



Smartcuts

How Hackers, Innovators, and Icons Accelerate Success

THE SUMMARY IN BRIEF

How do some startups go from zero to billions in mere months? How did Alexander the Great, YouTube tycoon Michelle Phan and Tonight Show host Jimmy Fallon climb to the top in less time than it takes most of us to get a promotion? What do high-growth businesses, world-class heart surgeons and underdog marketers do in common to beat the norm?

In *Smartcuts*, entrepreneur and journalist Shane Snow reveals that, one way or another, they do it like computer hackers. They employ what psychologists call “lateral thinking” to rethink the convention and break “rules” that aren’t rules.

Snow shatters common wisdom about success, revealing how conventions like “paying dues” prevent progress, why kids shouldn’t learn times tables, and how, paradoxically, it’s easier to build a huge business than a small one. From SpaceX to the Cuban Revolution, from Ferrari to Skrillex, *Smartcuts* is a narrative adventure that busts old myths about success and shows how innovators and icons do the incredible by working smarter — and how perhaps the rest of us can, too.

IN THIS SUMMARY, YOU WILL LEARN:

- The importance of lateral thinking for disruptive innovation.
- How to catch waves and capitalize on momentum in business.
- How to find the right mentors and become a superconnector.
- Why it’s easier to gain support for big causes than for incremental progress.



by Shane Snow

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THE COMPLETE SUMMARY: SMARTCUTS

by Shane Snow

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Introduction

We're multiplying our capabilities as a civilization, and yet we still accept the notion that important societal progress, like combating inequality and crime — or even innovating in government and medicine — must take generations. Despite leaps in what we can do, most of us still follow comfortable, pre-prescribed paths. We work hard but hardly question whether we're working smart.

On the other hand, some among us manage to build eBay in the time it takes the rest of us to build a house. Pick your era in history, and you'll find a handful of people — across industries and continents — who buck the norm and do incredible things in implausibly short amounts of time. The common pattern is that, like computer hackers, certain innovators break convention to find better routes to stunning accomplishments.

Pretend you are driving a car in the middle of a thunderstorm and you happen upon three people on the side of the road. One of them is a frail old woman, who looks on the verge of collapse. Another is a friend who once saved your life. The other is the romantic interest of your dreams, and this is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to meet him or her. You have only one other seat in the car.

Who do you pick up? The old woman, of course. Then, give the car keys to your friend, and stay behind with the romantic interest to wait for the bus!

This dilemma is an exercise in lateral thinking. It's the kind of puzzle in which the most elegant solution is revealed only when you attack it sideways.

Overachievers throughout history have applied lateral thinking to success in a variety of fields and endeavors. The fastest route to success is never traditional, and the

conventions we grow up with can be hacked. Most important, anyone — not just billionaire entrepreneurs and professional mavericks — can speed up progress in business or life.

Rapid but short-term gains are shortcuts, but sustainable success achieved quickly through smart work is called smartcuts. Shortcuts can be amoral, but you can think of smartcuts as shortcuts with integrity.

The patterns of lateral thinking (smartcuts) can be harnessed by anyone who seeks an edge — at work, at the gym, in the arts or education, from social enterprise to personal development, from big companies to small startups. ●

PART I: SHORTEN

Hacking the Ladder

We all know the ladder-climbing story. We're told that the best way to succeed is to start young, work hard and move up through the ranks. The two ingredients are hard work — not quitting when things get tough — and luck — spots opening up on the rungs above you.

But there's something wrong with the great American ladder-climbing advice: presidents of the United States, some of the world's most successful people, don't follow it. The average president spent just seven years as an elected official before reaching the White House. Five were never elected to any office before becoming president. It's like each invented his own ladder.

There is a pattern to the unconventional career tracks of U.S. presidents. We find it among other groups as well.



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Throughout history, fast-rising companies, rock-star executives, “overnight” movie stars and top-selling products have outrun their peers by acting more like ladder hackers than ladder climbers.

Leaping Sideways

The fastest land animal in the world is the cheetah. It can reach speeds in excess of 70 miles per hour. But, according to behavioral biologists, speed is not the cheetah’s biggest predatory advantage. As science writer Katie Hiler puts it, “It is their agility — their skill at leaping sideways, changing directions abruptly and slowing down quickly — that gives those antelope such bad odds.”

When we look at fast success in business and other fields, we see this cheetah behavior everywhere: One of the fastest-selling and transformative cellular phones in the world — the iPhone — was introduced by a personal computer company at a time when the phone market was dominated by telecommunications firms. Nintendo began its life printing Japanese playing cards; the company brokered in taxis, instant rice and hotels before it saw opportunity in the emerging American arcade scene.

This is often how “overnight success” happens for entertainers and public figures; they work hard in their field, then switch ladders and level up, to observers’ surprise. Business research shows that this kind of ladder switching generally tends to accelerate a company’s growth. Companies that pivot — that is, switch business models or products — while on the upswing tend to perform much better than those that stay on a single course.

Traditional paths are not just slow; they’re no longer viable if we want to compete and innovate. That’s great news, because throwing out the dues paradigm leads us toward meritocracy. But to be successful, we need to start thinking more like hackers, acting more like entrepreneurs. We have to work smarter, not just harder. Hacking the ladder is the mindset they use to get places. ●

Training With Masters

Many entertainers toil for decades to get their break. They pay their Actors Guild dues, hone their craft, and starve like artists until they reach a tipping point. Funnyman Louis C.K., for example, spent 15 years performing stand-up comedy for ungrateful local crowds before finally catching his break and becoming a recognizable name with his own cable TV series.

On the other hand, some people skip the dues and jump straight to the top, like the Canadian singer Justin Bieber, who played a few songs on YouTube and became an international megastar in a year.

Both C.K. and Bieber climbed to the top of their industry, and in fact, both ultimately used the Internet to get big. But somehow Bieber “made it” in one-fifteenth of the time. How did he climb so much faster than the guy Rolling Stone calls the funniest man in America?

Mentorship is the secret of many of the highest-profile achievers throughout history. Business research shows that entrepreneurs who have mentors end up raising seven times as much capital for their businesses and experience 3.5 times faster growth than those without mentors.

But history, it turns out, is full of people who’ve been lucky enough to have amazing mentors and have stumbled anyway. Indeed, equal amounts of research support both assertions: that mentorship works and that it doesn’t. It turns out that there’s a big difference between having a mentor guide our practice and having a mentor guide our journey.

Guide the Journey

Our typical paradigm for mentorship is that of a young, enterprising worker sitting across from an elderly executive at an oak desk, engaging in Q&A about how to succeed at specific challenges. On the other hand, a smartcut-savvy mentee approaches things a bit differently. She develops personal relationships with her mentors, asks their advice on other aspects of life, not just the formal challenge at hand. And she cares about her mentors’ lives, too.

Mentorship doesn’t always yield success. But when we look at superlative success stories throughout history, the presence of an in-person mentor or a world-class, long-distance mentor with whom the mentee has a deep, vulnerable relationship is almost always manifest.

The smartcut is the same: The world’s youngest Nobel Prize winner, 25-year-old Lawrence Bragg, won the coveted award for physics in 1915 in conjunction with his father, master physicist William Bragg, who had mentored his son in the lab. The billion-dollar micro-blogging service Tumblr earned its founder, 26-year-old David Karp, \$200 million in 2013, after six years of hard work. But it was in the second year that everything changed; that was when Karp brought in his personal mentor and friend, tech executive John Maloney, to guide him and the Tumblr rocket ship to maturity. This story is a repeat of that of countless other fast-growing companies. ●

Rapid Feedback

In 2008 four Harvard researchers looked at historical data of people who started businesses in America between 1975 and 2003. Their goal was to see how well founders who'd previously failed in business did with subsequent businesses. Had they learned from their past failures? They compared the failures to founders who'd successfully taken a company public, and entrepreneurs who'd never started a business before. It turns out that an entrepreneur who'd failed in a previous venture was not likely to do better than someone who'd never run a business in her life.

According to the study, successful entrepreneurs, on the other hand, are 50 percent more likely to succeed in a second venture. The more you win, the more likely you are to win again. This, of course, poses a chicken-and-egg problem. How do we increase the chance of success if the best way to do so is to . . . already . . . succeed?

Don't Take It Personally

Since the early twentieth century, psychologists have argued about the effects of feedback interventions, or critiques, on behavior and performance. Various studies have shown that such interventions improved learning, while others "prove" that feedback has negative effects on performance. For years, academics debated whether positive feedback was more helpful than negative feedback.

Then in 1996, researchers Avraham N. Kluger and Angelo DeNisi looked at a hundred years of these studies and found something interesting: cumulatively, most feedback interventions were indeed not actually helpful to bettering performance, and much feedback indeed made things worse; however, some feedback was very helpful to boosting performance, and it had nothing to do with bedside manner. The difference was how much the feedback caused a person to focus on himself rather than the task.

Crucially, experts tended to be able to turn off the part of their egos that took legitimate feedback personally when it came to their craft, and they were confident enough to parse helpful feedback from incorrect feedback. Meanwhile, novices psyched themselves out. They needed encouragement and feared failure. The tough part about negative feedback is in separating ourselves from the perceived failure and turning our experiences into objective experiments. But when we do that, feedback becomes much more powerful.

The Second City

This is how The Second City pumps out comedic talent so quickly. Founded in 1959, The Second City has been

the training ground for some of the most well-known comedians on the planet, from ghostbuster Dan Aykroyd to Parks and Recreation star Amy Poehler. The school is known for pioneering a style of comedy called improv, a blend of pantomime, character impersonations and impromptu dialogue. It's a zany, difficult art.

Tina Fey, Seth Meyers and other famous comedians to come out of The Second City all bombed — over and over again. *The Office* star Steve Carell once had an audience storm out of the theater on him for a joke gone too far. Political satirist Stephen Colbert was begged off the stage one night when his bit about dial-up Internet nearly put the audience to sleep.

The Second City teaches its students to take such things in stride, to become scientists who see audience reaction as commentary on the joke, not the jokester. The group manages to accomplish three things to accelerate its performers' growth: (1) it gives them rapid feedback; (2) it depersonalizes the feedback; and (3) it lowers the stakes and pressure, so students take risks that force them to improve. And then the school has students continuously parlay up to harder audiences and harsher feedback as they grow more comfortable. This forces them to both toughen up and push creative boundaries.

The Silicon Valley mantra "fail often" actually has a second part to it. More often than not, Valley startups will say, "fail fast and fail often." This gets at the principle of rapid feedback. But failing implies a finality, a funeral, an amen. And according to The Second City, that's not necessary. ●

PART II: LEVERAGE

Platforms

In the same way that driving on pavement makes a road trip faster and layers of code let you work on a computer faster, hackers like David Heinemeier Hansson, who goes by the moniker DHH, find and build layers of abstraction in business and life that allow them to multiply their effort. I call these layers platforms.

DHH is indirectly responsible for the development of Twitter. And Hulu and Airbnb. And a host of other transformative technologies for which he receives no royalties. His work has contributed to revolutions and lowered the barrier for thousands of tech companies to launch products.

Ruby on Rails

One day, a small American Web design agency called 37signals asked DHH to build a project management tool to help organize its work. Hoping to save some time on this new project, he decided to try a relatively new programming language called Ruby, developed by a guy in Japan who liked simplicity. DHH started coding in earnest.

Despite several layers of abstraction, Ruby (and all other code languages) forces programmers to make countless unimportant decisions. What do you name your databases? How do you want to configure your server? Those little things added up. And many programs required repetitive coding of the same basic components every time. That didn't jibe with DHH's selective slacking habit.

So DHH built a layer on top of Ruby to automate all the repetitive tasks and arbitrary decisions he didn't want taking up his time. His new layer on top of programming's pavement became a set of railroad tracks that made creating a Ruby application faster. He called it Ruby on Rails.

Rails helped DHH build his project — which 37signals named Basecamp — faster than he could have otherwise. But he wasn't prepared for what happened next. When he shared Ruby on Rails on the Internet, programmers fell in love with it. Rails was easier than regular programming but just as powerful, so amateurs downloaded it by the thousands. Veteran coders murmured about “real programming,” but many made the switch because Rails allowed them to build their projects faster.

In 2006 a couple of guys at a podcasting startup had an idea for a side project. With Rails, they were able to build it in a few days — as an experiment — while running their business. They launched it to see what would happen. By spring 2007 the app had gotten popular enough that the team sold off the old company to pursue the side project full time. It was called Twitter.

A traditional software company might have built Twitter on a lower layer like C and taken months or years to polish it before even knowing if people would use it. Twitter — and many other successful companies — used the Rails platform to launch and validate a business idea in days. Rails translated what Twitter's programmers wanted to tell all those computer transistors to do — with relatively little effort. And that allowed them to build a company fast. In the world of high tech, a tiny time advantage can mean the difference between winning and getting passed.

The Power of Platforms

Isaac Newton attributed his success as a scientist to “standing on the shoulders of giants” — building off of

the work of great thinkers before him. Platforms are tools and environments that let us do just that. Platforms can take the form of tools and technology like games and tires and calculators; they can also take the form of environments like pro racing leagues or superstandard schools. In either case, the platform amplifies the effort and teaches skills in the process of using it.

Platforms are why so many aspiring actors migrate to Los Angeles and why budding fashion bloggers move to New York. Platforms are why Harvard Law graduates have easier times finding jobs than those from other schools. Platforms are how Twitter could build Twitter in mere days while running a separate company.

Effort for the sake of effort is as foolish a tradition as paying dues. How much better is hard work when it's amplified by a lever? Platforms teach us skills and allow us to focus on being great rather than reinventing wheels or repeating ourselves. ●

Waves

In surfing, the difference between catching a wave and getting crushed or passed by is a matter of centimeters, which means the chance of being in the exact right spot in that water to grab a big wave without any effort is akin to winning at Powerball. Surfers make it look easy. The good ones can recognize the roll of incoming waves, so they can position themselves in the perfect spot to catch them. And at the last minute, a surfer will paddle vigorously to align herself with the wave and match its speed.

Luck is often talked about as “being in the right place at the right time.” But like a surfer, some people — and companies — are adept at *placing themselves at the right place at the right time*. They seek out opportunity rather than wait for it.

Recognize Patterns

There are two ways to catch a wave: exhausting hard work — paddling — and pattern recognition — spotting a wave early and casually drifting to the sweet spot. In a given domain — be it surfing or accounting or political fund-raising — the familiarity that leads to pattern recognition seems to come with experience and practice.

But research shows that, while logging hours of practice helps us see patterns subconsciously, we can often do just as well by deliberately looking for them. In many fields, such pattern hunting and deliberate analysis can yield high accuracy on the first try.

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Deliberate pattern spotting can compensate for experience. But we often don't even give it a shot. This explains how so many inexperienced companies and entrepreneurs beat the norm and build businesses that disrupt established players. Through deliberate analysis, the little guy can spot waves better than the big company that relies on experience and instinct once it's at the top. And a wave can take an amateur farther faster than an expert can swim. It also explains why the world's best surfers arrive at the beach hours before a competition and stare at the ocean.

The First Mover Myth

Over the years, entrepreneurs and academics have suggested that first movers in business — the first to catch a commercial wave — enjoy an unfair advantage over their competitors. But Peter Golder and Gerard Tellis of the University of Southern California researched what happened to 500 brands in 50 product categories, from toothpaste to video recorders to fax machines to chewing gum. Startlingly, the research showed that 47 percent of first movers failed. Only about half the companies that started selling a product first remained the market leader five years later. By contrast, early leaders — companies that took control of a product's market share after the first movers pioneered them — had only an 8 percent failure rate.

First movers take on the burden of educating customers, setting up infrastructure, getting regulatory approvals and making mistakes — getting feedback and adjusting. Fast followers, on the other hand, benefit from free-rider effects. The pioneers clear the way in terms of market education and infrastructure and learn the hard lessons, so the next guys can steal what works, learn objectively from the first movers' failures and spend more effort elsewhere.

Google, Facebook and Microsoft were each fast followers in their respective spaces in the technology sector, leaping past Overture, Myspace and Apple, respectively (until Apple made a comeback).

A business can work five times harder and longer than its neighbors and still lose to rivals that read the market better. Just like a pro surfer never wins by staying in one spot. ●

Superconnectors

Which is easier — making friends with a thousand people one by one or making friends with someone who already has a thousand friends? Which is faster — going door to door with a message or broadcasting the message to a million homes at once? This is the idea behind what I call superconnecting, the act of making mass connections

by tapping into hubs with many spokes. But tapping networks is not as easy as simply shouting a message.

“The number one problem with networking is people are out for themselves,” says Scott Gerber, founder of the Young Entrepreneur Council, who coined the term superconnector. “Superconnecting is about learning what people need, then talking about ‘how do we create something of value.’” This is a twist on the classic networking advice, which advocates boldly meeting people and asking them for things. Building relationships through giving is more work than begging for help, but it's also much more powerful.

Mint Software

In 2006 a Silicon Valley engineer named Aaron Patzer quit his job to start a company called Mint Software, Inc., an online service that helped people simplify their personal finances. Mint users could collect all their bank accounts and credit card information in one place and track their spending and savings with nice charts. Mint would then suggest ways to save money, such as by transferring balances to credit cards with lower rates (at which point the company received a commission).

At the time, the convention was for startups like Mint to acquire users by spending heavily on advertising. But instead of interrupting people with ads, Mint decided it was going to become a media company that taught people to better understand finances. It started a blog on which it posted helpful articles about money management and savings. The blog chugged along, slowly winning audience members to its free content, and then it found a way to tap into a large broadcast channel: social bookmarking.

Social bookmarking sites were all the rage in the mid-2000s. Here people shared links to content they liked, while others “voted” on which links they liked best. The highest voted stories every day surfaced to the front pages of bookmarking giants like Digg.com and Reddit.com, where millions of people saw them. So Mint started making blog posts its editors thought were likely to be voted up by the bookmarking crowds. Some of the most influential Digg and Reddit users fell in love with the Mint blog, which gave them content that would make them look good to their own fans.

Thus, Mint built relationships with an enormous number of people — by helping them. Over the next two years, 1.5 million people who discovered Mint through its blog posts ended up actually signing up for Mint's service. In 2009 Patzer sold the business to Intuit for \$170 million.

No matter the medium or method, giving is the timeless smartcut for harnessing superconnectors and creating

serendipity. What happens post-serendipity is where things start to get really interesting. ●

PART III: SOAR

Momentum

The problem with some rapid success, it turns out, is that lucky breaks like cashing out on an Internet wave are like having someone lift you up so you can grab one of the Olympic rings. Even if you get dropped off somewhere far along the chain, you're stuck in one spot. Financial planners say that this is why a surprisingly high percentage of the rapidly wealthy get depressed. This is the same reason that only one-third of Americans are happy at their jobs. When there's no forward momentum in our careers, we get depressed, too.

So how does one avoid billionaire's depression? Or regular person's stuck-in-a-dead-end-job, lack-of-momentum-fueled depression? Harvard Business School professor Teresa Amabile has found that the answer is simply progress. A sense of forward motion. Regardless how small. Amabile found that minor victories at work were nearly as psychologically powerful as major breakthroughs.

And momentum isn't just a powerful ingredient of success. It's also a powerful predictor of success. Investors see momentum and future success as so highly correlated that they will take bigger bets on companies with fast-growing user bases even if the companies are bleeding money.

The Momentum of Michelle Phan

Michelle Phan grew up in California with her Vietnamese parents. The classic American immigrant story of the impoverished but hardworking parents who toil to create a better life for the next generation was marred, in Phan's case, by her father's gambling addiction. Throughout primary and secondary school, Phan escaped from her problems through art. She started drawing and painting herself, often using the notes pages in the back of the telephone book as her canvas.

Imitating painter Bob Ross, she started making tutorials for her friends and posting them on her blog. Drawing, making Halloween costumes, applying cosmetics — the topic didn't matter. For three years, she blogged her problems away, fancying herself an amateur teacher of her peers and gaining a modest teenage following.

With a donated computer powerful enough to edit video, Phan parlayed the blog for a YouTube channel,

where she made her tutorials visual. She filmed herself applying artistic makeup while smiling into the camera, then edited the footage and added voiceovers to explain what she was doing. In 2007 she recorded six makeup tutorial videos. Each received modest views — often in the low thousands. In 2008 Phan recorded six more.

In 2009, Lady Gaga released her now-iconic “Bad Romance” music video. It quickly became YouTube's most watched. Phan decided to capitalize on the wave by posting a tutorial of how to re-create Gaga's makeup from the video. She uploaded her Gaga video at the optimal moment and then notified her little group of fans to watch it at once. It was enough to reach the home page. This was the tiny nudge that got the snowball rolling. A writer from BuzzFeed noticed it and wrote a story. Readers swarmed over to YouTube to watch it.

This is the part where most lucky breakers would enjoy the ride until the momentum dissipated. But instead of fading away after the fad was over, something else happened to Phan's momentum: the people who watched the Lady Gaga tutorial started watching Phan's other tutorials — which were excellent. Her unknown older work benefited from the spillover. Scores of the BuzzFeed viewers subscribed to Phan's channel, eager for more videos. Phan upgraded her camera and started recording. Phan's backlog of content allowed her to take the momentum caused by wave and superconnectors and capture it.

The secret to harnessing momentum is to build up potential energy so that unexpected opportunities can be amplified. On the playground, it's like building a tower to stand on, so you can start your Olympic ring with more velocity. Phan's tower was a backlog of quality content. ●

Simplicity

Let's step back for a moment and talk about innovation. Over the last several years, we've bastardized the word. Today, we equate it with change or general improvement, a buzzword meaning “bigger” or a synonym for creative. But the word used to mean “upheaval” or “transformation.” Innovation is about doing something differently, rather than creating something from nothing (invention) or doing the same thing better (improvement).

Harvard management professor Clayton M. Christensen furthered this concept in the mid-'90s when he coined the term “disruptive innovation.” Disruptive innovation is when the introduction of a lower-cost product steals market share from existing players, like when email usurped postal mail (how much would you spend a

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month if every email cost the price of a postage stamp?) or when Craigslist replaced costly classified newspaper ads with free Internet listings.

The key feature of disruptively innovative products is cost savings (either time or money). But the key ingredient behind the scenes of every disruptive product is simplification. Email is not just cheaper but simpler than postal mail. USB flash drives were not just less expensive than compact discs but simpler to use. And cloud storage became even simpler than flash.

Hackers strip the unnecessary from their lives. They zero in on what matters. Like great writers, innovators have the fortitude to cut the adverbs. Simplification is why Steve Jobs's Magic Mouse doubled Apple's mouse market share overnight. With zero buttons and a touchscreen glass top, the mouse is both pretty and intuitive — a huge departure from the conventional “innovative” mouse arms race, which amounted to adding more bulk and more buttons. Similarly, Apple's iPod won the MP3 player war with breakthrough simplicity, both in physical design and how the company explained it. While other companies touted “4 Gigabytes and a 0.5 Gigahertz processor!” Apple simply said, “1,000 songs in your pocket.”

Inventors and entrepreneurs ask, How could we make this product simpler? The answer transforms good to incredible. Perhaps that's why Steve Jobs referred to simplicity as “the ultimate sophistication.” ●

10X Thinking

10x Thinking is the art of the extremely big swing. To use a baseball analogy: instead of trying to get on base — or even aiming for a home run — it's trying to hit the ball into the next town. Such a goal requires you to think radically different.

The apostle of 10x Thinking is a man with perhaps the coolest name ever: Astro Teller. Teller is the goatee-and-ponytailed head of a rather secret Google laboratory in California called Google[x]. Teller's job is to dream big, 10x big. His team has built self-driving cars, augmented reality glasses, and WiFi balloons meant to roam the stratosphere. He's hired some brilliant minds onto his team, but that's not the secret of their success.

Says Teller, “It's often easier to make something 10 times better than it is to make it 10 percent better.” Incremental progress, he says, depends on working harder. More resources, more effort. 10x progress is built on bravery and creativity instead. Working smarter. In other words, 10x goals force you to come up with smartcuts.

Academic research actually shows that we're less likely to perform at our peak potential when we're reaching for low-hanging fruit. That's in part because there's more competition at the bottom of the tree than at the top. Perhaps more interesting, however, is the business research on companies that aim high philosophically. Executive Jim Stengel, formerly global marketing head of Procter & Gamble, teamed up with research firm Millward Brown in the 2000s to collect a decade's worth of data on the market performance of major brands that orient themselves around a noble purpose or ideal.

Brands with lofty purposes beyond making profits wildly outperformed the S&P 500. From 2001 to 2011, an investment in the 50 most idealistic brands — the ones opting for the high-hanging purpose and not just low-hanging profits — would have been 400 percent more profitable than shares of an S&P index fund. Why is this? The simple explanation is that human nature makes us surprisingly willing to support big ideals and big swings. That means more customers, more investors and more word-of-mouth for the dreamers.

Says Astro Teller, “If you make something ten times better for a large number of people — you really produce huge amounts of new value — the money's gonna come find you. Because it would be hard not to make money if you're really adding that much value.”

Big causes attract big believers, big investors, big capital, big-name advisers and big talent. They force us to rethink convention and hack the ladder of success. To engage with masters and to leverage waves and platforms and superconnectors. To swing and to simplify, to quickly turn failure into feedback. To become not just bigger but truly better. And they remind us, once again, that together we can achieve the implausible. ●

RECOMMENDED READING LIST

If you liked *Smartcuts* you'll also like:

1. ***The Pumpkin Plan* by Mike Michalowicz.** Michalowicz applied his step-by-step approach to grow his own company into a multimillion-dollar industry leader. He lays out the process for others to use.
2. ***Little Bets* by Peter Sims.** Bestselling author Peter Sims explores the value of taking small, experimental steps in developing breakthrough innovation.
3. ***Best Practices are Stupid* by Stephen M. Shapiro.** Shapiro offers 40 counterintuitive yet proven strategies for boosting innovation and making it a repeatable, sustainable and profitable process at the heart of a company's culture.