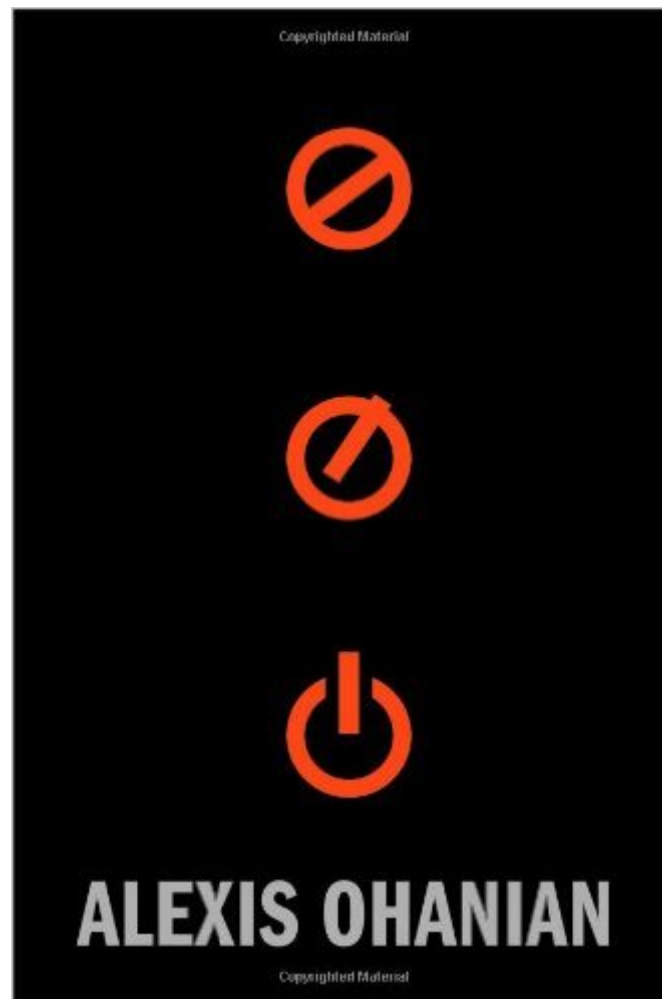# Without Their Permission: How The 21st Century Will Be Made, Not Managed

Synopsis

A WALL STREET JOURNAL BESTSELLER As Alexis Ohanian learned when he helped to co-found the immensely popular reddit.com, the internet is the most powerful and democratic tool for disseminating information in human history. And when that power is harnessed to create new communities, technologies, businesses or charities, the results can be absolutely stunning. In this book, Alexis will share his ideas, tips and even his own doodles about harnessing the power of the web for good, and along the way, he will share his philosophy with young entrepreneurs all over the globe. At 29, Ohanian has come to personify the dorm-room tech entrepreneur, changing the world without asking permission. Within a couple of years of graduating from the University of Virginia, Ohanian did just that, selling reddit for millions of dollars. He's gone on to start many other companies, like hipmunk and breadpig, all while representing Y Combinator and investing in over sixty other tech startups. WITHOUT THEIR PERMISSION is his personal guidebook as to how other aspiring entrepreneurs can follow in his footsteps.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I'm 75% thru this and while I like the author's writing style (though I can see how some find him really self-centered), think most of this kind of information is available free online or elsewhere - and is frankly common sense in the business world ("Build something people want" is just another way of saying "make sure your product solves an issue for your customers" - that's nothing new).I really wanted to like this book, but find it mediocre at best. Ohanian's tone is enthusiastic, but my

expectations were totally different going into it. I bought this because I am a HUGE reddit fan and user and wanted to know more about its start-up phase, founding, and ongoing business issues. If you buy this thinking you'll get good advice on how to found and run your startup, think again - that's not here. Also, this is NOT a product development book (though he offers a few tidbits on prototyping, but they are nothing revelatory).I agree with other reviewers in that the book is a mish-mash and fails on several levels: as a biography (it's not extensive enough); as a teaching lesson on how to emulate/approximate reddit's success (again, not extensive enough -- there's not enough detail here); or as a general primer on starting an internet company ("go find an incubator or like-minded individuals!"). He does provide solid examples of internet companies like Kickstarter, DonorsChoose.org etc. that solve real problems for their customers, but you can get that info from other sources as well.I have to point out that I find it very odd that Aaron Swartz, who is often referred to as a co-founder of reddit, is mentioned NOWHERE in Ohanian's book. Intentional omission? Sure looks that way.

This book is hackneyed, vacuous, and written by an author who is totally, completely, utterly fascinated with himself. His book is full of ridiculously detailed trivia about his life experiences. It offers up hundreds, maybe thousands, of banal observations about entrepreneurship as though they were deep insights. (One random example: "I believe in startup karma. Skeptical? Imagine a reputation score floating above your head. If that's a little too surreal for you, just know that social currency is something you can spend by asking for favors and earn by doing them.")A number of five-star reviewers apparently have met Ohanian personally, and by all accounts he's a really nice guy who has generously funded some good causes. That's great to hear, and I'm sure he has his followers. His coverage of DonorsChoose.org in the book is genuinely enthusiastic. All good. Nonetheless, I find his writing style to be highly focused on himself, and irritating in the same way that those informercials on cable TV in the wee hours of the morning are irritating: Some guy driving around in his expensive car, camera on himself, telling you about how successful he is and that you can succeed too. The narrative is anecdotal, promotional and superficial, bereft of any systematic or analytical approach. There's no index. The few footnotes are not a serious attempt to document sources but instead are full of cutesy comments.This light narrative should have been condensed down to a two-part magazine article or maybe a simple Reddit thread. Of all the how-to-succeed-online books out there, this is one of the least useful I've encountered. "Jobs," "In the Plex," "One Click," or virtually any other work would be more useful if one is looking for high-tech startup tips.

I'm a regular user of reddit and generally interested in technology, and I found this book to be quite disappointing. It reads as more of a memoir and makes a fairly shallow effort to advance the argument presented in the title of the book. I'm glad that Mr. Ohanian is proud of his accomplishments, but it would have been nice to hear more information about taking reddit from a startup to being one of the most trafficked websites around. And yet, we learn that Ohanion a) didn't come up with the idea for reddit, b) didn't write any code for reddit, other than designing the alien icon, c) argued against the concept of subreddits, which contributed greatly to the site's success, especially versus competitor Digg. I couldn't help walking away from this book feeling that Ohanion was simply in the right place at the right time and has little actual insight into the world of technology and its future.I'll admit that I was also a bit turned off by the *multiple* mentions of the fact early on in the book that he was a millionaire at an early age due to the reddit acquisition.

Decent read, but I felt like the book lacked a cohesive narative and it kind of meandered from story to story. This made it hard to for the book to capture my interest. The tone is a talking/story telling tone (much like I'd expect in a speech), that may have contributed to the meandered feeling. I would have like to see some more analysis on the state and future of the internet and how that related to the stories, I think that would have helped to tie everything together.Overall, I didn't feel my time was wasted, but I probably would not reccommend this book

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