Top 10 Books for Mastering the Art of Building Software at Scale

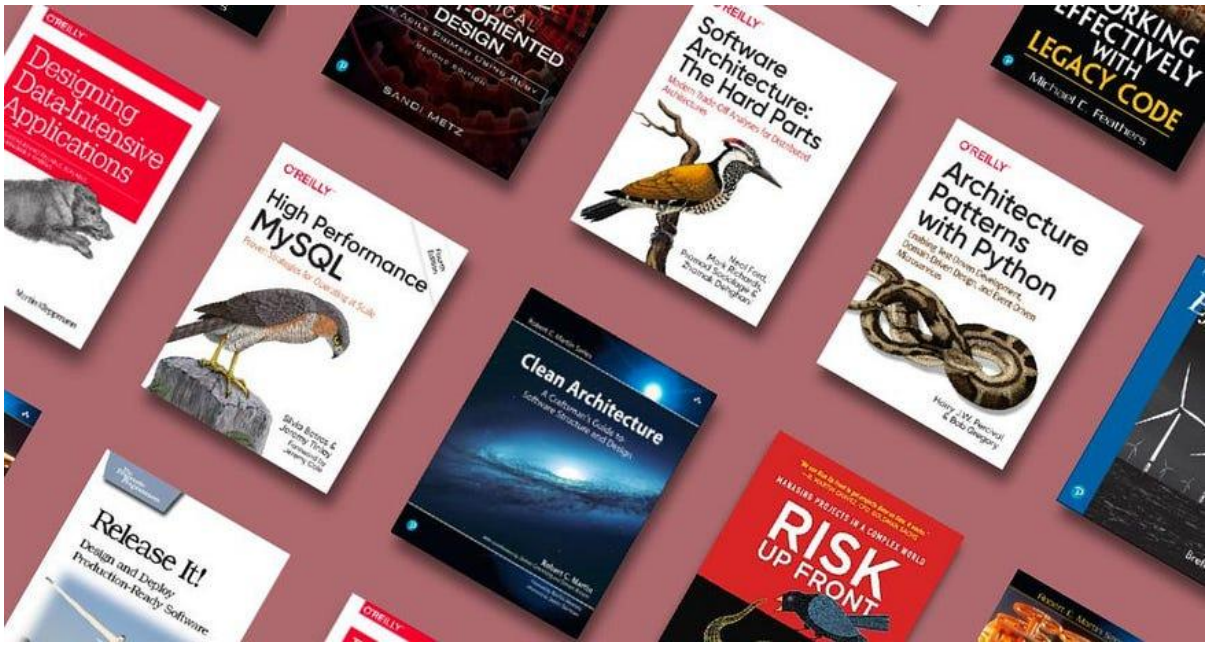
Author: Dmitry Mamyrin

Claps: 642

Date: Feb 22

I started at Klaviyo six years ago. The company was small and the R&D department was no larger than a dozen people. At the time, we were in full startup mode. We iterated fast and had to make rapid decisions. We had to learn quickly.

As Klaviyo grew, so did the complexity of our systems and the load they had to handle, which forced us to be thoughtful about their evolution. We had to make our learning more strategic and specialized. We realized that as much as we could google to get quick answers to questions, reading books helped us be more thoughtful. Book clubs started to pop up across Klaviyo.



After a couple of years working all over the product, I became one of the founding members of the integrations area and later led the team for a few years. We had a lot of work to do and a wealth of knowledge to gain. Iâ€™m an avid reader myself, and I started one of the first engineering book clubs. In the course of the last three and a half years, we read a dozen books covering subjects such as application design, systems architecture, coding, and software delivery. These books played a critical role in helping us scale our pipelines 100x, handle billions of data points a day, achieve near real-time processing speeds for data hydration workloads, and make our systems highly reliable.

Today, we have multiple book clubs and a Slack channel where articles, blogs, and books are recommended. A few books have been recommended over and over and circulated through several reading groups. I asked engineers across the organization to share books that influenced their growth and how their teams build software. Here are the top ten recommendations:

Designing Data-Intensive Applications by Martin Kleppmann

This book is one of the Klaviyo bibles and played a crucial role in navigating numerous architectural challenges. Itâ€™s one of the best overviews of distributed systems and practically the intro course on how to build an app like Klaviyo. It covers all the topics you need to build a large-scale application and does it in enough depth that youâ€™ll understand the key ideas and know where youâ€™ll need to dig deeper to become an expert.

While we donâ€™t necessarily refer to this book every day, we do use the principles and broad knowledge we gained from it. This book was instrumental to scaling and redesigning multiple product areas within Klaviyo. Itâ€™s clear and engaging, which is not a common find in technical books.

Austin Ward, Senior Software Engineer
Josh Bradt, Lead Software Engineer
Nicholas Hoffmann, Engineering Manager
Dmitry Mamyrin, Engineering Manager
and many others