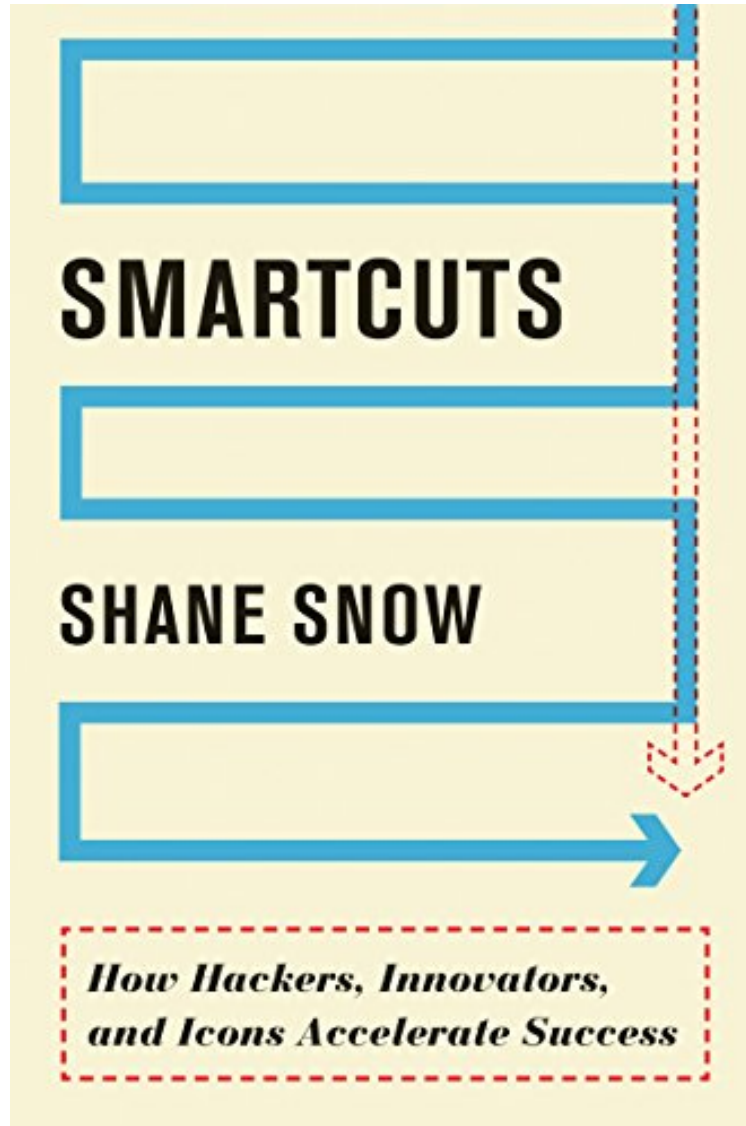


# Smartcuts: The Breakthrough Power of Lateral Thinking

*Shane Snow*

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**Shane Snow : Smartcuts: The Breakthrough Power of Lateral Thinking** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Smartcuts: The Breakthrough Power of Lateral Thinking:

167 of 171 people found the following review helpful. Excellent writing that keeps you goingBy Brian R. Most business strategy and self improvement books are dry and boring. This one is none of those. It was the right mix of tech language yet some of the more complex ideas were explained in laymans' terms. In each chapter or section, Shane gives multiple examples of what he's trying to explain, and often like a novel, will track 3 or 4 different experiences at once. He'll then bring them all back together by the end of the chapter to make a cohesive point about what he's

explaining. He presents not just the examples that support his ideas, but also gives examples of people who, when faced with similar situations, also fail. This lends some credibility and lets you see what that line is between a "smartcut" and a "shortcut". While there's still a lot of factors that go into creating and capitalizing on a Smartcut, he supports his ideas and the concept well. At the very least, this book will give you the awareness that climbing the ladder rung by rung is not the only option. It's not always easy to spot and use a Smartcut, but reading this book will help you prepare for doing it. I'd say this book is a lot like Rich Dad, Poor Dad. It's a philosophy and mindset that needs adopted in order to get any benefit. And while it might not always be at the front of your mind, having this knowledge in your back pocket will add to your skillset and strategy as you make your way through your career. Smartcuts is honestly one of the most well-written books I've read. 110 of 112 people found the following review helpful. Smartcuts is very smart fun. By Abacus This book serves as an original career and entrepreneurship guide in the 21st century (which was not the intent of the author). The main thesis of Shane Snow is that luck does not just happen. Using surfing metaphors, Snow indicates that the ones who catch the wave (luck) are the ones who were ready all along looking for it. These remarkable individuals were bound to catch a good wave (luck) sooner or later. It was just a matter of time. And, the way they went about it; they did not waste much time doing it. They did not pay their dues for decades. They spent no time in stagnant situations. They kept moving forward and often laterally (typically a lot faster than the rest of us). This does not mean they did not work very hard. They did. It does not mean they cheated and cut corners. To the contrary, they maintained superior ethical standards. Snow defines smart cuts as short cuts with integrity. These individuals worked smarter, more creatively, and better understood how to take their next step. Most often, they were guided by a life-passion, an interest, a focus that kept them honed like a heat-missile towards their target. Snow outlines nine foundational smart cuts principles that can accelerate anyone's career or one's company growth. They all make perfect sense, are intuitive, not controversial, and not far-fetched. Snow does not make anything up. Every single of his smart cuts principle is well supported by research and documented by many examples. The smart-cut thinking is an offshoot of "lateral thinking" as defined and developed by Edward de Bono. And, Snow gives de Bono his due credit for the concept. However, while I have read most of de Bono's books, and did find them interesting; I find Snow's book far more insightful. Each chapter describes thoroughly one of the smart-cut strategies on a stand-alone basis. Of course, they overlap a bit and work well simultaneously. But, it is amazing how powerful each one of those strategies is on a stand-alone basis. There are numerous passages within the book that are pretty fascinating. The contrast between the careers of US Presidents and US senators is amazing. The Presidents are often outstanding smartcutters with a surprisingly short career in Federal office before acceding to the Presidency (Eisenhower, Carter, Reagan, Clinton, Bush Jr., and Obama among others). Meanwhile, the senators are for the most part stagnant plotters; and, very few of them ever make it to President. Snow even makes the case that some of the Presidents who paid their dues with a lifelong career in politics were some of the worse Presidents (example: Andrew Johnson). Good Presidents mainly acquired leadership credentials outside the field of (national) politics. Meaning, paying your dues career-long is no guarantee of mastery once you get there. Another interesting fact is that companies who switch fields are often very successful. Moving laterally often causes one to accelerate. The iPhone was developed not by a telecommunication company, but Apple a PC company. Start-ups that "pivot" once or twice raise 2.5 more money, have 3.6 times faster user growth, and are 52% less likely to plateau prematurely. In another section, you learn about a team of hospital surgeons who learn how to synchronize their surgeries and patient treatments inspired by the exactitude, speed, and efficiency of a racing car formula I team of outstanding mechanics working at the races. Quoting the author: "Before long, the hospital had reduced its worst hellip; errors by 66%." As an extra, the formula I racers, mechanics, and hospital doctors became very good friends and participated together in fund raisers for various charities. The whole "Rapid Feedback" strategy (chapter 3) is really interesting. It details the comedians learning processes at The Second City in Chicago. It also shares research on how we learn from mistakes and feedback. Much research show that we actually learn more from the mistakes of others rather than our own. This is because we readily attribute the mistake of others to humans. Meanwhile, we attribute our own mistakes to external circumstances beyond our control so as to protect our own ego. Apparently, what differentiates some masters in whatever discipline from others is their ability to withstand, or even their eagerness to solicit negative criticism. They find negative criticism far more actionable to facilitate their progress. "Waves" (chapter 5) is at the essence of the book. That's where Snow goes all out with surfing metaphors that he effortlessly transfers into a multitude of real life and career related examples. He quotes a professional surfer stating: "Being able to pick and read good waves is almost more important than surfing well." You can see how you could plug in this concept effectively in many situations. There are a couple of specific gems in this chapter that will stay with you. One of them is the amazing power of pattern recognition. If you analyze deliberate trends, use criteria, observe the facts, etc; amateurs undertaking this kind of trend analysis will invariably outsmart experts; intuition in just about any field. Snow mentions a few weird examples such as the ability to recognize the difficulty level of a professional basketball shots; or the ability to pick out Louis Vuitton fake bags vs authentic ones. Thus, "you can be right the first timer" without years of apprenticeship. This will be music to the ears of all the data guys out there (not just the Big Data one). "Deliberate pattern spotting can

compensate for experience; as stated by the author. Another gem is that you don't need to be the first to do something and be successful. Research showed that 47% of first (company) movers failed. By contrast, early leaders-companies that took control of a product's market share after the first movers pioneered them had only an 8% failure rate. Fast followers benefit from the free-rider effect. Examples: Google beat out Overture in search engine. Facebook beat out Myspace in social networks. (chapter 9) will turn you into an Elon Musk fan if you are not already. This chapter outlines the genius, perseverance, and sheer bravado Musk demonstrated in pursuing his most daring venture: SpaceX. The concept here is that to revolutionize a field you can't go for just marginal improvements (10% better, etc.). You have to go for the big swing, 10 x better, or 10 x cheaper, etc. So, it is called 10 x thinking. And, Musk after many failures did just that with SpaceX. His company is literally 10 times more cost effective and 10 times faster in terms of project turnaround time than the former best in the aerospace business: NASA. As a result, SpaceX is now a very viable commercial entity swamped with contracts from all over the world to launch satellites transport resources back and forth to the Space Station, etc. A counterintuitive thought is that sometimes the 10 x improvements are easier than the + 10% one. This is because the former are challenging high-hanging fruits no one dares to go for. While the latter ones are low-hanging fruits crowded with competitors. And, this runs into the N-Effect. The more competitors in a given field the weaker is the individual performance. They found that test takers (SAT, ACT, etc.) perform much better when in a smaller class room with fewer test takers than when in a much larger class room with many test takers. There is a lot more to the book than what I covered. But, my review should give you a good idea if this book is for you. If you got that far in reading my review, it most probably is. 156 of 163 people found the following review helpful. Provides examples of people who've succeeded using "Smartcuts" - and then tells how to follow their lead. By Kcorn Author Shane Snow spends the first part of Shortcuts demonstrating how some people effectively use "hacker" thinking to shorten their path to success. And then he fills in the details in this tightly written book. A fair amount of this information may up readers' chances of becoming successful. I found some parts of this book to be very compelling. Others left me wanting more. Snow uses a "show then explain" approach. Each chapter is filled with plenty of examples of people whose lives illustrate the essentials in this book. Their experiences help drive home many of Snow's point. Want to succeed? Then be willing to break the rules, accept and learn from negative feedback, and use lateral thinking. D'Wayne Johnson, one of the youngest design directors ever hired by Nike, is used to sum up Snow's 10 key points. Johnson's life story is vivid and exciting. Other parts of this book are also intriguing, such as some of the information Snow shares about the 10 top-rated presidents in history. He describes them as "hackers", men who didn't follow traditional routes to the presidency. Instead they "switched ladders" multiple times, using their diverse experiences and various occupations to learn their leadership skills - and to convince others to that these skills were powerful enough to make them worthy of the presidency. According to Snow, this ladder switching not only upped their odds of getting elected but made them more effective leaders. While I was glad to have read this book, and found some new information which challenged my familiar assumptions about what it takes to succeed, there were some sections which seemed overly simplistic, lacking details. This left me wanting more information, falling short of convincing me that a particular technique or way of thinking was effective. Some of the examples Snow provided still left me wondering if someone had simply been lucky - rather than hacking the ladder, training with masters, or building on momentum (other key principles Snow considers vital to success).

Entrepreneur and journalist Shane Snow (Wired, Fast Company, The New Yorker, and cofounder of Contently) analyzes the lives of people and companies that do incredible things in implausibly short time. How do some startups go from zero to billions in mere months? How did Alexander the Great, YouTube tycoon Michelle Phan, and Tonight Show host Jimmy Fallon climb to the top in less time than it takes most of us to get a promotion? What do high-growth businesses, world-class heart surgeons, and underdog marketers do in common to beat the norm? One way or another, they do it like computer hackers. They employ what psychologists call "lateral thinking: to rethink convention and break "rules" that aren't rules. These are not shortcuts, which produce often dubious short-term gains, but ethical "smartcuts" that eliminate unnecessary effort and yield sustainable momentum. In Smartcuts, Snow shatters common wisdom about success, revealing how conventions like "paying dues" prevent progress, why kids shouldn't learn times tables, and how, paradoxically, it's easier to build a huge business than a small one. From SpaceX to The Cuban Revolution, from Ferrari to Skrillex, Smartcuts is a narrative adventure that busts old myths about success and shows how innovators and icons do the incredible by working smarter—and how perhaps the rest of us can, too.

As fascinating as it is fun, Smartcuts is an engaging journey through the types of lateral thinking and creative strategies that so often underlie success. (Maria Konnikova, New York Times bestselling author of Mastermind) Smartcuts solves a major mystery, illuminating how visionaries and pioneers find faster ways to achieve their goals. With spellbinding stories and relevant research, Shane Snow has delivered one of the most entertaining and thought-provoking books of the year. (Adam Grant, Wharton professor and author of Give and Take) Smartcuts is surprising and awesome. It's Malcolm Gladwell meets Tim Ferriss. Part Good to

Great, part McGuyver, this is a book every 21st century entrepreneur should read." (Scott Gerber, Founder, Young Entrepreneurs Council)"Shane is living proof that Smartcuts work. He hacked his way into Fast Company, Wired and Ad Age, built a multi-million dollar startup by age 30, and now he's written his first of what I'm sure will be many excellent books. Follow this guy!" (--Ryan Holiday, bestselling author of Trust Me I'm Lying and The Obstacle Is The Way)"Shane Snow is a fresh and future-thinking voice in today's tumultuous business climate. You must read Smartcuts if you are a social entrepreneur or would like to be one, because what Shane teaches us most of all is to be bigger than just business." (--Soraya Darabi, Co-founder of Zady and Foodspotting)"Smartcuts is a manifesto for success for those who do not want to toil away unnoticed." (Financial Times)"It's worth its weight in 10 airport business books, in part because Snow is such a clear, beautiful writer who does not succumb to aphorism and business gobbledegook." (New York Times Insider)From the Back CoverSerial entrepreneur and journalist Shane Snow delves into the reasons why some people and some organizations are able to achieve incredible things in implausibly short time frames, showing how each of us can use these "smartcuts" to rethink convention and accelerate success. Why do some companies attract millions of customers in mere months while others flop? How did Alexander the Great, YouTube phenom Michelle Phan, and Tonight Show host Jimmy Fallon dash to the top in less time than it takes most of us to get a midlevel promotion? How do high-growth businesses, world-class heart surgeons, and underdog marketers beat the norm? Like computer hackers, a handful of innovators in every era use lateral thinking to find better routes to stunning accomplishments. Throughout history, the world's biggest successes have been achieved by those who refuse to follow the expected course and buck the norm. Smartcuts is about bucking the norm. In it, Snow shatters common wisdom about success, revealing how conventions like "paying dues" prevent progress, why kids shouldn't learn multiplication tables, and how, paradoxically, it's easier to build a huge business than a small one. Smartcuts tells the stories of innovators who dared to work differently and lays out practical takeaways for the rest of us. It's about applying entrepreneurial and technological concepts to success, and how, by emulation, we too can leapfrog competitors, grow businesses, and fix society's problems faster than we think. About the AuthorShane Snow is a New York City-based journalist and Web entrepreneur, and the cofounder and chief creative officer of the media technology company Contently. He holds a master's degree in journalism from Columbia University and is a fellow of the Royal Society of the Arts. Snow contributes regularly to Wired magazine and Fast Company, and has written about innovation for numerous publications, including the New Yorker, the Washington Post, and Advertising Age. Snow is a sought-after speaker at technology and advertising summits, and writes for LinkedIn's Influencer program. His work in technology entrepreneurship has been recognized by the United Nations, the New York Times, Inc., Forbes, Details, and New York City's Economic Development Council.