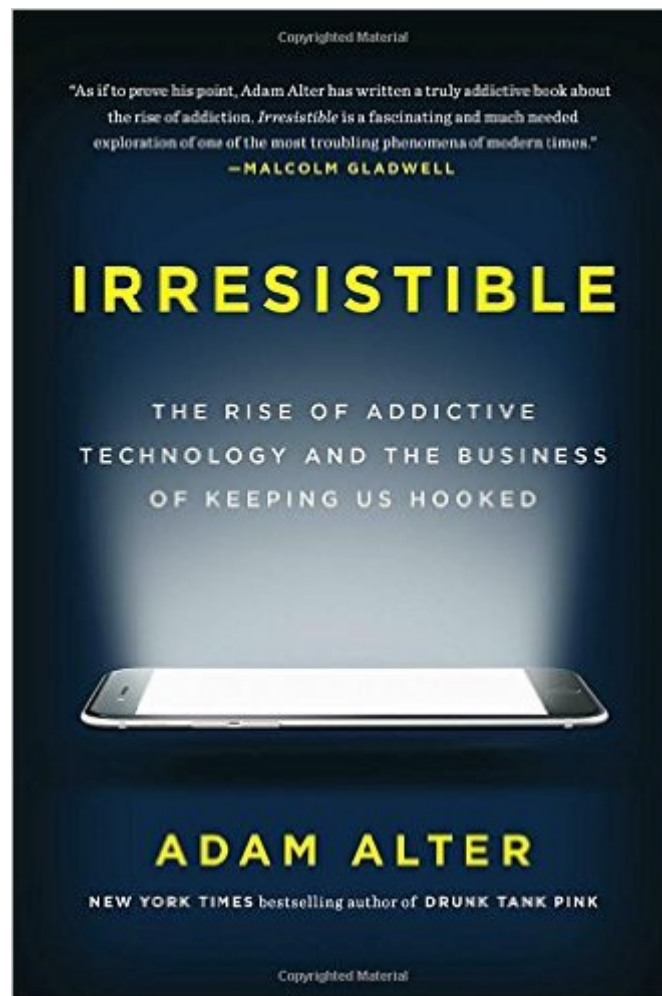




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# Irresistible: The Rise Of Addictive Technology And The Business Of Keeping Us Hooked



## Synopsis

“One of the most mesmerizing and important books I’ve read in quite some time. Alter brilliantly illuminates the new obsessions that are controlling our lives and offers the tools we need to rescue our businesses, our families, and our sanity.” —Adam Grant, *New York Times* bestselling author of *Originals* and *Give and Take*

Welcome to the age of behavioral addiction—an age in which half of the American population is addicted to at least one behavior. We obsess over our emails, Instagram likes, and Facebook feeds; we binge on TV episodes and YouTube videos; we work longer hours each year; and we spend an average of three hours each day using our smartphones. Half of us would rather suffer a broken bone than a broken phone, and Millennial kids spend so much time in front of screens that they struggle to interact with real, live humans. In this revolutionary book, Adam Alter, a professor of psychology and marketing at NYU, tracks the rise of behavioral addiction, and explains why so many of today’s products are irresistible. Though these miraculous products melt the miles that separate people across the globe, their extraordinary and sometimes damaging magnetism is no accident. The companies that design these products tweak them over time until they become almost impossible to resist. By reverse engineering behavioral addiction, Alter explains how we can harness addictive products for the good—to improve how we communicate with each other, spend and save our money, and set boundaries between work and play—and how we can mitigate their most damaging effects on our well-being, and the health and happiness of our children.

Adam Alter’s previous book, *Drunk Tank Pink: And Other Unexpected Forces that Shape How We Think, Feel, and Behave* is available in paperback from Penguin.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

An Best Book of March 2017: In his fascinating new book, associate professor of marketing and best-selling author Adam Alter examines the rise of behavioral addiction in our current times and offers some suggestions for alleviating your own addictive behavior. Here's a question: where is your phone right now? Chances are it's within arm's reach •and as Alter writes, a device that travels with you is always a better vehicle for addiction. Convenience weaponizes temptation, and with the ubiquity and convenience of technology these days, you can see why behavioral addiction to video games, Facebook, checking your email on your phone, even your Fitbit, is on the rise. Irresistible is a deep and wide-ranging study of addiction, and there is much food for thought here. Alter seems especially concerned about how children and teens interact with technology, citing that they are the most vulnerable of us all. But as adults we are much more susceptible than most of us imagine •we may think we're just interacting with a screen, but it's important to remember that there are dozens of highly-paid people behind that screen whose only job is to make sure that we don't stop. --Chris Schluep, The Book Review

“As if to prove his point, Adam Alter has written a truly addictive book about the rise of addiction. Irresistible is a fascinating and much needed exploration of one of the most troubling phenomena of modern times. •Malcolm Gladwell, author of New York Times bestsellers David and Goliath and Outliers “Alter's sweep is broad: He includes not just the more obvious addictive technologies such as slot machines and video games, but the whole sweep of social media, dating apps, online shopping and other binge-inducing programs. He takes in everything (which today is most things) whose business model depends on being irresistible [An] enjoyable yet alarming book. •Washington Post “If you can't stop checking, clicking, surfing and liking, put your device down and read Adam Alter's Irresistible, an important, groundbreaking book about why we're addicted to technology, how we got here, and what we should do next. •Arianna Huffington, author of The Sleep Revolution and Thrive “One of the most mesmerizing and important books

I've read in quite some time. Alter brilliantly illuminates the new obsessions that are controlling our lives and offers the tools we need to rescue our businesses, our families, and our sanity.

•Adam Grant, *New York Times* bestselling author of *Originals* and *Give and Take* "This important book explores how technology keeps us hooked, why that's destructive and how to take back control. • People

"In this smart, sharply-argued book, Adam Alter lays out the evidence for a hidden danger in our lives: behavioral addiction. From tracking social media "likes" to counting our steps, our actions are being guided less by our own volition than by the architecture of the technologies we use. *IRRESISTIBLE* is a fascinating read that will leave you enlightened and alarmed.

•Daniel H. Pink, author of *To Sell Is Human* and *Drive* "For many, social media presents an ideal mode of expression, but it also holds the danger of becoming a crutch or as Adam Alter's brilliant new book illustrates a behavioral addiction that threatens to undermine our mental health and relationships. *Irresistible* offers a crucial understanding of how we are psychologically tethered to our devices, along with much-needed solutions so that we can live rich, meaningful and healthy lives in an increasingly tech-driven age.

•Susan Cain, co-founder of Quiet Revolution and *New York Times* bestselling author of *Quiet: The Power of Introverts in a World That Can't Stop Talking* "Adam Alter has achieved the Holy Grail: a book that's important, insightful, and a pleasure to read. With cutting-edge research about our tech-obsessed world, he soothes us via novel solutions to wean us from our social networks, smartphones, games, fitness watches and other gadgets. He also illustrates the stakes: that these technologies are preventing us from forming meaningful relationships, raising empathetic children, and separating work from sleep and play. *Irresistible* is essential reading if you've ever wondered why some experiences are so addictive, and how to regain control of your time, finances, and relationships.

•Charles Duhigg, author of *New York Times* bestseller *The Power of Habit* "In *Irresistible*, Adam Alter illuminates the surprising, fascinating, and frightening biological and psychological connections between a toddler hitting every button in an elevator, a surgical patient asking for painkillers, and the millions of people hooked on Facebook. No one who has ever seen an advertisement, checked their email on a smartphone, or used the Internet will come away quite the same.

•David Epstein, author of *New York Times* bestseller *The Sports Gene* "I originally wrote this sentence on an analog word processor—that is, paper. Such was the impact of Adam Alter's meticulous research

into behavioral addiction that I've become increasingly frightened of the monster that is my computer. Alter isn't an alarmist, and is evenhanded and rational in his approach toward technology, which makes his fascinating and witty book all the more powerful. In a world of ever-increasing connectivity and omnipresent screens, *Irresistible* is absolutely essential reading. But for your own sake, buy the paper version.

• Maria Konnikova, author of *The Confidence Game* and *Mastermind*: "There could be no better guide than Adam Alter to a technological landscape that's increasingly designed to turn us into addicts. *Irresistible* is both a brilliant exploration of the sometimes sinister ways we get hooked, and a manual for finding focus and human connection in the midst of it all. Your sanity will thank you for reading it."

• Oliver Burkeman, author of *The Antidote: Happiness for People Who Can't Stand Positive Thinking*: "Looked at your phone recently? I thought so. Our devices have become more addictive than any drug, and thanks to *Irresistible*, now we know why. A powerful look at how technology sucks us in, and what we can do to resist its pull."

• Jonah Berger, author of *New York Times* bestseller *Contagious*: "We live in an age of addiction—seemingly benign and otherwise—and Adam Alter, mixing the latest in behavioral science with briskly engaging storytelling, wakes us to an age-old problem that has found troubling new expression in the era of ubiquitous technology. You may never look at your smartphone in the same way again."

• Tom Vanderbilt, author of *Traffic and You May Also Like*: "Adam Alter's brilliant book is a necessary map for navigating a digitally connected world that's teeming with addictive temptations. It's also a crackerjack box of fascinating scientific discoveries on games, habits, and behaviors. I circled, starred, underlined, or wrote exclamation marks on basically every page."

• Derek Thompson, Senior Editor at The Atlantic, and author of *Hit Makers*: "A provocative, clearly written book that argues new technology causes new addictions."

• Kevin Ashton, author of *How to Fly a Horse*: "[A] superb study of Internet addiction."

• Nature: "A book [that] lives up to its title."

• New Scientist: "Contains smart and fascinating analysis of how social media apps, gambling sites and computer games have been engineered to hook users."

• New Statesman (UK): "Adam Alter makes the frightening case that modern connectivity threatens the health of not just our children, but everyone. Alter's book is illuminating on the ways that designers engineer behavioural addiction. Fascinating."

• The Guardian: "With a background in psychology and marketing, Alter brings a specialist eye to his material, and it

shows a fascinating, salutary read | Compelling. • The Daily Telegraph (UK) “Digs down into exactly how technology has us hooked by tapping in to our deepest needs and desires | Irresistible brims with insightful studies, explaining arcane concepts in science and tech with great clarity. • The Times (UK)

This is a well-written and entertaining, yet frightening book about how tech designers use our own evolutionary structures to get us addicted to their products. In addition to an explanation of the science behind addiction, the author uses interesting anecdotes to illustrate key points. As a result of reading this book, I've decided to be more cognizant of the time I spend on apps, social media, and just staring at my phone in general. I hope that by being able to recognize the weapons that are being used against me, I can combat them in order to take control of my own attention.

I am a “zero email” enthusiast. I am obsessed with getting my email inbox down to zero emails. It turns out millions of us have this same addiction. The problem with those like me who suffer with email zero is that with 300 or so emails a day, we spend so much time focused on email that we are never in the productivity zone. But my obsession with technology is far less disruptive than those with an online gambling addiction or people who are so focused on gaming that they wear diapers so they don't need to leave the game to go to the toilet. In his new book *Irresistible: The Rise of Addictive Technology and the Business of Keeping Us Hooked*, Adam Alter looks at the age of behavioral addiction. (Hat tip to Seth Godin for alerting me to this excellent book.) This book is a must read for marketers because it clearly lays out how you can build addictive behavior into products and services. By knowing the qualities of being irresistible, you can harness that force for good and understand when it becomes too powerful. For many people, social media, video, and smart technology takes up a third of our lives (or more). When you factor out work and sleeping, many of us aren't leaving any time for friends and family. We don't have time for that big project we've always wanted to do. With rules, you can manage the deluge. Steve Jobs unveiled the iPad in January 2010 by saying “What this device does is extraordinary” for 90 minutes he explained how the new iPad was the best way to interact with all kinds of digital data. He believed that everyone should own an iPad. But Steve Jobs refused to let his own kids use an iPad. A simple bit of advice Alter provides are

rules for the evening. Don't look at any screens in the hour or two before bed because the blue light disrupts your body rhythms. And never, ever leave your phone in the bedroom because it is too tempting to glance at. Me? I'm doing my best to resist email zero. It's really tough. But when I do, I can get real work done. Like write this blog post.

Few books have been written about the negative effects of technology and its huge long term impact. While we've been bombarded almost every ten minutes with commercial advertisements on benefits of technology, governments, regulators, and technology providers are also encouraging us to use more and more new technologies for business purposes without providing sufficient warning information on their negative impact. People enjoy using technology without being aware of the dark side of it until they are hooked and things fall apart. Human beings are blind to the negative side of technology which eventually will change our mental and physical health. Steve Jobs, Chris Anderson and Evan William all know that almost all technological tools are engineered to be addicted. They have seen the dangers of technology first hand. Because of this, their kids were limited the use of such tools. Adam Alter did a good job. This book explains how we are hooked and get addicted to technology. The main theme of the book is "Behavioral Addiction". This book provides some information on substance and behavioral addictions and the latter of which came to our daily life unnoticeable and irresistible. The author used scientific experiments, observations, and games to support the theory of behavioral addictions. Even though, the term "behavioral addiction" has long been coined, what surprised me was to learn that behavioral addiction was just recently included in the list of APA as official diagnoses. The author included the ingredient of behavioral addiction which consists of goal, feedback, progress, escalation, cliffhanger, and social interaction. The author also made a good point on addiction in children and adolescents which is very important for their daily life in the new age of technological innovation. Some good information i.e. habits and architecture as well as gamification is included in the last two chapters. Most information given in this book is good, however, some long explanations could have been omitted to make this book more concise. This book is good to read, however, it would be helpful for readers if the author could have provided some more solutions in a separate chapter. Reading this book reminded me to pay more attention to the hidden dangers of technology which has not been clearly perceived by massive users. This book is very helpful for readers to raise their awareness on the danger of behavioral addiction. It is also good for parents, students, teachers, and policy makers.

The trifecta - the concepts are clear and important to grasp, the book is new and punchy and entertaining, and it is not too long. I'm very glad I picked up Irresistible, and it may influence my life.

These ideas, about the behaviorably addictive qualities of computers (in all present forms, including smart phones) is evident in everyday life. Alter includes studies in various universities to prove his observations, which are pretty much everyone's observations nowadays. I was disappointed to see that there was no section on the hypnotic effects of blue light panels and the innate flicker of such devices (including TV screens ) and how such objects have been used in brainwashing and propaganda.

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