Shoe Dog distilled into operating principles, plus trending career reading and the rise of "verifiers"

Recommended Reading from Tech Founders

2026-02-25

Shoe Dog distilled into operating principles, plus trending career reading and the rise of "verifiers"

By Recommended Reading from Tech Founders • February 25, 2026

A high-signal set of learning resources recommended by founders and investors, led by Shane Parrish's actionable distillation of *Shoe Dog*. Also included: a convergent career-book pick from Tony Fadell and Tim Ferriss (with a free chapter excerpt), a thread on the growing need for "verifiers," and several investing, creativity, and personal operating-system essentials.

Most compelling recommendation: a founder memoir distilled into actionable operating principles

Shoe Dog **(book) — Phil Knight**

- **Content type**: Book [1]
- **Author/creator**: Phil Knight [2]
- **Who recommended it**: Shane Parrish (Farnam Street), in a YouTube breakdown [3]
- **Key takeaway (as shared)**: Parrish calls it "one of the best business books ever written" because it "tells the truth about what building something actually feels like" [4], including how the company "almost died daily" amid compounding crises [5]. He pulls out a set of repeatable lessons:
    - **Belief draws people in**: "Belief is irresistible" [6] and "genuine conviction is contagious—you stop persuading and start attracting" [7].

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[1] [Outliers] Phil Knight: The Obsession That Built Nike
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[3] [Outliers] Phil Knight: The Obsession That Built Nike
[4] [Outliers] Phil Knight: The Obsession That Built Nike
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[6] [Outliers] Phil Knight: The Obsession That Built Nike
[7] [Outliers] Phil Knight: The Obsession That Built Nike

- **Reframe fear by facing the worst case**: "Fail fast… but fight like hell not to" and use worst-case thinking to change your relationship with fear [8].
- **Lead with autonomy, not instructions**: "Tell them what to do, and let them surprise you with the results" (as a contrast to micro-management) [9].
- **Make work feel like play when the mission is real**: when you believe in what you're building, the work can "pull[] you forward" and the work/play boundary dissolves [10].
- **Use the 'goodbye test' for people decisions**: imagine someone leaving to reveal their true importance to you [11].
- **Focus on the one task that matters, and on what's working**: when things are toughest, deliberately direct attention toward what's working (not only what's broken) [12].

- **Why it matters**: This recommendation comes with *specific* decision frameworks (belief, fear management, delegation, focus) grounded in a narrative of near-constant existential pressure [13][14].

"Belief is irresistible." [15]

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[10] [Outliers] Phil Knight: The Obsession That Built Nike
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[12] [Outliers] Phil Knight: The Obsession That Built Nike
[13] [Outliers] Phil Knight: The Obsession That Built Nike
[14] [Outliers] Phil Knight: The Obsession That Built Nike
[15] [Outliers] Phil Knight: The Obsession That Built Nike

[Outliers] Phil Knight: The Obsession That Built Nike (7:58)

Multiple leaders converged on the same career book (with a free chapter excerpt)

***Runnin' Down a Dream: How to Thrive in a Career You Actually Love* (book) — Bill Gurley**

- **Content type**: Book [16]
- **Author/creator**: Bill Gurley [17]
- **Link/URL (excerpt)**: https://tim.blog/2026/01/26/runnin-down-a-dream-how-to-thrive-in-a-career-you-actually-love/ [18]
- **Who recommended it**:
    - Tony Fadell (launch-day endorsement) [19]
    - Tim Ferriss (following a recent interview) [20]
- **Key takeaway (as shared)**:
    - Fadell's guidance is simple: "Order and read immediately!" [21]

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[16] post by @tferriss
[17] post by @tferriss
[18] post by @tferriss
[19] post by @tfadell
[20] post by @tferriss
[21] post by @tfadell

- Ferriss said he interviewed Gurley about the new book [22] and shared the chapter **"Go Where The Action Is"** [23]—reprinted with permission "to give you a taste" [24].
- **Why it matters**: This is a high-signal "multiple independent recommendations" pattern (Fadell + Ferriss) [25][26], and Ferriss provides a low-friction way to sample the material via a full chapter excerpt [27][28].

Work and AI: why "verification" demand is growing—and why the training pipeline is thinning

"Verifiers" + the "Missing Junior Loop" (X thread/analysis) — @ccatalini

- **Content type**: X thread/analysis [29]
- **Author/creator**: @ccatalini [30]
- **Link/URL**: https://x.com/ccatalini/status/2026311839089631468 [31]
- **Who recommended it**: Scott Belsky [32]
- **Key takeaway (as shared)**:
  - With "exponential and autonomous software generating all sorts of outputs and taking actions on our behalf," Belsky highlights the thread's claim that there will be an "explosion of stuff to verify," driving demand for "verifiers" [33].
  - The thread also flags a "Missing Junior Loop": firms are "thinning the pipeline that produces future verifiers" while the economy needs to expand verification capacity—"the old apprenticeship model is being quietly dismantled" [34].
- **Why it matters**: If verification work is increasing while the apprentice-to-expert pathway is shrinking, the bottleneck becomes *capacity-building* (how people become competent verifiers) [35] rather than just the headline demand signal [36].

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[22] post by @tferriss
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[32] post by @scottbelsky
[33] post by @scottbelsky
[34] post by @ccatalini
[35] post by @ccatalini
[36] post by @scottbelsky

Investing pattern recognition: signals in writing, plus history as a risk-avoidance tool

Jeff Bezos' 1997 shareholder letter (shareholder letter)

- **Content type**: Shareholder letter [37]
- **Author/creator**: Jeff Bezos [38]
- **Link/URL**: Not provided in the source
- **Who recommended it**: Dan Sundheim (D1 Capital), on *Invest Like The Best* [39]
- **Key takeaway (as shared)**: Sundheim says that early on, Amazon's income statement looked like "a sea of red," and that the "only telltale sign" was the **clarity of thought** in the 1997 letter—so much so that reading it and "almost ignor[ing] everything else" would have been an important and profitable signal [40].
- **Why it matters**: It's a concrete example of weighting "written clarity" as an investing input when financial statements are non-informative (or misleading) in a company's early days [41].

Dario Amodei's essays + podcast appearances (essays/podcasts)

- **Content type**: Essays and podcasts [42]
- **Author/creator**: Dario Amodei [43]
- **Link/URL**: Not provided in the source
- **Who recommended it**: Dan Sundheim [44]
- **Key takeaway (as shared)**: Sundheim says his "pattern recognition" on Anthropic came from reading Dario's essays and listening to him on podcasts, and he places heavy weight on CEO clarity of thought—saying Dario did this "better than almost any CEO" he's seen since Bezos [45].
- **Why it matters**: This frames long-form communication (essays, interviews) as a primary diligence channel for assessing leadership quality and focus [46].

***Real Dictators* (podcast)**

- **Content type**: Podcast [47]
- **Author/creator**: Not specified in the source

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[37] Inside Dan Sundheim's Bets on Anthropic, OpenAI, and SpaceX
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[46] Inside Dan Sundheim's Bets on Anthropic, OpenAI, and SpaceX
[47] Inside Dan Sundheim's Bets on Anthropic, OpenAI, and SpaceX

- **Link/URL**: Not provided in the source
- **Who recommended it**: Dan Sundheim [48]
- **Key takeaway (as shared)**: He listens because he "like[s] history," and because understanding how "horrible leaders" and systems (e.g., communism/fascism) played out can help you avoid repeating mistakes—"it tends to repeat itself" [49].
- **Why it matters**: It's recommended as a way to internalize historical failure modes and recognize "seeds" of them in the present [50].

Ken Griffin's 2008 interviews (interviews)

- **Content type**: Interviews [51]
- **Author/creator**: Ken Griffin [52]
- **Link/URL**: Not provided in the source
- **Who recommended it**: Dan Sundheim [53]
- **Key takeaway (as shared)**: Sundheim found it helpful (and "lonely") to go back and read/listen to Griffin's 2008 interviews and others he respected [54].
- **Why it matters**: Offered as an "in-the-arena" reference point for thinking and emotional steadiness during stressful drawdowns [55].

Creativity + spirituality: a builder's reading list from a deep-tech founder

Reading list shared by Eve Bodnia (Logical Intelligence)

Bodnia shared resources that relate to "how meditation, piano, and Eastern philosophy support her creative process" [56] and themes of "spirituality and creativity" [57], including what helps her "sustain[] her creativity" [58].

The Creative Act: A Way of Being (book) — Rick Rubin

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[50] Inside Dan Sundheim's Bets on Anthropic, OpenAI, and SpaceX
[51] Inside Dan Sundheim's Bets on Anthropic, OpenAI, and SpaceX
[52] Inside Dan Sundheim's Bets on Anthropic, OpenAI, and SpaceX
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[56] Everyone Is Betting on Bigger LLMs. She's Betting They're Fundamentally Wrong. (Eve Bodnia, Founder & CEO of Logical Intelligence)
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[58] Everyone Is Betting on Bigger LLMs. She's Betting They're Fundamentally Wrong. (Eve Bodnia, Founder & CEO of Logical Intelligence)

- **Content type**: Book [59]
- **Author/creator**: Rick Rubin [60]
- **Link/URL**: https://www.amazon.com/Creative-Act-Way-Being/dp/0593652886 [61]
- **Who recommended it**: Eve Bodnia [62]
- **Key takeaway (as shared)**: Included as part of her creativity-supporting reading list [63].
- **Why it matters**: Flagged by a technical founder as relevant to maintaining a creative practice [64].

Impro: Improvisation and the Theatre (book) — Keith Johnstone

- **Content type**: Book [65]
- **Author/creator**: Keith Johnstone [66]
- **Link/URL**: https://www.amazon.com/Impro-Improvisation-Theatre-Keith-Johnstone/dp/0878301178 [67]
- **Who recommended it**: Eve Bodnia [68]
- **Key takeaway (as shared)**: Included in her creative-process reading list [69].
- **Why it matters**: Points to improvisation as an input to sustaining creative output [70].

Perfectly Reasonable Deviations from the Beaten Track (book; Feynman letters)

- **Content type**: Book [71]

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[59] Everyone Is Betting on Bigger LLMs. She's Betting They're Fundamentally Wrong. (Eve Bodnia, Founder & CEO of Logical Intelligence)

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[71] Everyone Is Betting on Bigger LLMs. She's Betting They're Fundamentally Wrong. (Eve

- **Author/creator**: Not specified in the source
- **Link/URL**: https://www.amazon.com/Perfectly-Reasonable-Deviations-Beaten-Track/dp/0465023711 [72]
- **Who recommended it**: Eve Bodnia [73]
- **Key takeaway (as shared)**: Listed alongside a discussion of "Feynman's influence on Eve's work" [74].
- **Why it matters**: Offered as a direct influence on how she thinks about her work [75].

Letting Go: The Pathway of Surrender (book) — **David R. Hawkins**

- **Content type**: Book [76]
- **Author/creator**: David R. Hawkins [77]
- **Link/URL**: https://www.amazon.com/Letting-David-Hawkins-M-D-Ph-D/dp/1401945015 [78]
- **Who recommended it**: Eve Bodnia [79][80]
- **Key takeaway (as shared)**: Included in her spirituality/creativity-adjacent list [81].
- **Why it matters**: Included specifically in the context of spirituality and creativity [82].

"The Kekulé Problem" (article) — **Cormac McCarthy**

- **Content type**: Article [83]

Bodnia, Founder & CEO of Logical Intelligence)

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- **Author/creator**: Cormac McCarthy [84]
- **Link/URL**: https://nautil.us/the-kekul-problem-236574 [85]
- **Who recommended it**: Eve Bodnia [86]
- **Key takeaway (as shared)**: Included as a referenced reading item in her list [87].
- **Why it matters**: A non-technical reading suggestion surfaced in a discussion about creativity and sustaining creative work [88].

Practical personal operating system: communication, food heuristics, and prioritization

Nonviolent Communication (book) — **Marshall Rosenberg**

- **Content type**: Book [89]
- **Author/creator**: Not specified in the source
- **Link/URL**: Not provided in the source
- **Who recommended it**: Tim Ferriss (YouTube interview) [90]
- **Key takeaway (as shared)**: Ferriss recommends it to "figure out how to talk to people without sounding overly defensive or aggressive," and frames communication as the "connective tissue for everything" [91].
- **Why it matters**: Recommended as foundational skill-building, not a niche tactic [92].

Food Rules (book) — **Michael Pollan**

- **Content type**: Book [93]
- **Author/creator**: Michael Pollan [94]
- **Link/URL**: Not provided in the source
- **Who recommended it**: Tim Ferriss [95]

[84]Everyone Is Betting on Bigger LLMs. She's Betting They're Fundamentally Wrong. (Eve Bodnia, Founder & CEO of Logical Intelligence)

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[89]How to Quiet the Ruminative Mind and Avoid The Traps of Self-Help — Tim Ferriss

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[94]How to Quiet the Ruminative Mind and Avoid The Traps of Self-Help — Tim Ferriss

[95]How to Quiet the Ruminative Mind and Avoid The Traps of Self-Help — Tim Ferriss

- **Key takeaway (as shared)**: "If your grandmother wouldn't recognize the ingredients, don't eat it" [96].
- **Why it matters**: Shared as a simple, memorable rule for avoiding processed foods [97].

The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People (book) — **Stephen Covey**

- **Content type**: Book [98]
- **Author/creator**: Not specified in the source
- **Link/URL**: Not provided in the source
- **Who recommended it**: Tim Ferriss (as the source of a prioritization story) [99]
- **Key takeaway (as shared)**: The mason-jar analogy—put the "big rocks" (life-changing yeses) in first, then gravel, then sand (distractions), because scheduling distractions first crowds out what matters [100].
- **Why it matters**: A concrete prioritization model for protecting the few commitments that actually move your life forward [101].

A sci-fi lens for technology's uneven rollout

Neuromancer (book) — **William Gibson**

- **Content type**: Book [102]
- **Author/creator**: William Gibson [103]
- **Link/URL**: Not provided in the source
- **Who recommended it**: Reid Hoffman [104]
- **Key takeaway (as shared)**: Hoffman cites Gibson (one of his favorite sci-fi authors) and highlights the line: "the future is already here. It's just unevenly distributed" [105].
- **Why it matters**: Offered as a compact framing for thinking about uneven adoption and impact (raised in the context of AI rollout) [106].

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[99] How to Quiet the Ruminative Mind and Avoid The Traps of Self-Help — Tim Ferriss
[100] How to Quiet the Ruminative Mind and Avoid The Traps of Self-Help — Tim Ferriss
[101] How to Quiet the Ruminative Mind and Avoid The Traps of Self-Help — Tim Ferriss
[102] Reid Hoffman - Co-founder of LinkedIn | Podcast | In Good Company
[103] Reid Hoffman - Co-founder of LinkedIn | Podcast | In Good Company
[104] Reid Hoffman - Co-founder of LinkedIn | Podcast | In Good Company
[105] Reid Hoffman - Co-founder of LinkedIn | Podcast | In Good Company
[106] Reid Hoffman - Co-founder of LinkedIn | Podcast | In Good Company

Sources

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6. Inside Dan Sundheim's Bets on Anthropic, OpenAI, and SpaceX
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8. How to Quiet the Ruminative Mind and Avoid The Traps of Self-Help — Tim Ferriss
9. Reid Hoffman - Co-founder of LinkedIn | Podcast | In Good Company