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One Click: Jeff Bezos And The Rise Of .com



Synopsis

Amazon's business model is deceptively simple: Make online shopping so easy and convenient that customers won't think twice. It almost can be summed up by the button on every page: "Buy now with one click." Why has Amazon been so successful? Much of it has to do with Jeff Bezos, the founder and CEO, whose unique combination of character traits and business strategy has driven him to the top of the online retail world. Richard Brandt charts Bezos's rise from computer nerd to world-changing entrepreneur. Through interviews with employees, competitors, and observers, Brandt has deciphered how Bezos makes decisions. The story of Amazon's ongoing evolution is a case study in how to reinvent an entire industry, and one that businesses today ignore at their peril.

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Customer Reviews

I guess it really depends on how much you already know about Jeff Bezos and the history of Amazon - that will probably determine whether you enjoy the book, IMHO. I knew very little, so I got a good, quick oversight into Jeff Bezos as a businessman, and into Amazon's early days. It discusses his strengths and questions his weaknesses as a business leader quite extensively. The traits that made him successful are probably his acute decision making abilities (why he chose books instead of CDs at first, why Seattle over CA, etc), long-term perspective, and a unique ability to execute decisions to precision. Both sides of Amazon's book business - customers who want lower prices, and publishers who want to keep authors in business, are discussed at length. Amazon may have been portrayed, willingly or unwillingly, in a poor light here. I think Amazon is doing what is right by their customers and what any

business would do in order to keep a competitive edge in the marketplace. It's a free market economy and any company is welcome to step in and help publishers get a higher price if they are able to do so - is not stopping them. There are two sides to the debate, both sides with their own merits, but I think the author spends more time on 's ruthless negotiations with publication houses. While there is lengthy discussion about the early days of , the ongoing battles with publishers, and Blue Origin, not much has been discussed about the current market is operating in and its projected path forward. Cloud computing, for example, is discussed only fleetingly. The book reveals nothing new in itself, except maybe the early years of Bezos that I wasn't familiar with.

'One Click' provides background on 's early history; unfortunately, it is not nearly complete enough to qualify as a 'good history.' Jeff Bezos was a good student in high school, and graduated from Princeton with majors in electrical engineering and computer science. When selecting a business to start he considered books (\$19 billion wold in 1994, vs. only \$7 billion in software, of which \$2 billion was from Microsoft - a company that probably wouldn't allow much profits. Barnes and Nobles, and Borders held 25% of the book business - their stores held a maximum of 175,000 titles. Small bookstores held 21% of the market, and the rest were sold by supermarkets, etc. There are two major book distributors, each with warehouses holding about 400,000 titles. Bezos liked the name " - is early in the alphabet, easy to spell, and represented a mighty river. He began with less than \$200,000 - mostly funds from his relatives. He chose Oracle's database management system, along with free UNIX and AT&T's data-base-management software. His general strategy was to be conservative in estimating shipping dates so as to not disappoint. It took about a year to create a web site; launched 7/95, and started with about 6 orders/day. Fortunately, neither Barnes and Noble nor Borders had web sites at the time. By October, volume was up to 100 sales/day, and in less than a year, 100/hour. It's 1997 IPO was valued at \$429 million. (It now is about \$82 billion.) Early customer service representatives were given options for 100 shares after three years. The best could answer 12 emails/minute, those dropping below 7 were often fired. Prior to this they took a three-week course to learn how everything worked. My guess is that very few, if any, lasted the three years.

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