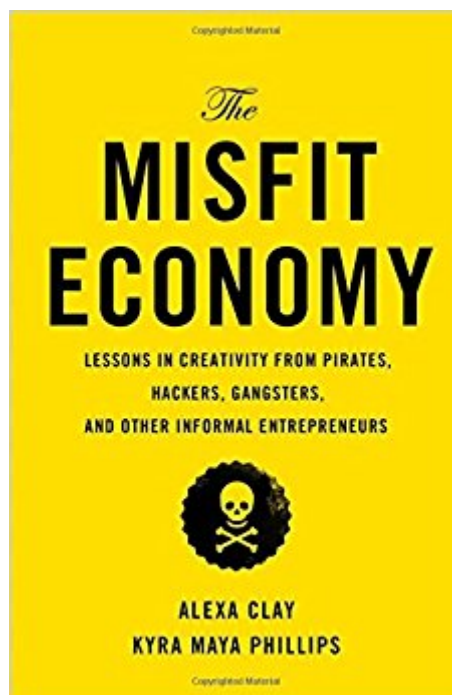




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The Misfit Economy: Lessons In Creativity From Pirates, Hackers, Gangsters And Other Informal Entrepreneurs



Synopsis

A book that argues that lessons in creativity, innovation, salesmanship, and entrepreneurship can come from surprising places: pirates, bootleggers, counterfeiters, hustlers, and others living and working on the margins of business and society. Who are the greatest innovators in the world? You're probably thinking Steve Jobs, Thomas Edison, Henry Ford. The usual suspects. This book isn't about them. It's about people you've never heard of. It's about people who are just as innovative, entrepreneurial, and visionary as the Jobses, Edisons, and Fords of the world. They're in the crowded streets of Shenzhen, the prisons of Somalia, the flooded coastal towns of Thailand. They are pirates, computer hackers, pranksters, and former gang leaders. Across the globe, diverse innovators operating in the black, grey, and informal economies are developing solutions to a myriad of challenges. Far from being "deviant entrepreneurs" that pose threats to our social and economic stability, these innovators display remarkable ingenuity, pioneering original methods and practices that we can learn from and apply to move formal markets. This book investigates the stories of underground innovation that make up the Misfit Economy. It examines the teeming genius of the underground. It asks: Who are these unknown visionaries? How do they work? How do they organize themselves? How do they catalyze innovation? And ultimately, how can you take these lessons into your own world?

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Customer Reviews

"This imaginative, provocative book reveals that if we want to overcome barriers, we can

find surprisingly valuable lessons underground. I never expected to learn so much about entrepreneurship and innovation from pirates and gangsters." (Adam Grant, Wharton professor and author of GIVE AND TAKE) "What do Somali pirates, Amish camel-milkers, and gang leaders have in common? They're all innovative and successful misfits in today's global economy. Think you can't learn anything from outlaws and provocateurs? This book will make you think again with engaging stories and insightful analysis of how people operating on the fringes create unique business models, and in the process transform the culture around them." (Daniel H. Pink, author of TO SELL IS HUMAN and DRIVE) "The Misfit Economy helps us to understand the lives of those men and women who have had to depend on illegal enterprise just to get by. In this book you'll learn how the misfit economies can bring meaning to those who are hopeless, jobless, and hungry for more than a handout. You'll meet people who are just like everyone else in searching for freedom and opportunity, but aren't afraid to bend the rules of the system." (King Tone, Former Leader of the Latin Kings, a hispanic street gang) "If you want to learn what Somali pirates have in common with Silicon Valley entrepreneurs, read this book. It's a colourful guide on how to shine a light on the ingenuity that often lies in the dark depths of all types organisations." (Rachel Botsman, co-author of What's Mine is Yours: How Collaborative Consumption is Changing the Way We Live) "For those wanting a fresh perspective on business practices or working lives, this is a snappy introduction to a new way of thinking." (Financial Times) "A well-paced read about a unique perspective on supply and demand and those who create it. For anyone interested in business or economics especially those who hustle." (Library Journal) "Lively and insightful." The Economist

Alexa Clay is a storyteller and leading expert on subculture. She is the cofounder of the League of Intrapreneurs, a movement to create change from within big business and the Founder of Wisdom Hackers, an incubator for philosophical inquiry. Alexa initiates projects through the collective The Human Agency, which aim to create communities of purpose around the world. Formerly, she was a Director at Ashoka, a global nonprofit that invests in social entrepreneurs. When not operating in the world as Alexa, you can find her playing the Amish Futurist, an alter ego bringing Socratic inquiry to the tech scene. She is a graduate of Brown University and Oxford University. Kyra Maya Phillips is a writer and innovation strategist. She is a director of The Point People, a network based consultancy focused on innovation and systemic change. Previously, Kyra worked as a journalist for The Guardian, where she focused on environmental reporting, and as a consultant at SustainAbility, a London based think-tank and consultancy. She grew up in Caracas, Venezuela,

but is now based in London, where she lives with her husband and son. She is a graduate of The London School of Economics. Together, Alexa and Kyra have appeared in and written for Wired Magazine, Harvard Business Review, Le Monde, The Guardian, The New York Times, Haaretz, Aeon Magazine, Fast Company, MTV, Forbes, Dazed and Confused, and National Geographic.

While this book is good, it fell short of my expectations. I was interested in reading about the innovations of a larger swath of deviants who are often neglected by society. And I did enjoy reading about the entrepreneurial attributes of the Somalian pilots, criminal offenders, and gang leaders. However, I was a bit disappointed that the authors framed the misfit economy through the values and social norms of conventional society. The book seemed to eventually skew towards portraying stories of the typical Ivy League graduate/corporate shill who decided to get a bit edgy. There are already a ton of books/news articles glorifying the rebel businessman, so I was a bit bored by these stories. I also would have been more interested in learning about the practices of "misfits" who aren't on some sort of moralistic quest that we can easily identify as beneficial. I think the book would have been far more intriguing if the authors allowed the readers to wrestle with areas of moral ambiguity rather than attempting to shape every profile to meet society's expectations of morality. I give the book a three because I think these missed opportunities reduced the originality of this work, making this book similar to anything written by Gladwell or any CSR puff piece from corporate America.

Let me first start off by saying that I completely agree with the concepts presented within this book. In the world we live in today, especially in the realm of business and entrepreneurship, it pays to be a misfit, to be different from the pack. I also agree with the presentation of non-unicorn businesses and entrepreneurs. In other words, not nearly as well known nor as affluent. Makes it feel truly attainable by the common person. Each of the anecdotes presented a unique character and they certainly didn't fit the mold. The skeleton was there, it was a great structure for expansion and for plenty of insight to be gained. But after completing it, that isn't quite what I got. For the most part, it seemed like a series of bland stories that were either too vague to really push the point, or just were too in unnecessarily in-depth in areas that didn't pertain to the focus of the book. There was very little "good" meat on the bones, and it was honestly disappointing. I would've preferred some more legitimate lessons in creativity. Within the title of the book is "lessons in creativity," and despite the very interesting people and their stories, I really don't feel like I learned any lessons, or at least anything groundbreaking for that matter. Instead of just throwing out these stories, I would've liked some more application. How can we use what these people did/know to succeed in our

businesses? I get that there is inference there, but the points should've been explicit. Overall, could've been better. I wasn't too thrilled by it. If you want some real, applicable information, this might not be the book to buy. If you are looking for some stories about some very interesting people and their businesses, then pick it up.

While there are some interesting insights around flat organizations being successful, the book mostly reads as a series of random stories that are cherry picked by the authors and don't provide much insight into anything. I did like the early section of the book which explained how intellectual property and those working outside traditional legal frameworks can often be the ones most likely to push innovation forward. I wish it had been the focus of the book rather than many of the other stories.

Started fine, but half way through the end it felt like it was not going anywhere.....But it's not bad. Maybe it's just not my type of reading.

The idea of gleaning the best practices of some of the more exciting subcultures like Pirates, Hackers, Gangsters sounds like a lot of fun. The authors seem to have done a moderate amount of work looking into these people groups and what they came up with was...nothing. They came up with some amusing anecdotes, but very little content leads to greater insight as to why these subcultures thrive. I mean, maybe they thrive because they break the law, while all the rest of us choose to abide by it. Breaking the law is a pretty big barrier to entry.

Anecdotes weren't compelling, and often felt aimless. This is only tied-up at the end, where the author forces the anecdote to fit the broader themes -- themes which were generic and un insightful.

Great Price

The general idea in the book was not new to me, as I've been in this type of innovative environment, but enjoyed reading it. Not only the stories make sense as samples, they also inspire some path to action.

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