

Maker Time, Time-Tested Product Books, and AI Context Reads

Recommended Reading from Tech Founders

2026-05-27

Maker Time, Time-Tested Product Books, and AI Context Reads

By Recommended Reading from Tech Founders • May 27, 2026

Tim Ferriss' endorsement of Paul Graham's maker-schedule essay was the clearest actionable pick. The rest of the brief distills Lenny Rachitsky's time-tested book map for product builders and four additional reads on AI geopolitics, consciousness, classical skepticism about writing, and the origins of internet resilience.

What stood out

The strongest single recommendation was Paul Graham's *Maker's Schedule, Manager's Schedule*. Tim Ferriss tied it to a precise operating rule: creative work needs uninterrupted 3-5 hour blocks, plus enough slack for multi-day synthesis, and he protects 3-4 mornings per week in maker mode until at least 1pm [1, 2].

The other major signal was Lenny Rachitsky's book list for product builders. He organized it by job-to-be-done, limited himself to books he had completed, and mostly favored books more than 10 years old because they had stood the test of time [3].

Most compelling recommendation

Maker's Schedule, Manager's Schedule

- **Content type:** Essay
- **Author/creator:** Paul Graham
- **Link/URL:** <https://www.paulgraham.com/makerschedule.html>
- **Who recommended it:** Tim Ferriss
- **Key takeaway:** Ferriss said great creative work is hard to do in fragmented 30-45 minute windows; it needs uninterrupted 3-5 hour blocks

and enough slack for multi-day “CPU-intensive synthesis” [1]

- **Why it matters:** This was the clearest recommendation in the batch because it came with a concrete scheduling practice he already uses: 3-4 maker mornings per week until at least 1pm [1]

“Large, uninterrupted blocks of time—3-5 hours minimum—create the space needed to find and connect the dots.” [1]

A compact starting stack from Lenny Rachitsky’s broader book list

Lenny’s full list spans multiple categories, from communication skills to sales and marketing. If you want a smaller starting point, these nine titles give you one book per category from that broader map [3].

- *Nobody Wants to Read Your Sht** — **Content type:** Book; **Author/creator:** Steven Pressfield; **Link/URL:** https://www.amazon.com/Nobody-Wants-Read-Your-Tough-Love/dp/1936891492/ref=tmm_pap_swatch_0; **Who recommended it:** Lenny Rachitsky; **Key takeaway:** one of his three picks for **communication skills** in a list optimized for books that have stood the test of time; **Why it matters:** it puts writing and communication at the front of the product-builder skill map [3]
- *The Great CEO Within* — **Content type:** Book; **Author/creator:** Matt Mochary; **Link/URL:** https://www.amazon.com/Great-CEO-Within-Tactical-Building/dp/0578599287/ref=tmm_pap_swatch_0; **Who recommended it:** Lenny Rachitsky; **Key takeaway:** one of his three picks for **executing**; **Why it matters:** it signals execution as a distinct reading track, not just an output of strategy [3]
- *Good Strategy/Bad Strategy* — **Content type:** Book; **Author/creator:** Richard Rumelt; **Link/URL:** https://www.amazon.com/Good-Strategy-Bad-Difference-Matters/dp/0307886239/ref=tmm_hrd_swatch_0; **Who recommended it:** Lenny Rachitsky; **Key takeaway:** one of his three picks for **strategy**; **Why it matters:** it gives strategy its own dedicated place in a practical operator reading list [3]
- *Build* — **Content type:** Book; **Author/creator:** Tony Fadell; **Link/URL:** <https://www.buildc.com/the-book>; **Who recommended it:** Lenny Rachitsky; **Key takeaway:** one of his three picks for **inspiration to build**; **Why it matters:** it shows that founder motivation and building craft belong in the same learning stack [3]
- *High Output Management* — **Content type:** Book; **Author/creator:** Andy Grove; **Link/URL:** https://www.amazon.com/High-Output-Management-Andrew-Grove/dp/0679762884/ref=tmm_pap_swatch_0; **Who recommended it:** Lenny Rachitsky; **Key takeaway:** one of his three picks for **management**; **Why it matters:** it identifies management as a separate discipline from leadership or product judgment [3]

- *Amp It Up* — **Content type:** Book; **Author/creator:** Frank Sloatman; **Link/URL:** https://www.amazon.com/Amp-Unlocking-Hypergrowth-Expectations-Intensity/dp/1119836115/ref=tmm_hrd_swatch_0; **Who recommended it:** Lenny Rachitsky; **Key takeaway:** one of his three picks for **leadership**; **Why it matters:** it separates leadership intensity and standards from day-to-day management mechanics [3]
- *The Mom Test* — **Content type:** Book; **Author/creator:** Rob Fitzpatrick; **Link/URL:** https://www.amazon.com/Mom-Test-customers-business-everyone/dp/1492180742/ref=tmm_pap_swatch_0; **Who recommended it:** Lenny Rachitsky; **Key takeaway:** one of his three picks for **product success**; **Why it matters:** it places customer learning inside the core product-building toolkit [3]
- *Empowered* — **Content type:** Book; **Author/creator:** Marty Cagan; **Link/URL:** <https://www.svpg.com/books/empowered-ordinary-people-extraordinary-products/>; **Who recommended it:** Lenny Rachitsky; **Key takeaway:** one of his three picks for the **product org**; **Why it matters:** it extends the reading list from individual craft to team and organizational design [3]
- *Obviously Awesome* — **Content type:** Book; **Author/creator:** April Dunford; **Link/URL:** https://www.amazon.com/Obviously-Awesome-Product-Positioning-Customers/dp/1999023080/ref=tmm_hrd_swatch_0; **Who recommended it:** Lenny Rachitsky; **Key takeaway:** one of his three picks for **sales and marketing**; **Why it matters:** it makes go-to-market part of the same learning arc as product and management [3]

Four side paths worth saving

- *US/China AI race article* — **Content type:** Article; **Author/creator:** not specified in the source; **Link/URL:** <https://chinai.substack.com/p/anthropics-dogmatic-views-on-us-china>; **Who recommended it:** Bill Gurley; **Key takeaway:** he called it “a wonderfully pragmatic look” and said it is unrealistic and dangerous to project that the next 12 months are an all-or-nothing bet on the future of the world; **Why it matters:** it is the clearest AI-geopolitics recommendation in this batch, and the value lies in its push against compressed, absolutist timelines [4]
- *Could a Large Language Model Be Conscious?* — **Content type:** Article; **Author/creator:** not specified in the source; **Link/URL:** <https://www.bostonreview.net/articles/could-a-large-language-model-be-conscious/>; **Who recommended it:** shared by Marc Andreessen via a quoted post from @badlogicgames; **Key takeaway:** it was shared as recommended reading during a discussion about “model wellbeing,” consciousness, and the limits of current LLM framing; **Why it matters:** it is the most explicit philosophy-of-AI reading in today’s set [5, 6]

- *Socrates on the written word* — **Content type:** Philosophical text; **Author/creator:** Socrates, via Plato; **Link/URL:** direct text link not provided in the source; source discussion: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k2THslsOYZY>; **Who recommended it:** Palmer Luckey; **Key takeaway:** he drew a direct parallel between Socrates' critique of writing and current worries that AI or ChatGPT could weaken memory, encourage superficial understanding, and outsource thinking; **Why it matters:** it re-frames an AI-era concern as an older debate about tools and cognition [7]



Palmer Luckey on Threats, Autonomy, and the Future of American Power (41:31)

- *Paul Baran and the Origins of the Internet* — **Content type:** Article; **Author/creator:** RAND; **Link/URL:** <https://www.rand.org/pubs/articles/2018/paul-baran-and-the-origins-of-the-internet.html>; **Who recommended it:** Balaji; **Key takeaway:** Baran proposed packet-switched networking as a system that could survive nuclear attack; the design was later adopted mainly for efficiency, but the original resiliency property remained; **Why it matters:** it adds historical context to how technical architectures can outlast the political conditions that produced them [8]

Bottom line

If you save one item today, save Paul Graham's essay for the clear rule on protecting maker time [1]. If you want a broader next-read list, Lenny Rachitsky's

categories provide the largest set of book recommendations in this batch, filtered for titles he had actually finished and believed had endured over time [3].

Sources

1. X post by @tferriss
2. X post by @tferriss
3. Essential books for product builders—part 1
4. X post by @bgurley
5. X post by @badlogicgames
6. X post by @pmarca
7. Palmer Luckey on Threats, Autonomy, and the Future of American Power
8. X post by @balajis