The 21 Best Digital Marketing Books for Startup Founders

growthhit.com/growth/best-digital-marketing-books

By Jim Huffman on Tuesday, February 20th, 2018

As a member of an early stage startup, spare time is limited. It's tough to keep up with the best digital marketing books to help you grow.

Well, unless you're a speed reader of course.

But most of us aren't.

It's easy to let reading fall to a lower place on your priority list. If you continue to ignore this task then you may just find yourself getting passed by competitors — or worse, struggling harder than you should, just to get your startup off the ground.

It's good to read case studies and articles that highlight the latest tactics or trends but if you want to get in-depth information, **reading the best digital marketing books is hands down the best** way to stay on top of your growth strategy.

To help, we've pieced together a list of **the best digital marketing books for startup founders** and startup employees that are looking to build the next rocket ship.

Whether you want to learn more about Growth Hacking and CRO or you're interested in writing persuasive advertising copy for your Facebook ads, you'll find insights that will help you up your growth hacking game and digital marketing skills.

Best Digital Marketing Books

This list of the best marketing books includes some of the top books on growth hacking, startup founders and branding.

(1) The Growth Marketer's Playbook

The Growth Marketer's Playbook: Learn the skillset that's lacking at 90% of startups and grow your online business the right way by Jim Huffman
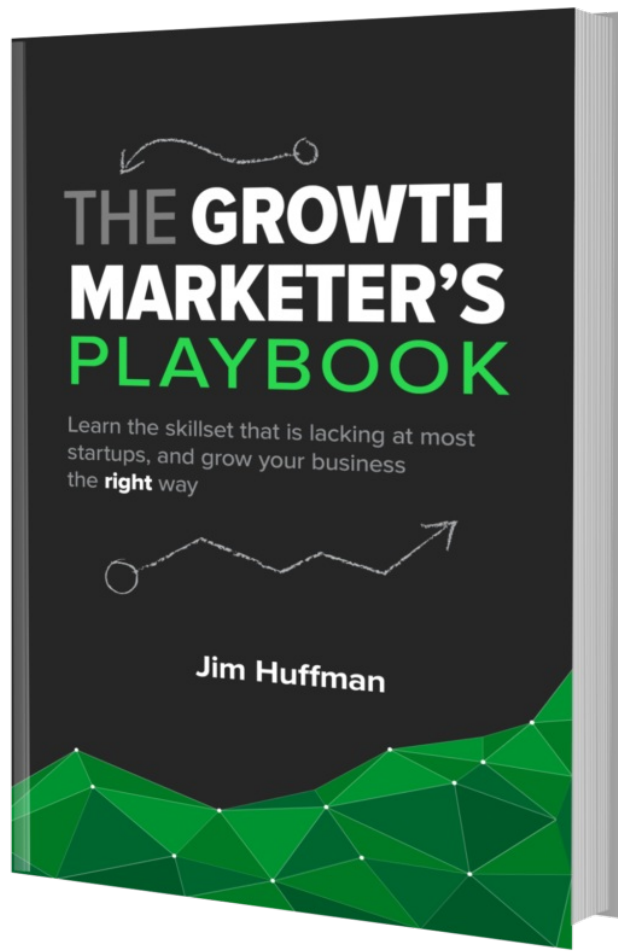
Full Disclosure: This is our digital marketing book, and we're really excited to share it with you. It builds off of all the amazing digital marketing books that are on this list. We truly hope you find the information in this book helpful as you grow your business the right way.

After mentoring Techstars' startups and Fortune 500 brands about growth marketing we decided to create a growth strategy book that details all our "secrets" to scaling a startup the right way. Get access to the step-by-step growth strategy our growth marketing agency has used to grow multiple companies from idea to seven figures in sales. From our growth framework and process to a list of 60+ growth tactics and strategies, you'll learn the exact process for running growth at your startup. Use the promocode "**10bucksoff**" for a limited time $10 discount if you pre-order here.

We'll also include our Master Growth Marketing Spreadsheet we use to manage our clients that **has over 100 growth tactics**.

Why startups will like it: This book is our exact playbook that can help any founder or marketer on what they should be doing right now to grow their startup.
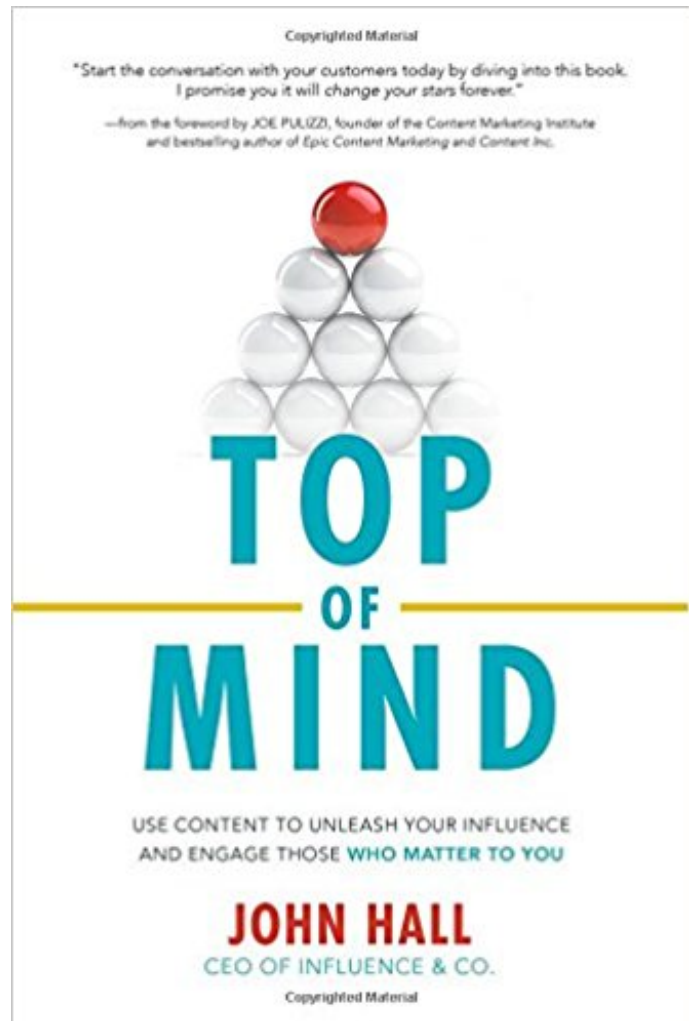
Website | Twitter

(2) Top of Mind

Top of Mind: Use Content to Unleash Your Influence and Engage Those Who Matter To You by John Hall

John Hall talks about how you can use content to unleash your influence and engage those who matter to you. This is a descriptive guide on how to use digital content to enrich your ideal customer's world in a way that adds value and builds trust. Written by the founder of Influence & Co, this book shows you how to build a content-driven relationship to keep your brand top of mind.

Why startups will like it: If you want to be positioned as a thought leader or an influencer then this is the roadmap for doing that the right way.

[Amazon](#) | [Website](#)

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"Start the conversation with your customers today by diving into this book. I promise you it will change your stars forever."

—from the foreword by JOE PULIZZI, founder of the Content Marketing Institute and bestselling author of Epic Content Marketing and Content Inc.

TOP OF MIND

USE CONTENT TO UNLEASH YOUR INFLUENCE AND ENGAGE THOSE WHO MATTER TO YOU

JOHN HALL
CEO OF INFLUENCE & CO.

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(3) What Customers Crave

What Customers Crave: How to Create Relevant and Memorable Experiences at Every Touchpoint by Nicholas J, Webb

Learn how to create relevant and memorable experiences at every touchpoint. As the power shifts to the customer, it's about making an experience that delights a customer at every opportunity. This book gets deep on how to understand what your customers love and what your customers hate.

Why startups will like it: For UI/UX teams, you'll learn everything from how to engineer experiences that are exceptional to how to get invaluable insight into what customers truly love.

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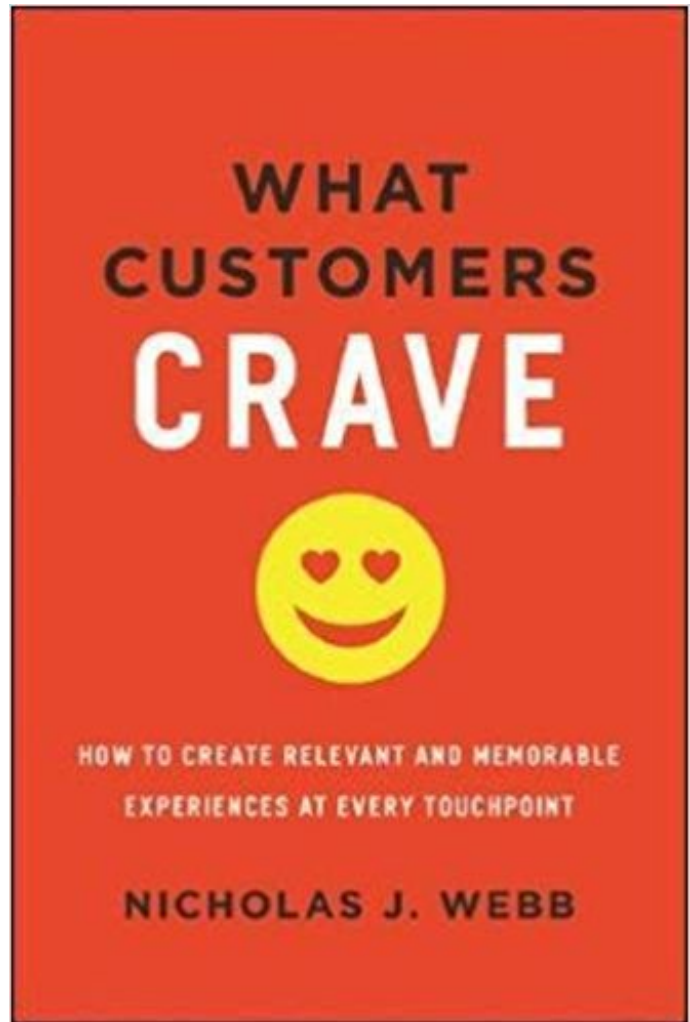
(4) Hello, My Name Is Awesome

Hello, My Name Is Awesome: How to Create Brand Names That Stick by Alexandra Watkins

How do you create brand names that stick? Every year, 6 million companies and more than 100,000 products are launched. They all need an awesome name, but many fall short. In this book, naming consultant Alexandra Watkins teaches you her SMILE and SCRATCH test to see if you have a great brand name or not. She gives examples of great brand names and the ones that fell short.

Why founders will like this: If you haven't named your company yet or are struggling with a rebrand then this is the book for you. Learn the dos and don'ts when it comes to naming your startup.

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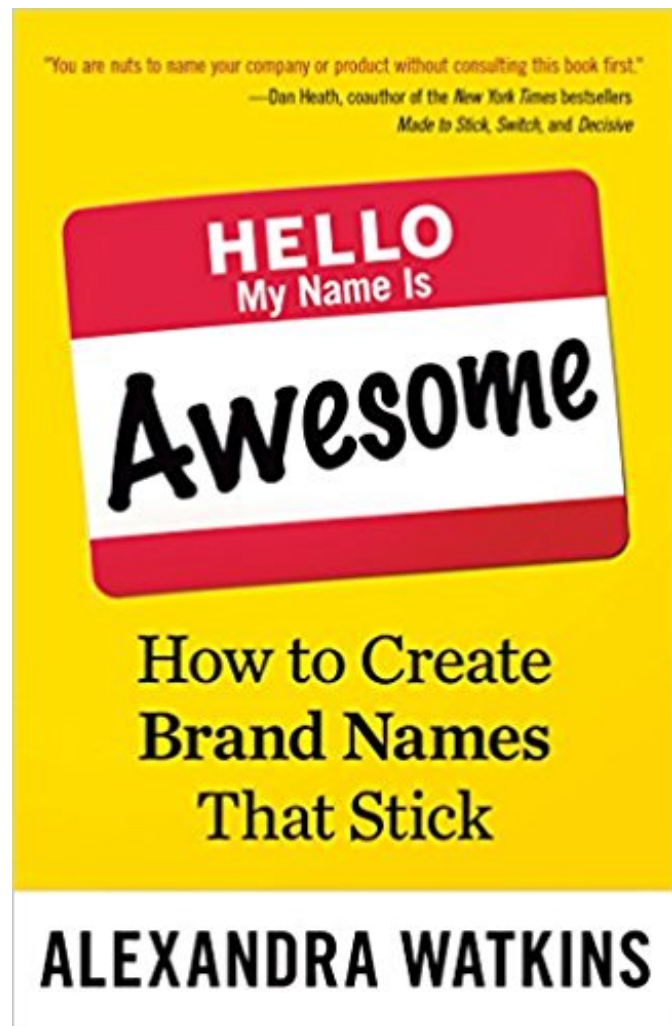
(5) Start with Why

Start with Why: How Great Leaders Inspire Everyone to Take Action by Simon Sinek

Learn how great leaders inspire others to action by focusing on the why instead of the what. After studying the top leaders in the world (Steve Jobs, MLK, the Wright Brothers, etc.), Simon weaves together the common narrative that all of these leaders started with a clear reason that answers the why.

Why founders will like it: Learn how other companies and brands have positioned themselves relative to the competition.

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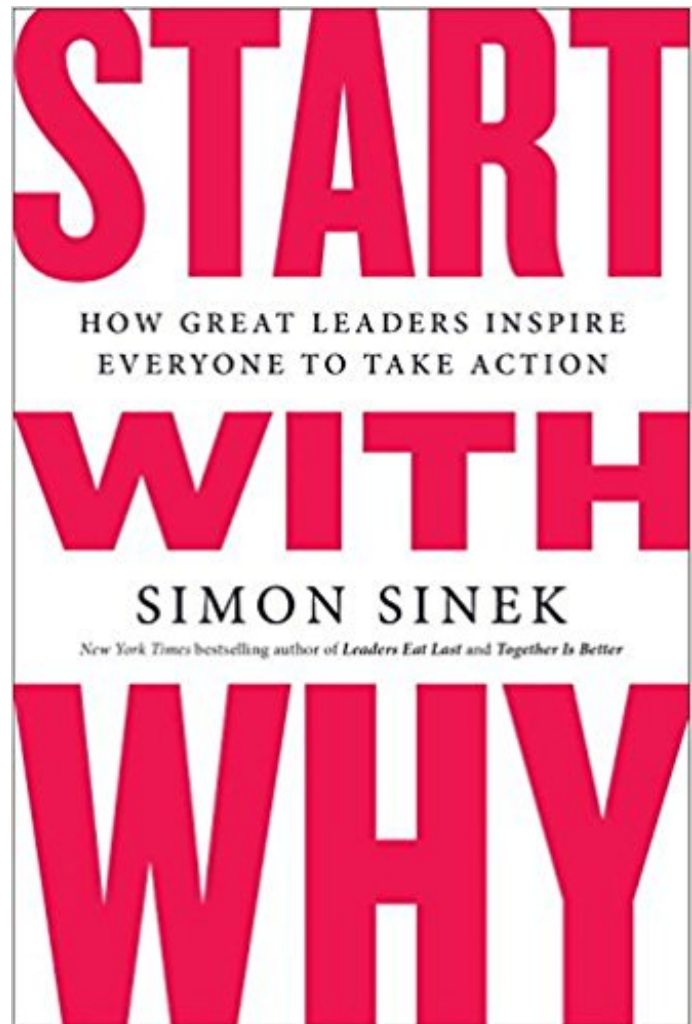
(6) The Growth Manifesto

The Growth Manifesto: How to Drive Growth in a fast-changing digital world by Alex Cleanthous

Written by the founder of WebProfits, an Australian marketing agency, this book is broken down into the growth mindset, how to approach growth, growth tactics and a growth framework. They use case studies from brands like Birchbox and Dollar Shave Club to showcase other great growth teams.

Why startups will like It: This book pulls screenshots from various brands to show you exactly how they are implementing different tactics.

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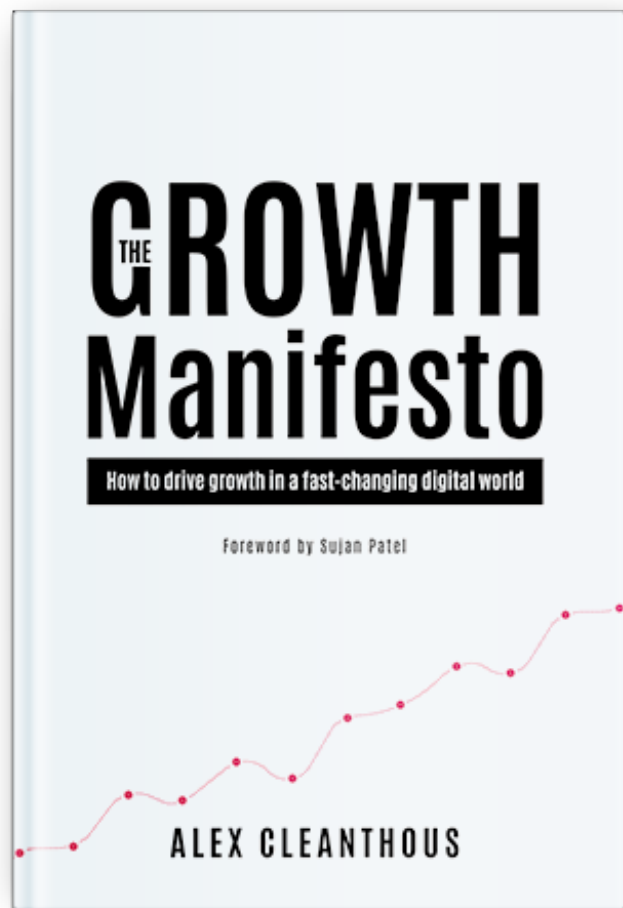
(7) Email Marketing Fundamentals

Email Marketing Fundamentals: Learn how to build and optimize successful email marketing campaigns by Carl Sednaoui

This book, from the CEO of MailCharts, is a tool to help you monitor the email campaigns of your competitors. He provides a plan for launching a successful email automation strategy. With B2B and B2C case studies, he provides a detailed guide on how to do everything from building an email onboarding campaign to creating the best transactional campaigns.

Why startups will like it: You can quickly browse all the options for types of email campaigns to see which one is right for your startup.

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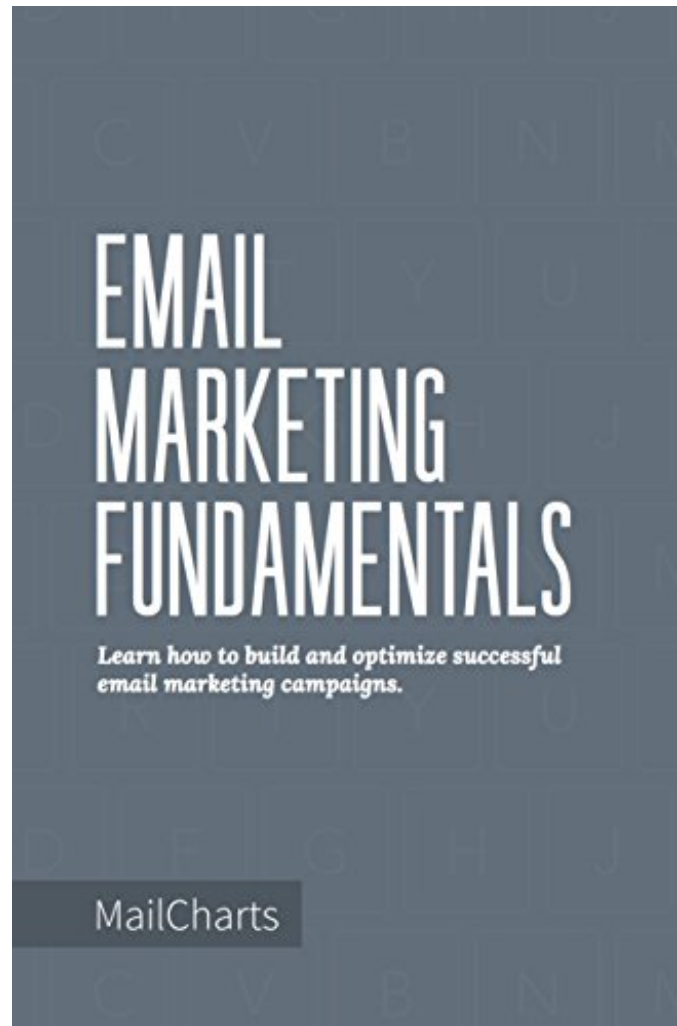
(8) Hacking Growth

Hacking Growth: How Today's Fastest-Growing Companies Drive Breakout Success by Morgan Brown and Sean Ellis

Sean Ellis, the co-author of this book, invented the phrase Growth Hacker while he was leading growth at Dropbox. In this book, Sean and Morgan talk about the origin of growth hacking and how to run growth at a startup by using examples from their experiences at different startups like Dropbox and LogMeIn. The book is laid out into two main sections: The growth method and the growth playbook.

Why startups will like this: It gives you 30+ growth options or growth tactics for scaling your startup or online business.

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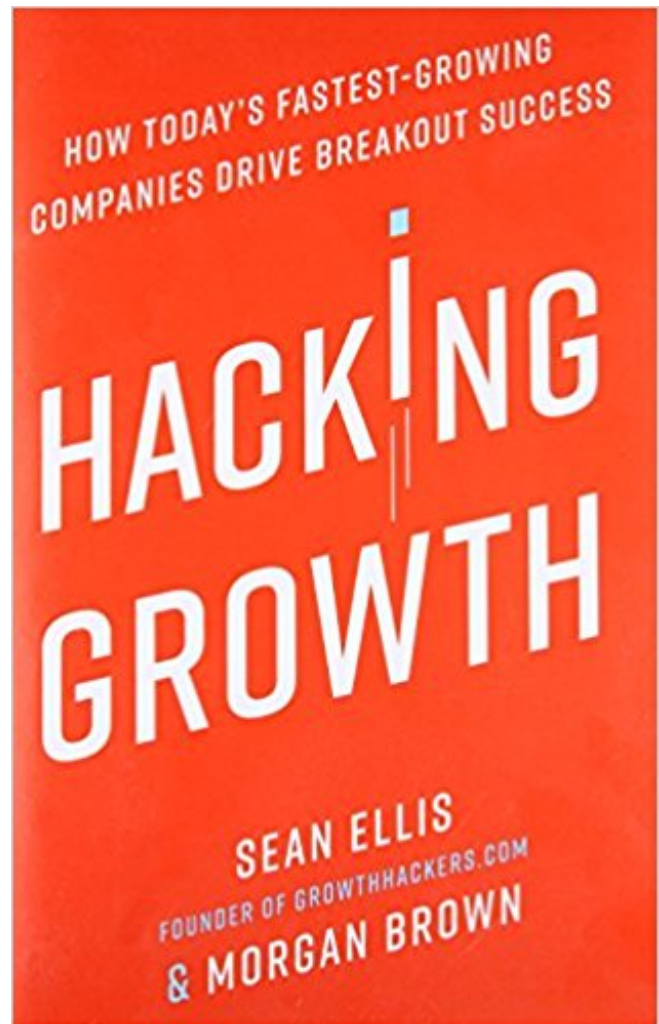
(9) Growth Engines

Startup Growth Engines: Case Studies of How Today's Most Successful Startups Unlock Extraordinary Growth by Sean Ellis and Morgan Brown

Another one from the man that invented the phrase Growth Hacker, Sean Ellis. This book is all about growth hacking case studies. Sean and Morgan talk about specific examples from fast-growing startups like Uber, Square, Snapchat, Evernote, Hubspot, Github and Yelp.

Why startups will like it: You'll get insight into how founders from Linkedin and Yelp approached digital marketing in the early days.

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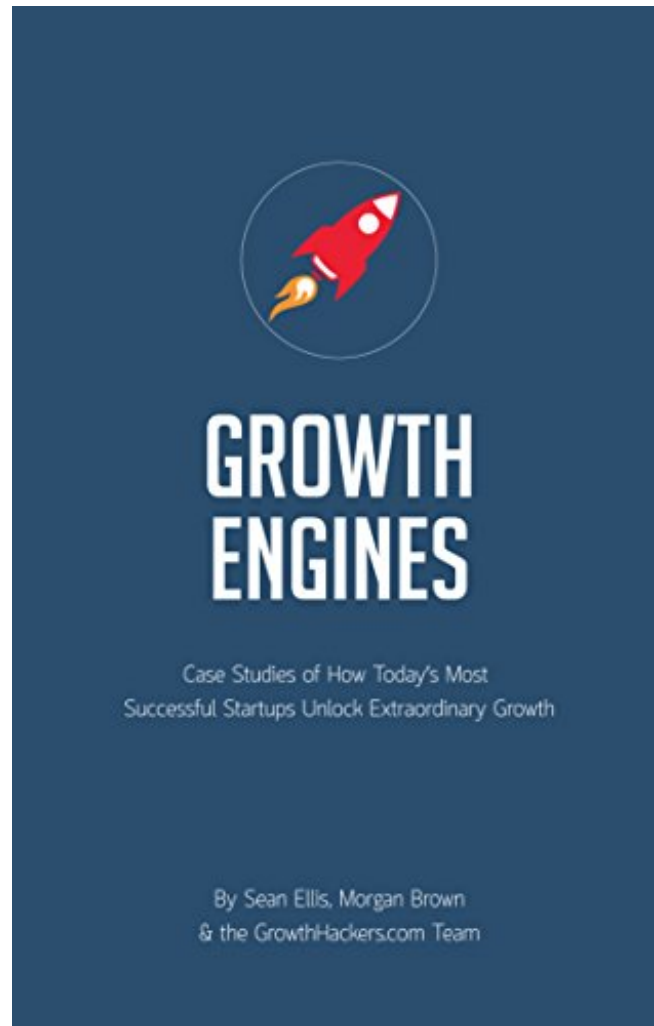
(10) Viral Loop

Viral Loop: From Facebook to Twitter, How Today's Smartest Businesses Grow Themselves by Adam L. Penenberg

Consider this a history lesson on the power of virality in the internet age. The author, a decorated writer from the New York Times and WIRED, does a nice job of weaving together the narrative of how various online products were designed to grow. You'll learn how companies like Facebook, Twitter, Flickr and Ebay built viral engines into their product experience.

Why startups will like it: It gives you a foundation in how to design a product for scale. Great for any startup focused on building a community platform.

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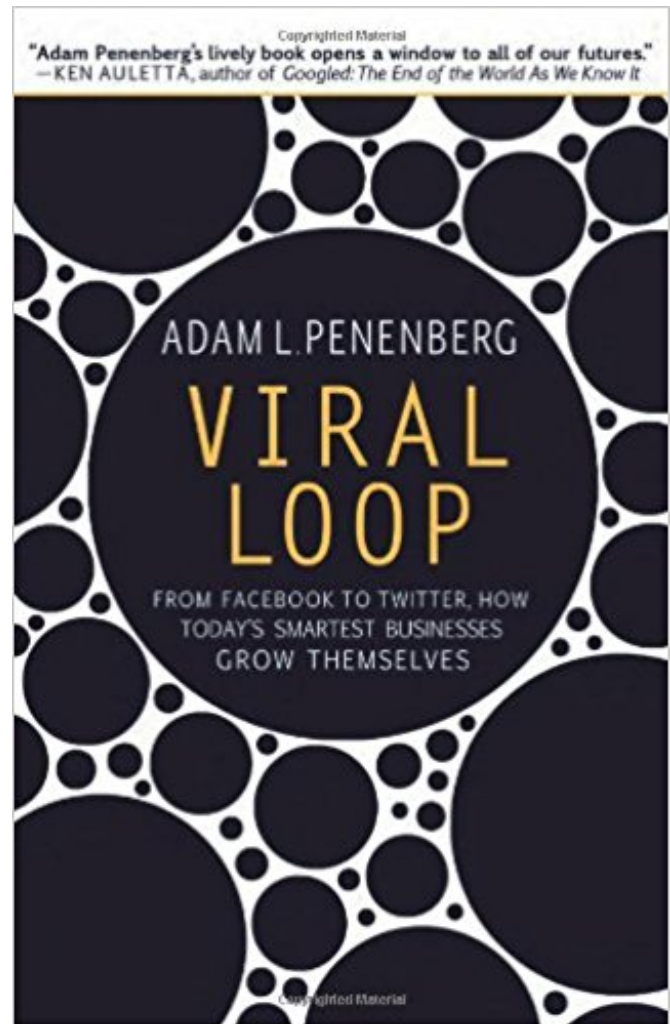
(11) The Viral Startup

The Viral Startup: A Guide to Designing Viral Loops by Andrew Chen

From running growth at Uber to teaching growth at Reforge, Andrew Chen is one of the pioneers in the growth hacking space. If you're a numbers person or an analytical mind then you'll love **his experiment-focused approach** on how you can create a viral loop for your startup. Note that it's a book made of his compiled blog posts so each chapter is its own subject.

Why startups will like it: Growth always comes back to the quality of your product and how is that product is designed for virality. Great read for anyone that's laser-focused on product development.

Amazon | Website

(12) The Lean Startup

The Lean Startup: How Today's Entrepreneurs Use Continuous Innovation to Create Radically Successful Businesses by Eric Reis

It would be a crime to not mention this timeless book from Eric Ries. His relentless focus on moving fast, rapid iteration and getting customer feedback as soon as possible has become a rallying cry for so many founders. He says there are three engines that drive growth for a startup: the sticky engine, the virality engine and the paid engine.

Why startups will like it: It's an inspiring read about getting to product market fit by talking to your customers. You'll learn ways you can run marketing experiments to figure out if you have it or not.

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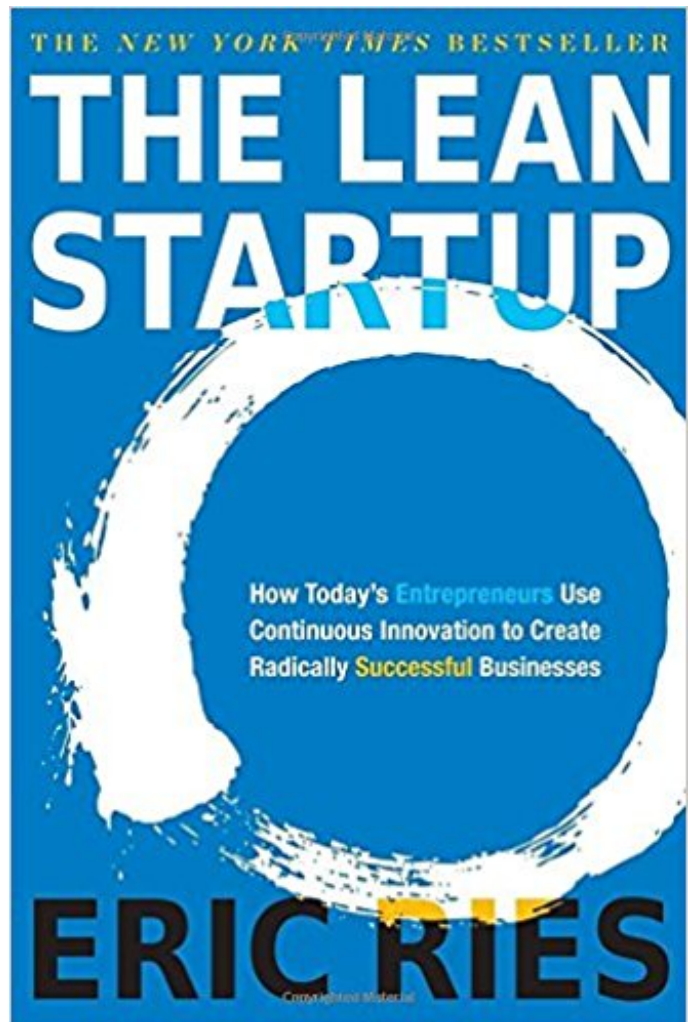
(13) Traction

Traction: How Any Startup Can Achieve Explosive Customer Growth by Gabriel Weinberg

Simply put, this book includes every option for how a startup can get traction with its product or service. The CEO of the search engine Duck Duck Go wrote this book while trying to figure out the right traction channels for launching his product. He breaks down every option into 19 channels and provides case studies on how companies have successfully gotten traction with each one. From Search Engine Marketing to Engineering as marketing, you'll get a Denny's menu of growth options. Plus, Gabriel details his framework, The Bullseye Framework, for figuring out how to prioritize each one.

Why startups will like it: It helps you understand every option you have for trying to get traction and grow.

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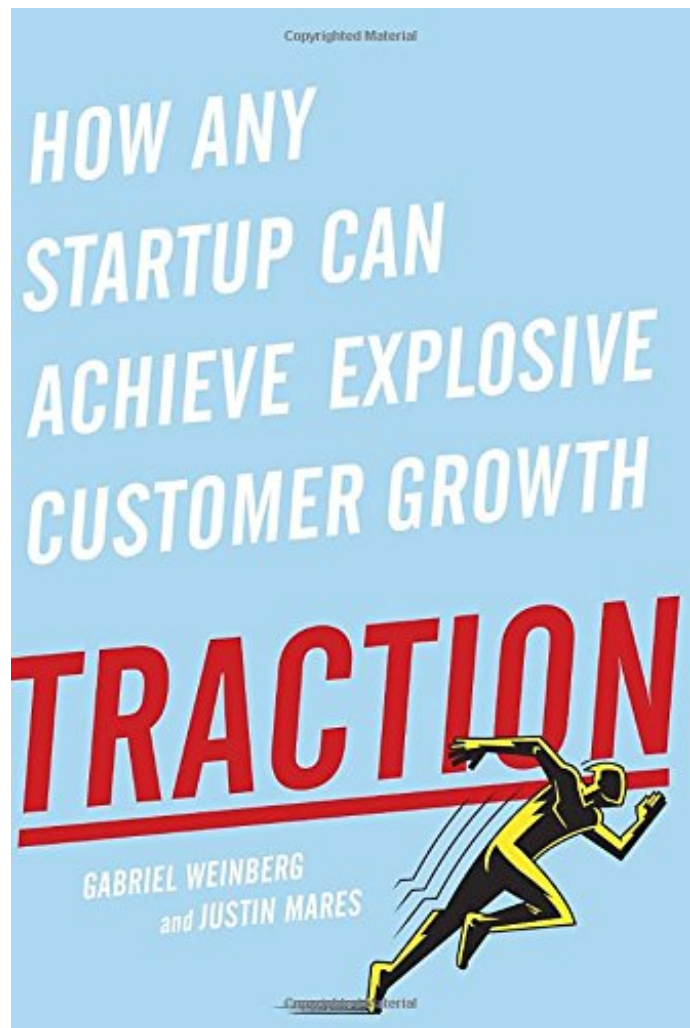
(14) The Hard Thing About Hard Things

The Hard Thing About Hard Things: Building a Business When There Are No Easy Answers by Ben Horowitz

Ben Horowitz is one of the most respected and experienced entrepreneurs in Silicon Valley. He demystifies the startup experience and gets real about the difficulties of being a startup founder of a fast-growing business in a digital world that's allows changing. From layoffs to IPOs, Ben shows you how to approach the hard realities that come with growing a startup.
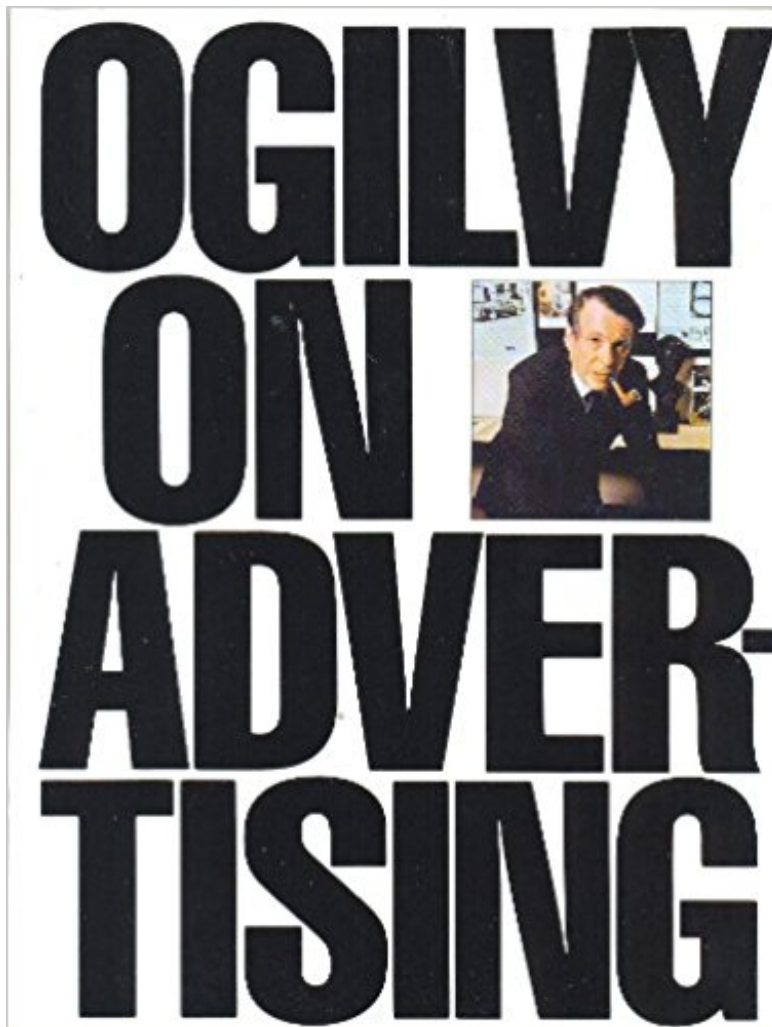
Why startups will like it: He is open and honest about every problem and pivot he faced and the decisions (good and bad) he made and why. Plus, it's filled with rap lyrics.

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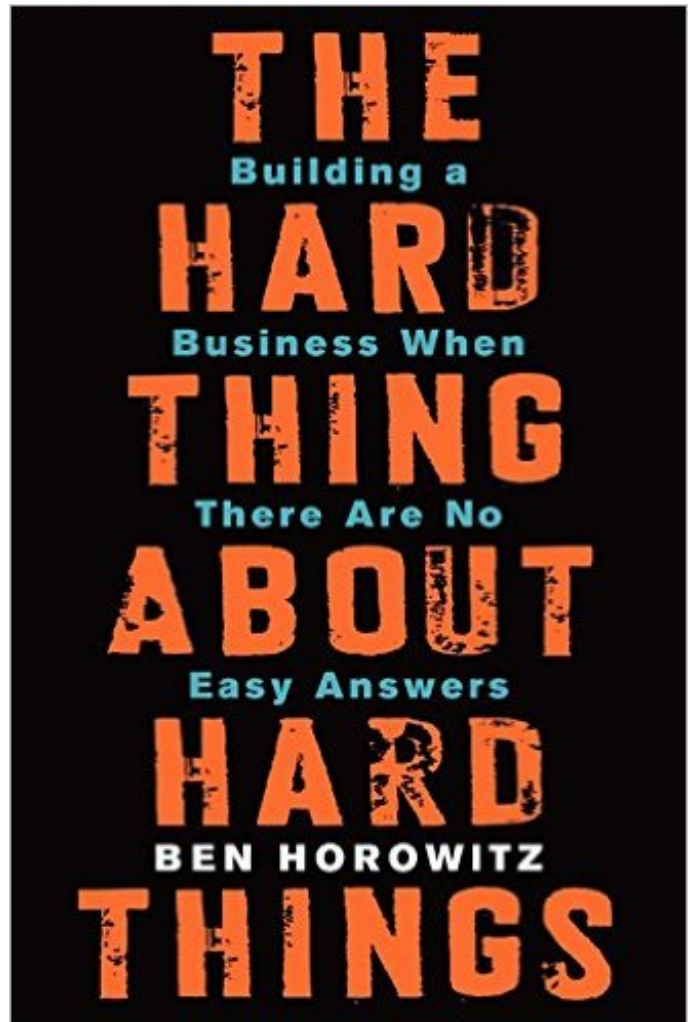
(15) Ogilvy on Advertising

Ogilvy on Advertising by David Ogilvy

Yes, this book was written in 1985, well before Facebook ads. But, David Ogilvy's principles on advertising are more true today than ever. He writes about the secrets behind advertising that works, how to write successful copy—and get people to read it and the 18 miracles of research for advertising.

Why startups will like it: If you're looking to put together a video that goes viral or a social post that gets shares, then flip through this book to get your creative juices flowing. Your brain will be overflowing with creative ideas after you read it.

Amazon

(16) What Great Brands Do

What Great Brands Do: The Seven Brand-Building Principles that Separate the Best from the Rest by Denise Lee Yohn

For companies trying to figure out who they are and what their brand stands for, this book might be right up your alley. Denise Lee does a deep dive on the **7 key brand principles every company must do** to be a brand that lasts. The principles include: great brands start inside, great brands avoid selling products, great brands ignore trends, great brands don't chase customers, great brands sweat the small stuff, great brands commit and stay committed and great brands never have to "give back."

Why startups will like it: Take the 7 principles that Denise lays out and use those to measure your brand position. Consider it a litmus test for branding.

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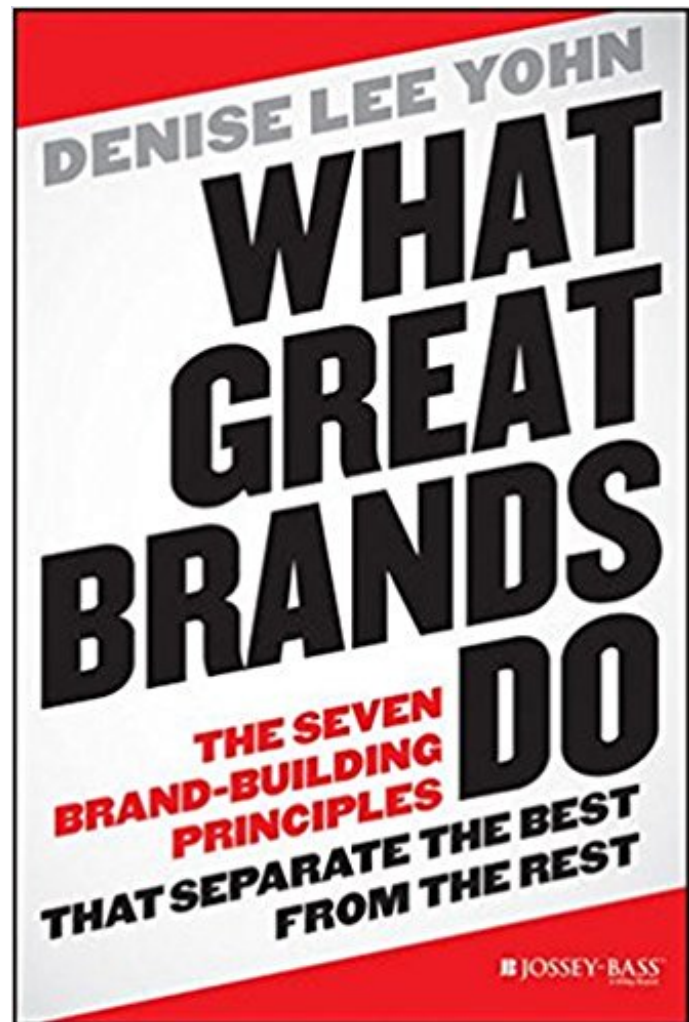
(17) Start Something that Matters

Start Something That Matters by Blake Mycoskie

This is the story of TOMS founder, Blake Mycoskie, and how he truly started a philanthropic revolution through his shoe company. His "one-for-one" business model has inspired startups that have **disrupted industries** from eyewear to socks. Learn how he started a brand based off of solving a problem and being authentic.

Why startups will like it: Branding isn't just about a logo or tagline but a brand mission and purpose. This book will inspire you to think bigger on the impact your company can have and what you stand for.

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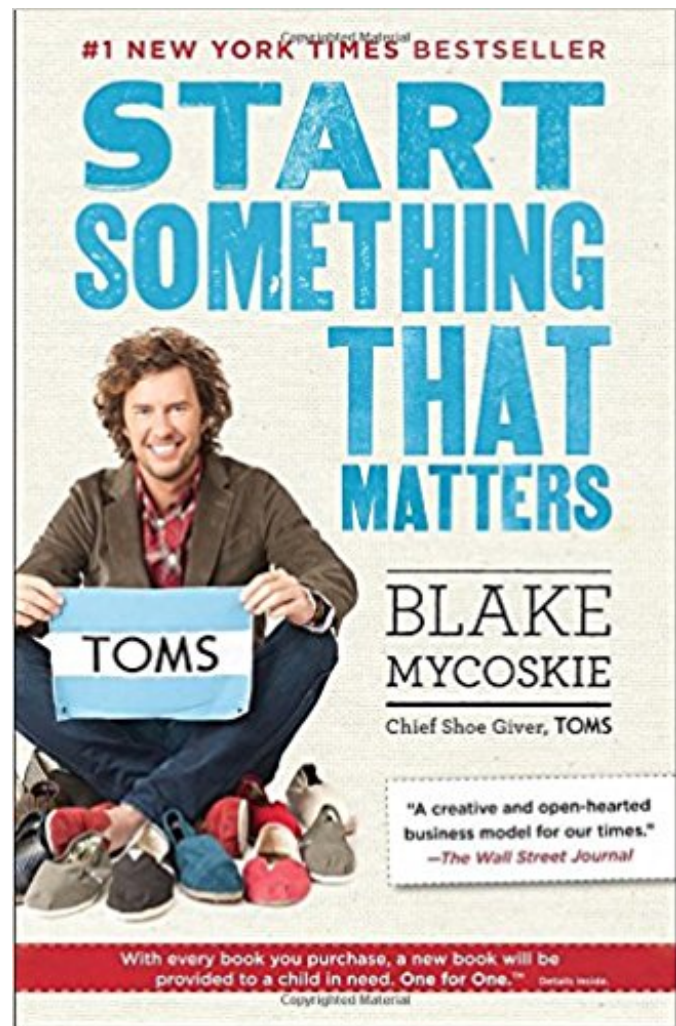
(18) Hooked

Hooked: How to Build Habit-Forming Products by Nir Eyal and Ryan Hoover

What makes us engage with certain products out of habit? Why do other products flop? Nir Eyal and the founder of Product Hunt, Ryan Hoover, dissect the **four-step process** for making products that get users hooked. The process of trigger, action, reward, and investment has been proven successful by the fastest growing startups in tech.

Why startups will like it: This is designed for marketers and product managers that want to make products user cannot put down.

[Amazon](#) | [Website](#)
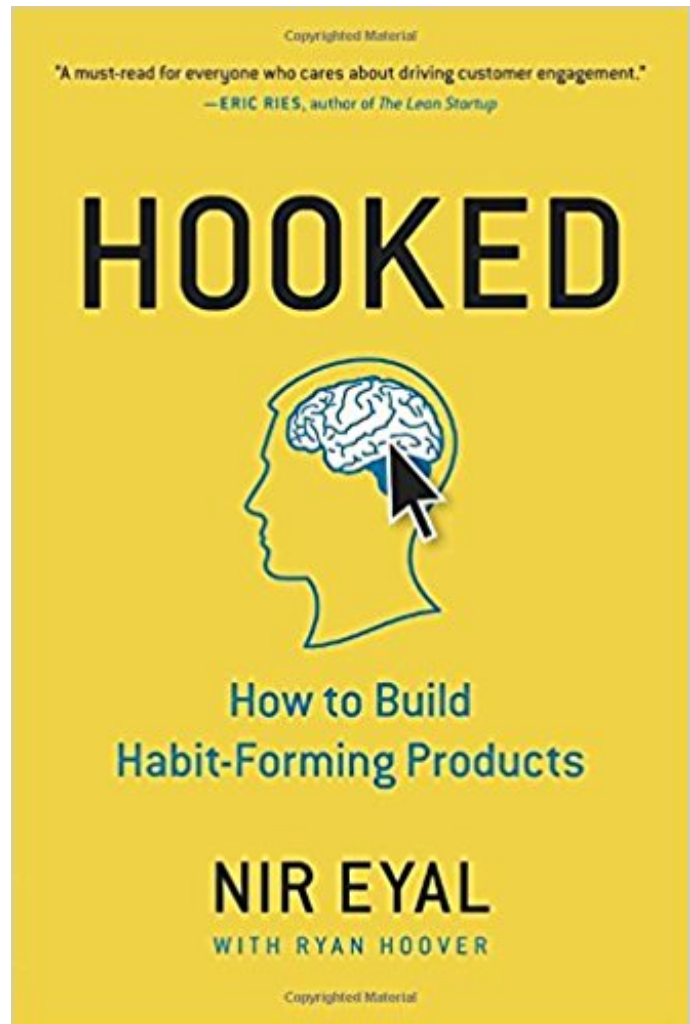
(19) The Ultimate Sales Machine

The Ultimate Sales Machine: Turbocharge Your Business with Relentless Focus on 12 Key Strategies by Chet Holmes

Don't let the title trick you. This book is packed with great takeaways for startup founders that are looking to scale an organization. As a former CEO, Chet goes into the exact processes he used for time management, running and managing teams, how to **optimize every stage of your marketing channel** and what works in scaling a sales team. Consider it a playbook for startup CEOs.

Why startups will like it: It's a playbook for how a startup founder should manage their team and their team's time.

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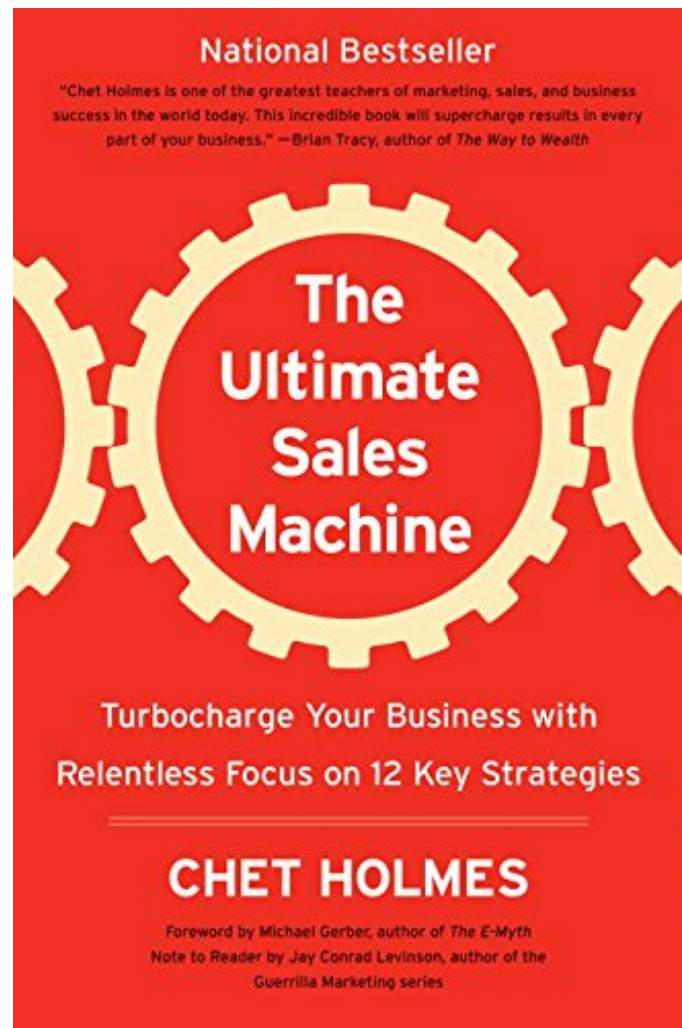
(20) Lean Analytics

Lean Analytics: Use Data to Build a Better Startup Fasterby Alistair Croll & Benjamin Yoskovitz

Based on the principles of the *The Lean Startup,* this book by shows you how to use one metric to drive your entire growth plan. With case studies from AirBnb, Linkedin and PayPal, Lean Analytics gives you multiple examples of how fast growing startups were able to focus on optimizing for one key metric to hit their growth goals.

Why startups will like it: They have a graphic in the book that will help you determine what's the right metric for your startup right now. Based off of your business model and the stage of your startup, the graphic can help determine the metric you should be focused on right now.

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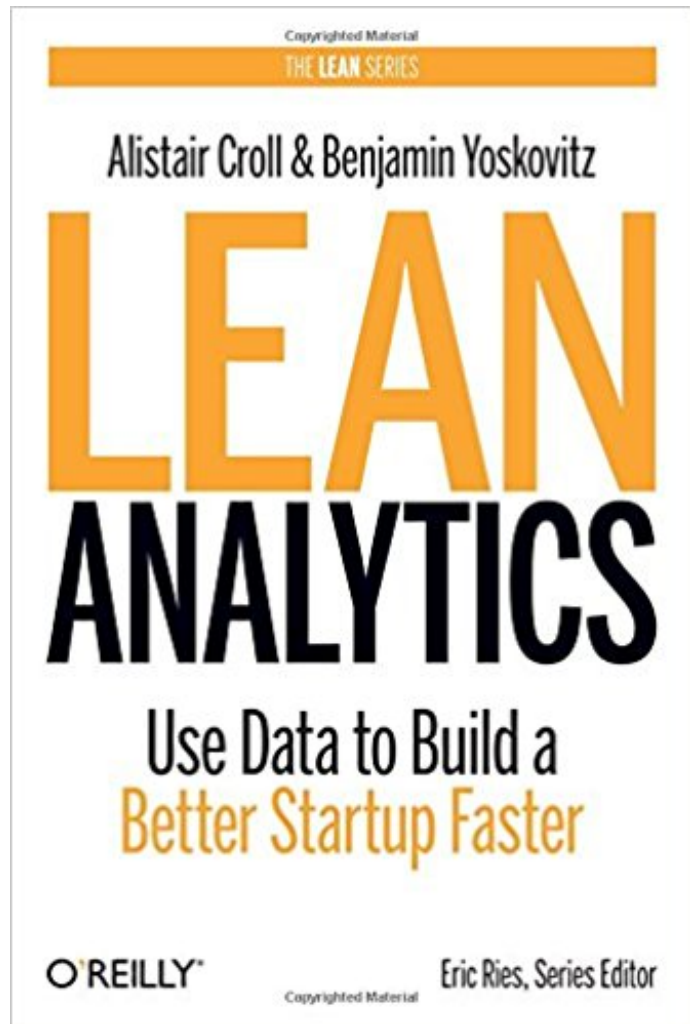
(21) From Impossible to Inevitable

From Impossible To Inevitable: How Hyper-Growth Companies Create Predictable Revenue by Aaron Ross and Jason Lemkin

Written by the founder of SaaStr, Jason Lemkin, this is a must-read book for B2B startups that are looking to build a process for growth that results in predictable revenue. Jason believes there is a proven template the fastest growing startups follow to achieve sustainable revenue. He gets into the details of the processes used by Salesforce, Zenefits, Echosign and more.

Why Startups will like it: The book gets very tactical on growth with the seven ingredients of hyper-growth. These include how to nail your niche, building sustainable growth systems, and how to embrace a culture of employee ownership.
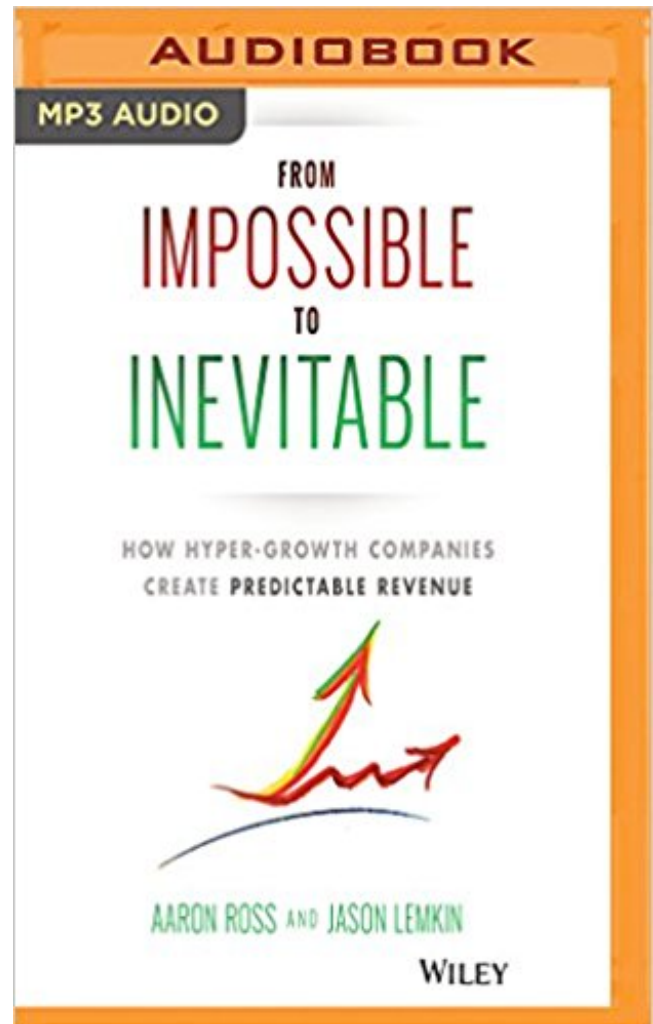
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