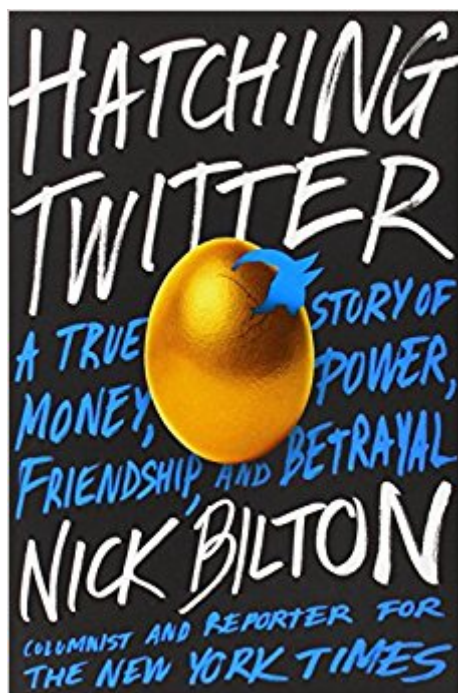


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Hatching Twitter: A True Story Of Money, Power, Friendship, And Betrayal



Synopsis

A New York Times bestseller. Ev told Jack he had to chill out with the deluge of media he was doing. "It's bad for the company," Ev said. "It's sending the wrong message." Biz sat between them, watching like a spectator at a tennis match. "But I invented Twitter," Jack said. "No, you didn't invent Twitter," Ev replied. "I didn't invent Twitter either. Neither did Biz. People don't invent things on the Internet. They simply expand on an idea that already exists." In 2005, Odeo was a struggling podcasting start-up founded by free-range hacker Noah Glass and staffed by a motley crew of anarchists. Less than two years later, its days were numbered and half the staff had been let go. But out of Odeo's ashes, the remaining employees worked on a little side venture . . . that by 2013 had become an \$11.5 billion business. That much is widely known. But the full story of Twitter's hatching has never been told before. It's a drama of betrayed friendships and high-stakes power struggles, as the founders went from everyday engineers to wealthy celebrities featured on magazine covers, The Oprah Winfrey Show, The Daily Show, and Time's list of the world's most influential people. New York Times columnist and reporter Nick Bilton takes readers behind the scenes as Twitter grew at exponential speeds. He gets inside the heads of the four hackers out of whom the company tumbled: Evan Williams, the ambitious farm boy from Clarks, Nebraska, who had already created Blogger and sold it to Google for millions. Quiet and protective, Ev is a shrewd businessman who made tough choices in the interest of his companies, firing cofounders and employees who were once friends. Jack Dorsey, the tattooed "nobody" who helped mastermind the original concept of Twitter, became a billionaire tech titan, and convinced the media that he was the next Steve Jobs. Christopher "Biz" Stone, the joker and diplomat who played nice with everyone. As drama ensued, he was the only founder who remained on good terms with his friends and to this day has no enduring resentments. Noah Glass, the shy but energetic geek who invested his whole life in Twitter, only to be kicked out and expunged from the company's official history. As Twitter grew, the four founders fought bitterly for money, influence, publicity, and control over a company that grows larger and more powerful by the day. Ultimately they all lost their grip on it. Today, none of them is the CEO. Dick Costolo, a fifty-year-old former comedian, runs the company. By 2013 Twitter boasted close to 300 million active users around the world. In barely six years, the service has become a tool for fighting political oppression in the Middle East, a marketing must-have for business, and the world's living room during live TV events. Today, notables such as the pope, Oprah Winfrey, and the president of the United States are

regular Twitter users. A seventeen-year-old with a mobile phone can now reach a larger audience than an entire crew at CNN. Bilton's unprecedented access and exhaustive investigating reporting—drawing on hundreds of sources, documents, and internal e-mails—have enabled him to write an intimate portrait of four friends who accidentally changed the world, and what they all learned along the way.

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Customer Reviews

I'm Rabble, one of the people who helped start Odeo and I'm mentioned a bunch in the first couple chapters. This review might not be useful for evaluating the book as something to read, but I figured this might be a decent forum to provide a review. The story is very well told. It's a captivating read. It's very surreal to read about your friends and former co-workers in a book like this. Most of us live our lives only ourselves. Having this book is kind of like having a well researched MTV Rock Documentary about our work, friendships, and time in our lives. I think if you interview enough people, look at what happened in any situation, it's easy to put a spin and story on things. None of us know the details of everybody else's life. I wish there'd been more discussion about the technical and models we pulled from to build Twitter. Where the ideas came from and how they were put together. It's very weird to see how much focus there is on people's drinking, clothing, hygiene, and being broke. That we were pulling from txtmob, the unix finger command, Carlton University's status update system, bike messenger dispatch, blogger, etc... that's not as sexy a story. That we considered how to look at transitions of mediums from desktop to web, from web to mobile, as a

place to create new systems for communications in old ways, isn't as cool as intrigue amongst friends who ended up creating twitter. There's a lot of the people and not as much understanding twitter and it's context. The order of things as they happened and as they are told in the book isn't the same. This is ok, i think, mostly because the book is about telling the story of twitter's creation. It's no a strict chronology. Reordering things makes for a better story arc.

Having lived and worked in and around Silicon Valley for most of my adult life, I have always felt that one of the most frustrating things about this still-amazing place is that it never seems content to just tell the world the truth about how technology is made. Building products--successful and unsuccessful ones alike--requires a lot of things: A solid idea, the right team to execute on it, and good timing, certainly, but on a more complicated note, personal connections, social capital, back-room deals, and, most of all, a whole hell of a lot of luck. Yet the stories that get told about Silicon Valley all too often gloss over all of this (and the power-grabbing and horse-trading that always accompany it) in favor of the much simpler and totally inaccurate narrative about the brilliance of "that one guy." The "founder." The "inventor." The one who made all the money and took all the fame. Never mind the other people who helped come up with it, the people who supported it, the people who contributed to it, the people who toiled away to make it a real thing. Nope: Just that guy. You know, the next Steve Jobs! Not so "Hatching Twitter." A lot of the reviews here have focused on how compelling Bilton tells this story, weaving the narrative of the tool's creation around some impressively researched details about a seemingly never-ending litany of back-stabbing. That's completely true, and the book's a worthwhile read for that alone.

Author Nick Bilton conducted hundreds of hours of interviews with both current and past employees at Twitter, as well as their friends and even competitors at other companies. All four co-founders of the company agreed to be interviewed - and so did board members (past and present). I've read plenty about the history of the company and still found some surprising information in this book. In addition to interviews, Bilton turned to Twitter itself to help fact check Twitter's history and the varied personalities behind the company. He also pored through thousands of online photos, videos, and tweets. If conversations with key players revealed significantly different recollections, trails of info found on Twitter could often set the record straight. A smart move on the author's part - scrutinizing how the founders used Twitter - right down to tweets on the exact days and times when certain pivotal events occurred. From the first pages, I found myself drawn to the details of the power plays and personalities vividly chronicled by Bilton. The first section focuses on Twitter's founders: Evan

Williams, Noah Glass, Jack Dorsey, and Biz Stone. All of them diverse and fascinating. Williams, the farm boy who came to California and taught himself code. Noah Glass, who opens a magazine and realizes he lives in an apartment directly across from Williams (talk about coincidence) and introduces himself by yelling, "Hey, Blogger!" at Williams. Then there is Jack Dorsey, the "invisible man" who had a significant speech impediment but didn't let that stop him from eventually becoming so successful that he won Wall Street Journal's 2012 "Innovator of the Year Award" in technology.

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