



Stay Thirsty: A Serial Entrepreneur's Tale of Success & Failure

Mark Haerten

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Risk, stress, disappointment, and failure are essential parts of a founder's experience, suggests Stay Thirsty, an illustrative entrepreneur's memoir.

Serial entrepreneur Mark Haerten's expansive memoir *Stay Thirsty* is a retrospective on six decades of business.

About creating, growing, and sustaining a business, this candid book traces the emotional and financial turbulence that accompanied Haerten's more than fifty business ventures. It moves from descriptions of his childhood money-making schemes—at six years old, Haerten set up a “toll” at a break in the fence where fairgoers were entering without buying a ticket—to Rocket Man, a company that lasted three decades and that was rooted in the development of an affordable, portable beverage dispenser.

The story of the beverage company takes up most of the book's space, though that company almost didn't exist: When the idea to invent a wearable drink dispenser formed, Haerten discovered that it had already been invented many times over. Rather than give up, though, he adapted, harnessing and improving the existing technology for its sales potential.

Thirty-seven pieces of advice, often accompanied by counteradvice, appear too, to support others interested in entrepreneurial success. Indeed, using Haerten's stories as illustrations, the text revels in the notion that risk, stress, disappointment, and failure are essential parts of a founder's experience, guiding by example.

However, some points are belabored in the course of this long book. Ample space is dedicated to philosophical reflections on how an entrepreneur is formed, for instance, with consideration of nature versus nurture appearing early in the text. Haerten's childhood and genealogical history are also explored at unnecessary length, delaying the book's ultimate points about entrepreneurship. By the book's end, its stories from older generations have been rendered somewhat superfluous, and its descriptions of family moves and educational careers seem too digressive. The connection drawn from financial insecurities in childhood to Haerten's adult drive to succeed in business is keen, though.

The conversational prose is organic and personable across the book's shifts among storytelling, self-reflection, and direct addresses to the audience. Meaning is wrung out of everyday personal stories, as about disappointment and how it affects people on the personal, business, and family levels. Indeed, discrete moments are rendered rich in significance throughout, and the book's flow toward its ending is smooth, facilitated by the multilayered quality of its teachings.

Recalling decades of gritty entrepreneurial efforts, the edifying memoir *Stay Thirsty* models embracing failure to attain success through consistent hard work.

WILLEM MARX (March 25, 2026)

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