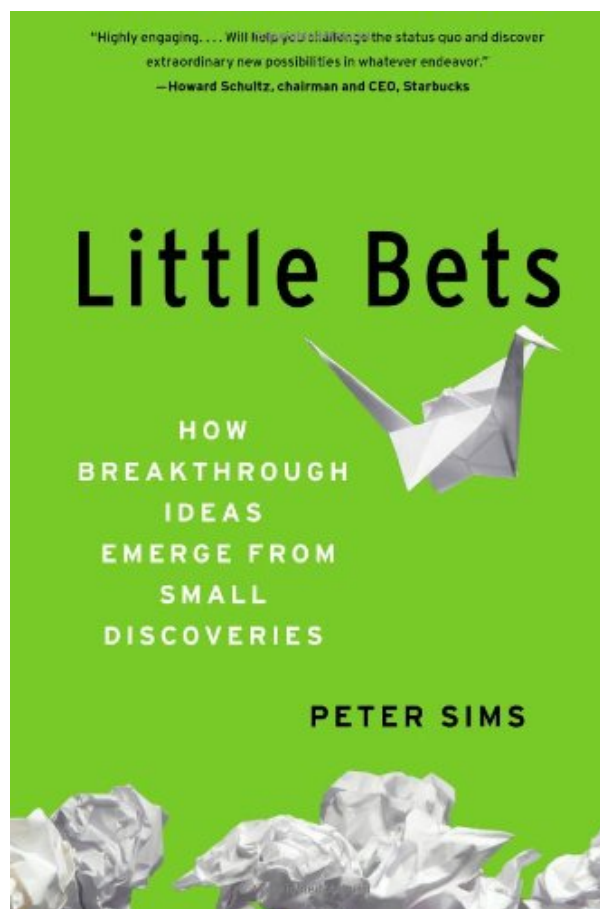


LITTLE BETS: HOW BREAKTHROUGH IDEAS EMERGE FROM SMALL DISCOVERIES (ENGLISH AND ENGLISH EDITION) BY PETER SIMS



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"Highly engaging. . . . Will help you challenge the status quo and discover extraordinary new possibilities in whatever endeavor."
—Howard Schultz, chairman and CEO, Starbucks

Little Bets

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About the Author

Peter Sims is the coauthor with Bill George of the Wall Street Journal and BusinessWeek bestselling book True North. His work has appeared in the Harvard Business Review, Fortune, and TechCrunch and he is a contributor to the Reuters and Harvard Business Review blogs. He received an M.B.A. from Stanford Business School where he and several classmates established a popular course on leadership. He has spoken or advised at such organizations as Cisco Systems, Eli Lilly, Current Media, Molson Coors, Qualcomm, and Frost & Sullivan. Previously, Peter worked in venture capital with Summit Partners, a leading investment company, and was part of the team that established the firm's London Office.

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What do Apple CEO Steve Jobs, comedian Chris Rock, prize-winning architect Frank Gehry, the story developers at Pixar films, and the Army Chief of Strategic Plans all have in common? Bestselling author Peter Sims found that all of them have achieved breakthrough results by methodically taking small, experimental steps in order to discover and develop new ideas. Rather than believing they have to start with a big idea or plan a whole project out in advance, trying to foresee the final outcome, they make a series of little bets about what might be a good direction, learning from lots of little failures and from small but highly significant wins that allow them to happen upon unexpected avenues and arrive at extraordinary outcomes.

Based on deep and extensive research, including more than 200 interviews with leading innovators, Sims discovered that productive, creative thinkers and doers—from Ludwig van Beethoven to Thomas Edison and Amazon's Jeff Bezos—practice a key set of simple but ingenious experimental methods—such as failing quickly to learn fast, tapping into the genius of play, and engaging in highly immersed observation—that free their minds, opening them up to making unexpected connections and perceiving invaluable insights. These methods also unshackle them from the constraints of overly analytical thinking and linear problem solving that our education places so much emphasis on, as well as from the fear of failure, all of which thwart so many of us in trying to be more innovative.

Reporting on a fascinating range of research, from the psychology of creative blocks to the influential Silicon Valley-based field of design thinking, Sims offers engaging and wonderfully illuminating accounts of breakthrough innovators at work, including how Hewlett-Packard stumbled onto the breakaway success of the first hand-held calculator; the remarkable storyboarding process at Pixar films that has been the key to their unbroken streak of box office successes; the playful discovery process by which Frank Gehry arrived at his critically acclaimed design for Disney Hall; the aha revelation that led Amazon to pursue its wildly successful affiliates program; and the U.S. Army's ingenious approach to counterinsurgency operations that led to the dramatic turnaround in Iraq.

Fast paced and as entertaining as it is illuminating, Little Bets offers a whole new way of thinking about how to break away from the narrow strictures of the methods of analyzing and problem solving we were all taught in school and unleash our untapped creative powers.

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Most helpful customer reviews

80 of 89 people found the following review helpful.

Interesting Anecdotes but Nothing Groundbreaking

By Blake Henderson

This book has some interesting anecdotal stuff. I especially liked the stories on Pixar, and the creative process as it relates to learning in young children.

That said, most of the time when I flipped the page and saw the referenced person - Muhammad Yunus, General McMaster, or Malcolm Gladwell - as I reader of Tom Ricks' Fiasco, Banker to the Poor, The Tipping Point, and books on Lean Start-Up and Customer Development, I already knew where the author was headed and was left underwhelmed.

I'm not usually moved to review books on Amazon, however, I honestly believe the book is overrated as it stands with a lot of four and five star reviews. The book has a great title that certainly drew me in, yet I didn't find anything groundbreaking inside.

41 of 45 people found the following review helpful.

Great lesson for risk takers

By Benjamin P. Foss

Little Bets by Peter Sims is an excellent read. As someone who led a product design team at Intel, has a handful of U.S. patents and has dabbled in film making, I can tell you these insights play well across industry. I recommend it highly to anyone interested in tapping into the design revolution to improve their work and help change the world.

I often measure content I consume according to how much I think about it the next day. This book left me with a number of outstanding insights that I apply consistently.

Sims explains that when it comes to getting great work out of people be the student a coworker or yourself, the key seems to be to praise people for **effort** that they put in rather than merely praising them for their outcomes. It seems silly given that context to say that this book achieves great things but it does!

The book is well researched, and draws from a number of different fields. While many business books focus solely on one industry or one school of thought, Sims draws from an incredibly diverse palette to establish some consistent themes. We hear stories from comedians, military leaders, filmmakers, architects, and even a few entrepreneurs.

The key insight from this book is to treat life is an experiment where failure teaches as much a success. If you can scale your bets to the right size (a.k.a. little) is show that failures are less painful and allow course corrections. You can then place larger bets on things that will be successful. Trust me on this little bet -- buy the book.

36 of 39 people found the following review helpful.

Not much of a book

By D. Chandler

The idea is great; little bets are a great way to go. But there just isn't enough here for a book, and the examples given are repetitive and frequently struggling and stretching to be on-point. It reminds me of a high school essay where you hadn't done much research, but still had to produce the 10 page term paper.

It seems like the publisher noticed the book was a bit light, so they've added page after page of notes, references, resources to explore, etc; nearly 30% of the book is puff. Frankly, you could go to the author's Q&A page on Amazon, read the interview, and have all the ideas and value of the book for 5 minutes reading, and \$0. Save your time and your money on this one.

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A: One of the things that constantly surprised me was how many similar approaches and methods spanned across the vastly different fields. Story developers at Pixar, Army General H.R. McMaster, a counterinsurgency expert, and Frank Gehry use the same basic methods and of course make lots of little bets. They even use similar language and vocabulary – like "using constraints" or "reframing problems" – but they all learned their approaches through their experiences, not in school. General McMaster may have said it best when he said that the parallels between these very different experts were "eerie."

Q: What companies are best at little bets?

A: Amazon, Pixar, Apple, and to a lesser extent Toyota, 3M, and Google have little bets infused into their cultural DNA. Steve Jobs has evangelized about the benefits of the approach described in Little Bets more than any other CEO, while little bets are a way of life at Amazon, whether the company is expanding into new markets or improving internal processes. And, I wrote a lot about Pixar because it's the closest thing to a constant learning organization using little bets around today. But any company or team can make use of little bets. Procter & Gamble is an example of a more risk-averse organization that is working to build a culture of little bets.

Q: What's the first step any of us can start taking tomorrow to start benefitting from a little bets approach?

A: Commit to making a little bet. It doesn't matter on what. Look for interesting problems and work toward larger aspirations. Maybe it's going to be a presentation about starting a new nonprofit. Or maybe it's trying a different approach for a work meeting. Once you get into the habit of making little bets, they can constantly open up new possibilities that just might lead to something big.

Review

"Little Bets is a timely and compelling book that will change the way you think, a roadmap to success in the 21st century. And, a very enjoyable read." (Peter Georgescu, former CEO of Young & Rubicam)

"A fascinating and revealing journey through the real-life dynamics of the creative process. Vividly written and bustling with examples from comedy to architecture, Little Bets is a wonderful example of itself: a big idea that takes shape through many small discoveries. I highly recommend it for anyone with a serious interest in cultivating creativity in business, education or in their own lives." (Sir Ken Robinson, New York Times bestselling author of *The Element: How Finding Your Passion Changes*)

"I have always believed that constant innovation is core to success. The methods Peter Sims provides in the highly engaging Little Bets will help you challenge the status quo and discover extraordinary new possibilities in whatever endeavor you're engaged in." (Howard Schultz, chairman and CEO, Starbucks)

"Want a big idea? Start little. Whether you're an entrepreneur or an artist, Peter Sims shows you how big breakthroughs start with little bets." (Chip Heath, author of *Switch: How to Change Things When Change is Hard*)

"I really can't say enough about this book; Little Bets rings so true to my own experience at Teach For America. Peter Sims does a huge service by showing the world how big entrepreneurial and innovative successes come to be -- and in the process reveals ways of thinking that aren't the product of anything elusive or enigmatic but rather of traits we can all learn and foster, such as openness, inquisitiveness, and perseverance." (Wendy Kopp, CEO and Founder, Teach for America)

"Peter Sims buries the myth that big talkers with brains and big ideas move industry and science forward. This modern masterpiece demonstrates that the most powerful and profitable ideas are produced by persistent people who mess with lots of little ideas and keep muddling forward until they get it right. Little Bets is easily the most delightful and useful innovation book published in the last decade." (Robert I. Sutton, Professor, Stanford University, New York Times bestselling author of *Good Boss, Bad Boss*)

"With examples that range from traditional businesses to stand-up comedians, Peter Sims shows that the path to big success is lined with small failures. Behind every breakthrough idea is often a host of experiments that flopped — and Sims shows how to leverage these "little bets" to produce lasting results. This is a powerful and practical book." (Daniel H. Pink, author of *A Whole New Mind* and *Drive*)

"In Little Bets, Peter Sims convincingly argues that we need a new model of creativity, focused around gradual improvement and constant innovation. If you're not learning while doing, Sims points out, then you're probably doing it wrong." (Jonah Lehrer, author of *How We Decide*)

"Peter Sims' exciting new book, Little Bets, is replete with stunning insights about innovation and the remarkable benefits of backing many creative initiatives that yield the big breakthrough. Corporate leaders everywhere can benefit from his sound advice." (Bill George, Professor, Harvard Business School and Author, *True North*)

"'Little Bets' is a big idea. Here's my bet: if you're passionate about innovation, creativity, and entrepreneurship, you need to read this book!" (Alan M. Webber, Co-Founding Editor, *Fast Company* magazine, Author, *Rules of Thumb*)

About the Author

Peter Sims is the coauthor with Bill George of the Wall Street Journal and BusinessWeek bestselling book

True North. His work has appeared in the Harvard Business Review, Fortune, and TechCrunch and he is a contributor to the Reuters and Harvard Business Review blogs. He received an M.B.A. from Stanford Business School where he and several classmates established a popular course on leadership. He has spoken or advised at such organizations as Cisco Systems, Eli Lilly, Current Media, Molson Coors, Qualcomm, and Frost & Sullivan. Previously, Peter worked in venture capital with Summit Partners, a leading investment company, and was part of the team that established the firm's London Office.

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