

Differentiating in the AI Era and a Procurement Reform Case Study

Recommended Reading from Tech Founders

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By Recommended Reading from Tech Founders • July 18, 2026

Two organic recommendations stand out: Kevin Kelly's updated essay on differentiating creative work in an AI-copying environment, and Robert Coram's narrative of John Boyd's fight to reform military procurement.

Most compelling: *Better Than Free: How To Differentiate In The Age Of AI*

- **Content type:** Essay
- **Author:** Kevin Kelly
- **Link:** Read the updated essay
- **Recommended by:** Tim Ferriss
- **Key takeaway:** Ferriss republished an updated version of Kelly's 2008 essay after a reader suggested it in response to Ferriss's post on AI and how-to nonfiction. The essay centers on what creators can sell when AI can generate low-cost copies and competent variations of words, images, music, code, and advice. [1]
- **Why it matters:** This is the day's clearest, most timely recommendation: it directly addresses differentiation for creators in the AI era. Ferriss also singled out Kelly's *1,000 True Fans* as one of his favorite essays on making a living as a creator. [1]

A reformer's view of military procurement

Boyd

- **Content type:** Narrative nonfiction book
- **Author:** Robert Coram

- **Link:** No direct book URL was supplied; watch the recommendation
 - **Recommended by:** Patrick Collison
 - **Key takeaway:** Collison recommended Coram's account of Air Force colonel John Boyd, describing it as an engaging, well-written story of reform in Air Force procurement. He highlighted Boyd's theory of better fighter jets and his influence on the F-16, A-10, and F-15 amid a battle over aircraft design. [2]
 - **Why it matters:** The book offers a narrative case study of how technical judgment, institutional resistance, and procurement choices can shape consequential systems. [2]
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Sources

1. X post by @tferriss
2. The Stablecoin Future, Milei's Memecoin, DOGE for the DoD, Grok 3, Why Stripe Stays Private