



## One Click: Jeff Bezos and the Rise of Amazon.com

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Amazon's business model is deceptively simple: Make online shopping so easy and convenient that customers won't think twice. It can almost 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 CEO and founder, whose unique combination of character traits and business strategy have driven Amazon to the top of the online retail world.

Richard Brandt charts Bezos's rise from computer nerd to world-changing entrepreneur. His success can be credited to his forward-looking insights and ruthless business sense. Brandt explains:

Why Bezos decided to allow negative product reviews, correctly guessing that the earned trust would outweigh possible lost sales.

Why Amazon zealously guards some patents yet freely shares others.

Why Bezos called becoming profitable the "dumbest" thing they could do in 1997.

How Amazon.com became one of the only dotcoms to survive the bust of the early 2000s.

Where the company is headed next.

Through interviews with Amazon 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 anyone in business today ignores at their peril.

## **One Click: Jeff Bezos and the Rise of Amazon.com Details**

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## From Reader Review One Click: Jeff Bezos and the Rise of Amazon.com for online ebook

### Loy Machedo says

Loy Machedo's Book Review - One Click by Richard L. Brandt

When you compare the Biography of Steve Jobs (630 pages) and then compare the Biography of Jeff Bezos (190 pages), you will without a doubt know something is missing. A large chunk of it.

In those 190 pages, Ricahrd L. Brandt the award-winning magazine writer tries to summarizes Jeff Bezos & Amazon for a quick read.

Here are a few bits that I picked from this book.

- Jeff Bezos was a Brainy Kid and one among the top in his class with unusual academic talent.
- Amazon was literally started in a garage.
- The company had started in 1994 when there was No Internet Commerce as yet.
- The odds against Jeff Bezos vision for a book store were not only scoffed at, they were outright mocked by the so called Industry Experts.
- The 1-Click patented model of Amazon gave the company the extra boost which would make them stand out.
- The Amazon acquisition & Investments included IMDb, PlanetAll, Drugstore.com, zBubbles, HomeGrocer.com, Gear.com, Della & James And yes, the most intelligent Choice – Zappos.
- Amazon Suffered Intensely with the Dot.com Bubble Crash – which was a big surprise. I didn't know Amazon went through a Rough Patch. By 2000, it recorded annual losses of \$1.4bn and was 'the biggest money loser on the internet', making Bezos as the author put it 'internet poster child to internet whipping boy'.
- In 2010 Amazon was worth more than \$80bn, having launched the Kindle and pioneered cloud computing.

But the book does bring in its share of criticism. And that is the totality of the 2 Juggernauts.

If you are seeking for a book that clearly takes you deep inside the mind of Jeff Bezos or into the Intricate World of Amazon, then no, this book will not do you any favors. In 190 pages, you just cannot do justice to One of the Largest Online Book Stores in the World (or is it moving towards the Largest eCommerce Store in the world?) and one of the most admired personalities of the Dot-Com era.

I would summarize by stating that if you are looking for a summary of what Amazon is all about to what its founder and mastermind is like, then this book honors its end of the bargain. I didn't find anything outstanding but at the same time I wasn't disappointed. So if you want my recommendation, I simply say, go ahead and buy the book.

Overall Rating

7 out of 10

Loy Machedo

loymachedo.com

## Shay says

Those familiar with the work of technology journalist Richard L. Brandt will be acquainted with his style of blending biography and business history, as he has previously done with Larry Page, Sergey Brin, and Google. In *One Click*, Brandt profiles Amazon founder and CEO Jeff Bezos. Readers expecting an in-depth, definitive history of Amazon or a complete portrait of Bezos may be disappointed. This relatively short (224p) profile draws largely on publically available information and resources. Those who have followed Amazon and Bezos in the news will find little fresh information.

Where this book does shine is in reviewing the critical role of Amazon in the transformation of book selling in America over the last twenty years. Brandt highlights the business strategies and technologies that enabled this success. However, the section on the most recent change, e-books, is already beginning to date less than a year after publication. This is an innate peril of writing about living entrepreneur and business in a rapidly changing field. Unlike a posthumous biography, Brandt's profile is likely to be quickly superseded by future accounts.

Although this book discusses common criticisms of Bezos, the author is largely friendly towards his subject. Brandt's thesis seems to be that analysts have consistently underestimated Bezos's business acumen to their detriment. By concluding with a discussion of Bezos's investment in space travel and research, Brandt suggests that the sky is the limit for this entrepreneur.

<http://shayshortt.wordpress.com/2012/...>

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## Steven Dzwonczyk says

As with many biographies I read, when I find out how much has been done by the person who is the topic of the book by the time they were my age, I get a little depressed and bemoan my own lack of accomplishments. When I found out that Jeffrey Bezos was born in the same year as me I became doubly so. Around the years he was coming up with the ideas and layout for Amazon.com I was toiling away at my comfortable, if not lucrative, corporate job. I was even doing a little programming at the same time Jeff was, and solving similar problems, albeit on a much smaller scale. But he somehow transformed himself into the 18th richest person in the world; I'm probably not the 18th richest person in my family.

Enough about me. The book was great! So much went on behind the scenes of this well known company who seemed to always have everything under control, yet they were cobbling together programs and algorithms in a similar way to the way I do it, by the seat of my pants and not always released in perfect form.

Bezos is clearly a charismatic leader who had a vision and was able to motivate his people. He transformed how a company is born, changing the whole business model from profits-based to customer-based. He lost money for so many years yet never gave up. I can remember reading an article in *Barron's* which lampooned the company as a failure and quipped, "They lose \$5 per sale, but they plan to make it up in volume." So much for conventional wisdom. Bezos recognized where the online opportunities were and figured out how to exploit them, and was patient enough to wait out becoming profitable.



childhood to jobs he had before becoming CEO of Amazon and goes on with minimal details to describe some of Amazon's successes and failures. I was most surprised by how abruptly the book ended. Brandt briefly delves into Bezos' activity and involvement with his space venture company, Blue Origin, about its lofty goals and high aspirations. Then it ends a chapter with something along the lines of "don't bet against Bezos," and that's it. Fin. Considering how this book was published in 2012, I'm not 100% sure that there could have been more to talk about before ending the book in such a manner (such as perhaps talking about Bezos' strive to maintain minimal profit and in response how current stockholders and investors seem to demand nothing else from Bezos), but there definitely was the possibility of going into some more recent events.

Nevertheless I enjoyed the quick read as Amazon is for me, like most people, the go-to place for online shopping, and I learned a lot about Bezos, Amazon, and what it takes to grow a company to such a large scale.

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### **Brad says**

This book is insulting. The author had no access whatsoever and doesn't acknowledge any interviews or primary data collection. Several of the sources are actually publicly available YouTube videos.

In essence, it is a well-written 4th grade book report.

To add insult to injury, there are some very awkward word uses in here including several laugh-out-loud cliches like "spit over a bridge".

The book gets off to a weird start. I actually thought that my copy may have been missing some pages because it was paced so quickly. By page 17 I am learning about a lawsuit that happened in 2010. On that page you are hit with the sweeping conclusion, "Innovations and new patents at Amazon will never cease."

I am normally not this grouchy but seriously, there are some great corporate histories out there (The Perfect Store, First in Thirst, The Facebook Effect) and this just is not one of them.

The good news is that I got to page 65 on the bus ride home, and wrapped up the complete book (with references) in about two hours.

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### **Jay says**

This is mostly a company history of Amazon, hitting the highlights such as the founding, development of features, operations, competing, buying Zappos, developing the Kindle, and so on. I thought that much of what I read I had seen previously in magazine articles, many of which were mentioned in the book. There wasn't as much personal info on Bezos as I would have expected, and I'm not sure I learned what makes him tick. As a company history, this was just OK, not delving very deeply into the issues faced and being very choosey in the stories covered. It is not a book with recommendations on running your own business, but I pulled out a couple of things that Bezos did that are repeatable: make the customer number one, if possible when starting invest like crazy, and realize some investments can take decades to work out. Not much gold there, so read it for the company's story.

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## Miranda (M.E.) Brumbaugh says

As a writer, I think it is very important to keep up with the latest happenings in the publishing world, and Amazon just so happens to be at the top of the totem pole as of the past decade. Whether or not we agree with the Wal-Martesque approach that Jeff Bezos has taken with the book industry, his methods deserve some attention. OK enough with the blah.

The book hit on the biography of Bezos, but it was more like a cotton candy version full of fluff and sugar-coated. It is not a Walter Isaacson biography by no means. Actually it is more of a biography of Amazon, with ties and links, no punt intended, to products and developments associated with the site's CEO. If you are looking for an in-depth insight to Bezos, skip this book.

However, as for Amazon, the biography was rather telling.

I did not know that Amazon was in control of the Netflix streaming content, and as the book was published in late 2011 I assume is still the case. This was interesting. Also, Amazon has stakes in the future of space exploration, which given Bezos personal interest is not surprising.

Now for the book industry.

While Amazon is sending the Big 6 of publishing in circles with their tails tucked between their legs, the dot.com company purchases most of its material from independent bookstores. I know from experience that almost all of the books I've purchased from Amazon have been from independent booksellers including Goodwill, so this is something to keep in mind as an author. If you want to have a stake in the world's largest bookstore without going all e-Book or via Amazon's Create Space publishing company, simply have your books published and make your rounds to all of the independent bookstores so your book is supplied. Of course, if you don't use the Create Space publishing link, you can't sell your books directly via Amazon (it will take away your very necessary Buy Now button) so you'll be at the mercy of your advertising methods to attract customers. Yadayadayada just some thoughts.

Also, while Amazon seems big and large and overwhelming as far as the Web marketplace, they may be more bark than bite. The company is constantly coming up against huge barriers including as of late the tax issues in various states. Also, the Big 6 isn't backing down at all, and you can bet that if the publishing companies can come up with a way to knock Amazon down to size, they'll do it in a blink of an eye. Not saying that is the right thing to do, but it's clear that too many people are losing money and too many toes are being stepped on for everyone to just sit back and let Amazon take over the world...and outer space.

I recently heard a study on NPR that the publishing industry and book companies are not losing business because of e-Books or e-Readers or Amazon. The real problem we are facing is the decline in LITERACY. When people don't want to read a book, it doesn't matter what format it is in. The lack of demand isn't going to push the marketplace for book sales, and ultimately, the quality of books will begin to decline and eventually fade out. The last time such an incident occurred, it was prior to the establishment of free education in public schools. Before then, poetry was the focus as readers had a lack of reading ability.

Also, while the number of books available have sky rocketed, there are two factors: the number of books free to the public domain that are older than the 1920s, and self-published books riddled with typos and signs of speedy delivery lacking of any indication the author has studied the craft of writing. So free older titles and cheap crappy titles are what is flooding the market.

So read this book if you want to gain insight about the future of the world's biggest bookseller.





## **mark monday says**

It seems like ages ago that Amazon and I met-cute while fox & dolphin hunting on a small private island reserve off of the Southern California coast. Oh how the years move by. And yet, after all the early displays of yearning and passion, after all of the screaming bouts of sadomasochistic blood-sport and nonconsensual body modification that constitutes our "love"-making, I am proud to report that our so-called love still stands strong, still runs deep. The sympathy and even the - dare i say such a maudlin word - "empathy" that Amazon has given me in support of my goal of utter global domination has been truly invaluable. And endearing!

Just last night, while enjoying a repaste of a light pear & walnut salad, fine wine, and a simple clarified butter & ginger sauce served over a minced infant crudo, I noticed my darling Amazon gazing fondly into my one good eye. Now Amazon knows that fond gazes always give me heartburn, so I inquired: what was amiss? Amazon smiled and stated lovingly that I looked like the sort of gentleman who would gladly destroy an independent bookseller if it meant 5 more dollars in my wallet. I replied "Surely you are not just now noticing this!" We laughed merrily and toasted each other. 'Tis a wondrous thing when forward-looking minds find themselves in meaningful agreement.

Later, we curled up to watch our favorite movie, the enchanting "You've Got Mail". Tom Hanks is so adorable when he is trying to run an independent bookseller into the ground!

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## **Mark Jr. says**

Maybe Walter Isaacson spoiled me in his amazing biography of Steve Jobs, and maybe the biography of a company simply can't be compared to the biography of a great man, but this book was a disappointment. Don't get me wrong, I'm still very glad I read it. And it was a very quick read. But I felt like the book was written with a sort of paint-by-number journalism. The whole thing felt obligatory, and not full of life like Isaacson's biography of Jobs.

I got out of this book what I needed: some details about the founding of Amazon and its current financial state. But did I miss something or did the author fail to say that Amazon is actually profitable?

I also felt as if the chapter on the all-important topic of Amazon's possible destruction of the existing book business was not nearly as insightful and deep as we need.

Ah, well. I borrowed it from my local library on my very own Amazon Kindle—which read substantial portions of the book to me out loud—so I can't complain.

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## **Troy Blackford says**

This is a much more slender book than 'The Everything Store' by Brad Stone, and it accordingly gets into far less detail. Giant swaths of Amazon's history are left out of this one. Also, this book came out in 2010, so much of the meteoric rise of eBooks, led by the Kindle, was just conjecture at the time. But it was still a very interesting book and I'm glad I read it.

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## Mahmoud Fouad says

It is one of the best books I have ever read. I recommend it for any technology entrepreneur. It narrates the story of Amazon and how Jeff Bezos struggle a lot in the beginning of Amazon. This book makes me sure that money & profit shouldn't be your main target, I know that no business could survive without money but you have to set long term plans and concentrate on providing a good service for your customer..money & profit would come later..I learnt not to loose hope.. work hard & think out of the box if you want to build a great company that would change the world..I would like to mention an important part of bezos philosophy [ you can invent your way out of any box if you believe that you can ] ;).. when Bezos Started Amazon, no one really imagine that Amazon would be a world wide company.. now Bezos Investing on a company called in a space company, he wants to make it easy for normal ppl to visit space, although it is hard to believe that ppl could do that nowadays but for sure in the future we would be able... I really enjoyed reading this book.. Special Thanks for the author Richard L. Brandt :)

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## Kara says

Real rating: 3.5 stars

Interesting, though short, read about the birth and growth of Amazon.com. It's a good introduction to the company's history with little personal detail about Bezos himself (despite the title).

One of the key questions the book purports to answer is, "Why has Amazon been so successful?" Brandt presents a number of reasons, but I was surprised that customer support wasn't really one of them, despite Amazon's image as a customer-centric company\*. Instead, the author emphasizes low prices and an aggressive growth strategy, as well as Bezo's originality. He paints Bezos as a visionary entrepreneur who can also be cutthroat in business and disingenuous in the press (a "showman").

Positives: I liked hearing about the little clever decisions Amazon made in the beginning. ex: Part of the reason for naming the company Amazon was the fact that it started with "A", and would therefore top alphabetical lists.

Negatives: Wish the book had more recent developments. Published in 2011, it didn't include anything about the Kindle Fire or more recent press (not its fault, really).

\*As one former care rep put it, "we're supposed to care deeply about our customers, provided we can care deeply at an incredible rate of speed." Customer service at Amazon, according to the author, consists more of a friendly UI ("one-click") and speedy shipping than human-to-human contact.

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## Gerhard says

I recently updated my beloved Kindle version 2 to a Paperwhite, which made me curious to find out more about the man behind the device that has made such an impact on my own life.

'One Click' is good as a potted history of Amazon, the rise (and rise) of which traces the advent of Internet commerce itself. Amazon's progress from humble, haphazard start-up to its current status as e-commerce behemoth (I did not even know it sold power tools or shoes) is a remarkable story. What is perhaps a little bit

depressing is that book-selling is actually a rather small part of the overall Amazon business, both in size and turnover.

Less elusive is the character of Jeff Bezos himself; Brandt does his best with what resources he had at hand to paint as balanced a portrait of the man as he could, as well as delving into the 'cult of Amazon' and the management style of its founder (who inevitably emerges as something of an eccentric). Apparently Bezos no longer grants interviews, and only speaks publicly on company occasions.

Obviously this is not meant to be the 'definitive' biography, a la Steve Jobs. Instead 'One Click' is a perfectly serviceable, solid introduction that is entertaining and informative.

P.S. I think this was published in 2011; it could really do with an update, and a more detailed chapter on the launch / impact of the Kindle (especially the latest iterations) and Kindle Fire, and Amazon's venture into cloud computing services.

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