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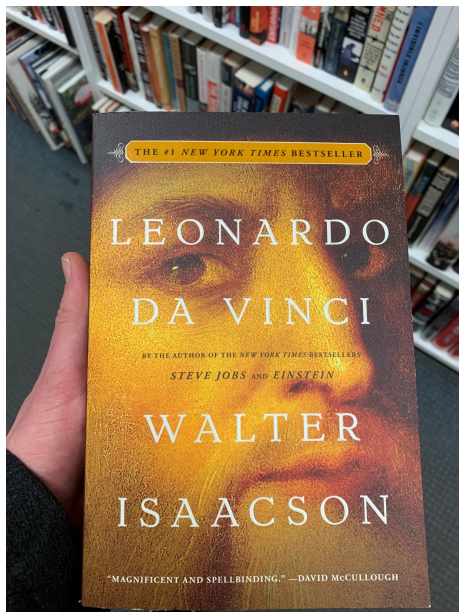


Key lessons from Leonardo da Vinci

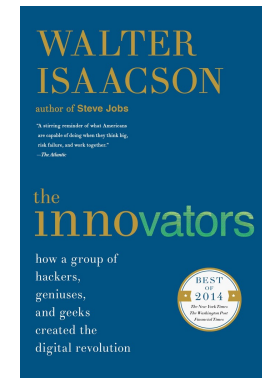
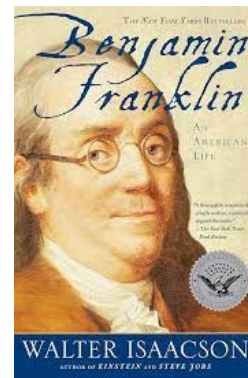
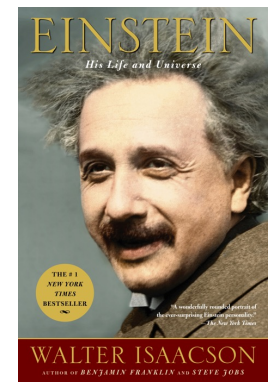
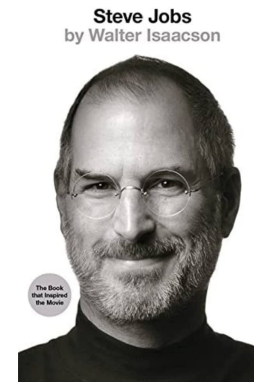
February 2024

I wanted to share some insights from one of my favourite reads of 2024

Other notable titles by Walter Isaacson



My copy, purchased at BMV Books near the Eaton Centre



Agenda

Timeline of Leonardo da Vinci's Life and Works

Key Lessons

Be relentlessly curious

Take time to observe things

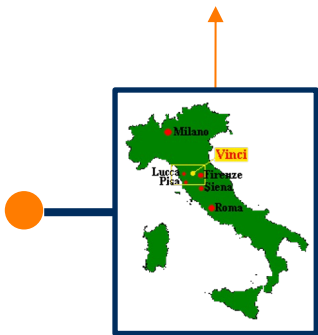
Be open to changing your mind

Avoid silos and borrow from elsewhere

Genius lies in collaboration

Leonardo da Vinci's Life (1452 – 1478)

Born in Vinci to Ser Piero da Vinci, a notary, and Caterina a peasant woman



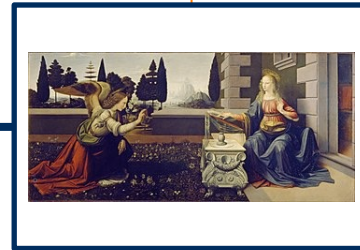
1452

1466



Moves to Florence with his father and begins working in Verrocchio's workshop

Paints *The Annunciation*; considered a flawed perspective but showcasing early brilliance



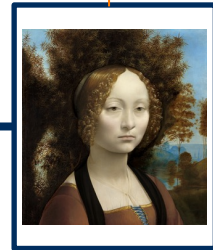
1472

Collaborates with Verrocchio on the *Baptism of Christ*



1475

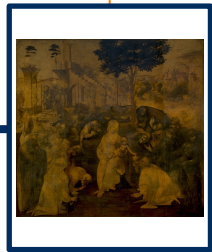
Paints *Portrait of Ginevra de' Benci*, daughter of a wealthy Florentine Banker



1478

Leonardo da Vinci's Life (1481 – 1493)

Commissioned for *Adoration of the Magi*; leaves it unfinished



1481

1482



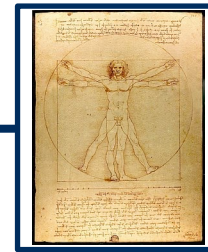
Moves to Milan, begins writing in notebooks

Commissioned to paint *Virgin of the Rocks*, starts studying anatomy and architecture



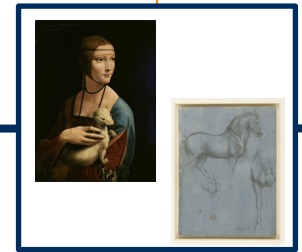
1483

1490



Creates the *Vitruvian Man*, lifelong companion/student Salai begins living with him

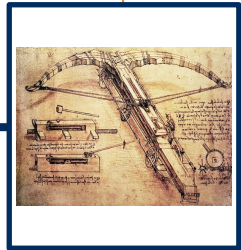
Paints *Lady with an Ermine*; constructs clay horse monument for display in Milan



1493

Leonardo da Vinci's Life (1502 – 1509)

Begins working as military engineer for Cesar Bogoria (inspiration for Macchiavelli's *The Prince*)



1502

1503



Returns to Florence, begins working on *Mona Lisa*, works on it for the rest of his life

Second attempt at flying, creates *Codex on the Flight of Birds*, commissioned to paint *Battle of Aghiari* which is left unfinished



1505

1508



Splits time between Florence and Milan, paints second *Virgin of the Rocks*, begins studying water movement

Begins dissecting cadavers to study anatomy, continues work on hydraulics



1509

Leonardo da Vinci's Life (1513 – 1519)

Moves to Rome, draws the iconic Turin drawing which is believed to be a self-portrait

Moves to Amboise, France as a guest of King Francis I



1502

1514

1516

1519

Visits Parma and Florence, creates plans to drain the Pontine marshes

Leonardo da Vinci dies in Amboise on May 2

Key Lessons

Lesson 1: Be relentlessly curious

“[Leonardo’s] distinguishing and most inspiring trait was his intense curiosity. He wanted to know what causes people to yawn, how they walk on ice in Flanders, methods for squaring a circle, what makes the aortic valve close, how light is processed in the eye and what that means for the perspective in a painting. He instructed himself to learn about the placenta of a calf, the jaw of a crocodile, the tongue of a woodpecker, the muscles of a face, the light of the moon, and the edges of the shadows. Being relentlessly and randomly curious about everything around us is something that each of us can push ourselves to do, every waking hour, just as he did.”

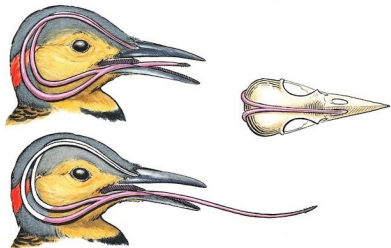


Diagram of a woodpecker's tongue



Leonardo's drawings of the heart

Key Take-Away: Being curious can help us develop, learn more, and ultimately gather the insights that are helpful to our clients

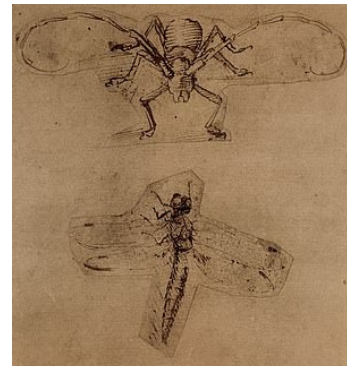
Lesson 2: Take time to observe things

“Leonardo’s greatest skill was his acute ability to observe things. It was the talent that empowered his curiosity, and vice versa. It was not some magical gift but a product of his own effort. When he visited the moats surrounding Sforza Castle, he looked at the four wing dragonflies and noticed how the pairs alternate in motion.

... this, too, we can emulate. Water flowing into a bowl? Look, as he did, at exactly how the eddies swirl. Then wonder why.”



Leonardo’s drawing of a water eddy swirling in a river



Leonardo’s drawing of dragonfly wings alternating in motion

Key Take-Away: Taking a step back to observe things can help us ask better questions and gather better insights

Lesson 3: Be open to changing your mind

“Leonardo was a forerunner of the age of observational experiments and critical thinking. When he came up with an idea, he devised an experiment to test it. And when his expertise showed that a theory was flawed – such as the belief that the springs within the earth were replenished the same way as the blood vessels in humans – he abandoned his theory and sought a new one. If we want to be more like Leonardo, we have to be fearless about changing our minds based on new information.”



Leonardo's drawings of a human flying machine (ornithopter)



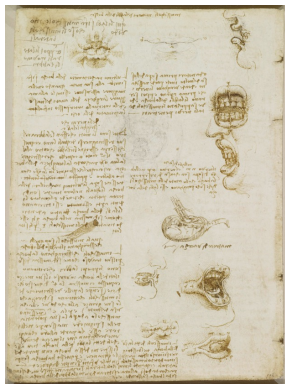
Leonardo's drawing of the circulatory system

Key Take-Away: Our hypothesis might change, but it is our job to accept that, adjust and work on proving our new theory

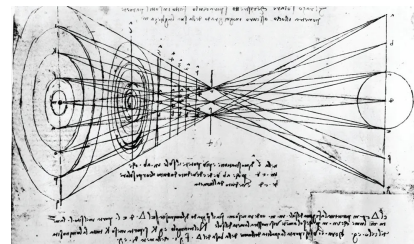
Lesson 4: Avoid silos and borrow from elsewhere

“Leonardo’s had a free-range mind and that merrily wandered across all the disciplines of the arts, sciences, engineering, and humanities. His knowledge of how light strikes the retina helped inform the perspective in *The Last Supper*, and on a page of anatomical drawings depicting the dissection of lips he drew the smile that would reappear in the *Mona Lisa*.

He knew that art was a science, and that science was an art. Whether he was drawing a fetus in the womb or the swirls of a deluge, he blurred the distinction between the two.”



Leonardo's drawings of the mouth



Leonardo's drawing of light

Key Take-Away: Looking into learning from other industries, cases or disciplines can help inform a strong answer

Lesson 5: Genius lies in collaboration

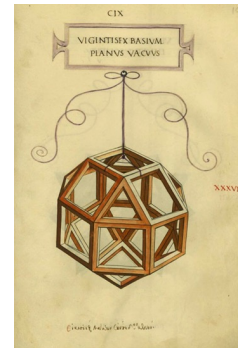
“Genius is often considered the purview of loners who retreat to their garrets and are struck by creative lightning ... but there’s usually more to the story.

The Madonnas and drapery studies were produced in Verocchio’s studio ... other paintings from Leonardo’s studio were created in such a collaborative manner that it is hard to tell whose handmade which strokes ... Vitruvian Man was produced after sharing ideas and sketches with friends ...

Genius starts with individual brilliance. It requires singular vision. But executing often entails working with others. Innovation is a team sport. Creativity is a collaborative endeavor.”



Baptism of Christ painting by Verrochio with Leonardo



Example of a geometric drawing by Leonardo in a collaborative textbook written by Luca Pacioli

Key Take-Away: It is easy to get bogged down in your own work stream, but consulting is a team sport and getting ideas from others helps make the end product better