

Gary Hoover

Business Thought Leader, Entrepreneur, Innovator

Please contact a GDA agent for information.

Topics

- Business
- Business Growth / Strategy / Trends
- CEO
- Disruption
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- History
- Influence
- Innovation / Creativity
- Inspiration / Achievement
- Retail and Consumerism
- Storytelling
- Sustainability



About Gary Hoover

Gary Hoover began his entrepreneurial journey at an early age. He grew up in Anderson, Indiana, a General Motors factory town, and began asking questions about business at an early age. Convinced that the best way to change the world (for the better) was to lead or create enterprises, he started subscribing to Fortune Magazine when he was 12. While other kids were playing baseball, he was memorizing the Fortune 500. He visited hundreds of corporate headquarters and offices before he was 18, and studied the stock market in depth. His question was the same, "What separates the losers from the winners?"

In this quest, Gary's research was not limited to for-profit enterprises, but included the study of all types of enterprise from empires to unions, from General Motors to the United States of America. As part of his education, he studied economics at the University of Chicago under Milton Friedman and two other Nobel Prize winners, served as a securities analyst for CitiBank on Wall Street, worked as a buyer for Federated Department Stores, and headed up acquisitions and strategic planning for the May Department Stores Company.

At the age of 30, he finally took the plunge and created pioneering book superstore BOOKSTOP, which helped change the nature of book shopping in America. BOOKSTOP also won kudos for its preservation and restoration of historic buildings such as old movie theatres. This company was sold to Barnes & Noble for \$41.5 million cash when it was 7 years old, and became a cornerstone for their industry-dominating superstore chain, which in 2007 did over \$4.5 billion in sales out of 700-plus stores.

After he and his partners sold BOOKSTOP, Gary returned to his first love of understanding businesses, and (in 1990) began a small business information publisher, the Reference Press. This company evolved into Hoover's, Inc., the world's largest Internet-based provider of information about enterprises. Hoover's Online, covers thousands of companies around the world, and includes private, public, and non-profit enterprises. Millions of users from all countries access Hoover's every day for the site's easy-to-use and easy-to-read information on enterprises, generating hundreds of millions of page views a year. In July of 1999, Hoover's went public and in March of 2003, the company was purchased by Dun & Bradstreet for \$117 million. Like BOOKSTOP, Hoover's has changed the way we do things and today employs over 600 people. This is what Gary Hoover started out to do as a teenager.

Hoover also knows failure, having started travel superstore TravelFest in 1993 – and closing it down in 1998-99 as airlines slashed commissions to travel agents.

From 2003 through 2008, Gary did an in-depth study of the museum industry and business opportunities, therein. He and his colleagues created a company, Story Stores, to build a chain of for-profit museums, starting with the concept RoadStoryUSA. The economic environment made it difficult to raise the required capital, and this project is on the back-burner for now.

Today, Gary Hoover travels the world speaking to Fortune 500 executives, trade associations, entrepreneurs, and college and high school students about how enterprises are built and how they stand the test of time. His speeches and workshops have ranged from the Hong Kong and Jakarta chapters of EO (Entrepreneurs Organization) to keynote at the National Association of Convenience Stores Convention and the Mid-Atlantic Venture Capital Conference, from Microsoft and Oracle client conferences to strategic planning meetings of major law firms.

From his own successes and failures, and from the lessons of the thousands of companies he has studied, he draws real-life examples of the things that really matter. He talks about the role of history, of geography, of demography, of curiosity, and the other key things that aren't discussed every day in the newspaper – or the classroom. Gary speaks from long experience and long study about the big picture, about the critical components of the successful business mission. In an era of fads and fashions, Gary keeps his eye on the timeless fundamentals of success, but with new and surprising stories.

Gary has for 40+ years been watching demographic and other trends, today including the aging baby boom and its implications for “the experience economy.” As always, he is especially attuned to the customer and to retailing.

Gary lives in Austin, Texas, with his 50,000-book personal research library. In Austin, he has worked to develop entrepreneurial thinking among local young people, helping to create a group of students who meet monthly to learn the keys to entrepreneurial success.

Gary Hoover also maintains a list of new business ideas, containing over 100 concepts, as reported in Fortune Small Business Magazine and elsewhere.

In the spring of 2002, Gary's alma mater the University of Chicago opened Hoover House dormitory, named in honor of Hoover for the gifts of stock in his companies made to the University over the last 20 years. He continues to be an active supporter of nonprofit entrepreneurship, particularly in education.

Select Keynotes

- **Big Screen: The Story of the Movie Industry**

The story of movie directors and actors has been covered many times in books and documentaries. But this key American industry is also a business. In this colorful and engaging visual presentation, learn how a small group of outsiders challenged the establishment and built the great brands we still know today, from Fox to Paramount. This fast-moving series of stories has a broad appeal to many audiences looking for "something different" which also inspires and educates.

- **Flying High: The Story of the American Airline Industry**

This highly visual history of one of our most important industries has leadership lessons for all of us to learn. Who were the bold innovators and how did they build an industry from dangerous crop-dusters and world war one fighter pilots into the massive system that serves us all daily? Anyone interested in aviation or technology will love this colorful thriller of a talk.

- **From Punch Card to PC: The Story of the Computer Industry**

We are immersed and driven by a world of technology. Often it seems that everything is a totally new idea and approach. But how many realize that John Patterson invented how we sell things, especially technology, that Thomas Watson took those ideas and built the greatest tech company in US history (IBM), and how the PC then came about? Audiences have been completely absorbed in this fast-paced, very visual presentation by Gary Hoover, a great storyteller and serious business historian.

- **How Retailing Can Get its Mojo Back**

Gary Hoover loves retailing. He began studying the industry at the age of 12, and then served as a securities analyst on Wall Street covering the industry, a department store buyer, and head of strategic planning and mergers and acquisitions for a giant retailer. Then he founded BOOKSTOP, the first chain of book superstores, which led the industry in innovation and was acquired by Barnes & Noble, signaling their entry into superstores. Gary's deep understanding of enthusiasm for retailing come through in this dynamic presentation.

- **Learning Lessons from the Greats: Four People Who Changed Your Life Who You Never Heard Of**

This highly unusual talk takes the audience back in time to learn the lessons of some of the greatest business leaders in history, in fields from media to technology. See how they created industry-changing innovations and dealt with incredible obstacles. Gary Hoover has studied business since he subscribed to Fortune Magazine at the age of 12, and speaks and teaches key principals worldwide. This audience-invigorating keynote is highly visual and is best in a theater environment or with a very large screen. "Ken Burns meets Peter Drucker."

- **Lessons from Detroit: The Story of the American Auto Industry**

Ken Burns meets Peter Drucker in this highly visual, dynamic presentation. Anyone interested in business success, technology, and transportation can learn a great deal from Alfred P. Sloan, the greatest manager in American history and the builder of General Motors, Henry Ford, a bold innovator, and Walter P. Chrysler, the brilliant manager and innovator who took on the big players. Gary's presentation on this important industry history has been called "a virtuoso performance" by those who have seen it. No one but Gary could combine history with key lessons so engagingly.

- **Lessons from The Creators of the Media Industries**

The media industries saturate our modern lives. Yet few know how this world came about, or the stories of the two great innovators who gave us modern publishing and modern broadcasting. In this intensely visual big screen show, Gary Hoover leads us through the life, challenges, and innovations of Henry Luce of Time-Life and William Paley of CBS. As Gary says, "Nothing that matters in business is new." Techniques and technologies evolve, but the principals that lead to innovation and success do not. Learn from two of the greatest entrepreneurs and company builders in US history.

- **Longer Workshops Available**

Intensive Workshop on Entrepreneurial Thinking & Innovation for companies big and small Intensive Workshop on Retailing Principles, Players, &

Trends Custom-tailored presentations for your company or industry

- **Ringling Registers: The Story of American Retailing**

Companies selling technology, products, and services to the retail industry and retail leaders have been absorbed by this story of American retailing – the who, what, when, and where of the major innovations that have changed lives worldwide. A lifelong student of retailing, and successful retail executive and entrepreneur, Gary Hoover is the ideal person to excite and energize your group with this compelling story.

- **The Eight Keys to Building and Leading Great Enterprises**

In this fast-paced, fact-filled hour, Gary Hoover covers the Eight Keys to Building and Leading Enterprises in the 21st Century. Gary combines his 50+ years of research into big companies (which led to the formation of Hoovers.com) with his 35 years as a serial entrepreneur and business educator. Real world examples, fresh ideas, and the secrets of innovation are all part of this very popular talk.

Select Book Titles

- **2017:** The Lifetime Learner's Guide to Reading and Learning

Select Articles

- [Which Cities Are Americans Fleeing?](#)

Two weeks ago, we presented an animated chart showing the most popular American cities – the metropolitan areas which received the most domestic migrants in each year from 2010 through 2018. This week, we created an animated chart showing “the least popular” cities – which metros the most people are leaving.

- [The Unsung Story of the Greatest Industrial Designer](#)

Outside of the field of product and transportation design, too few people know who Raymond Loewy was. The best-known industrial designer, founder of the industrial design profession, and member of the pantheon of our greatest designers, it is time for wider recognition of this amazing man.

- [Kirk Kerkorian: The Risk Taker Who Rose From Poverty to Change Las Vegas and Armenia](#)

One of the myths about great entrepreneurs is that they love risk and are big gamblers. In fact, they usually do everything they can to reduce risk and are rarely true gamblers. But there is always an exception to the rule.

- [Amazon & Whole Foods Disrupt Food Retailing – Unprecedented or Repeating Pattern?](#)

In the spring of 1982, I had selected Austin, Texas, as the most promising market in which to start my idea of big discount bookstores, BOOKSTOP. Unable to find a big enough space in the heart of the city, I considered a shopping center at the then-remote northwest edge of the city.

Select Testimonials

“Exhilarating speaker. His Passion Jumped off the stage.” “Riveting.” “Worth the conference if he had been the only speaker.”

— Audience, WJF Institute National Conference of Attorneys

Gary Hoover is a man of many, many talents, and I respect him dearly. He is really a genius level business thinker. I had a lot of great professors at Wharton and when I attended Wharton it was rated the #1 MBA program 6 years in a row. And none of them approached Gary's level of knowledge about business history or entrepreneurship.

— Brett A. Hurt, Founder, Coremetrics and Bazaarvoice, Co-Founder & CEO, data.world

When we launched our retail vertical, multiple members of our team recommend we have Gary talk to Square Root to kick-start our knowledge. Gary's energy and depth was hugely beneficial to our team. I loved his open, conversational format in his History of Retailing and Top Trends in Retail Today presentations. He tailored his talks to be relevant to Square Root, and inspired us on many levels. I couldn't recommend Gary enough.

— Chris Taylor, CEO, Square Root, Software for Retail Management

Few are better than Gary Hoover at identifying big opportunities.

— Fortune Small Business Magazine

I have known Gary Hoover for over 30 years. He is a lifelong student of retail strategy and innovation. His Bookstop idea pioneered the large selection bookstore chain and changed that industry.

— *Herbert Simon, Chairman Emeritus, Simon Property Group*

Gary Hoover is a true pioneer in creating retail experiences and furthering innovative brands. He's been rethinking the retail experience for decades, literally since he founded Bookstop!"

— *Jason Dorsey, Co-Founder, The Center for Generational Kinetics*

I have known Gary Hoover for over 20 years. With that background, I can tell you that Gary Hoover is one of the most amazing entrepreneurs and teachers I have ever encountered. He is literally a walking encyclopedia of business history and his story telling is incredible. He is the most prolific reader I have ever met and his ability to not only speed read but retain information is incredible. I consider Gary Hoover one of Austin's most valuable assets and recommend him without reservation. Whether you are a lifetime learner, an aspiring entrepreneur, or an academic, you will find Gary Hoover as one of your truly great resources and your time spent with him among your most memorable.

— *Jim Nolen, Distinguished Senior Lecturer, Department of Finance, McCombs School of Business, University of Texas at Austin*

I have not had as many positive comments ever in my 21 years here. You nailed it. You motivated our minds!

— *Joe Swedberg, SVP Sales, Hormel Foods*

When it comes to retail trends, evolution, and innovation, Gary Hoover is one of the most knowledgeable people I know. He served as a valuable Board of Directors member at Whole Foods Market during our early growth and Initial Public Offering. He always has innovative ideas. There are few if any people who share Gary's lifelong passion for and deep understanding of retailing, its past, and its future.

— *John Mackey, Co-Founder and Co-CEO, Whole Foods Market*

Gary Hoover is one of the smartest and most creative people I know

— *Leonard L. Berry, Distinguished Professor of Marketing, Texas A&M University*

Gary Hoover's knowledge of the origins and development of the retail industry is encyclopedic and his attention to both the "big picture" and the smallest details is accurate and entertaining.

— *Richard Marcus, former CEO, Neiman Marcus*