

**NEVER
VENTURE
CAPITAL**

BEN WIENER

**THE
ART
OF**



A Novel About
Selling Your
Vision, Raising
Venture
Capital, and
Launching
Your Startup

“ Essential business strategy with off-the-wall satire...a can't-miss formula.



— FROM THE FOREWORD BY **GUY KAWASAKI**

Endorsements

“Nonstop motion, and, out of it, an eminently sensible prescription for formulating a startup pitch. I wish I had known about how to do this earlier! Ben Wiener’s techno-entrepreneurial thriller is great reading.”

— Roald Hoffmann, poet, playwright,
and Nobel laureate in chemistry

“It’s hard to decide if this book is better enjoyed as a gripping novel at the beach or an assigned reading in my entrepreneurship class at Harvard Business School. The answer is both. And that’s why you should read it!”

— Jeffrey Bussgang, general partner at Flybridge Capital
Partners and senior lecturer at Harvard Business School

“A must-read for any startup founder. *Fever Pitch* is an entertaining page-turner that will open your eyes to the core elements of the ideal startup pitch.”

— David Siegel, CEO of Meetup and
author of *Decide and Conquer*

“Fever Pitch accomplishes something few books can do...it is simultaneously entertaining, emotionally engaging, and educational.”

— Matt Abrahams, Stanford Graduate School of
Business lecturer, author, podcast host

“What a read! Fever Pitch presents a fast-paced, immensely entertaining story, and an insightful guide of tremendous importance.”

—Lawrence Williams, PhD, Professor and Chair,
Department of Chemistry and Chemical Biology at Rutgers

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Entrepreneurship in advanced technology is not merely a matter of decision-making. It is a matter of imposing cognitive order on situations that are repeatedly ill-defined.

W. Brian Arthur, *The Nature of Technology*

We go out in the world and take our chances Fate is just the weight of circumstances.

Rush, "Roll the Bones"

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For all of my unknowing mentors

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Foreword

OMG, I literally laughed out loud (and learned a ton) reading this hilarious send-up of the tech world that somehow manages to be deadly serious at the same time. My buddy Ben Wiener clearly gets both the absurdity and the high stakes of entrepreneurship. I should know, since he name-checks my 10/20/30 rule about killer seed round pitches.

When Mark Edmond starts getting mysterious calls from the Jersey mob over a stupid quarrel with his neighbor, you know Ben is capturing how irrational yet very real founding a company can feel. And when Mark has to pitch gun-toting gangsters over the phone for his life—I kid you not, that actually happens here—you understand the life-or-death pressure of fundraising. Forget Sand Hill Road—try to avoid sleeping with the fishes if your pitch falls flat!

Even amid the wacky misadventures, Ben keeps the focus on what matters most: nailing the pitch. He walks through structuring the perfect startup presentation step-by-step until the main character has his aha moment. The “H-E-A-R-T” of the pitch finally clicks for Mark while he’s scribbling on a jail cell wall. You’ll have to read this gem to find out what that means and how Mark turns it all around.

So buckle up for a wild and totally “only in tech” ride. Just like a hot startup aiming for product-market fit, *Fever Pitch* somehow mixes essential business strategy with off-the-wall satire into a can’t-miss formula. It perfectly captures today’s over-the-top world where innovation, imagination, and sometimes just sheer lunacy collide. I can’t wait for the sequel!

And I’d better get a cameo role in the movie...

Guy Kawasaki
Author of *Think Remarkable* and host of
the *Remarkable People* podcast

Prologue

Take a Friend

Fourteen years ago, Mark Edmond was a chemistry major at Cornell University in New York, where he also swam varsity and cohosted a weekly classic rock hour on the college's radio station. He was a tall, soft-spoken honors student looking forward to a career in scientific research. For the radio show, he savored choosing the music but generally disliked using the microphone. Mark held an embryonic belief that people who liked to speak publicly were arrogant. Mark's disregard, tinged with disdain, for the verbal arts had even steered him clear of Cornell professor Roald Hoffmann. Hoffmann, a poet, philosopher, winner of the 1981 Nobel Prize in Chemistry, and host of the lecture series *Entertaining Science*, had pioneered the blending of science and storytelling. During Mark's entire undergraduate tenure, he had taken none of Hoffmann's courses.

On the cramped radio station's broadcast console, rows of lighted diodes undulated like excited molecules in electrical discharge. The small pulsating lights simmered as electric guitar feedback subsided in Mark's headset. Mark consulted his watch again and checked its reported time against the clock on the console. They still agreed that it was twenty past the hour. *Twenty minutes late*. He sighed and drew his microphone closer. The door swung open. Mark's padded headphones muffled the dull thud of the doorknob striking the fabric-lined studio wall. Jeff Montego, Mark's roommate and radio show cohost, was in the house.

"I'm so dead," moaned Jeff, his tinny, distant voice filtering through Mark's headset from two feet away. Upon that proclamation of his impending demise, Jeff collapsed into the unoccupied chair to Mark's left with a careless crash. Mark glowered at Jeff. He exhaled and, leaning forward, spoke into his mike over the waning fadeout of an electric guitar.

"Welcome to Sunday Night Rush Hour," Mark recited into the ether with a reluctant monotone. "Where we play the greatest hits of the greatest rock band of all time, Rush. That was the opening set from *2112*. Next up is