

F'D Companies: Spectacular Dot-com Flameouts

Philip J. Kaplan

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Philip J. Kaplan : F'D Companies: Spectacular Dot-com Flameouts before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised F'D Companies: Spectacular Dot-com Flameouts:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. More interesting now than when it was written but a bit repetitiveBy sienFrsquo;d Companies : Spectacular Dot Com Flameouts (2002) by Phillip J Kaplan that lists company after company that raised money, burned money and went out of business. Kaplan, aka Pud, created the site Frsquo;dCompany that was a really fun site that catalogued the collapse of many dot com companies. I saw him speak

in DC not long after the book had been released and he was also an entertaining speaker. I think I read the book around then as well. The book is of some historical interest because it looks at failure, which is something that isn't often looked at. There are dozens of books about Apple, Google, Microsoft, Ebay, and co but few books look at the many, many failures that looked almost as likely at one point. The book is also funny, at least for a while, but the sort of thing that makes a funny blog post (which this book actually predates really -- blogs took off after) isn't what makes a funny book. It gets a bit tiring. But there are still some laughs. For anyone who was around at the time it will bring back some memories. But reading the book in 2016 makes you realise that a number of the ideas were just before their time. On demand internet video, now known as Youtube, is there. Also a company called 'myspacers' in their first incarnation as an online storage site. There are also other online storage sites like Dropbox that went insolvent. Hosting companies are also numerous. Also mocked is six-degrees, which was about the first social networking site, long before Facebook. Also mocked are various sites for making internet sites mobile friendly, admittedly over WAP which never took off. Still, an idea before its time that doesn't make any money is a bad idea. It's also worth noting how many failed companies was involved in. If you'd been really smart and looked at the book in 2002 and thought about how increasing broadband and internet adoption was coming and what would work once there was three or four times as many people on the internet as there was in 2000 you could also have founded Youtube or Facebook. Who knows, perhaps some of these companies were founded by people who read the book and thought about what would work in the future. This is overly simplistic, there is a lot of skill in making things like that scale but it does show that ideas that do eventually work have often failed before. There's something in this book for people who remember the first dot-com boom and people who listen to 'The Internet History Podcasts' but want to remember some of the many companies who didn't make it. Their style is pretty terrible but the content is there. It's also worth noting that Pud went on to found some successful companies, so the book isn't about total disillusionment with the internet, it just shows that there money was too easy to come by and ideas that were half baked got funded like never before and never since.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Decent
By John Pretty entertaining. Good glimpse into the past.
2 of 4 people found the following review helpful. A fun, quick read, but hardly a business book
By Benny Choi...I work for an established and successful software company which happens to be located in a San Francisco district where there used to be dozens of dotcoms around (they're ALL gone now)...the CEO of my employer brings his lunch plate over and asks if he could sit with me for lunch...the first thing he asks, "What are you reading?" Great. Instead of having a Jack Welch or Peter Lynch or even a Tom Peters book in my hand, I had to tell my employer's CEO, who I know reads many serious business books, and, of course, has to run a real technology company with real customers, real products, real profits, real shareholders, real competitors, and real business issues, that I'm spending my precious time and mental capacity reading about dotcom flameouts chronicled with sarcasm and dirty words. Fortunately, he had heard of the website before and I was able to recite off the top of my head a few quick stories of some of the more extreme situations mentioned in the book, such as the dotcom which raised \$26M in venture capital just after they toured the investors in front of accountants and engineers who were faking themselves as customer service reps on dead phone lines with non-existent customers. Needless to say, we ended up changing the subject to more relevant business matters. Phew! Thanks, Pud!

Not long ago, the world was awash with venture capital in search of the next Yahoo! or Amazon.com. No product, no experience, no technology, no business plan -- no problem. You could still get \$40 million from investors to start up your dot-com. And you could get people to work around the clock for stock options and the promise of millions. Then, around April 2000, it all came crashing down. Smart investors, esteemed analysts, and the business press found themselves asking: Who knew people wouldn't rush out to trade in their U.S. dollars for a virtual currency called Flooz? Who knew people wouldn't blow all their Flooz on a used car from the guys at iMotors.com? And who needed a used car from iMotors.com when they could just sit at home and have 40-lb. bags of dog food delivered to them by a sock puppet? F'd Companies captures the waste, greed, and human stupidity of more than 100 dot-com companies. Written in Philip J. Kaplan's popular, cynical style, these profiles are filled with colorful anecdotes, factoids, and information unavailable anywhere else. Together they form a gleeful encyclopedia of how not to run a business. They also capture a truly remarkable period of history. F'd Companies is required reading for everyone involved in the "new economy" -- assuming your severance check can cover the cost.

.com The graveyard of dot-com disasters is overflowing with grandiose ideas gone spectacularly bad, and Philip J. Kaplan's F'd Companies offers an unapologetically acerbic opinion on dozens of the most outrageous. Kaplan, a programmer turned consultant whose own online dreams began when he launched a bulletin board system for pirated game software back in 1989, pulls no punches as he bluntly dissects Web failures that remain dazzling for their pretentious plans and audacious executions. There are big names like Webvan ("a classic example of PAYING more for products than they were SELLING them for") and Go.com (a "portal to nowhere"), but most here are less well known despite similarly burning through cash like a cyber-brushfire. In language far more explicit than his softened-

for-the-bookstore title, Kaplan skewers the likes of Iam.com (which lost \$48 million trying to convince models and actors to post their portfolios on the Net), OnlineChoice.com (which spent \$20 million to learn consumers weren't interested in group buys of electricity and other utilities), HeavenlyDoor.com (which sunk \$26 million into a site peddling caskets and burial plots), and Eppraisals.com (which dropped \$15 million on an effort to sell online evaluations of antiques). The result is consistently profane, frequently hilarious, and usually right on target. --Howard RothmanFrom Publishers Weekly

"I'm a computer programmer," Kaplan writes. "I'm that dude at your office in the dark cubicle who nobody listens or pays attention to (especially the hotties in marketing)." Kaplan's claim to fame is FuckedCompany.com, a Web site he built over Memorial Day weekend in 2000 to serve as a forum for bad news about Internet companies. His timing a few months after the Internet bubble began to deflate was perfect, and FuckedCompany became an immediate hit. Thousands of fired or about-to-be-fired dot-commers were more than willing to share their horror stories about the collapse of one Internet company after another. He has translated the material posted on the site into a book, offering brief vignettes of the demise of more than 150 Internet ventures. His basic formula includes a description of what the company purported to do (Mercata.com "customers would use the site to band together and purchase merchandise at wholesale prices"), how much money it blew through before going bankrupt and how many people were fired ("\$89 million and 100 employees were burned"). Kaplan, 25, attempts to enliven each story with humor, which is often more crude than clever. That many of the stories sound the same is not Kaplan's fault, as most really are: someone comes up with an idea, finds a venture capitalist willing to pour funding into the company despite the flimsiest of business plans, and then goes broke when the money dries up. Although he tries, Kaplan delivers little more than an elegy for the Industry Standard, Pets.com, Contentville.com, Flooz.com, Bid.com and Kozmo.com, not to mention Zing.com, ProcessTree.com and MetalSpectrum.com. Copyright 2002 Cahners Business Information, Inc.

From Library Journal

As the dot-com boom ended, Kaplan established a web site, fuckedcompanies.com, to help keep track of the bankruptcies, massive layoffs, and sometimes ill-conceived ideas that failed. The site began as a joke but was chosen as "Site of the Year" by Yahoo! Internet Life in 2000 and as one of the year's best by Time. Kaplan, now the president of an e-commerce solutions firm, here chronicles the rise and rapid fall of numerous dot-coms. Written in an informal style and sprinkled with salty language, his book explains why each company was formed and why it was doomed to failure. At Pets.Com, for instance, pet owners could order food and supplies; "then I'll watch the dog starve and the cat shit all over the house while I wait for it to be delivered!" Several other dot-coms were fined because they failed to deliver items by the holidays as promised. Included in the sources section are web sites that the author consulted; future editions would do well to include a bibliography of articles and books for further reading. Both fascinating and instructive, this book is recommended for public and academic library collections. Lucy Heckman, St. John's Univ. Lib., NY Copyright 2002 Reed Business Information, Inc.