Building, automation, and the missing layer in AI judgment

Recommended Reading from Tech Founders

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By Recommended Reading from Tech Founders • September 4, 2026

The strongest authentic recommendations this period address three linked questions: how founders learn, how technology compounds through systems, and what emotion contributes to intelligence.

Strongest recommendation

How Universities Should Prepare Founders — article

- **Author:** Paul Graham. [1]
- **Recommended by:** Jessica Livingston, who argues that universities may struggle to give students freedom to work on their own projects—but that this is exactly what they need to do. [2]
- **Key takeaway:** Graham's answer is not an entrepreneurship curriculum. Universities should teach powerful ideas and cultivate the ability and habit of building; the two institutional changes he identifies are making startups feel like a viable option and encouraging students to pursue independent projects. [3]
- **Why it matters:** This is an unusually operational founder-formation playbook. Graham ties independent projects to deep learning, finding cofounders, and discovering ideas, then contrasts that with business-plan competitions, which train students to optimize for investor stories rather than user-valued prototypes. [3] His implementation advice is deliberately counterintuitive: return time to students, leave projects genuinely student-owned, and resist adding entrepreneurship deans or innovation centers. [3]

A founder case study in systems thinking

Thomas Peterffy: market-maker profile — article

- **Creator/source:** Colossus; the page identifies Dom Cooke as its managing editor. [4]
- **Recommended by:** Patrick O'Shaughnessy, who called Peterffy's story "fascinating" and linked the profile after a post highlighting him. [5, 6]
- **Key takeaway:** The profile follows Peterffy turning friction into systems: he reduced routine engineering calculations from 20 minutes to 30 seconds, replaced trader intuition with mathematical pricing, and—after a $75,000 loss—rebuilt around fair-value calculations and hedging. [4] He ultimately built what the article calls Wall Street's first fully automated trading system, despite repeated resistance from incumbent exchanges. [4]
- **Why it matters:** This is a useful case study because automation and risk discipline are inseparable in the story: the same willingness to redesign a broken workflow is paired with explicit controls learned from failure. The result is a more useful founder lesson than a generic success narrative. [4]

A conceptual read for AI builders

***The Emotion Machine* — book**

- **Author:** Marvin Minsky. **Link:** No direct book link was supplied in the post. [7]
- **Recommended by:** Amjad Masad, who surfaced the book while responding to a discussion of how impaired emotional processing can leave someone able to reason but unable to make basic decisions. [7, 8]
- **Key takeaway:** Masad summarizes Minsky's position that emotions are part of human intelligence, not an incidental side effect, and highlights a "selector" for different thinking strategies. [7]
- **Why it matters:** It is a targeted conceptual counterpoint to treating intelligence as the production of plausible options alone. The surrounding discussion makes the unresolved problem concrete: an AI system may produce 20 reasonable answers, while someone—or something—still has to determine which outcome matters. [8]

Sources

1. X post by @paulg
2. X post by @jesslivingston
3. How Universities Should Prepare Founders
4. The Making of a Market Maker
5. X post by @qcapital2020
6. X post by @patrick_oshag
7. X post by @amasad

8. X post by @danysvnt