Issue #25: underrated business writers, a story we can't forget, AI content generation   Inbox ×

Sari
to me ⌄   8:15 AM (1 hour ago)

Startupy

a laid back newsletter about very serious ideas

If you're a regular reader, we hope you consider joining our membership.

What's startupy?
Startupy is your refuge from the noisy Internet. We're building a human-curated search and discovery engine for people in love with interesting ideas.

Mood

Cool things curated in our universe

—
A startup on our radar
News of Brie Wolfson starting a company got me really excited. Check out Constellate - a collectively-curated feed of work-in-progress that anyone, in any corner of an organization, can rely on. The note in the pre-launch landing page felt really special to me – you can just feel the authenticity of this mission.

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A story we can't forget
I read this story several years ago, and I still can't stop thinking about it. If you have a few minutes for a hopeful story from a parent with a struggling son and an unlikely hero, this is it.

Filed under inspiration.

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On Cedric Chin
Cedric Chin remains one of the most underrated business writers. His piece on why product validation frameworks are mostly useless without taste is especially good:

I've come to see customer obsession and taste as two parallel paths to product success. In some domains, you can get there through customer obsession alone — ala the Lean Startup. My previous company was very much like that, as was Slootman's Data Domain. It was 'simple', even if it wasn't easy. We knew what needed to be built at each step of the way. In other domains — when you're building TikTok, say, or the first iPhone, the idea maze is a larger mess, so the process is more dependent on judgment and taste. That taste, of course, is tacit in nature. But people don't seem to want to talk about that.

Related: the taste topic on startupy has some really good stuff!

—
On thinking
A great essay by Rohit Krishnan on thinkers vs. doers and why we need to create more spaces for people to think:

The only way out from this rat race I can see is to re-create a safe space. When you are no longer consumed by the worry that is career sustenance and growth, at least a subset of folks might choose to work on what they think is important... Its not a pure argument to reduce the number of hours worked, though that might be a result. Its a more holistic push to reduce the pressure to pursue short-term distractions to keep the red queen race going.

If you want to fall down a good rabbit hole, the ideas topic page on startupy strings a wonderful collection of related musings on where good ideas come from, and creating the conditions for them to thrive.

—
On AI Content Generation
The pace of innovation in AI Content Generation is astounding. From Runway's text to video, to Midjourney's AI generated images - this is the closest

thing to magic happening in tech today. These tools raise the questions — will they destroy creativity and jobs or expand the imaginary powers of the human species?

Two great reads on the subject:

- Charlie Warzel on what's really behind those AI images
  AI art tools are evolving quickly—often faster than the moral and ethical debates around the technology.

- Ben Thompson on the Unbundling of AI
  The analogy to publishing also point to what will be the long-term trend for any profession affected by these models: relatively undifferentiated creators who depended on the structural bundling of idea creation and substantiation will be reduced to competing with zero marginal cost creators for attention generated and directed from Aggregators; highly differentiated creators, though, who can sustainably deliver both creation and substantiation on their own will be even more valuable. Social media, for example, has been a tremendous boon to differentiated publishers: it gives readers a megaphone to tell everyone how great said publisher is. These AI tools will have a similar effect on highly differentiated creators, who will leverage text-based iteration to make themselves more productive and original than ever before.

Feeling serendipitous?

Try our shuffle experience!

Community health

This week on startupy:

- **520** contributions
- **1,680** connections
- **679** highlights

Virtual high-fives to Stuart Evans, Supritha, and Jay Matthews for their contributions.

Curator spotlight

Adam Zeiner
startupy.world/adamzeiner
dezein.info
twitter.com/_dezein

Rabbit hole: Ecosystem Mapping

Why is Ecosystem Mapping an interesting topic?

I'm a fervent mapping, anyone whose ever worked with me can tell you as much. I staunchly believe the value of map making extends well beyond the common use of maps as communication artifacts and that mapping is a consistently under-appreciated vehicle for sense making, individually or communally.

To create and represent context. Mapping is somewhat of a vocational constant for me, as is Systems Thinking. In fact I've found Systems Thinking to be the primary through-line of the latter half of my career, time and again advocating for the adoption of more systemic tools at every organization I engage with.

Ecosystem Maps are one such systemic tool. A tool I can point to as a tangible example of how Systems Thinking as a mindset can be applied via the praxis of (Human-centered) Design. In order to account for the relational nature of the networked world and contexts we inhabit with increasing frequency. Relations we as the enactors of networked products and services ought not ignore.

Podcasts worth listening to?

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System Mapping & Drawing Happy Pictures via Software Delivery Club

Mapping is all about rendering intangible or ethereal ideas and concepts—like software— tangible to serve as boundary artifacts you can leverage to drive strategic conversations. This episode focuses on mapping as a way to visualize your software systems as well as your business, which I've found is typically the context in which most people are introduced to Ecosystem Mapping.

–
Scott Kubie and Content Ecosystems via The Content Strategy Podcast

My colleague Jared Meyer turned me on to this content-centric approach to Ecosystem Mapping by way of a workshop he designed and facilitated for our Experience Platform org at Expedia Group. In this episode the host talks with Scott Kubie about how he uses content-focused Ecosystem Mapping to help his clients create connections in their content universe. Again, rendering tangible the mental models of our colleagues and stakeholders, in order to collectively represent implied or potentially intangible connections and relationships the end users of the products + services we deliver are unknowingly inhabiting and utilizing.

Help People Not Disappoint You, a Hack for Reading More, a Talk with Deepa Iyer about Different Roles to Play in Social Change via Happier with Gretchen Rubin

This episode touches on the inspiring "Social Change Ecosystem Map" Deepa created to identify the ten roles people play in helping to bring about social change, imperative to include to highlight the social, human-action side of Ecosystem Mapping. A complement to the more software or technically-centric examples included here. I actually came to learn about and start applying Ecosystem Mapping as a method through my work at the Design Institute for Health where along with my incredible colleagues, I applied design as a method to catalyze social change.

Things worth reading and watching?

What are Ecosystem Maps?

I'll start with this overview from the Interaction Design Foundation. They've done a great job introducing Ecosystem Maps in a way that those with more traditional Interaction Design backgrounds can relate to. Explaining how this tool builds on our prior experience while also applying to present or future contexts we may find ourselves operating in.

Rethinking Users

My coworker Pax Escobar, a fellow Systems Thinker, shared this with me. The book is a pretty quick read that introduces the notion of User Ecosystem Thinking and also comes with a toolkit to guide you and others through this new way of thinking about users, user experience, and design. I couldn't agree more with their central thesis that anytime we engage with a product or service we're stepping into a complex, relationally driven context that is impacted by our very presence as service consumers or providers. You can learn more about the impetus for this book and toolkit in From 1:1 to 1:Many—Humans, Artefacts, & Ecosystems Thinking.

From service design to systems change

Although not explicitly about Ecosystem Mapping, I found this article about how to frame the services comprising your organizations portfolio in a more systemic manner to be unendingly inspiring. I was also glad to see the concept of system Leverage Points, introduced by the late Donella Meadows well represented. So much so that I wrote my own article about how my colleagues and I adapted this method to fit our needs in Plotting Design Interventions as Points of System Leverage.

Ecosystem-to-Human (E2H): The New Paradigm

I'm also including this introductory overview of a "new paradigm marked by two major changes within companies: the change of the value creation focus/purpose and the change of the operating model/identity" as the authors state because I think it speaks to two important benefits of Ecosystem Mapping. Firstly, that this is a tool that can foster individual + organizational mindset shifts towards thinking more ecosystemically, collectively, and/or holistically. Additionally I think this article does a great job speaking to the impact that the act of Ecosystem Mapping (or Mapping in general) can have on business strategy, necessary to address when discussing this topic because a map is not the territory and your strategy is only as effective as it's implementation.

Projects worth following?

Kumu

I love this platform for wrangling complexity by way of mapping. I was fortunate to be able to use Kumu often in my prior role as a Systems Designer in the Design Institute for Health and still manage to find ways to leverage Kumu in my current role at Expedia Group. Kumu's blog In Too Deep is also a treasure trove of complexity mapping knowledge.

Ecosystemizer

An effort by the folks who wrote that Ecosystem-to-Human article above. Admittedly I'm not super familiar with their Strategy Map offering but I enjoy and have learned from reading the articles shared on their blog, even as a practiced systemic designer.

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System Viz

For the more visually inclined, this research project by Peter Stoyko explores how visuals can enhance systems thinking, especially as it relates to inter-disciplinary, collaborative design. I am fortunate to have attended a workshop from Peter at RSD 10 where he walked us through the impetus for this project as well as how he utilizes it himself.

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RSD (Relating Systems Thinking and Design) Symposium

RSD is an annual symposium organized by the Systemic Design Association. RSD brings together systemically-inclined designers practitioners and academics and usually has a lecture or workshop focused on Ecosystem Mapping, or some analogous method of mapping in a systemic manner.

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SystemsWiki's Musings

Gene Bellinger is a big name in the System Mapping space and was an early, now prolific contributor to Kumu. Gene generously shares the knowledge he's gathered about relationships and ways to map them over his decades long career for free on Substack. My current favorite musing from him is this ecosystem-oriented bit on Battling the Jungle.

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...

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