

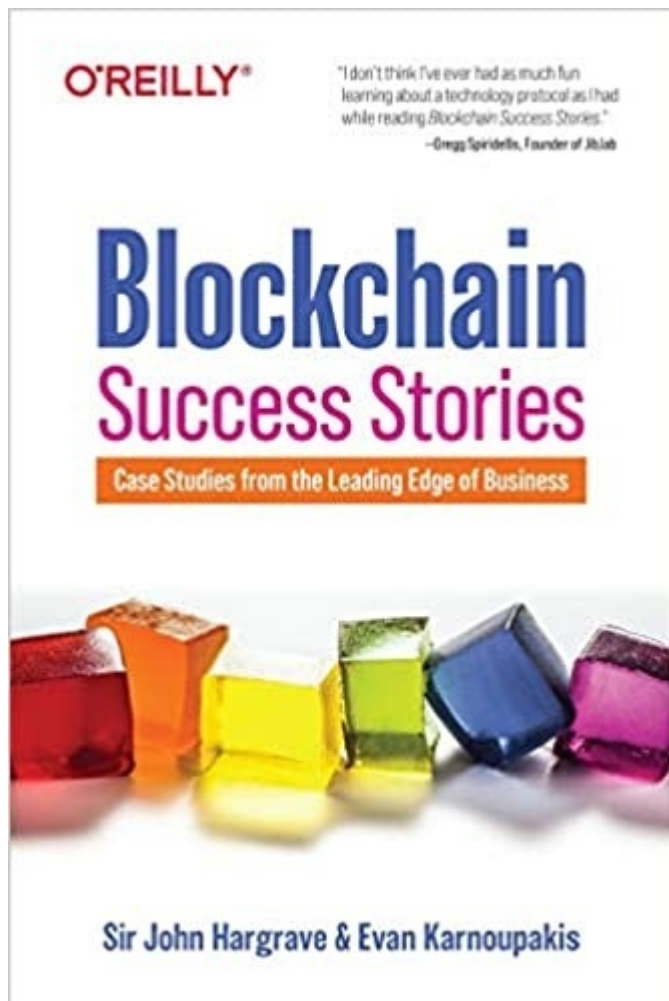
Instead of Focusing on Blockchain, Examine the Stories of Innovators Who Propel the Technology

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The global pandemic has changed the way we work, communicate, socialize, and conduct our daily lives. Some people are in limbo while others are focused on the what ifs. Instead, with the acceleration of digital technologies, staying abreast of the emerging trends will keep you relevant and prepare you for new opportunities.

Having worked with founders of tech startups, I learned how those who are successful operate. They have a mission bigger than themselves, possess customer-driven ideas, and never give up despite challenges.

After reading many books about technology, I've learned the ones that stick provide use cases, learnings from the past, use plain-English instead of techno-speak, demystify the core concepts and take us along the author's journey.



In October, I was a judge during CoinAgenda and BitAngels Virtual Pitch Competition, a global pitch fest with many leading startups. The opening presenters were authors John Hargrave and Evan Karnoupakis, both experts in the field who discussed their new book, *Blockchain Success Stories: Case Studies from the Leading Edge of Business*.

Their conversation was engaging, educational and thought-provoking which inspired me to learn more. If you're a blockchain or crypto enthusiast, you know that many startups fail while others succeed. So, what makes a startup last?

For those of you who work within industry sectors that use blockchain applications, you'll gain a better understand of the global ecosystem. If you're a tech-newbie, a student, or are searching for a job, blockchain has accelerated. Why not get involved?

The global blockchain market size is projected to grow from \$3.0 billion in 2020 to \$39.7 billion in 2025, according to a May 2020 report from MarketsandMarkets. PWC predicts that blockchain has the potential to add \$1.76 trillion to the global economy by 2030, increasing jobs by 40 million.

While the authors review blockchain basics, the reader doesn't

get mired in descriptors, industry-specific jargon or buzzwords which hinders adoption. Several years ago, Gartner even dubbed the problem as *blockchain fatigue*.

I encountered this first-hand when I wrote, *The Amazing Utility of Blockchain: From Mining Crypto for Charities to Tracking E-Coli* in 2018 and learned that many people were still not clear about how blockchain works. After writing a more basic article, *How Blockchain Can Rebuild Digital Trust* it was named CommPRO's #2 most-read (out of 10,000 contributors) in 2019.

How to Move from Tech Newbie to Savvy

People often think you need to be a technologist, data scientist, analyst, investor or possess hard skills like data analytics, cloud and distributed computing, AI, engineering, UX design and more.

But business leaders report that having soft skills like, a growth mindset, creativity, adaptability, a collaborative nature, and emotional intelligence, are equally important in our current environment.

In fact, *Walmart and JPMorgan are increasingly experimenting with new blockchain initiatives where non-technical folks are needed*, Phillipe Forte, partner at The Blockchain Venture Coalition told CoinDesk.

Like the case study method created by Harvard Business School, the authors discuss each founder's vision, their strategy, fits and starts and how they worked to overcome problems and gain adoption.

The questions at the end of each chapter help us think about what we'd do in different scenarios and serve as teaching tools. With so many inspiring stories in the book, here are a few examples:

How Helium is Reducing IoT Costs. You Can Too

In 2013, Amir Haleem champion video gamer and Shawn Fanning, creator of Napster wanted to create a massive wireless network that was inexpensive and used less power and bandwidth.

One year later, their idea evolved into a wireless network of millions of hotspots. Instead of using large and costly cell towers, people connected their devices to Helium hotspots, creating communities of connectivity without using WiFi.

With Helium, consumers can connect to the Internet of Things (IOT) using a hotspot that tracks location, usage, and more from scooters, bikes, smart pet collars, cargo freights and detect forest fires.

Once people connect their hotspot to WiFi and place it on a windowsill, it connects to a Helium IoT wireless peer-to-peer (P2P) protocol or a standard set of rules called LongFi that connects to thousands of self-communicating devices.

The energy used is similar to the cost of a 12-watt lightbulb. In essence, people become their own telecom company which Helium dubbed, "The People's Network." It's accessible to anyone at a low-cost, resistant to censorship and secure.

Some of the companies using Helium are Salesforce for IoT innovation, Lime for micro mobility tracking, Conserv for protecting art, Smart Mimic for contact tracing, and many others. Here's a brief video about Helium.

How Voatz, a Mobile Voting App Can Help Disenfranchised Voters

Throughout the Presidential election, voting was a huge topic of discussion with uncertainty and skepticism about the process. Barriers included fears of catching COVID-19 while

waiting in long lines, concerns about mail-in ballots, an inability to take time off from work, lack of clarity regarding the location or access to polling places and other problems with voting.

For example, many military personnel and students studying abroad were unable to get their ballots in on time, and some people who were incarcerated were not allowed to vote (depending on their state). Others felt they were discriminated against because of their race, gender or financial status.

To address these issues, Nimit S. Sawhney, Co-Founder and CEO of Voatz, a private Boston-based company created the first voting app. Recalling his travels to India, Nimit discusses what he saw as a young child; seeing families targeted and killed and people being forced to vote at gunpoint. This experience inspired him to create a new voting system that people would trust.

Pilot programs included the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, counties within the states of West Virginia and Massachusetts, and also with Tufts University. Voatz was used in federal, state and municipal elections in West Virginia, Denver, Oregon and Utah.

As John says, *it's an idea whose time has come. We do everything on our phones. Why not vote?* Watch this short Voatz video to learn the inspiration behind the founders use of blockchain technology.

Owning Your Digital Assets

The story of CryptoKitties is one of the most well-known in blockchain, and one of the authors' favorites because of what happened during a massive boom in 2017 with blockchain.

Mack Flavelle, the CEO of CryptoKitties worked at Dapper Labs and Axiom Zen. Axiom Zen is an innovation studio that develops

software and innovation solutions for both large companies and startups in gaming, AI, AR and blockchain.

Roham Gharegozlou, CEO of Dapper Labs, Former CEO of Axion Zen, the company behind CryptoKitties, works with startup founders, corporate leaders, VC's and academic institutions.

Together, they had an idea to take a breeding/farming game and "mash it up" with the new world of cryptocurrency and blockchain. The story began when Flavelle was staying with his father and said after receiving a message, *we just sold our first CryptoKittie for \$30,000*. Then another message said *Ethereum crashed*.

Since CryptoKitties was extremely popular it was driving the sale of Ethereum. How did they fix the problem? They followed the same method as Satoshi and created a non-fungible token (NFT).

As an aside, if you haven't heard the name, Satoshi Nakamoto it's a pseudonym, person or persons who developed Bitcoin, authored the renown Bitcoin whitepaper and created the first blockchain database. Another innovation was tokenization (using blockchain technology to securitize assets). Simply put, it's when a blockchain token is issued to represent a real tradeable asset.

Unlike fungible tokens (which can be exchanged for equal value) such as a ten-dollar bill which is equal to two five-dollar bills, or one Bitcoin has the same value as another Bitcoin, NFT's are unique, rare, and not interchangeable. ERC721 is a standard interface for NFTs, a subset of Ethereum tokens. In gaming and collectibles, NFT's are digital collectibles.

The CryptoKitties team collaborated with Metamask, created a community of investors and in early 2018, CryptoKitties spun off Dapper Labs into its own company which raised \$12M from VCs and angel investors.

In May of 2018, one CryptoKitty sold for \$140,000 and in October, it had 1M cats that were bred with 3.2M transactions on its smart contracts and raised an additional \$15 million.

As the world moves increasingly online, so has consumers' desire for discovering and collecting digital memorabilia that brings them one step closer to their favorite athletes, musicians and iconic characters," said Roham Gharegozlou, in a statement to Venture Beat.

Since most people know of CryptoKitties, I won't share the entire story. Instead, here's a Vox video about the craze behind why people buy digital cat collectibles.

Build on Your Strengths

These and many other stories are covered in-detail in Blockchain Success Stories. Whether you're a student, graduate, entrepreneur, marketer, or C-Suite executive, blockchain is impacting most industry sectors. You can learn by reading, participating in virtual events, using social media, watching explainer videos and more.

Throughout 2020, common terms used are, "pivoting," "the new normal" and "the next new normal." Instead, continued learning will keep you relevant during an uncertain future. As a marketing communications veteran, I expanded my skillset to become a published writer and a technology columnist. If you reflect you on your career, you will find common patterns and transferrable skills too.

As we move closer to 2021, here's one of my favorite quotes about learning:

"The passion for stretching yourself and sticking to it, even (or especially) when it's not going well, is the hallmark of the growth mindset. This is the mindset that allows people to thrive during some of the most challenging times in their lives." – Carol Dweck, world-renowned Stanford University

psychologist and author



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