

# **Innovation Economy: True Stories of Start-Ups, Flame-Outs, and Inventing the Future in New England**

By Scott Kirsner

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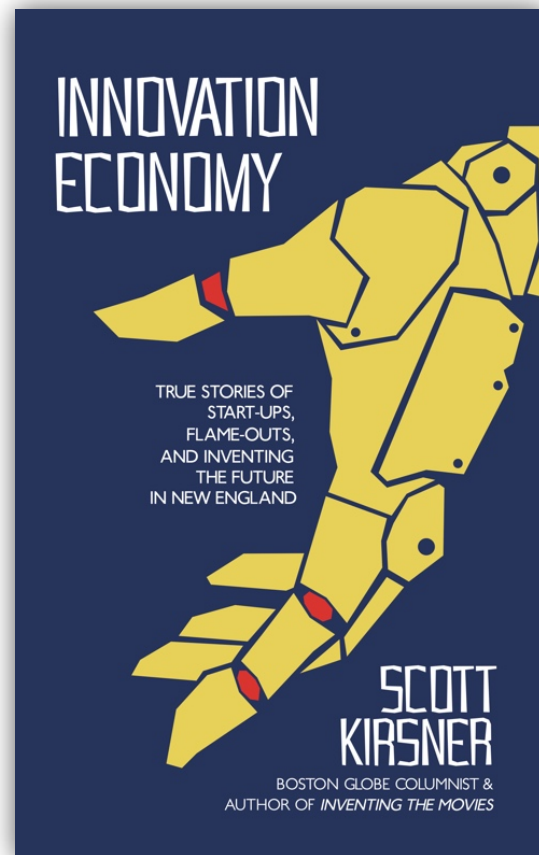
How are innovation and entrepreneurship different in New England from other parts of the world? Who are the key players driving progress forward in technology, life sciences, energy, and robotics?

Scott Kirsner has covered research, startups, and venture capital in the New England region for publications like *Wired*, *Fast Company*, and the *New York Times*, and has written a regular column for the *Boston Globe* since 2000. This collection explores what it takes to start and build businesses – whether selling fresh-cut New Hampshire Christmas trees online or designing bespoke bacteria on the edge of Boston Harbor. Kirsner includes profiles and columns of inventors Dean Kamen, Tim Berners-Lee, and Ray Kurzweil; stories about the early days of Dropbox, Facebook, and iRobot; and tales of scammers selling computer gear on eBay and scientists racing to create an effective COVID vaccine.

There are also colorful pieces about why Cambridge has hundreds of biotech companies and neighboring Somerville almost none; how the frat house that inspired “Animal House” became a coworking space; the mysterious Cambridge factory where every Junior Mint in the world is produced; what happened when one startup tried to obtain a license plate for its flying car; and why robots may need to carry candy to bribe humans.

This collection is a must-read for anyone interested in the dynamics that drive innovation and entrepreneurship – not just in New England, but anywhere in the world.

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## Testimonials for *Innovation Economy*

"I've been a passionate Scott Kirsner fan for twenty years, because he has an uncanny ability to turn complex business concepts into super-fun stories that I always learn from. Reading this collection is like sitting down to drinks with a dear friend. Some stories I remember, while some are new, and they are all fascinating."

– David Meerman Scott, *Wall Street Journal* bestselling author of *Fanocracy*

"To succeed as an innovator, it is imperative to be informed by both the work of earlier pioneers and current-day peers. *Innovation Economy* is like a main line IV of those riveting stories. Plus, the book is full of little-known facts, hilarious anecdotes, and the human foibles that make these endeavors relatable."

– Jules Pieri, Co-Founder, The Grommet and author of *How We Make Stuff Now*

"For years, Scott has been an avid player in the New England innovation scene. He seemed to be at every conference or gathering, often as an organizer or facilitator. He pumped us all for stories. He got to know us as people. He'd then distill that down into articles for the *Boston Globe* and others. More than 'reporting,' these were stories told with reasons behind them, and with humans and the world they lived in shown as he saw it. He showed us companies that succeeded, as well as those that ultimately failed. The tales presented here give insight into an ecosystem that any region in the world would be blessed to have. You come away with a broad feel for an environment that moves technology forward..."

– Dan Bricklin, Co-Creator of VisiCalc, the computing era's first "killer app"  
and author of *Bricklin on Technology*

"'Proximity matters,' writes Kirsner. *Innovation Economy* chronicles the evolution of one of the world's great startup hubs over the past two decades, and shows how Boston's bold entrepreneurs have been enabled by its universities, hospitals, accelerators, big corporations, and venture capital firms. History matters, too, and Kirsner connects Boston's present to its past with deep insight and a great flair for storytelling."

– Tom Eisenmann, Professor, Harvard Business School and author,  
*Why Startups Fail: A New Roadmap for Entrepreneurial Success*

"All reporters need competitors to keep us on our toes. Scott was always the best one I could hope for: curious, connected, insightful, and aggressive. Reading this outstanding collection reminded me about the fundamental technological changes we've all lived through in this century, and how important it is to understand them."

–Wade Roush, Host and Producer of the podcast *Soonish*;  
former columnist at *MIT Technology Review*, *Xconomy*, and *Scientific American*

"Scott has witnessed and written about so much of what makes Boston a great place to launch and scale a company. This collection of stories is funny, nostalgic, and an incredible resource for anyone wanting to understand how a city could be so innovative and so agile, despite its seemingly small size."

– Jodi Gernon, Director, Arthur Rock Center for Entrepreneurship at Harvard Business School

"Dive into it – each piece is a gem, and taken together, this is a powerful account of what makes innovation in Boston so compelling. It is fascinating and even fun. Kirsner is a great writer."

– Dr. Bob Krim, author, *Boston Made: From Revolution to Robotics, Innovations Which Changed the World*

"In over twenty years of following the entrepreneurship scene in Boston and beyond, Scott Kirsner has had his hand on its pulse. While we might not have agreed on everything over the years, his writings have been thought-provoking must-reads. Anyone who wants to understand what happened to make Boston, New England and the tech industry what it is today will get great satisfaction from reading this well-structured collection of articles."

– Bill Aulet, MIT Professor of Entrepreneurship; author of *Disciplined Entrepreneurship*

"What is different about Scott is that he not only wants to understand why something is innovative and how it works, but also how we got to this point of innovation. ...Scott's stories of the communities and networks that innovators, entrepreneurs, and creators sprang from make his stories important for truly understanding the history of the innovation economy."

– Gavin Kleespies, Director of Programs, Exhibitions, and Community Partnerships,  
Massachusetts Historical Society