

THE ONE DEVICE: THE SECRET HISTORY OF THE IPHONE BY BRIAN MERCHANT



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NATIONAL BESTSELLER

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The secret history of the invention that changed everything-and became the most profitable product in the world.

Odds are that as you read this, an iPhone is within reach. But before Steve Jobs introduced us to "the one device," as he called it, a cell phone was merely what you used to make calls on the go.

How did the iPhone transform our world and turn Apple into the most valuable company ever? Veteran technology journalist Brian Merchant reveals the inside story you won't hear from Cupertino-based on his exclusive interviews with the engineers, inventors, and developers who guided every stage of the iPhone's creation.

This deep dive takes you from inside One Infinite Loop to 19th century France to WWII America, from the driest place on earth to a Kenyan pit of toxic e-waste, and even deep inside Shenzhen's notorious "suicide factories." It's a firsthand look at how the cutting-edge tech that makes the world work-touch screens, motion trackers, and even AI-made their way into our pockets.

The One Device is a roadmap for design and engineering genius, an anthropology of the modern age, and an unprecedented view into one of the most secretive companies in history. This is the untold account, ten years in the making, of the device that changed everything.

- Sales Rank: #27307 in Books
- Brand: Merchant Brian
- Published on: 2017-06-20
- Released on: 2017-06-20
- Original language: English
- Dimensions: 9.50" h x 1.38" w x 6.38" l,
- Binding: Hardcover
- 416 pages

Features

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I highly recommend it. When I first heard of this book

By John K. Lin

I have mixed feelings on this book. But overall, I highly recommend it.

When I first heard of this book, I was really interested in reading it and pre-ordered it on Amazon – since I like to read and study the history and development of technology and Silicon Valley. I read *The One Device* over the course of a few days. No doubt, this book was released a week before the 10th anniversary of release of the first iPhone - Friday, June 29th, 2007, to generate interest and sales.

If you want *just* a history of the development of the first iPhone, this book may not be for you – except for the last chapter. If you want to know more about what made the iPhone possible and everything that led up to the iPhone in a historical context, then you'll definitely want to read this book. I just felt that the book could have been organized with more about Apple than a lot of isolated chapters with some Apple and iPhone history sprinkled in, where the best chapter on the development of the iPhone was saved for last. These lines from the last chapter succinctly encapsulate the essence of the book and the development of the iPhone:

“... The stars aligned. They also aligned with lithium-ion battery technology, and with the compacting of cameras. With the accretion of China's skilled labor force, and the surfeit of cheaper metals around the world. The list goes on. “It's not just a question of waking up one morning in 2006 and deciding that you're going to build the iPhone; it's a matter of making these nonintuitive investments and failed products and crazy experimentation – and being able to operate on this huge timescale ... Most companies aren't able to that. Apple almost wasn't able to do that.”

The One Device tells the story of the development of the iPhone – but much more so, the confluence of ideas and technologies over time that made the iPhone possible.

The book starts off with Apple's “Explore New Rich Interactions” (ENRI) group and initial experimentations of multi-touch before even thinking about the smartphone. Then a chapter into the history of the phone, electronic communications and the smartphone. Then on to a chapter (“Minephones”) on the sources of materials of smartphones. Then to Gorilla Glass. Then a chapter on the origins and work on

multitouch over the decades.

Then back to a chapter on Apple (“Prototyping”).

Then back to the history of the battery and lithium battery and the origins of lithium. Then a chapter on Apple’s interest in the camera & image stabilization. Then a chapter back to the history of sensing motion (gyroscopes, GPS, accelerometers, etc). And onto a chapter on the ARM microprocessor (“Strong-ARMed”). Then a chapter on cellular network infrastructure.

Then back to Apple (“Enter the iPhone”), describing Apple’s thinking on developing a mobile phone, as iPod was taking off. Then to a side-tracked chapter and history of Siri (along with voice recognition, and artificial intelligence). I say side-tracked, since the original iPhone didn’t have Siri – which came out in the Fall of 2011 with the release of the iPhone 4S.

Then a chapter on Foxconn and the Chinese labor force that assembles the iPhone.

The back to Apple on how secretive it is as well as its marketing prowess (“Sellphone”).

Then back to China and description of the Chinese component ecosystem and aftermarket and black market for phones.

Then finally the last chapter of the book – the last 50 pages or so (out of 380 pages) – “The One Device” - is the meat of what I was looking for – getting more deeply into the details (as much as one could to a general reading audience).

Overall, I would describe The One Device as a book version of the history of the smartphone analogous to the 1996 three hour PBS television documentary about the PC industry titled, “Triumph of the Nerds” – which I often say, is the best three hours of television, or at least documentary television, ever made. If you’re really interested in the history of what made the iPhone possible, this is terrific primer.

Some other thoughts – this book really also looks at the cost of the iPhone, smartphone and consumer electronics in general – the mining material & labor cost, the factory worker & cellular tower worker cost, and the environmental cost.

And finally, the cost to the Apple employees who gave their lives for the iPhone:

As stated in the book, “His doctor, he says, gave him an ultimatum. Do these two things or risk dying – lose weight and quit [Apple]. Thirty-six people I worked with at Apple have died,” he says. “it is intense.”

That intensity is also likely the reason that the team that built the iPhone has since scattered to the winds. As of 2017, besides Jony Ive, none of the executive staff at Apple was seriously involved in creating the iPhone.”

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful.

Excellent reporting and a great read for true Apple fans.

By Joseph H Rosmann

Accurate and extensively documented. Most likely primarily of interest to True Apple fans who know the context of all that went on to create the iPhone. A good deal of the presentation add significantly to what has been included in several other authors books about the creation of the iPhone and the contextual time it's

development within the Apple business and corporate structure. Likely will not have a large readership because it's too arcane. Would be a great adjunct to a business school case study on how the iPhone got created to take Apple to its present level.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful.

Mostly fabulous

By J. Shereshevsky

Perhaps I just didn't get it, but when the author became the story doing his undercoverish work in China I got little bored. But the rest is magical.

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