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## Guide for start-ups blends humor with sound advice

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Stop!

Before you launch your new business, project or not-for-profit operation, take a couple of hours to read "The Art of the Start: The Time-Tested, Battle-Hardened Guide for Anyone Starting Anything." (Portfolio, \$26.95)

Macintosh computer evangelist turned venture capitalist Guy Kawasaki has distilled solid business principles, plus nuggets from his own experience, into a wise and witty primer for entrepreneurs of all sorts.

"Entrepreneur" is not a job title, Kawasaki says. "It is the state of mind of people who want to alter the future." Moreover, the fundamentals of initiating any enterprise are more alike than different.

"The Art of the Start" approaches start-up basics from three general perspectives: reality check, tactics and inspiration.

Throughout the book, Kawasaki squashes the illusions that handicap many new entrepreneurs. He calls most mission statements a joke, prefers pitching the product or service ahead of writing the detailed business plan and acknowledges that most new businesses fail. He says the odds of obtaining venture capital are worse than, as one of his partners says, "getting struck by lightning while standing on the bottom of a swimming pool on a sunny day."

"Who said it would be easy?" writes this Nike kind of guy. "Just build a great business and don't look back."

### **Think big; start small**

To help you build that great business, Kawasaki supplies no-nonsense guidelines for everything from positioning, branding and business plans, to recruiting, raising capital, partnering and sales. He starts with big-picture discussions, proceeds to mini-chapters on presentations, networking and other skills, tackles FAQs (Frequently Avoided Questions) and offers suggestions for further reading.

The section on bootstrapping is a good illustration. This chapter "explains how to survive the critical, capital-deprived early days of any startup's existence."

The mantra of bootstrapping is "think big and start small." Contrary to people who think bootstrapping condemns a business to insignificance, Kawasaki notes that Hewlett-Packard, Dell, Microsoft, Apple and eBay began as bootstrappers.

"Entrepreneurs can bootstrap almost any business," Kawasaki says. Money keeps a business going, so the bootstrap business model for startups centers on managing for cash flow, "not paper profits, growth, market share, or branding." Bootstrappers avoid fanciful market forecasts by basing projections on such variables as sales calls per day, call success rate and the sales cycle.

Kawasaki urges startups to get their product or service to market before all the bugs are worked out. He appreciates the tension between shipping and perfecting and provides questions to help entrepreneurs decide between the two options.