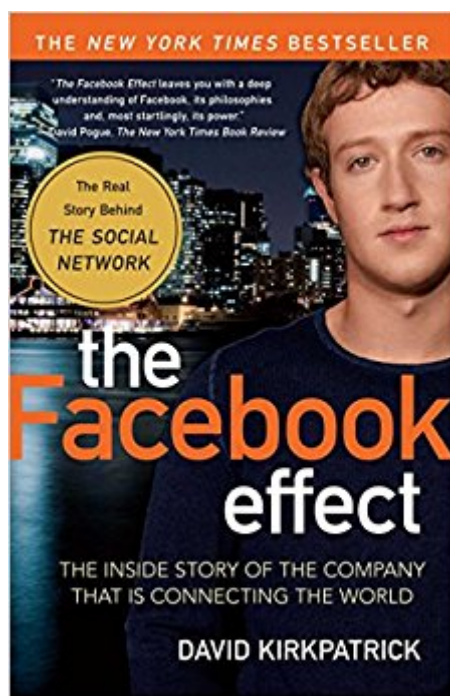


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The Facebook Effect: The Inside Story Of The Company That Is Connecting The World



Synopsis

The exclusive inside story of Facebook and how it has revolutionized the way the world uses the Internet. “A fantastic book, filled with great reporting and colorful narrative” (Walter Isaacson). In little more than half a decade, Facebook has gone from a dorm-room novelty to a company with 500 million users. It is one of the fastest growing companies in history, an essential part of the social life not only of teenagers but hundreds of millions of adults worldwide. As Facebook spreads around the globe, it creates surprising effects—even becoming instrumental in political protests from Colombia to Iran. Veteran technology reporter David Kirkpatrick had the full cooperation of Facebook’s key executives in researching this fascinating history of the company and its impact on our lives. Kirkpatrick tells us how Facebook was created, why it has flourished, and where it is going next. He chronicles its successes and missteps, and gives readers the most complete assessment anywhere of founder and CEO Mark Zuckerberg, the central figure in the company’s remarkable ascent. This is the Facebook story that can be found nowhere else. How did a nineteen-year-old Harvard student create a company that has transformed the Internet and how did he grow it to its current enormous size? Kirkpatrick shows how Zuckerberg steadfastly refused to compromise his vision, insistently focusing on growth over profits and preaching that Facebook must dominate (his word) communication on the Internet. In the process, he and a small group of key executives have created a company that has changed social life in the United States and elsewhere, a company that has become a ubiquitous presence in marketing, altering politics, business, and even our sense of our own identity. This is the Facebook Effect.

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Customer Reviews

There's never been a Web site like Facebook: more than 350 million people have accounts, and if the growth rate continues, by 2013 every Internet user worldwide will have his or her own page. And no one's had more access to the inner workings of the phenomenon than Kirkpatrick, a senior tech writer at Fortune magazine. Written with the full cooperation of founder Mark Zuckerberg, the book follows the company from its genesis in a Harvard dorm room through its successes over Friendster and MySpace, the expansion of the user base, and Zuckerberg's refusal to sell. The author is at his best discussing the social implications of the site, from the changing notions of privacy to why and how people use Facebook—increasingly it's to come together around a common interest or cause (the eponymous Facebook Effect). Though significantly more informative, thoughtful, and credible than Ben Mezrich's *The Accidental Billionaires*, it may be hamstrung by its late entry; the furor over Facebook has more or less subsided, and potential readers are more likely to be using the site than to be reading about its origins. (June) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Starred Review The greatest measure of the appeal of a business narrative is its story-ability, that is, the ways in which the tale of a corporation's ups and downs grabs its readers. Such is the case with Fortune magazine journalist Kirkpatrick's look at Facebook and its growth. The reason? In part because its co-founder now CEO Mark Zuckerberg allowed almost unprecedented access to the author—not one but several times. The results seem to mirror Zuckerberg's insistence on an "open and transparent" dialogue with itself and with its customers. Starting from a 2003 Harvard campus Web site created to keep track of schoolmates, Facebook has grown in less than a decade to nearly a half billion users and multimillions in revenues, a growth trajectory credited to its C-suite's unwavering vision and its continual innovations—including News Feed, multiple applications, and self-service advertising. Talented people, too, add to the explosion that is Facebook; Kirkpatrick's pages are populated with names like Steve Ballmer, Lawrence Summers, Larry Brin, and lesser-known others who've contributed to this social networking phenomenon. Kirkpatrick also keeps his superlatives in check, weaving stories about Zuckerberg

and his cadre while clearly showing the warts as well. An intriguing, almost participatory, read.

--Barbara Jacobs --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

The Facebook Effect provides an insider's view of what Facebook was like in the early days. One of the most interesting aspects of the story is how uncertain the success of the company was. At many points it seemed like the company bordered on the line of crisis, but Zuckerberg and his team were able to adapt and handle the challenges. The book is engaging as it tells the story. One of the more interesting stories was when one of the original owners of Facebook decided to not pay the bill for the Facebook servers. Tensions around this event ran high and the company was fortunate to survive this event unscathed. It seems this is the only novel which was granted behind-the-scenes access to the actual story and provides some insight to Zuckerberg's thought process. I found the parts about the impact of Facebook on society to be less impressive as many of the insights seemed like common sense to me. It would have been nice to see more analysis of the role Facebook plays in society. Although it appears the goal of the book was to focus on the Facebook story.

What features of Facebook led to its instant success, and who deserves the credit? Why has Facebook continued to grow while other social networks faltered at earlier stages? How did Facebook make money at various stages of development? What caused Facebook's various missteps? Does Facebook really care about privacy? David Fitzpatrick gives convincing answers to these questions that have been hotly debated among users for years. The book suffers at times from gushy editorializing, but overall the reporting is balanced (with a few exceptions), and readers can weigh the facts on their own. Fitzpatrick identifies several features that differentiated Facebook from the rest. School networks offered a controlled community. Users felt comfortable projecting their true identities online in this setting. The site was easy to use, and didn't try to do too much too soon. Long-run growth was always a stronger priority than short-term ad revenue. Mark Zuckerberg's immaturity during his college-age years is clear, but he ultimately nails the most important strategic decisions. He was not a mere caretaker of a simple idea at the right time. The book touches on the personal conflicts made famous by the Social Network movie. The motives behind Eduardo Saverin's sacking are carefully reported. In contrast, key facts are missing in Fitzpatrick's treatment of the Winklevoss/Narendra ConnectU lawsuit. Fitzpatrick makes a convincing case that ConnectU's business plan was inferior to Facebook's, but he glosses over how Zuckerberg sabotaged their site for months. Zuckerberg's AOL IMs from this era (referenced in the 12/30/10

NYT) reveal he viewed them as a competitor, and this calls into question Fitzpatrick's judgment that Zuckerberg was merely guilty of being "rude" and "uncooperative." Future editions of the book should incorporate more accurate information about the case. Another weakness is the book's failure to address contradictions in Facebook's views on privacy. For example, he asserts in the prologue that Facebook "has always been explicitly conceived and engineered by Zuckerberg and colleagues as a tool to enhance your relations with your real-world friends" But later we learn that Zuckerberg is always pushing people to be more transparent, and that voyeurism was part of Facebook's success from the beginning at Harvard. Who seriously believes Facebook has never encouraged voyeurism outside of your circle of real friends? Yet the book's most lasting impression is Zuckerberg's resolve in prioritizing Facebook's utility over its profits. Knowing how close friend Sean Parker lost control of his past ventures, Zuckerberg is careful not to let future investors take control of his baby. Understanding this is also crucial to understanding the controversy behind Facebook's delays in going public. Without Zuckerberg's patience, Facebook would have been far less useful as a tool of Viacom, News Corp, Yahoo, Microsoft, or Wall Street. For this, Zuckerberg is worthy of the rosy picture painted in this book, despite his sins.

Kirkpatrick really makes "The Facebook Effect" an easy read. It would be well suited for anyone looking to better understand the beginnings of Facebook. Many of the people at Facebook, including Zuckerberg, were involved in "The Facebook Effect," but the book is not all praise, which is nice. The book is set-up as a timeline of Facebook's evolution - which is sort of funny considering the new layout on Facebook currently. Throughout the book, Kirkpatrick emphasizes the effect social networking sites have had on the way people interact with each other. While nicely describing the evolution of Facebook, "The Facebook Effect" could have detailed how businesses use Facebook a bit more like promised in the Prologue. The book mainly focuses on the company and a bit on how consumers use Facebook. It would have been nice to read more information about Facebook's users instead of mainly company information. The user information seemed sort of thrown into the book toward the end. Even with "The Facebook Effect's" faults, the book was still engaging and an interesting read. Kirkpatrick spent a good amount of time discussing Zuckerberg and Facebook's willingness to change, which was a good thing. Much like every day, real life, social networking sites need to evolve and not remain stagnant. Even newer emerging niche social networking sites, such as Pinterest, allow for Facebook integration. Zuckerberg was smart in allowing Pinterest to utilize Facebook. The integration allows for both sites to flourish without explicitly taking users away from each other.

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