



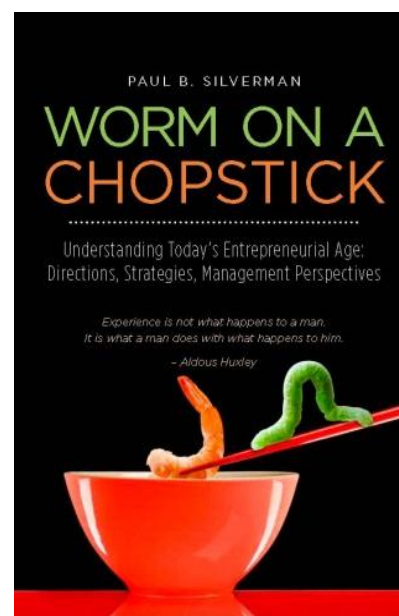
Q&A with Paul B. Silverman, Author of *Worm on a Chopstick: Understanding Today's Entrepreneurial Age: Directions, Strategies, Management Perspectives*

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Paul B. Silverman is the author of a new entrepreneurial management strategy book *Worm on a Chopstick: Understanding today's Entrepreneurial Age: Directions, Strategies, Management Perspectives* ("Chopstick"). The book was released in August 2011 and highly praised by initial reviewers (<http://paulbsilverman.com/books>)



Q. Why did you write *Chopstick*?

A. I have been encouraged by many to share my perspectives and counsel, and that is one reason *Chopstick* is born. Learning should be fun - that's why this book was written to be entertaining, insightful and educational.

Q. What is *Chopstick's* message?

A. Embrace change and think entrepreneurially.



Traditional business is under attack with morphing markets, technology, competition, regulatory forces, impacting *every* sector. Traditional business must embrace change and adapt to survive- look at Barnes & Noble and many others. But new entrepreneurial firms with explosive growth must also adapt, ‘think traditionally’, to attract resources supporting growth. And like a little critter that appears on a chopstick, these changes occur when least expected and often create chaos. Understanding how these two worlds are changing, the new rules, perspectives and strategies needed to survive and grow, is *Chopstick’s* message. Building on real experience, solving real client, global business, and people needs in a time of great change provides the foundation for what you will find in *Chopstick*.

Q. Where did you get the title for *Worm on a Chopstick*?

A. One of the most often-asked questions. *Chopstick’s* title comes from a real incident during a senior level dinner meeting in a dimly lit Tokyo restaurant many years ago. Names and places changed of course.

Confronted with a “what do I do now” situation, where the ability to define the animal/food boundary was a real challenge, I have used this anecdote in many classroom forums to share a perspective on global business challenges, dealing with global players, unpredictability, and how to handle global social and cultural issues and survive. Some valuable lessons here.

And yes, this really happened.

Q. The market for management books is very crowded, so why did you write another one?

A. Three reasons compelled me to write this book, the first of three in the *Chopstick* series.

First, as an educator, I saw the opportunity to significantly enhance students’ education by sharing “real world” insights, providing real world perspectives and experiences applying what they are taught in class, what alternative techniques are used, what is important and what is not, and ‘best practices’ at all levels. My experience working with many students is these perspectives are well received and make a real difference. *Chopstick* provides counsel to business majors at all levels, particularly in entrepreneurial programs.

Secondly, my approach is unique – my focus is what I call “sustainable, defensible business” which explores the broader issues and strategies needed for successful businesses. *Chopstick*



shares my perspectives to assist early stage company management professionals and move them beyond the “SYOB” thinking (i.e., “start your own business” thinking) where most focus

Finally, traditional companies must “think entrepreneurially” if they are to survive and grow given today’s entrepreneurial-age tsunami. Within *Chopstick* I share perspectives on how larger, more traditional companies must also adapt their thinking on innovation management, new product strategy, long tail marketing and other areas to meet today’s entrepreneurial age challenges. But entrepreneurial companies must *also* adapt, moving from start-up to a sustainable business demands thinking like “Traditional” management. Like an unexpected critter on a chopstick, today’s tsunami-like market and technology changes often occur when companies are least prepared.

While other books may address some of the above points, no other management books address entrepreneurial management issues, strategies and perspectives like *Chopstick*.

Q. Who is *Chopstick’s* audience and why?

A. *Chopstick* addresses three target audiences:

- ***College/MBA Students:***

Business majors seeking to move beyond SYOB (‘start your own business’) entrepreneurship courses and gain insight on what’s needed to build a ‘sustainable, defensible business’ given today’s entrepreneurial age tsunami.

- ***Entrepreneurial Company Founders and Managers:***

Founders and managers of early stage firms seeking to understand and create new strategies to address the many challenges they face, moving from an entrepreneurial to a “professionally managed” firm.

- ***Traditional Company Managers:***

Managers of traditional firms seeking new perspectives dealing with disruptive innovation, ‘going global’, long tail marketing and other forces dramatically reshaping their “traditional” business models



While not an initial target audience, reviewers noted that policymakers seeking new entrepreneurial strategies to improve regional economic growth in the U.S. and abroad would also benefit from *Chopstick*, pointing to ideas I shared in *Chapter 16: Entrepreneurial Leverage and ‘Shovel Ready’ Projects; Perspectives for Policymakers*, and the section *Driving Economic Growth with Information Policy Rather than Shoveling Dirt*.

Q. You mention that both traditional and entrepreneurial firms face many challenges and need to develop new entrepreneurial perspectives and strategies. Can you be more specific with some examples?

A. I shared many examples within *Chopstick*. Look at an innovation leader 3M Corporation. Was 3M’s development of Post-It™ Notes and Scotchguard™ driven by careful planning, pure luck or an accident? Describing how Scotchguard was developed (*Chapter 4 Innovation Frenzy: ‘The Researcher Spilled Liquid Fluorocarbon on Her Shoe ...’*), looking deeper, we see 3M developed a culture that encouraged innovation through policies and management.

Look at Walt Disney Corporation. I share insights on Michael Eisner’s leadership and strategies starting in 1984, how he redefined Disney’s core business to increase Walt Disney’s market capitalization from \$1.8 billion to \$10.3 billion within 4 years.

And look at Google, clearly an “entrepreneurial” company. Founded in 1998 by two Stanford university students, started as a basic search engine, ramped up sales to \$22 billion in 2008, and achieved a market cap of about \$96 billion in January 2009. Managing innovation, how to evolve products to maximize earnings, enter new markets are critical traditional business perspectives that successful entrepreneurial companies like Google learned well.



Three chapters in *Chopstick* share my perspectives on innovation management which emphasizes its importance to all firms.

Q. Today’s major companies, rather than emerging entrepreneurial companies, will continue to drive innovation and business growth since they have significant R&D investment and “push the envelope” creating next generation products and technologies- Is that a correct assumption?

Yes and no. Companies that embrace ‘entrepreneurial thinking’ as I described in *Chopstick*, and successfully address market, technology innovation and regulatory challenges, *will* play a leading role. But history has taught us leadership today does not ensure leadership tomorrow. WANG and DEC were leaders in the minicomputer market, but missed the market shift to desktop PCs. General Motors clearly tripped, missing the small car evolution, failing to capitalize on the electric car opportunities, and failing to leverage OnStar™ to offer full featured mobile information services. Barnes and Noble *could* have launched an online site decades ago comparable to today’s Amazon model but did not; believing “brick and mortar” bookstores will always lead the market. It is counter-intuitive to many that smaller, entrepreneurial firms, rather than well-funded, major firms have driven most innovation in the past 5 decades- that is supported by studies and that trend will continue.

Q. What is your message to entrepreneurs either launching new ventures or seeking to grow their business?

A. Ensure your entrepreneurial culture drives the business, but also think and act like a larger company, using the tools, perspectives and strategies employed by larger, “traditional” firms- these are the critical ‘get rights’ to create long term value. Difficult to balance these objectives sometimes, but that is how you build winning companies. And these skills can be learned.

Q. You emphasize entrepreneurial thinking as a powerful tool that can help both emerging and traditional companies succeed, also drive regional economic growth, help address inner city economic challenges, and create jobs. Are you going too far here?

Not at all. In *Chopstick*, I mentioned that Andy Grove, Intel’s founder, estimated that so far we have achieved less than 5 percent of the Internet’s real business and personal impact, implying 95 percent of the real opportunities and changes lie ahead.



To paraphrase Andy Grove's quote, my vision is we have only achieved less than 5 percent of the benefits and personal impact that "entrepreneurial thinking", entrepreneurship programs, strategies and creative policies will provide, **implying 95 percent of the real entrepreneurship opportunities, changes and benefits lie ahead.**

Within *Chopstick*, I share my vision on some of the new entrepreneurial directions and possibilities I foresee, such as a proposed Entrepreneurship Empowerment Program ('EEP') I developed with a colleague several years ago to help inner city entrepreneurs, both young and old, start and grow new business ventures, with both local government and business support. Looking overseas, it is clear many countries are well ahead of the U.S. in implementing successful entrepreneurship programs. For example, China's smaller businesses drive economic growth, employing about 75 percent of all urban employees, holding about 60 percent of all invention patents and accounting for about 80 percent of new products- China is pursuing a comprehensive plan to create 10,000 mostly small- and medium-size companies each year, hoping to create 100,000 new jobs. Malaysia's MSC initiative, managed within the prime minister's office, has an impressive track record, attracting 2,006 companies representing about sixty-three thousand knowledge workers. As emphasized in *Chopstick*, we have exciting opportunities to jumpstart economic growth by pursuing creative "entrepreneurial-driven" policies, and learning lessons looking globally.

I strongly believe entrepreneurship drives business value creation and economic growth and do have a vision here. Exciting times lie ahead.

Q. What do you see as the role for higher education in the entrepreneurial education process?

A. My views here are shaped by my experience and contributing as an Adjunct Professor at 3 leading universities since 2002, teaching entrepreneurship, advanced business strategy ("Capstone") and management courses. While there are exceptions, I do see a real gap in today's entrepreneurial education arena.

On one hand, many SYOB ("start your own business") programs exist- some more academic, some more practical, and they cover the basics on planning, launching and managing a new business. On the other hand, course exist typically embedded within a undergraduate or MBA degree curriculum, to address



innovation management, maybe one or two courses covering intellectual property, innovation management and similar areas.

What is missing is a more rigorous, integrated entrepreneurial education program that develops management staff capable of meeting today’s regional growth needs and next-generation entrepreneurial challenges. While many overseas students pass through U.S. universities and this trend will continue, entrepreneurial education in selected countries is moving quickly and creative programs are emerging. As an example, I recently reviewed and offered some ideas on a proposed curriculum for a European university entrepreneurship program that integrated topics addressing regional economic growth creation, a high opportunity area as I noted in *Chopstick*. The proposed program also covered broader management skills than typically found in “SYOB” programs, similar to management skills I covered in *Chopstick*. We can do much more in the entrepreneurial education area and I expect to be offering some recommendations and new ideas here in coming months.

Q. What do you want readers to gain after reading *Chopstick*?

A. The closing paragraph in *Chopstick*’s Introduction sums it up best and is reprinted below:

Dealing with today’s entrepreneurial age changes demands new thinking; new ways of looking at today’s changes, new perspectives, and a more nuanced, philosophical approach to understand and adapt to change. And these needs are the drivers for *Chopstick*, sharing with readers a practical, entertaining, and informative perspective about today’s entrepreneurial age challenges and new ways to meet them. I do try to cover a lot of ground in *Chopstick*, moving quickly, hopefully challenging your traditional thinking. After finishing *Chopstick*, if you have gained some new ways of looking at today’s challenges and opportunities, perhaps learned a few new tools, have lots of questions and more curiosity and passion for what lies ahead, then I have accomplished my mission.

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