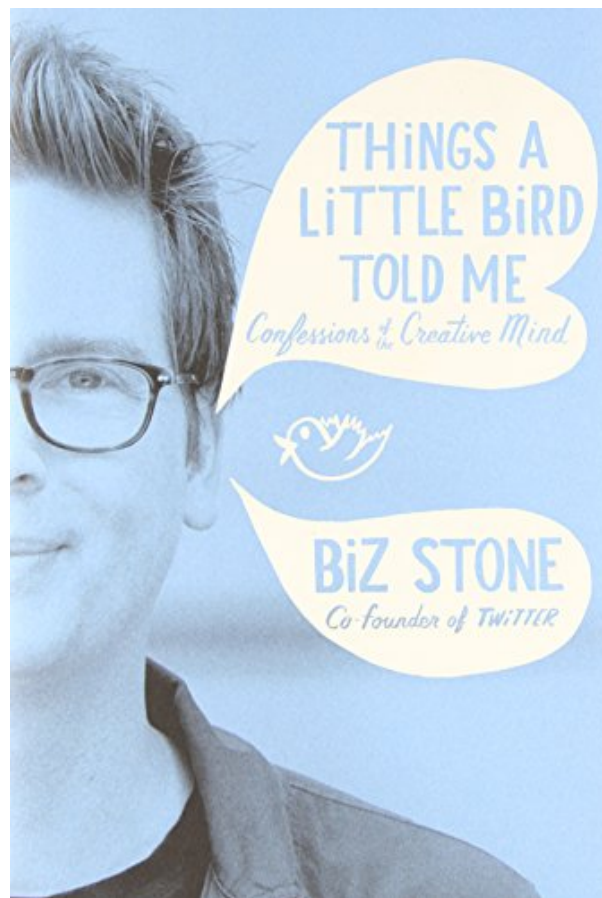
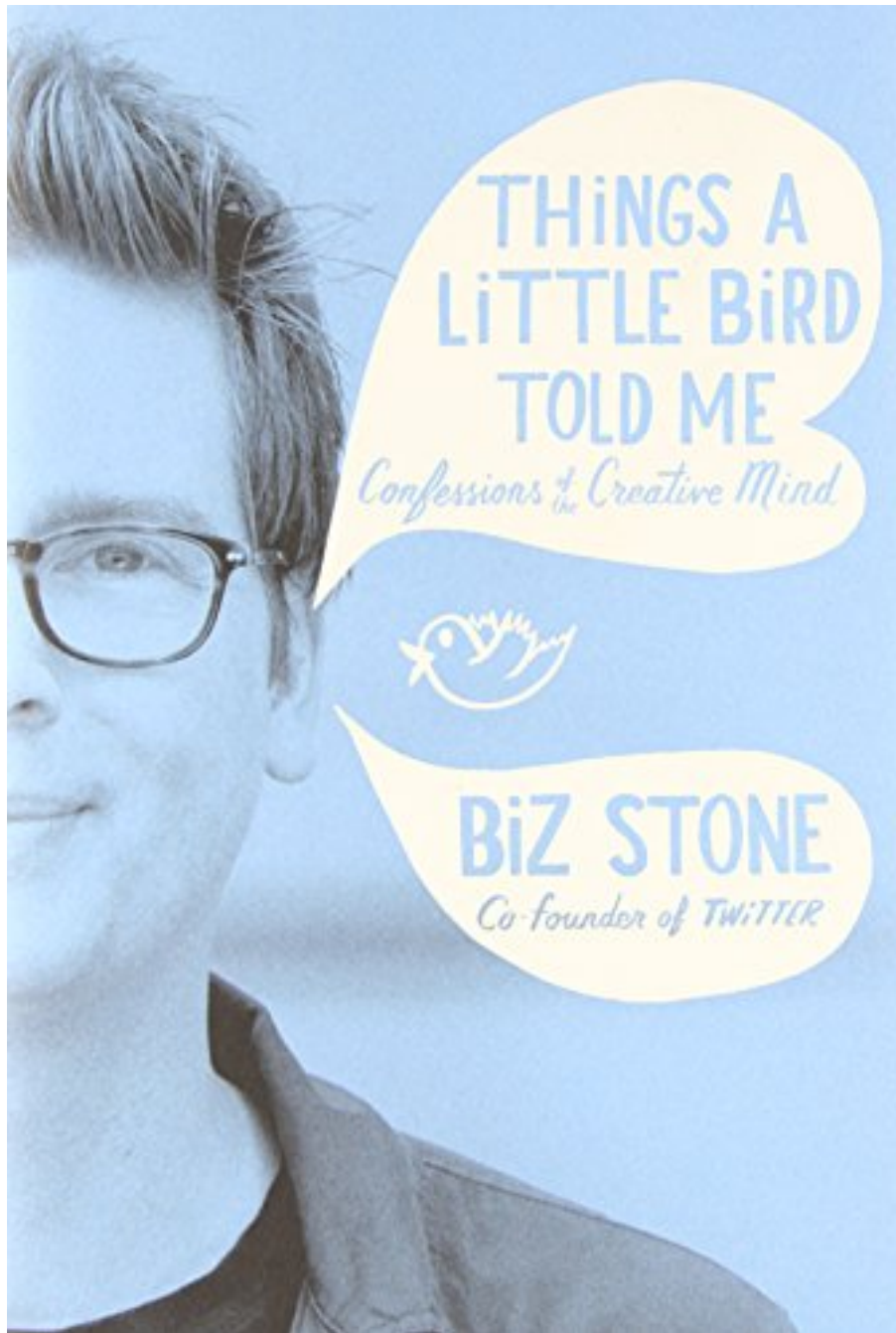


THINGS A LITTLE BIRD TOLD ME: CONFESSIONS OF THE CREATIVE MIND BY BIZ STONE



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Biz Stone, the co-founder of Twitter, discusses the power of creativity and how to harness it, through stories from his remarkable life and career.

THINGS A LITTLE BIRD TOLD ME

From GQ's "Nerd of the Year" to one of Time's most influential people in the world, Biz Stone represents different things to different people. But he is known to all as the creative, effervescent, funny, charmingly positive and remarkably savvy co-founder of Twitter-the social media platform that singlehandedly changed the way the world works. Now, Biz tells fascinating, pivotal, and personal stories from his early life and his careers at Google and Twitter, sharing his knowledge about the nature and importance of ingenuity today. In Biz's world:

- Opportunity can be manufactured
- Great work comes from abandoning a linear way of thinking
- Creativity never runs out
- Asking questions is free
- Empathy is core to personal and global success

In this book, Biz also addresses failure, the value of vulnerability, ambition, and corporate culture. Whether seeking behind-the-scenes stories, advice, or wisdom and principles from one of the most successful businessmen of the new century, THINGS A LITTLE BIRD TOLD ME will satisfy every reader.

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Most helpful customer reviews

16 of 17 people found the following review helpful.

This disarming man...

By Gabriella West

(I received a digital review copy from NetGalley in return for an honest review.)

"Things a Little Bird Told Me" is not your average business book. I see it more as a creative memoir of Biz's life and times. He was one of the four original co-founders of Twitter (Evan, Jack, and Noah were the others). Biz starts by taking us through his somewhat surreal initial hiring at Google (helped by Evan, who became a close friend), then his jumping ship to Evan's new startup Odeo, and then the birth of Twitter, which began as a two-week hackathon project by Jack and Biz, believe it or not!

There are so many great stories in the book. Biz seems like an unusual character, a self-deprecating "chancer" who bounces quickly from failure to success and is not ashamed to open up about his missteps. He comes off as sunny and warm and willing to look like a fool at times. The story of Ev and Biz driving down to Palo Alto to see Mark Zuckerberg is an awkward classic. (What must Zuckerberg have heard about these guys to have treated them like such morons? One wonders.)

Biz, to me, seems like he has ADHD. He proudly tells the tale of his "No Homework Policy" in high school, for example, where he simply gave up doing it because it took him too long. (The mind boggles. Who could get away with that? Well, someone who doesn't play by the rules and doesn't see the point of structure.) Biz's openness is very nice, but there is a shadow behind this book and that shadow is Nick Bilton's very much darker account of the founding of Twitter, with its quasi-Shakespearian theme of friendships betrayed.

I will admit that I haven't read Bilton's book yet, but I really want to after reading Biz's side of the story. What bothered me most in Biz's account was how he gave Noah Glass short shrift. Noah actually came up with the name "Twitter," but Biz presents it as an almost random incident in the book. Biz's friendship with Jack Dorsey raises some questions as well. Biz spins everything positively but can't quite cover the ouster of Evan Williams as CEO by the Twitter board without giving away what a painful and disillusioning episode this was.

The book shone for me when Biz was talking about how he envisaged Twitter as a collaborative force for good and strove to keep Twitter neutral and nonpartisan, letting the users determine new features. I love using Twitter and, because it has brought so much to my own life, I appreciate where he's coming from. I only hope that Twitter can stay relatively noncommercial as the company continues under a new administration.

So, I give it four stars because I feel that the account of the dynamics between the founders was somewhat self-serving. On the other hand, I didn't have a dull moment reading it. It was an interesting look into the mind of a creative force who is a genius at creating opportunities for himself!

14 of 16 people found the following review helpful.

Autobiographic and self-serving account of Stone's career

By John Martin

Things a Little Bird Told Me is an autobiographical account by Biz Stone of his life, focusing on his professional career. Stone is best known as one of the founders of Twitter. He indicates that he began his work career as a graphic artist after dropping out of college. He became acquainted with Evan Williams over the Internet and Williams, who was then working at Google, convinced him to work there as well. After a brief stint at Google he left with Williams when the latter buys Odeo which includes Twitter and the site grows exponentially. But he leaves after his friend Evan is fired as CEO and now has started a new company called "Jelly" which is a mobile app that allows people to ask questions and get answers from real people.

Throughout the book Stone drops small gems of personal wisdom such as the idea that constraint inspires creativity (Twitter is limited to 140 words), be willing to take risks to succeed, be optimistic and trust your instincts, know what you want and believe in your ability to get it. Also he advises that you do not follow rules and conventions blindly as he clearly did not. Stone comes across as egotistical and self-serving, referring to himself as a "genius" and always coming off as the good guy who tries to make everyone happy. At the end he talks about how good people are and that he wants to help people. Twitter he says put people first and technology second, whereas Google does the reverse.

Some of his stories about himself are poignant such as how as a small boy he overcame his fear of the dark

by intentionally going into a room with the lights off to see if any monsters would attack him. When none did he says he lost his fear of the dark. The message is “to seek knowledge even in the face of fear.”

This book will be of interest to people who are interested in Silicon Valley entrepreneurs and technology. It is relatively short and can be easily read in a few hours. It is clearly not on the level of Walter Isaacson’s biography of Steve Jobs. Readers may also want to read *Hatching Twitter* by Nick Bilton, which covers the creation of the company from another perspective.

14 of 16 people found the following review helpful.

Inspiring, Insightful, and Well-Written

By Ryan J. Dejonghe

THINGS A LITTLE BIRD TOLD ME by Biz Stone has done two things for me: left me inspired, and convinced me that Mr. Stone is a nice, cool, and interesting guy. In fact, reading this book reminded me of Chris Hadfield’s *AN ASTRONAUT'S GUIDE TO LIFE ON EARTH*. Through determination, mental projection, and a bit of luck, amazing things can happen. Or, so we are lead to believe.

This book goes through the life of Biz Stone from the time he was living in his mom’s basement with his girlfriend, tens of thousands of dollars in debt, and on to the time where Twitter is valued at fifteen billion dollars. Much of what Stone writes is vastly quotable as he relates his optimistic vision of himself and those around him. For instance, Stone says that “failures become our assets” and relates to how Twitter’s down time and the display of the “Fail Whale” actually helped Twitter grow stronger.

Stone endeavors to show how he is relatable to the Everyday Joe. He describes how his family lives modestly; how he programmed the company of Twitter to have a moral compass; and, how he can relate almost any life occurrence to an episode of *Star Trek*. From what we read here, he is inspiring and funny.

This book is filled with interesting stories, such as: the joke offer to sell Twitter to Mark Zuckerberg for five-hundred million dollars; the major event SXSW 2007 turned out to be; the Moldova unrest; and the plane landing in the Hudson River. Of particular interest is how Twitter got involved in the Presidential Elections with Obama and how Stone was steadfast in his resolve to remain unbiased, especially when NSA’s PRISM was seeking user data.

Some of Stone’s advice may seem excessively daring or foolhardy. He shows that high risk does have the potential of high reward, but the reader doesn’t get a glimpse into other peoples’ lives that weren’t so lucky. Malcom Gladwell relates this same type of hard-work and success in his book *OUTLIERS* with the examples of Bill Gates and Steve Jobs. Being at the right place at the right time has its benefits, too. (As an aside, Stone mentions Gladwell directly in this book as a point of contention.) Still, Stone gives some concession in his closing remarks, encouraging readers to perhaps alter their course versus jumping into the chasm blindly.

The bottom line: this is an exciting book. Stone is readable, quotable, and fun. He has his quirks, but that’s what gives this book its life.

Thanks to Grand Central Publishing for providing me with an electronic copy of this book for review.

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