

By Greg Shultz

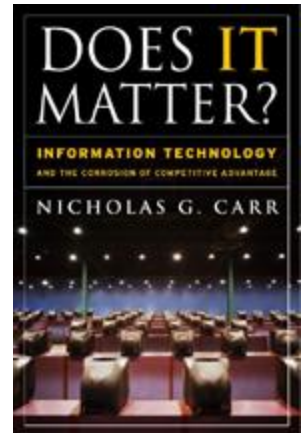
As an IT professional, chances are you read a lot. And, it's a good bet that most of what you read consists of manuals and other technical books and articles directly related to your work. However, you really owe it to yourself read other types of IT-related books. For example, reading nonfiction IT-related books can help you gain different perspectives on the industry, while reading fictional books about IT will allow you to relax and enjoy the industry. So as we get ready to close the book (pun intended) on the first decade of the 2000s, I thought I would compile a list of 10 books I think every IT pro should read.

1: [Does IT Matter?](#)

Information Technology and the Corrosion of Competitive Advantage

by Nicholas Carr

Every institution on the planet relies on information technology in some shape or form. It is the lifeblood of business and it provides most TechRepublic readers with a solid way to make a living. But does it really make a difference? In this thought-provoking look at the IT industry, the author challenges us to examine the role IT plays in the overall success of business. I highly recommend that everyone in IT pick up this book, no matter what your job is. Everyone from the support specialist to the CIO will find it worth their time to read Carr's analyses.



2: [The Road Ahead](#)

by Bill Gates

Soon after Windows 95 radically changed *computerdom* as we knew it back then, Bill Gates released *The Road Ahead*, in which he examined the personal computing revolution and how it was to play out in a future being paved by the information superhighway of the Internet. There are two editions of this book. The first was published in December 1995 and the second was published in October 1996. The second edition was put together so soon because Gates realized that the Internet was changing the world faster than he had originally theorized in the first edition, and he wanted the book to be as accurate as it was innovative.

While companion CDs are pretty common these days, *The Road Ahead* was one of the first books I remember purchasing that came with one. Not only does the CD contain the text of the book and supplemental information, but it also includes a couple of video shorts – mini-dramas that provide a look into how the technology discussed in the book would play out in the future. For example, a mother and son take advantage of home-based technology, such as information appliances and interactive TV. In another, a pair of Seattle police detectives uses video conferencing, mobile communications, and electronic wallets. When the boy from the earlier video goes to school, we see all sorts of electronic gadgets being used in education, such as tablet PCs and digital whiteboards.

Even though this book is relatively old, it is still a good read. It offers an interesting perspective of the man who, back then, recognized the path technology was on and steered Microsoft in that direction.

3: [Showstopper!](#):

The Breakneck Race to Create Windows NT and the Next Generation at Microsoft

by G. Pascal Zachary

If you've been in IT for a while, you remember when Windows NT 3.1 was released in July 1993 and how, as the first fully 32-bit version of Windows, it began to change the world of IT professionals. At the time, this operating system was revolutionary for a number of reasons, including the fact that it was processor-independent, provided a full preemptive multitasking kernel, featured a new file system called NTFS, and possessed many other innovative technological advances.

To create a new version of Windows from the ground up, Microsoft hired Dave Cutler, from Digital Equipment Corporation (DEC), and tasked the creator of the VMS operating system for the VAX superminicomputer with

picking up the pieces of what was being developed as OS/2 3.0 and transform it into what would become the foundation for today's Windows 7.

In this fascinating story, you get a rare and detailed look at the day-to-day machinations that went on inside the walls of Microsoft as the powerful and intelligent Cutler orchestrated the development of the most complex OS ever created for the PC.

4: [iWoz: Computer Geek to Cult Icon:](#)

How I Invented the Personal Computer, Co-Founded Apple, and Had Fun Doing It

by Steve Wozniak

Everyone knows that Steve Jobs is now the leading force at Apple, but he didn't get there by himself. Back in 1976, Jobs and his business partner, Steve Wozniak, formed Apple Computer and began work on the Apple I, which when released was essentially a circuit board containing about 30 chips. To this circuit board, end users had to connect a power supply, keyboard, and a standard television to get a working system. Using a keyboard for input and a television for output made the Apple I stand out from the competition. For example, the Altair 8800 used toggle switches for input and colored indicator lights for output.

In this book, Wozniak presents the story of his early years and his fascination with emerging computer technology and how he teamed up with Steve Jobs and created the first modern computer. Not only does the book provide an interesting, yet quirky, historical perspective on the beginnings of Apple, but it is filled with wonderful *techy* anecdotes, old photos, and even a glossary of computer terms.

Even if you're not an Apple fan, this book is a fun read.

5: [The Cuckoo's Egg:](#)

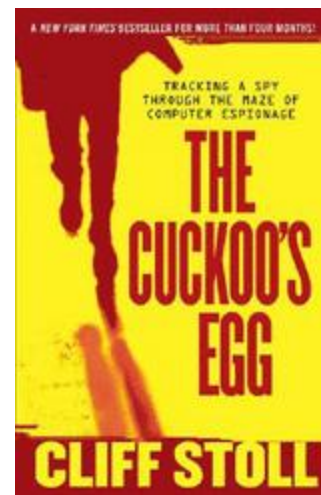
Tracking a Spy through the Maze of Computer Espionage

by Cliff Stoll

Back in 1986, an astronomer named Cliff Stoll took a job as a computer operator at the Lawrence Berkeley Laboratories when his grant money ran out. He stumbled upon and began tracking an unauthorized user through a maze of networks that included hacking into computers at universities, defense contractors, and military bases. Stoll eventually uncovered an international spy ring that was hacking into these computers, seeking out U.S. intelligence, and selling it to the KGB.

As a methodical scientist, Stoll began keeping a daily log book in which he documented the hacker's movements and methods. To add credibility to what he was witnessing, he set up traps, such as making sure that the hacker had access to the Lawrence Berkeley network where a teletype printer recorded everything the hacker typed and setting up a honeypot in the guise of a fake Strategic Defense Initiative account filled with fake documents that would keep the hacker involved long enough to backtrack the connection to its origin. The investigation lasted close to a year and involved a multitude of federal agencies, including the the FBI, CIA, NSA, and Air Force OSI.

Based on his experiences and vividly recounted with the aid of his detailed logs, this book documents an incredible true story of international computer espionage that is both educational and entertaining.



6: [Gödel, Escher, Bach:](#)

An Eternal Golden Braid

by Doug Hofstadter

A deep exploration of the workings of the human mind, using as examples the works of logician Kurt Gödel, artist M. C. Escher, and composer Johann Sebastian Bach, this book provides a philosophical outlook on how life, thoughts, and technology are all linked together. There are so many different and fascinating ideas presented in this book, along with wonderful illustrations, charts, diagrams, and complex formulas, that reading it is like exploring a foreign yet familiar land.

It is a captivating book, but because of its *heavy* subject matter, I found it best read it in small chunks over time.

7: [The Google Story](#)

by David Vise and Mark Malseed

Over the years, we've all picked up bits and pieces of the history behind Google's rise and its brilliant cofounders, Larry Page and Sergey Brin. But in this book, which was updated for Google's 10th birthday, we get the real inside story, because the authors were allowed seemingly unfettered access to historical documents and people at Google -- including Page and Brin.

They present a unique perspective on the people behind the scenes as you learn about the company's milestone events, such as the arrival of the first investor, the development of the Googleplex campus, the origins of keyword-targeted Web ads, the IPO, new product developments, and much more. Along the way, you'll learn a lot about how the search business works and much more about Google's plans for expansion of its searchable database.

8: [Wikinomics](#):

How Mass Collaboration Changes Everything

by Don Tapscott and Anthony D. Williams

By now, everyone is familiar with Wikipedia -- the massive collaborative effort aimed at providing the world with an encyclopedic source of information about everything. Thousands of people contribute to Wikipedia on a regular basis and it has become a terrific example of what can be accomplished when people use the world wide access of the Internet to work on a common goal.

This book explores how many companies have and can use mass collaboration and wikis to grow quickly and successfully. In fact, the book begins with the story of how Goldcorp CEO Rob McEwan learned of the success of the Linux open source initiative, realized that the closely guarded company secrets of mining for gold were no longer yielding viable results, and decided to share the company's geological data on the Web along with the offer of \$575,000 in prizes to those who could come up with the best way to find and extract gold on the company's 55,000 acre mining facility. Suggestions based on the data poured in and out of the 55 new targets that were identified, 80% hit pay dirt.

Citing Goldcorp's success as an example of Wikinomics, the authors go on to provide examples of other companies and describe in detail how these companies employed and harnessed collaborative efforts, or Wikinomics, to grow and be even more successful.

9: [Microserfs](#)

by Douglas Coupland

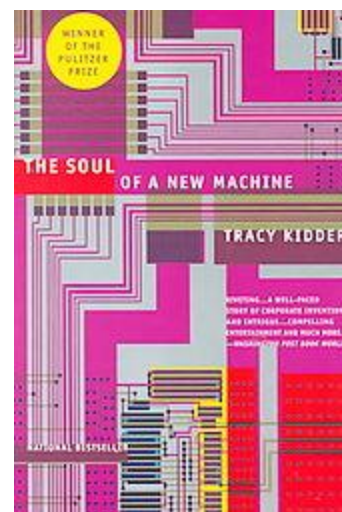
This is a thoroughly amusing story about a group of fictional characters working at Microsoft who feel that life at the company is like being in a feudalistic society, with Bill Gates as the lord and the employees as the serfs. As the story progresses, you learn more about each of the characters and how their lives are intertwined with each other, their products, and Microsoft.

Later, the group leaves Microsoft and Seattle and moves to the San Francisco where they start a new company. Living in California is different from Seattle, and you see the characters shed their Microserf skin and evolve in different ways.

10: [The Soul of a New Machine](#)

by Tracy Kidder

We all know what a cutthroat business the PC industry is and that the extreme competition that exists between rival companies can also exist inside a company as employees vie for resources and power. This type of competition is more widely publicized nowadays, but it wasn't invented by those in the PC industry. In *The Soul of a New Machine*, Kidder documents the internal turmoil that embroils two groups of Data General Corporation engineers tasked with developing a new a minicomputer that will go head-to-head with a new VAX computer from archrival Digital Equipment Corporation.



Along the way, we learn more about the lives of the engineers, most notably a fellow by the name of Tom West, and how he and his team beat out the other group and then have to prove themselves worthy as they grapple with such challenges as making sure that the new system is backward compatible with earlier systems, using new and untested technology, and relying on young team members fresh out of college.

Published in 1981 (incidentally the same year that the IBM PC made its debut), this book won a Pulitzer Prize.

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