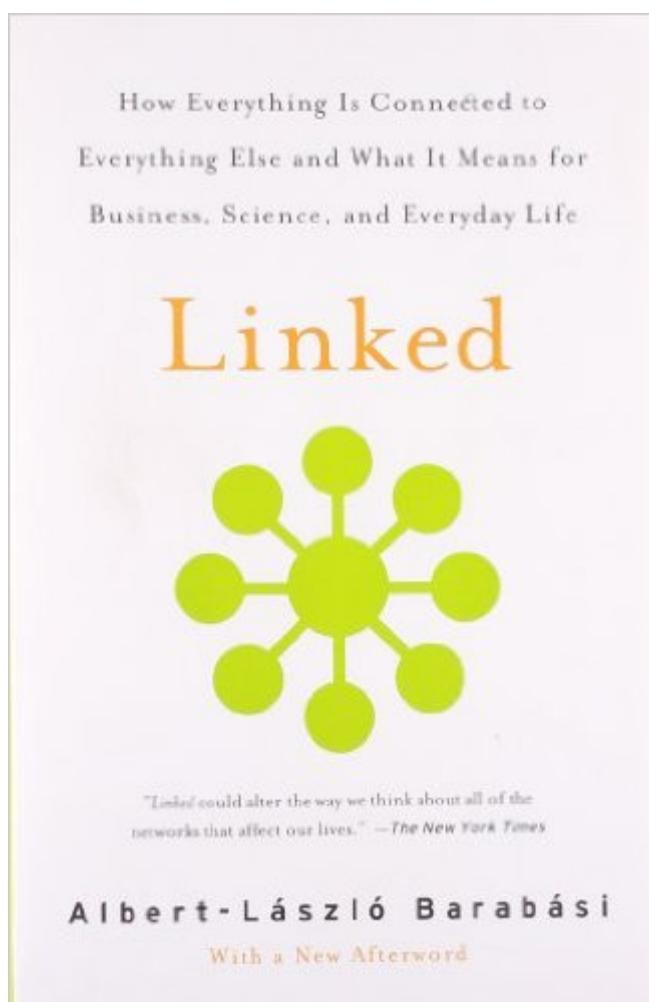


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# Linked: How Everything Is Connected To Everything Else And What It Means For Business, Science, And Everyday Life



## Synopsis

A cocktail party? A terrorist cell? Ancient bacteria? An international conglomerate? All are networks, and all are a part of a surprising scientific revolution. Albert-László Barabási, the nation's foremost expert in the new science of networks and author of *Bursts*, takes us on an intellectual adventure to prove that social networks, corporations, and living organisms are more similar than previously thought. Grasping a full understanding of network science will someday allow us to design blue-chip businesses, stop the outbreak of deadly diseases, and influence the exchange of ideas and information. Just as James Gleick and the Erdos-Rényi model brought the discovery of chaos theory to the general public, *Linked* tells the story of the true science of the future and of experiments in statistical mechanics on the internet, all vital parts of what would eventually be called the Barabási-Albert model. Â

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I have focused this review on the audience of the book, since other reviews have quite adequately summarized the material. There have been a lot of books recently that have been published on the new science of networks. Network theory and how it applies to many different fields from technology, marketing, biology, social science, terrorism, disease control etc. (Six Degrees by Duncan Watts, Nexus - Mark Buchanan, Smart Mobs - Howard Rheingold, Tipping Point - Malcolm Gladwell etc.). Barabási's is a welcome addition to the field and has a nice niche, which isn't filled by the other books. As some other reviewers have pointed this book is a popular science book, which means it covers scientific and mathematical theories at a very high level and makes these theories

accessible to a wide audience. The niche lies somewhere between Gladwell's Tipping Point and Watt's Six Degrees. It is very well written and draws you in with stories that explore the theories. Some of the other reviewers have complained that Barabasi has done a disservice to the theories that he explains by making them too simplistic. I disagree, I actually found this book to be very rewarding, and a quick read, which is a sign of a well-written book. I have never been a fan of scientific and academic books that pride themselves on being totally incomprehensible. Richard Feynman, the Nobel Prize winning physicist, once said that if someone truly understands a subject they should be able to explain it to a general audience without resorting to technical jargon (Feynman's Lectures on Physics Vol 1,2,3 are a perfect example). To be able to explain a complex subject you need to resort analogies, examples and stories. Stories give a framework for the general reader to absorb the complex material.

Albert Barabasi presents the lay reader with a stimulating description of the origins of network theory and recent applications. He describes random networks, small world and scalefree networks. In nonrandom networks the importance of hubs is emphasized. Small world networks are the ones with a well defined average number of links, and in scalefree ones the density of links scales as a power law. For the many interesting examples discussed, I would like to have seen graphs showing scaling over at least three decades in order to be convinced of scaling. However, in practice, whether a network scales or not may not be so important. I liked best the discussions of terrorism, AIDS, and biology. If one could locate the hubs, then a small world network could be destroyed, but as the author points out there is no systematic method for locating the hubs. Also, destroyed hubs in a terror network might be replaced rather fast, whereas airline hubs could not be replaced so quickly. The book might be seen as indicating a starting point to try to develop a branch of mathematical sociology. For example, the maintenance of ethnic identity outside the Heimat is discussed in terms of networking. Now for a little criticism. I did not find the discussion of 'the rich get richer' very helpful because network theory at this stage deals only with static geometry, not with empirically-based dynamics. In fact, the dynamics of financial markets have been described empirically accurately without using any notion of networking. In the text the phrase 'economic stability' is used but stability is a dynamic idea, and there is no known empirical evidence from the analysis of real markets for any kind of stability.

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