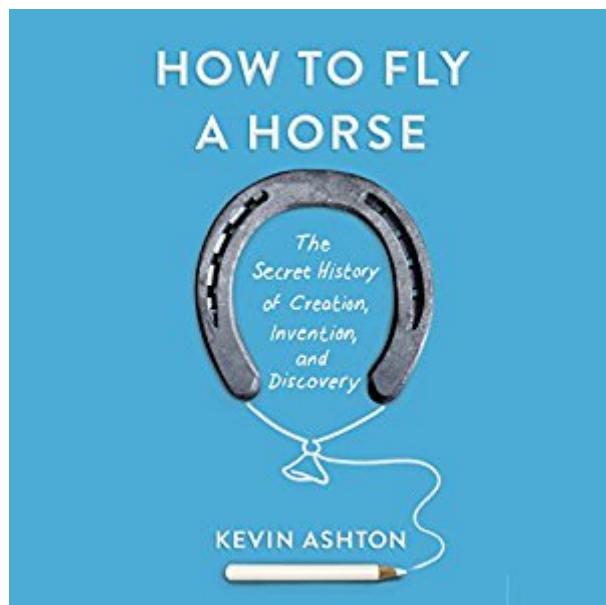


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# How To Fly A Horse: The Secret History Of Creation, Invention, And Discovery



## **Synopsis**

As a technology pioneer at MIT and as the leader of three successful start-ups, Kevin Ashton experienced firsthand the all-consuming challenge of creating something new. Now, in a tour-de-force narrative 20 years in the making, Ashton leads us on a journey through humanity's greatest creations to uncover the surprising truth behind who creates and how they do it. From the crystallographer's laboratory where the secrets of DNA were first revealed by a long forgotten woman, to the electromagnetic chamber where the stealth bomber was born on a twenty-five-cent bet, to the Ohio bicycle shop where the Wright brothers set out to "fly a horse"; Ashton showcases the seemingly unremarkable individuals, gradual steps, multiple failures, and countless ordinary and usually uncredited acts that lead to our most astounding breakthroughs. Creators, he shows, apply in particular ways the everyday, ordinary thinking of which we are all capable, taking thousands of small steps and working in an endless loop of problem and solution. He examines why innovators meet resistance and how they overcome it, why most organizations stifle creative people, and how the most creative organizations work. Drawing on examples from art, science, business, and invention, from Mozart to the Muppets, Archimedes to Apple, Kandinsky to a can of Coke, *How to Fly a Horse* is a passionate and immensely rewarding exploration of how "new" comes to be.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

Many books claim that creativity is not the possession of a select few but a natural and accessible part of every human life regardless of circumstance. But few I've read back it up with an alternate

history of singular achievements that effectively debunks many still widely-held notions concerning the very idea of 'genius'. Ashton begins with a myth (still cited to this day) based upon a forged letter attributed to Mozart describing how he supposedly composed works entirely in his mind as if by spontaneous insight, relegating the physical act of notating them to mere dictation. Far from it, it turns out, not just for Mozart but countless artists, scientists, researchers, inventors and entrepreneurs - both those who eventually achieved credit and fame for their work and many more whose contributions served to cultivate the soil with little or no recognition for their efforts. Ashton makes his point with stories backed with facts: Convincing and fascinating accounts of failed experiments and prototypes, rejections, bad timing, unfortunate geographic and political circumstances - all the variables that often play a decisive role in that ultimate awards show known as history. 'How to Fly A Horse' refers to a remark by the Wright Brothers, neither the first nor only ones to envision and pursue man-made flight, but the ones who ultimately achieved it - not in a single flash of insight - but through countless failures, re-steps and sheer iterative hard work, much of it built upon and in reaction to work by others now largely forgotten.

Kevin spends a few hundred pages to essentially make the point that we're all creative. So, we can all be creative, but apparently not succinct. :DSorry - I'm just joking around. Kind of. Notice that I gave the book four stars, and that's because I do like it. I think that Kevin does a nice job pointing out some important ideas to help people notice what's behind creativity and innovation. I do agree with others that the book gets noticeably repetitive, though. As I read it, I found myself wondering how I'd be able to write a review without essentially giving away all of the key concepts in the book in a few sentences. I want to thank reviewer Sunday for mentioning Kevin's video that sums up the book pretty well in a couple of minutes. It didn't need hundreds of pages. To me, one of the most important things to keep in mind is this - realize that you can make things better. Believe it. Live it. DO IT. We all can be creative, but that doesn't mean we all are. I like to make things better, but I've worked with several people who seemed almost unbelievably (to me) content to keep doing things the same way and essentially just "turn the crank." They would gladly accept my improvements, but never contribute. This went on for years with me encouraging them, until eventually some of them started to get it and things took off. So, I firmly believe that we can all be creative, but it takes a culture of creativity to bring it out of some folks. While I don't find most of Kevin's points new or unique, he tells some of them in a new (to me) way and did make me think about some things in a different way, which ultimately made this book valuable to me. Repetition aside, I do like how he blends examples in to help support his ideas.

Kevin Ashton has a glorious video online for this book. In less than two minutes, the video nicely sums up what he's trying to say about creation in *How to Fly a Horse: The Secret History of Creation, Invention, and Discovery*. His main message is: "Creating is not magic but work." In his opinion, anyone can create. As he states: "Creating is not rare. We are all born to do it. If it seems magical, it is because it is innate. If it seems like some of us are better at it than others, that is because it is part of being human, like talking and walking. We are not all equally creative, just as we are not all equally gifted orators or athletes. But we all can create." In addition: "There is no electric fence between those who can create and those who cannot, with genius on one side and the general population on the other." I could go on and on quoting this book, namely because I highlighted so much of it. This is the first book I have highlighted since college. (And I highly recommend you get Post-it Study Kit with Tabs, Flags, Arrow Flags, Note Tabs, Grid Notes, Full Adhesive Notes, Label Pads, and Flag + Highlighter, when you order this book. :) Besides having many highlightable ideas, Mr. Ashton provides many interesting stories about people who have created, invented, discovered in the fields of agriculture, science, medicine, education, business, the arts, etc.. The only thing that made the book glow less yellow for me is the extensive attention on Woody Allen.

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