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Collaborative Reading notes

1 Introduction

This, for now, are my personal reading notes. I just finished the Innovators by Walter Isaacson, which has elicited a lot of excitement on my part. A few of the reasons for this are the following: it is a tale of wonderful systems built in a relatively short time. It is also a reminder that people are capable of great ideas and of building great things when they are in the right environment, and when they work with the right people for them. It's also a testimony to the power of government, industry, academia and **everyone else** both working together, and competing.

This reading, and the fact that I have a bunch of new books on my reading list thanks to Alice, has spurred me into starting this reading notes series. The idea is to keep short, bullet-point teachings from books I read, and posting them on Github. I hope this will allow for comments, add ons, and discussion of these points by other people. In typical blog fashion, I'll be writing about teachings for me personally, but in wiki fashion, I hope that I won't be the only one editing these documents. ull requests will allow to do this easily, and git will allow both moderating and history archiving. You can also just fork this repo to keep your own reading notes privately.

If you are reading this, please take a look at the repo. If you have read a book that's in here, feel free to add your personal comments. If you've recently read an exciting book, feel free to add a .tex file for that book with your comments.

Hope it helps and looking forward to your input.

PS: I really should be writing this in Markdown, but I don't know yet how to include different files so that README will include everything. I'll figure it out soon, promise.

Two ways to read and edit this document:

1. If you know LaTeX, you can just read the source files. It's mostly text anyway.
2. If you don't, I'll post a current version of the PDF on my personal webpage. On the other hand, edits will have to be made using LaTeX, so I guess you'll either have to learn the basics, or just edit inline using Github and the examples given by current reading notes. Have fun. :)

The only thing I impose is: one sentence per line. This allows for easy merging of edits. Thanks! If you have any doubts about this, just check current files.

2 Books on reading list

Tell us what books you're reading, and create reading communities. :)

- Habits by – GeoffNN
- Data Science for Python by David Taieb – GeoffNN
- The 3 body problem – GeoffNN
- Building data science systems using Python and Tensorflow – GeoffNN

3 The Innovators – Walter Isaacson

This book follows the great adventure of computing, networking, the Web and social media – Sidenote: funny how social networks became social media now – from the 1850s to 2014. Interestingly, there's little mention of Facebook and Twitter: the author didn't foresee opinion based truth.

Things to remember, and ideas they spark:

- Innovation comes from good teams. In a good team, often you need a visionary and a good product manager. Note for me (GeoffNN): I'm NOT a good product manager. Definitely a networker/team builder/connector. And rather good at starting projects and having ideas.
- Building stuff is important. Shipping it to the right crowd is even more important: they can help build/curate stuff and feedback is gold. Google is collaborative: the only input of the search engine is how to weight contributions (links) \implies PageRank. Seeing Google this way changes everything. Organizing other people's contributions in a meaningful and easy to understand way is more than gold.
- Hiring is important. Your company/unit's culture is the one of the people in it. You can't change it other than by changing the people (hiring and firing).
- Be ambitious. And focused. Be monomaniac for a few weeks to actually build a version that sort of works. Then build on that. Hire, get a community to help. Whatever.
- If going commercial, keep license of what you make. Don't sell exclusivity.
- People are important. Products are for people. Everything we make should help people, and people are never the issue: the user crowd is always right. Systems must be easy to use. Iterate. Get feedback. Stay open minded.

- Teams are important. Yours, but not only: help others you believe in build good teams. You can't hire everyone good that you know. Internship programs are amazing for this: they create networks of good people, and cross pollinates different institutions.
- Investing is important. In particular time: always collaborate. Hang out with smart people. You'll get ideas and motivation.
- Keep humanities in mind. We're augmenting intelligence. This should be for a good purpose. Caveat about the Defense industry: protecting soldiers giving their lives, and protecting people in general is a good goal (GeoffNN)
- Status now: good network of good people. Not enough building things that work because of lack of motivation and **focus**. Why? Usefulness. I'm a practical oriented person (despite what people say) well versed in theory.
- I like where I'm going these days. Towards more collaboration – always good in the long run. If people steal my ideas, it's only that I didn't convince them to be on my team, or that I wasn't good enough delivering. Fighting big guys on their turf (large computation needs for ex in research) is stupid. Having better ideas, concepts, MVP and TEAM to make them is where a small team's value is. Being acquired is fine.
- I want to do this. I actually hate having a boss – but I'm really open to learning.
- On this note: take a boring job at some point. I want to feel frustrated and the need to build something of my own. Challenging smart people and hogging their time is how big companies dominate the game. Even more so than paying them; although for the more risk averse that's an easy way too.
- All these incredible systems are amazingly young. And started with nothing. And developed randomly: a VC suggested advertising to Page and Brin at breakfast. This changed the Internet and a lot of people's lives, without them knowing it.
- Build a content/user centered social media? Medium is one. Lacks hyperlinks/easy feedback. Author (Isaacson) suggests a collaborative e-book. How can this make money? How could this be done?
- The interaction between humanities and engineering is key. We build roads to connect people and sell stuff. We built the Internet to share ideas – it stemmed from Defense and Research. Al Gore opened it to everyone and commercial ventures. People want to sell stuff, make money, and bring their ideas and content to other people. People get a wiki-high when they post updates that everyone will read. ASMR and so many other YouTube subcultures yield human gratification – and money, as a by-product. Content has worth: if you make something people like, you should make money somehow.
- Government, industry, academia, and people, i.e. **everyone** working together is the best thing that can happen. Their roles are different, different kinds of people work in each setting, but if everyone has the right spot and works with the right people, amazing things can be built.