

# A GUIDE FOR SMARTER STARTUPS

The Chinese version of a veteran US entrepreneur's book, *Making Elephants Fly*, on the process of innovation with practical advice from Silicon Valley, is on the stands. **Xing Yi** reports.

Steven Hoffman believes that Chinese startups will play a vital role in shaping the future of the planet.

Recently, the veteran US entrepreneur published a book, *Making Elephants Fly*, on the process of innovation with practical advice from Silicon Valley.

The Chinese edition hit the shelves in March, but the English edition will not be available until this fall.

"It is unusual," says Hoffman. "While I was talking to business book agents in the US, I told my Chinese friends that I had just finished a book. "Instantly, I was connected to almost all the top Chinese publishers, and things moved really fast. In China, everything seems to move so fast."

Having created three venture-funded startups in Silicon Valley and trained many corporate executives, Hoffman founded a business incubator in San Francisco in 2012.

The company opened its first overseas branch in Shanghai last September.

Besides giving consultancy, providing shared working spaces, and connecting angel investors with Chinese startups, the Shanghai branch serves as a bridge that helps overseas startups to enter the Chinese market, and the Chinese to go to Silicon Valley.

Last year, Hoffman traveled to more than a dozen major cities in China, meeting business partners and giving lectures to startups.

The experiences in China enabled Hoffman to do some "localization" in the book's Chinese edition.

"I put in special things just for China," says Hoffman. "The core teaching is the same, but there are a lot of Chinese examples."

When speaking about commercialization, Hoffman uses Hiibook to make the point.

Hiibook is a mobile application which gives email a look and function like WeChat, an instant-messaging app, as Chinese businessmen rely heavily on WeChat to communicate and are not used to email, which is, however, widely used in international business.

"They quickly got 10 mil-



Steven Hoffman publishes his latest book, *Making Elephants Fly*, on the process of innovation with practical advice from Silicon Valley. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

lion downloads in China, but their investor was urging them to add advertisements," Hoffman writes in the book. "This would have been a big mistake. They have to avoid doing things that could harm the growth of users as they are still in an early stage."

Hiibook took Hoffman's advice.

"If we have to balance user experience and profits, we will give emphasis to the former," says Zhou Gongjin, founder of Hiibook. "Now we have no advertisements. Even if we have to monetize our product in the future, we will find a new way that won't damage user experience."

In Hoffman's eyes, the Chinese are natural-born entrepreneurs.

“To really innovate, one has to break away from the pack mentality.”

Steven Hoffman, US entrepreneur

"I've met businessmen in South Korea and Japan, and they are more like big company people, whereas the Chinese will do anything to get a business going — there's no

hesitation," says Hoffman.

He also sees a tendency for "quick money" among Chinese businessmen.

"If you want to copy a product, that's great. The Chinese are pretty brilliant at that — take an idea, introduce it to China and run with it," says Hoffman.

"When there was not so much competition, in the days of (Alibaba's) Jack Ma and (Tencent's) Pony Ma, that model worked fine."

But nowadays, there are so many entrepreneurs.

Ever since Premier Li Keqiang called for efforts to boost mass innovation and entrepreneurship at the Summer Davos Forum in September 2014, startups have mushroomed in every corner of the country.

Li said at the news conference following the annual legislative session on March 15 that in the past three years, there were more than 10 million new market entities registered each year.

"They have to innovate, whether they like it or not, or they won't succeed," says Hoffman. "That will actually be good for China, because it will propel China into being a leader in innovation, as opposed to a follower."

"I see that happening right now. That's why I wrote the book and why I am here — to teach the process we follow in Silicon Valley, so that the Chinese can benefit from it and innovate on a global scale."

Mao Daqing, founder of a Chinese business incubator, says Hoffman's book answered many of his questions.

"Hoffman reflects the success of the Valley, and offers valuable lessons for Chinese startups," Mao writes in the book's recommendation.

Besides studying Chinese businesses, Hoffman reads a lot on Chinese history, and finds that China as a society is very good at moving in unison.

"But to really innovate, one has to break away from the pack mentality. People have to force themselves to say: 'No, I am not gonna go where everybody is going, I am gonna go where nobody is going or very few people are going'"

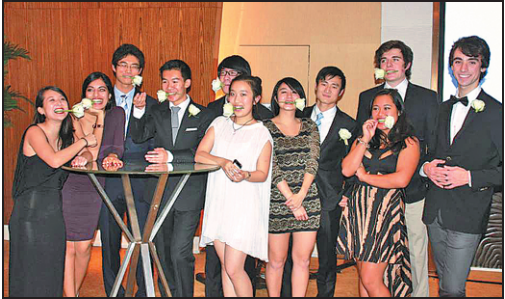
Marching into uncharted territory sounds frightening, and realizing a new idea that the world have never seen is hard.

Hoffman admits that most startups fail, and making a startup succeed is like getting the heaviest animal on earth off the ground.

"Peter Thiel's book *Zero to One* gives you the big picture, telling you what makes a startup successful," says Hoffman.

"I give you the little picture. I try to go into detail on what are the exact processes to make that breakthrough happen — to make elephants fly."

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Students from New York University Shanghai celebrate after the end of a semester. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

## NYU Shanghai graduates ready for the world

By ZHOU WENTING in Shanghai [zhouwenting@chinadaily.com.cn](mailto:zhouwenting@chinadaily.com.cn)

New York University Shanghai's first batch of 280 graduates from 27 countries, who have rich experience in global travel for field study and exchange programs, will bid farewell to the school in May.

Unlike most local institutions of higher education, NYU Shanghai seems custom-made to churn out global citizens in an increasingly globalized world. Students are encouraged to spend at least one year at its campuses in New York City or Abu Dhabi or other universities — providing students with abundant opportunities to travel, study and work around the world. It is the first Sino-US research university established by New York University and East China Normal University.

Mark West, who was born and raised in the US state of Maryland, has been to 20 countries during his four years at NYU Shanghai, which is located in the Lujiazui financial district, known as China's Wall Street.

"University life is usually perceived as a daily repetition of traveling between the school building and the dormitory, but at NYU Shanghai, students can have access to the whole world," says West, 22, who majors in humanities.

"The whole experience will enable us to observe, learn, adjust and accumulate," he said during a media briefing on March 22.

West spent the first half of 2016 working as an intern in a microfinance company in Accra, Ghana. He believes the experience was a good opportunity to get a taste of African culture and build up connections with local business circles.

Zhao Zeyu, who majors in business and finance and is interested in law and public policy, spent one semester in Prague, taking law courses and interning in a non-governmental organization. Zhao

then worked another semester in Washington DC, as an intern in the office of Hakeem Jeffries, who represents a New York City district in the US House of Representatives.

"That gave me abundant chances to understand American politics and enhance my communication skills in the workplace. I believe that experience has offered more possibilities for my future," says Zhao, a native of Suzhou, Jiangsu province.

Wang Jialing, majoring in business and finance, traveled to Abu Dhabi in 2014 to participate in the first summit of NYU student leaders, with a theme of "cross-border leadership". Thirty-five students from the three campuses of NYU carried out in-depth discussions and volunteer activities in local communities.

Wang, a native of Ningbo, Zhejiang province, was inspired by the summit and initiated a Shanghai version after returning. Sixty students from home and abroad who are studying at universities in Shanghai gathered to discuss possible solutions to traffic woes in the city.

American Roxanne Roman has spent time all over China and in New York City, Washington DC, Abu Dhabi and New Delhi for field studies. She says she would never have imagined that her decision to come to NYU Shanghai, made at age 18, would have changed her life path so dramatically.

"The university empowered us with courage and determination to become leaders," says Roman, who has received a scholarship offer from Tsinghua University in the capital. "I hope I'll have a new perspective to learn more about China in Beijing, and I will work as a bridge of friendship between China and the US."

Jeffrey Lehman, vice-chancellor of NYU Shanghai, describes the graduates, including around 130 from abroad, as "incredible" and "amazing".

# Helping Chinese writers win more fans abroad

By MEI JIA [meijia@chinadaily.com.cn](mailto:meijia@chinadaily.com.cn)

Writer Liu Zhenyun returned on Tuesday from a 20-day trip to seven European countries, including the Netherlands, Italy, France and Germany. There he observed obvious changes in Western readers' perspectives about Chinese literature.

"Twenty years ago, their interest was only confined to works on Chinese society and politics, which misled a bunch of Chinese writers to go for shortcuts and seek to be opportunists, and thus China became a strange country through their pens," says Liu.

"But now, Western audiences care more about the depth of life represented in Chinese

literature," he adds.

Liu shares how European readers he met analyzed his novel, *I Did Not Kill My Husband*, translated by Sylvia Li-chun Lin and Howard Goldblatt, which is about a rural woman, Li Xuelian, reclaiming her reputation after being wrongly judged by her husband.

"The French readers say they are impressed by Li, who spends 20 years trying to right a wrong," says Liu.

The introduction of more Chinese books by top writers to overseas readers has made the change, says Liu.

The Chinese Culture Translation and Studies and Support group, under the Ministry of Culture, is one of the main organizations pushing the books

abroad, as it offers a joint platform to protect copyright while increasing Chinese writers' overseas influence and appeal.

Meanwhile, at its Forum on Overseas Translation and Communication of Famous Works of Chinese Contemporary Literature last week, it focused on works by top writers, and released a guide of 40 recommended works from Chinese contemporary literature under the title *Discover Chinese Literature*.

An introduction in English and selected translations are available in the guide.

Digital distribution companies — including Amazon and Overdrive — were also invited to take part in the project.

The guide was created by veteran critic Bai Ye, who led a

team of 40 critics and 30 chief editors of literary magazines in sifting through the works of 651 candidates.

The works included 31 novels, 61 novellas and 100 short stories. Three of Liu Zhenyun's works were also part of the works which were screened.

"We're offering a reference for foreign readers on the representative works of well written and genuine Chinese stories. And this is only a beginning."

In a related development, the Beijing International Book Fair — an influential platform for the copyright trade and publishing, and a place where Chinese books are introduced to the international market — appointed Liu as its first "reading

ambassador" on Wednesday.

Lin Liying, the deputy general manager of the China National Publications Import & Export (Group) Corporation and one of the fair's organizers, says: "After 30 years, BIBF has become the world's second-largest book event, after the Frankfurt Book Fair. But we know that if we want to continue growing we need to do something different, instead of just hosting the fair."

The fair, which is a window to Chinese writing and publishing, now attracts over 2,400 publishers from more than 80 countries.

Discussing Liu's appointment, Lin, who calls the writer "an old friend and a perfect choice", says he is a representative of contemporary Chinese

literature and a winner of international literary awards. His works have been rendered in more than 20 languages.

Liu will be involved in multiple reading promotion events in the next five years.

"The Chinese are avid readers, and they are even writing more," Liu says. "It is just that the way they do it has changed. They are now writing using WeChat updates and the like."

Zhao Haiyun, deputy department head at the State Administration of Press, Publication, Radio, Film and Television, says that more than 150 Chinese contemporary writers — including Mo Yan, Mai Jia, Liu Zhenyun, Liu Cixin and Cao Wenxue — have won international literary awards and sold their works in foreign



Writer Liu Zhenyun is selected as the first "reading ambassador" of the 30-year-old Beijing International Book Fair for the next five years. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

markets in the recent past.

"Chinese writers are gradually shining on the world stage, and I believe we will see more of this," says Zhao.