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Traction: How Any Startup Can Achieve Explosive Customer Growth



Synopsis

Most startups don't fail because they can't build a product. Most startups fail because they can't get traction. Startup advice tends to be a lot of platitudes repackaged with new buzzwords, but *Traction* is something else entirely. As Gabriel Weinberg and Justin Mares learned from their own experiences, building a successful company is hard. For every startup that grows to the point where it can go public or be profitably acquired, hundreds of others sputter and die. Smart entrepreneurs know that the key to success isn't the originality of your offering, the brilliance of your team, or how much money you raise. It's how consistently you can grow and acquire new customers (or, for a free service, users). That's called traction, and it makes everything else easier - fund-raising, hiring, press, partnerships, acquisitions. Talk is cheap, but traction is hard evidence that you're on the right path. *Traction* will teach you the 19 channels you can use to build a customer base and how to pick the right ones for your business. It draws on interviews with more than 40 successful founders, including Jimmy Wales (Wikipedia), Alexis Ohanian (reddit), Paul English (Kayak), and Dharmesh Shah (HubSpot). You'll learn, for example, how to: Find and use offline ads and other channels your competitors probably aren't using Get targeted media coverage that will help you reach more customers Boost the effectiveness of your email marketing campaigns by automating staggered sets of prompts and updates Improve your search engine rankings and advertising through online tools and research Weinberg and Mares know that there's no one-size-fits-all solution; every startup faces unique challenges and will benefit from a blend of these 19 traction channels. They offer a three-step framework (called Bullseye) to figure out which ones will work best for your business.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I was outlining a book proposal when I found "Traction." My proposal first explained that product development gets easier, faster, and cheaper every year, so startups no longer fail because they can't build their product. Instead, startups fail when they hit the marketing wall. According to The Economist (2014 Sep 13), "marketers say they have seen more change in the past two years than in the previous 50." According to the Harvard Business Review (2014 July-August, p. 56) "In the past decade, what marketers do to engage customers has changed almost beyond recognition....we can't think of another discipline that has evolved so quickly." It can seem like marketing is getting harder each year, but actually in some ways it's getting easier and cheaper, e.g., Facebook's targeted ads. What's needed is a guide to how marketing is changing. Unlike the zillions of e-books about Facebook marketing, Twitter marketing, etc., my book would cover and compare all marketing channels. Unlike the e-books, my book would include case studies of real companies. Unlike the marketing textbooks, my book would focus on tech startups, not on dog treat bakeries and corner grocery stores. Unlike the books that say you'll get rich if you follow their formula, my book would say that marketing is changing rapidly now, and the marketing plan that worked even a few years ago won't work now. I proposed teaching entrepreneurs instead to make small-scale experiments, see what works and what doesn't, and continuously evolve their marketing. I scrapped my book proposal because "Traction" is that book. There are some things I would add (and perhaps Weinberg and Mares will in a second edition).

Traction is one of those books that makes you wonder, "Why didn't anyone write this before?" • Gabriel and Justin have done a marvelous job outlining a strategy for solving the #1 challenge facing EVERY new business today: how to get traction " what Naval Ravikant (AngelList) defines as "quantitative evidence of demand". The book begins by explaining why getting early customers is so critical for startups today and outlining a high-level strategy for doing it. They recommend considering a lot of different options, systematically testing them, and then focusing like hell on the 1 or two that are working. The meat of the book " and the reason it belongs on your bookshelf " is the 19 chapters dedicated to each one of the traction channels: Viral Marketing, PR, Unconventional PR, SEM, Social & Display Ads, Offline Ads, SEO, Content Marketing, Email Marketing, Engineering as Marketing, Targeting Blogs, Business Development, Sales, Affiliate Programs, Existing Platforms, Trade Shows, Offline Events, Speaking Engagements, Community

BuildingA marketing resource for startup FoundersThis is a book that could have only been written by startup founders for startup founders. As founders, we never have the luxury of becoming an expert in any marketing strategy. But we have to know enough about all of them to get started and fill our teams with experts. There are hundreds (e.g. Content Marketing) or thousands (e.g. Sales) of books on each of these strategies – more than any Founder ever needs to absorb. But I’ve never encountered a resources that gives a comprehensive overview of each of them.

Traction. Ah, just the sound of the word alone makes my spine tingle. Traction, it seems, can forgive all sins. With enough of it, investors will commit even if you haven’t figured out your team or how you will make money. So why is it that so many founders sit on their hands and just hope that their product takes off? Ignorance. Most founders don’t know how to get traction for their startups and so they blindly double down on building a great product. They don’t know what investors mean when asked for a “Go-to-Market” plan so they skip that slide. Almost every failed startup has a product. What failed startups don’t have are enough customers. Ignorance for how to build traction is not an excuse, and Justin and Gabriel have created a definitive guide to stepping you through the 19 channels that every entrepreneur has access to today. I don’t care if you are a food cart or the next Instagram, you will learn valuable techniques for building your business if you buy this book. After reading this book and implementing their “Bullseye Framework”, you will absolutely be able to create a killer Go-to-Market slide for any investor. The Bullseye Framework solves the fundamental problem that: “Some traction channels will move the needle early on, but will fail to work later [] What moves the needle changes dramatically.” This framework will guide you to quickly figure out which 1 of the 19 channels you should focus on first. It will also help you shift gears when that one no longer serves you any more. The worst thing you can do with traction is forget to shift into 5th gear while merging onto the freeway. It is about time that someone create this definitive guide.

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