Operator-grade resources for high-growth teams and background agents

Recommended Reading from Tech Founders

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By Recommended Reading from Tech Founders • August 10, 2026

A short, non-promotional curriculum spanning founder scaling, emotional intelligence, high-signal recruiting, and the shift from prompted to background agent work.

The strongest recommendations are unusually usable: Adam Ward favors books that function as tools at recurring company bottlenecks; Aaron Levie points to a podcast thought experiment for judging whether enterprise workflows are truly agent-ready; and Lenny surfaces a concrete hiring system from Coda. [1, 2]

The standout: a reference guide for founders

Title: *The High-Growth Handbook*
Type: Book
Author: Elad Gil
Link: Episode context
Recommended by: Adam Ward, Cursor's head of talent. [1]

Key takeaway: Ward recommends it especially for founders because it works as a reference: readers can jump to a chapter for an answer rather than read it linearly, and its core company-building principles still hold years after publication. [1]

Why it matters: This is the most immediately practical recommendation in the set. It is designed for the moment a founder encounters a specific scaling problem, not just for absorbing a general philosophy of growth.

Ward's complementary recommendation: the human layer of AI-era work

Title: *Emotional Intelligence*
Type: Book
Author: Daniel Goleman
Link: Episode context
Recommended by: Adam Ward, Cursor's head of talent. [1]

Key takeaway: Ward says he first read the book as an undergraduate, found it transformative, and now considers emotional intelligence more important than ever in the AI age. [1]

Why it matters: It is a useful counterweight to purely technical AI curricula: Ward's recommendation treats judgment, empathy, and the ability to work with people as capabilities whose value is not reduced by better tools.

Two operator lenses on what comes next

Title: *Training Data* podcast segment featuring Matan Grinberg at Factory
Type: Podcast
Creator/guest: Matan Grinberg at Factory; the specific episode title is not supplied
Link: Aaron Levie's recommendation context
Recommended by: Aaron Levie

Key takeaway: Levie highlights Grinberg's thought experiment: if everyone called in sick tomorrow, token usage would plummet because nobody would be there to prompt the agents. He uses it to show that most processes are still early in moving agents into background operation; achieving that future requires workflows to be wired for agents rather than manual work. [2]

Why it matters: The thought experiment gives operators a sharp test for agent readiness: if the workflow stops when humans stop prompting, the organization has not yet redesigned it for autonomous, continuous work.

Title: Brie Wolfson's post on how Coda approaches hiring
Type: Blog post/article
Author: Brie Wolfson
Link: Episode context
Recommended by: Lenny, the episode host

Key takeaway: Lenny calls the post "incredible" and says it helped him prepare for the conversation. The Coda practice it surfaces is an active "hiring ideas" Slack channel where employees nominate impressive people and rally around how to engage them; the underlying principle is that the atomic unit of hiring is the person, not the job specification or role. [1]

Why it matters: This is a concrete alternative to passive funnel recruiting.

Start with a small set of exceptional people, then build a bespoke relationship and candidate experience around the individual rather than waiting for the right applicant to appear in a standardized process.

Sources

1. The playbook for building high talent density teams | Adam Ward, Head of Talent at Cursor
2. X post by @levie