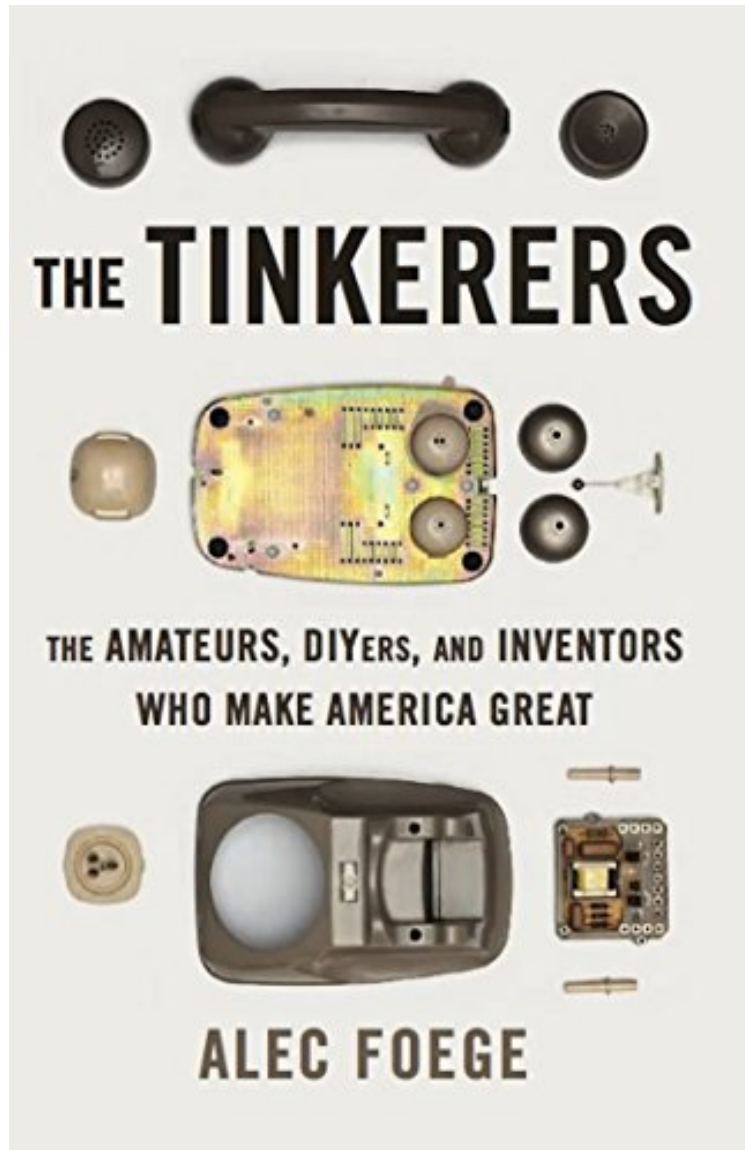


The Tinkerers: The Amateurs, DIYers, and Inventors Who Make America Great

Alec Foege

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Alec Foege : The Tinkerers: The Amateurs, DIYers, and Inventors Who Make America Great before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Tinkerers: The Amateurs, DIYers, and Inventors Who Make America Great:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Author seems to overlook a golden age of "tinkering", todayBy Dan TrachtmanI disagree with the authors premise that this country is rapidly losing its competitive edge because we don't

invest enough in innovation anymore and that we are no longer a country of tinkerers. I feel that he is missing all the amazing tinkering going on right in front of him. He misses the point that tinkering is now mostly done by writing code which is no less innovative than what was done physically in the past AND many of the big successes are still done by individuals, not corporations as the author suggests. At least by the metrics I am looking at, the US doesn't seem to be losing its competitive edge at all. Google, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, , etc. All American and all started by "tinkerers".

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. "The Tinkers" should be read by anyone interested in the future of the American educational system.

By Margaret W. Shiels I thought it was an excellent description of what makes a great inventor who needs to be left alone to his own devices. I also believe that schools today are not encouraging individuals to think outside the box. I loved the book because I agree with his conclusions and have passed the book to my grandson who is majoring in bio medical engineering and asked him to pass it on to his mother who is also an engineer. My engineer husband also enjoyed the book.

2 of 3 people found the following review helpful. sorta interesting

By R. B. Cathcart This book is just barely OK. The author writes with a odd use of the English language--some slang, some jargon, not much is really very interesting. Obvious deductions etc.

Having completed her transition from a manufacturing economy, America ndash; it is said ndash; has stopped making things. When there are breakthroughs in engineering and design, it's usually thanks to a team of corporate researchers trying to squeeze out more profit. But once upon a time, the United States was a nation of tinkerers. Amateurs and professionals alike applied their ingenuity and talent to the problems of their day, coming up with innovative solutions that at once channeled the optimistic spirit of America and kept that spirit alive. Guided by the curiosity of an inquiring mind, a desire to know how things work, and a belief that anything can be improved, they laid the foundations for the American century.

When Alexander Graham Bell beat Thomas Edison to the invention of the telephone, Edison fiddled around with the transmitter and receiver until he produced an equally revolutionary machine ndash; the phonograph. When Thomas MacDonal observed the hardship that a lack of good roads imposed on his fellow Iowans, he began a road-building project that eventually morphed into the interstate highway system. Some of the people profiled in this book attended the finest engineering schools in the world; some, like Microsoft's former chief technology officer Nathan Myhrvold, had no formal training in their chosen fields. Some see themselves as solo visionaries; others emphasize the importance of working in teams. What binds them together is an ability to imagine new systems and subvert old ones, to see fresh potential in existing technologies, and to apply technical know-how to the problems of their day.

In *The Tinkerers*, Alec Foege presents a version of American history told through feats of engineering, large and small. He argues that reports of tinkering's death have been greatly exaggerated; since World War II, it has been the guiding force behind projects from corporate-sponsored innovations (the personal computer, Ethernet) to smaller scale inventions with great potential (a machine that can make low-cost eyeglass lenses for people in impoverished countries, a device that uses lasers to shoot malarial mosquitoes out of the sky). Think tanks and companies have recognized the benefits of tinkering and have done their best to harness and institutionalize it. But as systems become more complex, budding inventors may become intimidated. Foege argues that this would be an enormous loss to a nation that achieved its strength largely thanks to the accomplishments of its innovators. He shows us how tinkering remains, in new and unexpected forms, at the heart of American society and culture.

From Booklist The word tinkerer has migrated far from its original definition as a repairer of utensils. In Foege's formulation, being a tinkerer is as much a state of mind ndash; creative, obsessive, and unorthodox ndash; as being someone who fixes or improves gizmos. Imagining a better gizmo is the tinkerer's hallmark, and the gizmo in Foege's demonstrations can be a device, methods of production, interstate highways, financial derivatives, even music. Individuals historical and contemporary furnish facts for Foege's search for what constitutes tinkering, which he feels is, to America's economic detriment, in decline and ought to be revived. Via journalistic portraits, including one of tinkerer nonpareil Thomas Edison, Foege extracts traits that cultivate tinkering. Foege's positive examples include the inventor of the Segway pedestrian vehicle, Dean Kamen, and the more famous Steve Jobs, both of whom characterize Foege's idea of the tinkerer as someone who doesn't take to formal education and creates gadgets and, more important, organizations that promote a tinkering spirit. (Ironically, Edison serves Foege as a negative example because of Edison's failure to commercialize his phonograph.) A lively exploration for those interested in technological innovation. --Gilbert Taylor [Foege hopes] to inspire people to incorporate more of the tinkering mindset into their everyday lives and the lives of their children.

American Scientist