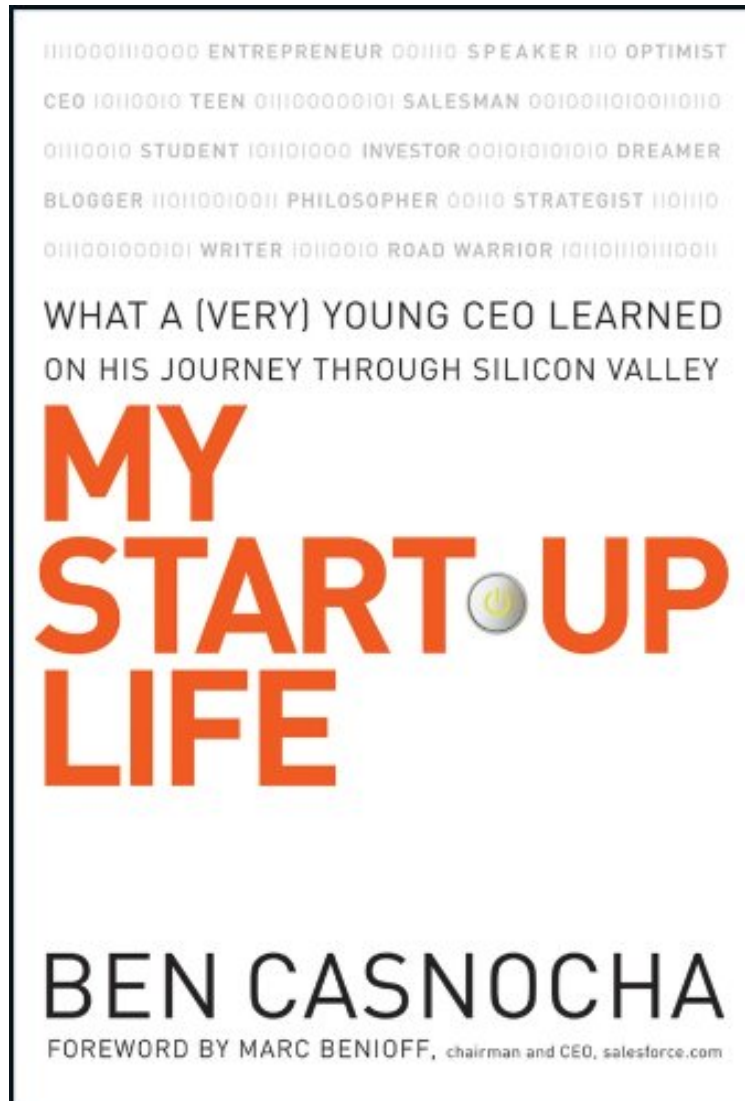


My Start-Up Life: What a (Very) Young CEO Learned on His Journey Through Silicon Valley

Ben Casnocha

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Ben Casnocha : My Start-Up Life: What a (Very) Young CEO Learned on His Journey Through Silicon Valley before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised My Start-Up Life: What a (Very) Young CEO Learned on His Journey Through Silicon Valley:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. My favorite part was Bens little rebate gigBy Gina Lynch, Tomorrows Tech PodcastInspiring story all young kids should read this. My favorite part was Bens little rebate gig. Just drives the point home how He had a habit of seeing the opportunity. Even grown adults just sit back and complain about not having a job. This kid - He went out hussled his face off and made stuff happen. Bravo.0 of 0 people found

the following review helpful. Prompt service. Book arrived as described. By Jacqueline Simonelli Prompt service. Book arrived as described. 8 of 13 people found the following review helpful. Life on the Entrepreneurial Roller Coaster By Deborah H. Streeter Ben Casnocha's book is a disarming tale of a startup told by a young entrepreneur who, instead of trumpeting his tale as a tribute to his own genius, shares the real inside story, a roller coaster of a journey. Ben's story shows the value of being humble enough to ask questions when you don't understand and being determined enough to put one foot in front of the other and build a real business. I especially appreciate the way Ben portrays the crucial role of mentors in his successful business. In addition, Ben clearly understands one thing that often evades entrepreneurs (young and old): the value proposition of a business must be defined from the customer's point of view. And Ben's story does hinge on what I call the twin devils that plague all entrepreneurs: cash flow and people issues. The book has interesting discussions of many practical issues, including how to: teach yourself about finance and accounting, build a board, ask the right questions in a sales pitch, find the right kind of money, pay close attention to detail when presenting, and move a product from small scale to large scale. It would be tempting to focus on Ben's age (indeed, he is a whiz-kid in every sense of the word), but I think the real value of the story is that it has so much in common with entrepreneurs of all ages. Ben struggled to be a "normal high school kid" in the same way I see many talented entrepreneurs struggle to reconcile their own highly empowered view of life with others who are on more passive tracks. Most of Ben's mistakes are not a function of being young, but a function of being human and therefore fallible at times. His successes are equally disconnected from age and result from an unyielding personal commitment to his passion to make his business work and the desire to hear "yes" instead of "no" from the Universe. Probably the most compelling part of Ben's story is his description of the product development process. What Ben calls the "long hard slog" is the process of taking Comcate from a piece of software initially created from a simple sketch sent by a teen-aged American to a young programmer working overseas to a consistent product, designed for scale and focused on "good revenue" (money coming from product features that don't require extensive support). The slog is where Ben seems to have learned the critical life lessons that will surely help him pursue his entrepreneurial vision. Ben's book does have two specific messages that I think are extremely important to high school and college audiences. One of them is to manage your "personal brand." In this You-tube, MySpace, facebook world, young people tend to forget that future recruiters and investors will quickly find the footprints students are leaving in the digital world right now. I would love to see more high-schoolers and college students resist the urge to share their most intimate moments with the rest of the world in the name of social networking. The second message is the call to be philanthropic. Entrepreneurship education understandably attracts individuals with ambitious income goals, but many do not understand the power of using that wealth in philanthropic ways. Ben ends his book with an interesting reading list. We hope in future editions, he'll include a "Listening List" from Cornell eClips ([...])!

Ben Casnocha discovered he was entrepreneur at age 12 and hasn't slowed down since. In this remarkably instructive book, Ben dissects the entrepreneurship "gene," explaining that everyone has inherited it if they have an idea to make the world a better place. In Casnocha's case, he found a better way for city governments to communicate with constituents on the Web. Six years later, Comcate has dozens of municipal clients, a growing staff, and a record of excellence. This book is the story of his start-up, but also a conversation with his mentors, clients and fellow entrepreneurs about how to make a business idea work?and how to have the time of your life trying. From Pat Lencioni to Marc Benioff of salesforce.com, Ben has won over the best and brightest of the business world?now it's your turn!

From Booklist When Casnocha, a first-time entrepreneur and author, shares his life story chronicling a jam-packed 19 years, it's clear he listens to Oprah's encomium "live your best life." What's even more jaw opening is the level of wisdom and self-awareness he displays. Each brief chapter features at least one personal, headlined sidebar about, say, customer feedback, advisory boards, or the power of mentors. There are also short "braintrust" synopses from Casnocha's ever-expanding network; venture capitalist Heidi Roizen weighs in on taking responsibility, while writer Chris Yeh muses about the right blend of work and life. In between the snippets lies a compelling narrative, from the author's first meander into customer focus groups to hard-earned lessons about technology and bootstrapping. A simply written yet remarkably direct, honest, and, yes, a bit heart-wrenching account about a lost teenagerhood. Barbara Jacobs Copyright copy; American Library Association. All rights reserved LORD, I loved being 19. If I had the chance to do it all again, I'd start up my life at that age. For most relatively "normal" guys like me, life at 19 is a joyously ephemeral state of being in between. Your adolescence is not quite behind you; your adulthood is not quite at hand. You can appropriate the privileges of a grownup without facing the responsibilities. And if you're lucky, you can still put it all on your parents' tab. Or you can be Ben Casnocha, the 19-year-old author of "My Start-Up Life: What a (Very) Young C.E.O. Learned on His Journey Through Silicon Valley." Publishing a book in his teens actually ranks as one of his more modest accomplishments. At 12, he started his first company. At 14, he founded a software company called Comcate Inc. At 17, Inc. magazine named him "entrepreneur of the year." Along the way, Ben (I refuse to address him as Mr. Casnocha until he turns 21)

was also captain of his high school basketball team and edited the school newspaper. He will be enrolling in Claremont McKenna College this fall. In the meantime, he's been taking what he describes as a "year off" to travel the world and to lecture at universities while continuing to serve as chairman of Comcate. So much for being a normal, carefree 19-year-old. "I don't want to be normal," Ben declares in "My Start-Up Life." "I want to be something else." Ben's book proves that he is indeed something else, and then some. Like its author, "My Start-Up Life" is precocious, informative and entertaining, if not quite fully realized as a grown-up work. But it's still very much worth reading to gain insight into the mind, manners and ambitions of an American entrepreneur from whom we will almost undoubtedly be hearing again throughout the first half of this century. Ben organizes his story in chronological order. He recounts the otherwise "routine day" in 2000 when the teachers of his sixth-grade technology class in a San Francisco-area middle school proposed the idea of creating a Web site dedicated to resolving citizen complaints about local government. Unlike his classmates, who abandoned the project as soon as school let out, he spent the summer learning how to write the HTML code necessary to make ComplainandResolve.com a short-lived but functioning entity. In 2002, Ben transformed that not-for-profit classroom venture into Comcate, a classic Silicon Valley start-up that provides software to enable city managers to track and resolve citizen complaints. He describes days when playing hooky from school started with catching a flight to Los Angeles and ended with basketball practice back in San Francisco. In between, there were sales calls to potential clients, lunches with venture capitalists, and scores of e-mail messages to and from a software programmer in India. But "My Start-Up Life" is more of an entrepreneurial how-to manual than the autobiography of a whiz kid. The narrative chapters are interspersed with sidebars headlined "Brain Trust" and "Brainstorm" that provide insights from adult business people and share the author's epiphanies on everything from "redefining the entrepreneurial lifestyle" with proper sleep, nutrition and exercise, to ways to "maximize luck." "Expose yourself to as much randomness as possible," Ben advises. "Attend conferences no one else is attending. Read books no one else is reading. Talk to people no one else is talking to. Who would have thought that giving a speech at a funeral at age 12 would introduce me to a man who would introduce me to my first business contact who would introduce me to several other important people in my life. That's luck. That's randomness." An appendix offers a "One-a-Day, One-Month Plan to Becoming a Better Entrepreneur." If some of the daily agenda items are mundane ("Stop watching TV," "Form an advisory board"), others are both insightful and inspirational. "Act on incomplete information," he urges in the context of entrepreneurial risk-taking. He says Gen. Colin Powell "expected his commanders in the field to make decisions when they had 40 percent of the potentially available information. In life-or-death situations. And you think you need more information?" Unfortunately, "My Start-Up Life" fails to give a coherent account of Comcate's financing and the current status of the company, which is privately held. In a recent telephone interview, Ben said he withheld those kinds of details for proprietary reasons because his company is a developing enterprise. With a little prodding, he told me that he raised "about \$250,000" to start Comcate, and that the company is now "self-sustaining" with 6 employees, 75 local government clients and anticipated 2007 revenue of \$1 million. I just wish he'd put some of this general information in the book. Apart from its repeated references to the dot-com mania of Silicon Valley, the book lacks political and socioeconomic context. In describing the early days of Comcate, for example, Ben notes that the fall of 2001 was a "busy few months," without any mention of the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11. When I asked him about that, he said that "it didn't really impact the business." I also would have liked to read more about Ben's parents. He duly expresses his gratitude, especially to his father who lent space in his law office for Comcate. But we never get a clear picture of what life was like in the Casnocha household. Talk about risk-taking — nothing takes more wisdom and courage than their kind of entrepreneurial parenting. In any event, Ben seems to be gaining an ever more acute sense of history and his own mortality as "My Start-Up Life" hits the stores. He told me that he's already working on a second book, about "America as the world's greatest start-up." He added that he intends to make the most of the time left until his next birthday, in March 2008. "I've got another eight months until I'm just another boring 20-year-old," he said. (New York Times, June 17, 2007) Praise for [MY START-UP LIFE] "This is a remarkable book for so many reasons. First, it is overflowing with incredible advice and perspective. Beyond that, it is written with the kind of style and grace that you usually find in a great essay or novel. If you have any interest in entrepreneurship or business, for that matter — you'll definitely want to read this." — Patrick Lencioni, author, The Five Dysfunctions of a Team "You will enjoy this provocative, honest, and fun romp through an entrepreneurial achievement, which will leave you determined to embark on your own enterprising endeavor — and inspired to find your own way to make a difference." — Marc Benioff, CEO and chairman, salesforce.com "I was blown away by how much learning Ben has packed into his (relatively) short entrepreneurial life — and how engagingly and effectively he passes it on in this book. This is such a fun read that you won't even realize how much you are learning. A must-read for first-time entrepreneurs, but equally enjoyable for fellow travelers who have already been down these roads." — Heidi Roizen, managing director, Mobius Venture Capital "This is an inspiring perspective on the dynamics of succeeding in

Silicon Valley. You may as well read this book today, because sooner or later we are all going to end up working for Ben." mdash;Chris Sacca, head of Strategic Initiatives, Google Inc. "A disarming story of the ups and downs of a business from startup to sustainability, filled with reflections on practical business and personal issues facing any entrepreneur. I recommend it to my students as a refreshingly honest account of the rollercoaster ride of startup entrepreneurship." mdash;Deborah Streeter, Bruce F. Failing, Sr. Professor of Personal Enterprise and Small Business Management, Cornell University