% of them are, in a way, weirdos. Steve Jobs is only the most prominent example, but actually plenty of entrepreneurs have a few quirks – and that's good.

**Being a little weird is what lets leaders develop a grand, if slightly delusional, vision for the future, which is exactly what companies need to go from zero to one.**

Way back in 1999 Thiel said: "PayPal will give citizens worldwide more direct control over their currencies than they ever had before." A mouthful? Sure! But he was right. His vision of the future showed an entirely different reality than the one he lived in, and the drive it instilled in himself and his team is exactly what led them to creating the very future they imagined.

So think big. As they say: "Shoot for the moon. Even if you miss it, you'll be among the stars."

## My personal take-aways

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I always wonder what the best approach to success is. Do you start small, build something, then make it a little bigger next time, and iterate year after year, until you have something big? Or do you go straight for the top?

It seems like if you develop the mindset for the latter, you'll end up playing in an entirely different league right from the start. A radical and eye-opening book, let the summary hook you and the book then convince you. Should you have even the slightest entrepreneurial inclination, then it's time you learn how to go from Zero To One.

## What else can you learn from the blinks?

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- The big mistake CV optimizers make
- What the strategy is startups can use to actually become a monopoly
- How focus will make your business profitable, if you're willing to put in the years
- Why the people are what matters most in a startup, and which 3 things you should pay the most attention to when assembling your team
- What can lead your startup to fail, even if you have the most innovative product in the world

## Who would I recommend the Zero To One summary to?

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The 22 year old with a grand idea, but not much support from friends and family, the 48 year old CTO, with a focus on 1-to-n and anyone who studies economics.

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