

Chaos Monkeys Summary

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1-Sentence-Summary: *Chaos Monkeys is a fun behind-the-scenes look that lifts the veil on some of the weird, mysterious and sometimes questionable practices going on behind closed doors of mega startups in Silicon Valley.*

Read in: 4 minutes

Favorite quote from the author:



15 years ago, it sounded more like a fairy tale than a true story: 3-4 guys rent a house, sit on the living room floor with their laptops, work 24/7, eat nothing but pizza and drink Red Bull until they pass out, keep this up for a year and then suddenly swim in cash.

Nowadays this scenario seems very much within shot. So much in fact, that way more people go for it than actually should, because now every McKinsey consultant with a music app idea thinks he can be the next Mark Zuckerberg. When we're trying to find a cause for this startup mania, we usually quickly point to Silicon Valley, the Mecca of tech, startups and software companies.

Chaos Monkeys is an inside look at it. More so, it reveals some of the unspoken (and sometimes dirty) ongoing behind the scenes of startup giants like Facebook, Twitter and Google, all from firsthand experience. Antonio García Martínez's career path reads like a rollercoaster ride: he worked at Goldman during the financial crisis, a startup afterwards, founded his own, sold that to Twitter, but then went on to work at Facebook.

Here are my 3 favorite lessons from *Chaos Monkeys*, which show it's not all gloss and glamour down in the Valley:

1. Immigrants go as far as faking marriages to be able to move to San Francisco.
2. If you want to build your own company and make it, you have to be a little crazy.
3. Facebook's security team acts in the shadows – and for good reason!

Ready for a point-of-view report from one of Silicon Valley's most prominent "chaos monkeys?" Let's take a closer look!

Lesson 1: Startup employees sometimes enter fake marriages, just so they can move to SF for work.

Way back in Europe in the 18th century, people who hadn't won the ethnic and cultural lottery, for example by being born poor or with a certain racial background, had few options. There was no way for a peasant to become king, or for a Jew to just shed his religion, if Jews were being discriminated against in his country.

But once the first European settlers had made it to America, a new hope arose. People could try to flee their country, make the dangerous trip to the new world and start fresh. To do so, many happily entered gruesome deals, like serving as a slave for the master who'd take them across the big pond.

Fortunately, we're long past that. But as always, history repeats itself: H-1B visas, which are the type of visas non-immigrant foreign workers require in the US, are almost impossible to get. Only 8% of all 200,000 applicants trying to get one to work in Silicon Valley in 2013 received one. Even worse, if they're then fired or their startup fails, the visa expires, so they usually accept low salaries and bad working conditions. Plus, it takes five years before they can apply for a green card.

To avoid all this, **it's not all that rare that startup employees trying to move to San Francisco or the Valley enter fake marriages**, like one of the author's co-founders, Argyris. Since his long-time girlfriend was getting a PhD in the US, being her husband would qualify him for an F-2 student-spouse visa and allow him to stay in the US – so they married a bit earlier than they would have

Lesson 2: If you really want to build a company that makes it, there's no way you can't be crazy and obsessed.

The year Antonio spent as the CEO of AdGrok, his own startup providing software to optimize Google Ads, before they sold it to Twitter, was shaped by long work nights, dozens of tech events, giving up hobbies, books, movies, friends and basically living family life only via Skype.

In the end, , but it took a fair share of insanity to get there. The main word used to describe startup founders in this context (by both themselves and those close to them) is *obsessed*. Until they've made it, whatever that means to them, nothing else matters.

By the way, that's not just for startups. Even if you "just" want to build a normal business, **you have to be crazy enough to refuse to give up on it until it works.**

I see it with Four Minute Books. Most of my friends think I'm crazy. I don't buy stuff, I voluntarily get up early, I often work 10-12 hours a day to manage this and school and I work most weekends.

The thing about being crazy this way is: we don't mind. We're in for the long run, the big reward, the payoff we know will come – and we'd rather die trying than not go for it.

Lesson 3: Facebook's ninja security team acts in the dark, because it'd be scary to reveal the kind of stuff they take care of.

Working at Facebook's security team really must be a shitty job. You have to look at scams, violent status updates, and weird, pornographic content all day long, flag it and then remove it from the system. Even worse, you'll get zero credit for your work, because if you do it well, no one will ever know about it. Only if you screw up and something slips through the cracks can you expect to get flack.

To deal with this, **the security team has created an internal group called Scalps@Facebook, which lists all taken down photos and profiles**, so they can at least commend each other's work.

Apart from this group, keeping a closed lid on this line of work is probably a good idea: if people knew how many scammers and sex offenders hang around on Facebook, they'd probably stay away from the platform altogether – but again, this is just one of the many dirty secrets of Silicon Valley.

Chaos Monkeys Review

Of course, *Chaos Monkeys* is just one person's point of view, but it's a highly informative, fun, not-so-serious-yet-shockingly-accurate inside look at one of the most popular hot spots on earth. Good read!

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What else can you learn from the blinks?

- How Google ads work – and make the company billions on autopilot
- Why early startup investors always get disproportionately better deals
- How both Steve Jobs and Bill Gates played dirty in their early days
- Where Antonio learned to refuse to give up
- How Mark Zuckerberg rallied Facebook's team to crush Google Plus

Who would I recommend the Chaos Monkeys summary to?

The 22 year old college student, who's tempted to move to Silicon Valley and start a company, the 52 year old asset manager, who thinks about becoming an angel investor, and anyone who's ever reported someone on Facebook.