

Seven Powers, a Productivity-Growth Paper, and a San Jose Case Study

Recommended Reading from Tech Founders

2026-05-22

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By Recommended Reading from Tech Founders • May 22, 2026

Patrick Collison surfaced the day’s strongest learning resources: Hamilton Helmer’s *Seven Powers* for thinking about durable software moats, and a Nick Bloom paper on innovation and productivity growth. Garry Tan’s notable pick was a New York Times video on San Jose’s homelessness approach, highlighted for its concrete design and measurable outcomes.

What stood out

Today’s strongest signals centered on **durable frameworks** and **outcome-focused case studies**. Patrick Collison supplied the clearest founder-learning recommendations: a favorite book on software moats and a paper on innovation and productivity growth. Garry Tan’s pick was a policy video, but it fit the same filter: a resource endorsed for its concrete model and observed results. [1, 2]

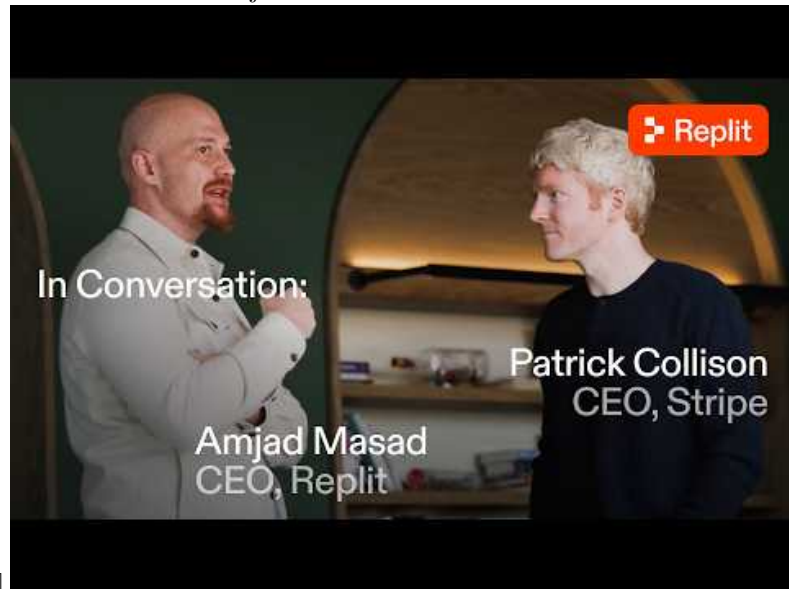
Most compelling recommendation

Seven Powers

- **Content type:** Book [1]
- **Author/creator:** Hamilton Helmer [1]
- **Link/URL:** Direct book link was not provided in the source; source discussion: Patrick Collison & Amjad Masad [1]
- **Who recommended it:** Patrick Collison [1]
- **Key takeaway:** Collison said software moats may not change all that much over the next 5–10 years and pointed to *Seven Powers* as one of his favorite frameworks because it reduces the question to “seven moats.” [1]

- **Why it matters:** This was the strongest recommendation because Collison used it directly when answering how durable competitive advantages in software should be analyzed. [1]

“one of my favorite books on the subject is Hamilton Helmer’s ...



seven powers.” [1]

The Best Time in History to Start a Company | Patrick Collison & Amjad Masad (29:48)

Two other recommendations worth saving

Paper on innovation and productivity growth (title not provided in source)

- **Content type:** Research paper [1]
- **Author/creator:** Nick Bloom [1]
- **Link/URL:** Direct paper link was not provided in the source; source discussion: Patrick Collison & Amjad Masad [1]
- **Who recommended it:** Patrick Collison [1]
- **Key takeaway:** Collison described it as a “very interesting paper” about how innovation and productivity growth, at least on a per-person basis, appeared to be declining and how that broader stagnation might be explained. [1]
- **Why it matters:** It offers a macro frame for readers who want to think about innovation, productivity, and stagnation at the system level rather than only at the company level. [1]

San Jose's approach to homelessness (video)

- **Content type:** Video [2]
- **Author/creator:** The New York Times [2]
- **Link/URL:** NYT video [2]
- **Who recommended it:** Garry Tan [2]
- **Key takeaway:** Tan highlighted a pragmatic approach built around converting rundown motels into transitional housing, prioritizing people from the local neighborhood first, and creating no-encampment zones only after offering real alternatives. [2]
- **Why it matters:** He emphasized concrete outcomes rather than abstract intent: fewer 911 calls, less blight, and more stable neighborhoods. [2]

Bottom line

If you open only one resource, start with *Seven Powers*. It had the clearest endorsement and the most direct application to a durable founder problem: how to reason about moats in software. After that, Nick Bloom's paper is the best macro follow-on, while the NYT video is the most concrete non-business case study in today's set. [1, 2]

Sources

1. The Best Time in History to Start a Company | Patrick Collison & Amjad Masad
2. X post by @garrytan