

ZERO HEADCOUNT

Two's a Crowd. One is a Unicorn.

VERSION 0.2 · MONDAY 12 OCTOBER · NEW: THE INTRODUCTION AND CHAPTER 1, WITH
NEW TEXT

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Scan to take the book with you

Sacha Tueni built a company with no employees.

This book is how, told as it happens.

“Your org chart should be a mirror, not a spreadsheet.”

- 01 The era of headcount as a proxy for ambition is over. Every hire you make is a decision to not let intelligence do the work.
- 02 The greatest companies of the next decade will be built by one person with taste, conviction, and an unfair advantage: machines that don't sleep, don't politic, and don't need equity.
- 03 Venture capital valued teams because execution was the bottleneck. When AI removes that bottleneck, what remains? Vision. Judgment. Speed. All singular.
- 04 Zero Headcount is not about doing more with less. It's about doing what was previously impossible — alone.
- 05 This is not a lifestyle business manifesto. This is a playbook for building something that dents the market — at zero marginal cost of coordination.
- 06 The solo founder with AI is the new full-stack. The new co-founding team. The new Series A headcount plan. And the incumbents aren't ready.

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Author's Note

Most business books analyze the past. This book captures an explosion in real-time.

What follows is a mix of observation and “Imagined Scenarios”—stories that are technically possible right now, waiting for a protagonist to claim them.

If you are that protagonist, I want to replace the fiction with your fact.

You are the co-author of Version 1.0. Let's build this thing.

Confessions of a Lonely Capitalist

I walked into the office on a Monday morning. It was a beautiful, open-plan space in Shoreditch designed for forty people. There were bean bags, an espresso machine that cost more than my first car, and rows of sleek desks waiting for “top talent.”

It was dead silent. The kind of silence that usually signals bankruptcy.

I poured a coffee. I sat down. I opened my laptop.

I checked the dashboard. We were on track to hit \$10M ARR (Annual Recurring Revenue) by Christmas.

Number of employees in the building? One.

Number of employees on the payroll? Zero.

Here's the thing nobody tells you about running a company alone: the silence isn't the problem. The silence is the point. No stand-ups. No Slack channels lighting up with opinions about opinions. No “quick syncs” that devour your morning. Just you, the machine, and the work...

The old world tells you that “scaling” means hiring. It tells you that your importance as a CEO is measured by how many people you manage. That is a vanity metric. It's an ego trap.

I prefer a different metric: Revenue per Employee.

And when the denominator is 1, the math gets really, really fun.

IMAGINED SCENARIO

The Skeleton Crew

Steve Jobs famously said, “It’s better to be a pirate than to join the navy.”

He was right. But he missed one thing: Pirates have to split the treasure. Pirates argue. Pirates mutiny. Pirates need rum and sleep.

Imagine the ultimate Pirate Ship. It is a digital frigate raiding the markets 24/7. It outmaneuvers the bloated “Navy” ships (the Fortune 500s) because it has no weight.

It hits \$10M in revenue. It captures the market share. But when you look on deck, there is only one Captain.

The crew is invisible. They are algorithms. They are loyal, they are relentless, and they don’t want a cut of the gold.

YOUR TURN

Are you the Captain of a Skeleton Crew?

Are you raiding a massive industry with a team of “bots”?

We want the story of the Pirate who keeps all the loot.

[Tell us your story at zeroheadcount.com/book](https://zeroheadcount.com/book)

The Pizza Rule Is Dead

Jeff Bezos is a legend. He famously coined the “Two Pizza Rule”: If a team can’t be fed with two pizzas, it’s too big.

I respect Jeff. But he built Amazon in the 90s.

My rule is different. It’s a bit more ruthless.

The Zero Pizza Rule: If I have to share my pizza at all, the team is too big.

Jeff had it backwards. The two-pizza rule wasn’t about keeping teams small, it was about keeping teams at all. The real question was never “how many people can two pizzas feed?” It was “why are you ordering pizza for a meeting in the first place?”

Collaboration is friction. We don’t like to admit it, but it’s true. Every time you have to explain your vision to another human, the vision dilutes. You lose 10% in the explanation, another 10% in their interpretation, and another 20% in the execution.

With AI, the transfer of vision is lossless. You speak; it builds. You correct; it iterates.

IMAGINED SCENARIO

The Monday Morning Silence

Meet “Sarah.” She runs a high-end design agency. In the old world, Monday morning was hell. It was three hours of Zoom calls, briefing junior designers, critiquing rough drafts, and managing egos.

Last Monday, Sarah woke up at 9:00 AM. She typed a paragraph into Midjourney and ChatGPT outlining the week’s campaign concepts. By 9:05 AM, her AI agents had drafted the copy, rendered the assets, and scheduled the posts. She spent the rest of the morning surfing.

YOUR TURN

Did you fire a freelancer, a department, or an agency because a prompt did it better?

I want the story of the moment you realized you didn’t need “them.”

Tell us your story at zeroheadcount.com/book

The Day I Fired My Imaginary Co-Founder

For years, the Venture Capital priests told us: “You need a technical co-founder. You’re just the ‘ideas guy.’ Ideas are cheap. Execution is expensive.”

I believed them. I spent years buying coffees for developers, trying to convince them to build my dream for 5% equity.

Turns out, the VCs were wrong. Code is cheap. Code is now a commodity.

Taste is the only thing left that’s expensive.

IMAGINED SCENARIO

The 48-Hour CTO

Dave had an idea for a niche real estate app. He couldn’t code. He didn’t know Python from a python snake. Usually, he’d give 50% of his company to a developer who would promise to build it in “six months.”

Instead, Dave opened an IDE and an AI agent. He described the app in plain English. He copy-pasted the errors back into the chat. He iterated. He launched the app in 48 hours. He owns 100%.

YOUR TURN

Did you build a product without knowing a line of code?

Show us the screenshot of the product and the prompt that built it. We want the “Napkin to Nasdaq” stories.

[Tell us your story at zeroheadcount.com/book](https://zeroheadcount.com/book)

David vs. Goliath (With a Laser Gun)

Big companies are slow. They have “Legal.” They have “Brand Guidelines.” They have “Stakeholders.”

You have speed. You have recklessness. You have the ability to generate 10,000 landing pages while they are still scheduling the kick-off meeting.

In the Zero Headcount era, size is a disadvantage.

IMAGINED SCENARIO

The SEO Swarm

A massive insurance company spends \$5M a year on content marketing. They have a team of 50 writers.

A solo founder builds an agent that scans the news, writes relevant insurance guides, optimizes them for SEO, and publishes them instantly. The agent works 24 hours a day. It costs \$200 a month. The solo founder captures 30% of the market traffic in three months.

YOUR TURN

How did you outmaneuver a giant using synthetic speed?

The pettier, the better. We love a good David vs. Goliath story.

[Tell us your story at zeroheadcount.com/book](https://zeroheadcount.com/book)

CHAPTER 4

I Don't Know Code, but My Butler Does

I am not a builder. I am an Architect. I point, and the machines lay the bricks.

The most powerful programming language in the world is no longer C++ or Rust. It is English.

IMAGINED SCENARIO

The Napkin App

A founder sketches a UI on a dirty cocktail napkin at 2 AM. He takes a photo. He uploads it to an AI with the caption: "Make this real." By 2:05 AM, the HTML/CSS is live. By morning, he has his first customer.

YOUR TURN

What is the most complex thing you've built using ONLY natural language?

Submit the prompt and the result.

Tell us your story at zeroheadcount.com/book

The Sales Team That Never Sleeps

In the old days, sales was a boiler room. It was loud, sweaty, and expensive. You needed adrenaline and coffee.

My sales floor is silent. It lives in the cloud. It doesn't need motivation. It needs data.

IMAGINED SCENARIO

The Hyper-Personalized Hustle

Imagine sending 5,000 cold emails a day. But they aren't spam. Each one is unique. The AI reads the recipient's LinkedIn, their recent news, and their company report, and drafts a custom note referencing their specific problems.

Open rate: 80%. Cost per lead: \$0.01. Human effort: Zero.

YOUR TURN

Have you automated the hustle?

Show us your stats. We want to see the dashboard that runs itself.

[Tell us your story at zeroheadcount.com/book](https://zeroheadcount.com/book)

The Night My AI Tried to Buy Sweden (When AI Goes Weird)

Let's take a breath. Up until now, I've made this sound like magic. But AI is not a "Super Genius." It is a Savant Toddler. It has read the entire internet, but it has never lived a day in the real world.

IMAGINED SCENARIO

The "Success" Incident

Okay, it wasn't actually Sweden. But it felt like it.

I told my autonomous marketing agent: "Spend \$5,000 to get me the biggest billboard visibility possible in Success."

I meant "success" as a metaphor. I wanted to be successful.

The AI didn't understand metaphor. It ran a geo-search. It found a town called Success, Missouri (Population: 200). It bought every single billboard space in that town for a month. The mayor called me; he thought I was running for Sheriff. We had a laugh. I lost \$5,000.

YOUR TURN

Tell us your best “AI Hallucination” comedy.

Did it write a poem instead of a press release? Did it hallucinate a feature you don’t have?

Tell us your story at zeroheadcount.com/book

Don't Give the Robot the Nuclear Codes (The Kill Switch)

Comedy is one thing. Bankruptcy is another. Leverage cuts both ways. When you automate speed, you also automate mistakes. This is the “I’m not selling you a fantasy” chapter. If you don’t respect the machine, it will eat you.

IMAGINED SCENARIO

The Discount Loop

A founder set up a dynamic pricing agent. The instruction was: “Beat the competitor’s price by 10%.” The competitor had a similar bot. The two bots got into a price war at 3:00 AM. They spiraled down to \$0.01.

By the time the founder woke up, he had sold 10,000 units for a penny each. He didn’t just lose inventory; he lost the shipping costs. He was bankrupt by breakfast.

YOUR TURN

Did you almost lose it all?

Tell us about the time the machine went too fast, and you had to pull the plug.

[Tell us your story at zeroheadcount.com/book](https://zeroheadcount.com/book)

Managing by Incantation

I used to manage people with meetings. Now I manage intelligence with words.

Being a CEO is no longer about charisma. It is about Prompt Engineering. It is about clear, precise, unambiguous instruction.

IMAGINED SCENARIO

The One-Line Pivot

A startup was failing. The tone of their product was too corporate. The founder didn't fire the writers. He went into the backend system prompt and changed one sentence:

"You are now a witty, sarcastic teenager who hates corporate jargon."

Instantly, across 10,000 customer interactions, the brand voice shifted. Engagement tripled.

YOUR TURN

What is your “Golden Prompt”?

Share the specific string of words that unlocked massive value for you.

Tell us your story at zeroheadcount.com/book

The Three-Second Board Meeting

They say it's lonely at the top. And sure, when you have zero headcount, there is nobody to high-five.

But there is also nobody to argue with. Except... when you want to argue.

IMAGINED SCENARIO

The Simulated Steve Jobs

Before launching a new feature, I don't ask my friends. They are too nice. I spin up an AI persona trained on the biography of Steve Jobs. I paste my idea.

The AI roasts me. It tells me the design is cluttered and the idea is derivative. It hurts. It's brutal. And it's free. I iterate until Simulated Steve approves.

YOUR TURN

Who is on your AI Board of Directors?

Do you debate strategy with a bot? Send us the transcript.

[Tell us your story at \[zeroheadcount.com/book\]\(https://zeroheadcount.com/book\)](https://zeroheadcount.com/book)

Speed Is the New Currency

In a Zero Headcount company, the OODA Loop (Observe, Orient, Decide, Act) is instant.

While my competitors are scheduling a Zoom call to discuss a meeting to plan a project, I have already launched it.

IMAGINED SCENARIO

The Trend Jack

A viral meme takes over the internet at 10:00 AM. A traditional company calls their agency. The agency briefs a creative. Legal reviews it. They post a joke two weeks later. It's cringe.

The Zero Headcount founder sees the meme at 10:00 AM. By 10:15 AM, the AI has designed the merch, written the ad copy, and launched the Facebook ads. By 10:30 AM, sales are flowing.

YOUR TURN

What is your record for “Idea to Revenue”?

Was it 24 hours? 6 hours? 10 minutes?

Tell us your story at zeroheadcount.com/book

CHAPTER 11

Building an Empire from a Hammock

This is the endgame.

We aren't doing this just to make money. We are doing this to buy back our time.

The Zero Headcount model separates time from money, and geography from success.

IMAGINED SCENARIO

The Wi-Fi Exit

The moment the acquisition papers came through, I wasn't in a boardroom in New York wearing a suit that choked me. I was on a slow boat in Laos.

My AI lawyer ("Law-Bot 3000") had reviewed the contracts, flagged the risks, and summarized the deal points. I signed with a thumbprint on my phone. I ordered a beer. The boat kept moving.

YOUR TURN

Where is the weirdest place you have run your company from?

Send us the photo of your view. Prove that the Empty HQ is the best HQ.

Tell us your story at zeroheadcount.com/book

EPILOGUE

The Gatekeepers Are Dead (They Just Don't Know It Yet)

For the last century, capitalism had a very specific set of rules.

If you wanted to build something massive, you had to ask for permission.

You had to ask a bank for a loan.

You had to ask a Venture Capitalist for a seed round.

You had to ask a Co-Founder to quit their job.

You had to ask a landlord for a lease.

You spent 90% of your energy begging for resources, and 10% of your energy actually building the thing.

That era ended on a Tuesday morning with a software update.

The moat is gone. The drawbridge is down. The castle is wide open.

We are living through the single greatest redistribution of leverage in human history. The tools that were once reserved for the Fortune 500—global distribution, instant code generation, mass-scale marketing, data analysis—are now available to you for \$20 a month.

Do you understand what that means?

It means the excuse is gone.

You can't say "I can't code." Neither can I. But my agent can.

You can't say "I can't afford a team." You don't need one.

You can't say "I don't have time." You have the same 24 hours as everyone else, but you now have a machine that can work the other 8,760 hours a year for you.

This book, Zero Headcount, is not a prediction of the future. The future is already here; it's just unevenly distributed.

Right now, somewhere in a bedroom in Jakarta, or a cafe in Berlin, or a hammock in Laos, someone is building a competitor that will wipe out a sluggish, 500-person corporation.

They are doing it quietly. They are doing it without meetings. And they are doing it alone.

The only question remaining is: Is that person you?

As I said at the start: This is Version 0.1.

This is not a textbook. It is a "Wanted" poster.

I didn't write this to teach you. I wrote this to find you.

The stories in this book are "Imagined" because the world hasn't seen them yet. But I know you are living them.

I want to know how you broke the rules.

I want to know how you fired the process.

I want to know how you built the Unicorn of One.

Don't let history be written by the people who hired the most staff. Let it be written by the ones who built the most value.

Upload your evidence. Claim your chapter.

The meeting is adjourned.

Get back to work.

YOUR TURN

Tell us your story at zeroheadcount.com/book

Hire no one. Build everything.

In 2010, if you wanted to build a global software company, you needed a garage, a co-founder, and a round of angel funding. In 2020, you needed a remote team and a Slack channel. Today, you just need a prompt.

We are living through the most asymmetrical moment in economic history. For the price of a few monthly subscriptions, a single individual can now command a workforce of 1,000 agents. They don't sleep. They don't complain. They don't need health insurance. And they are smarter than you.

ZERO HEADCOUNT is not just a business book; it is a declaration of independence from the old way of working. It is the tactical manual for the Solopreneur Conglomerate.

Inside, you will learn:

- Why the “Two Pizza Rule” is dead (if you're sharing pizza, your team is too big).
- How to fire your imaginary co-founder and hire a Python script.
- The art of “Management by Incantation”: Leading a digital legion with words.
- How to build a unicorn from a hammock in Laos.

Warning: This is Version 0.2. It is half-written. Why? Because the pioneers of this movement are still out there, building in the dark. This book is a call to arms for the silent billionaires of tomorrow.

Two's a crowd. One is a Unicorn.

Do you know a Zero Headcount story? Yours, or one you have watched happen. We are looking for the pioneers of this movement.

[Tell it at \[zeroheadcount.com/book\]\(https://zeroheadcount.com/book\)](https://zeroheadcount.com/book)

[Or leave your email at \[zeroheadcount.com\]\(https://zeroheadcount.com\) for the next edition](https://zeroheadcount.com)

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