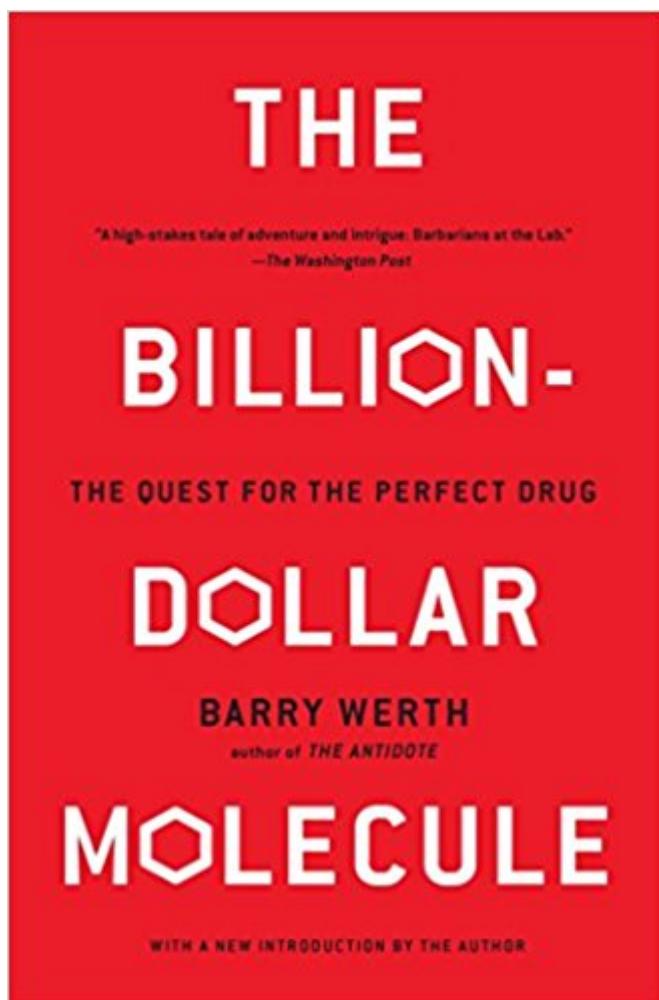


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# The Billion Dollar Molecule: One Company's Quest For The Perfect Drug



## **Synopsis**

Join journalist Barry Werth as he pulls back the curtain on Vertex, a start-up pharmaceutical company, and witness firsthand the intense drama being played out in the pioneering and hugely profitable field of drug research. Founded by Joshua Boger, a dynamic Harvard- and Merck-trained scientific whiz kid, Vertex is dedicated to designing -- atom by atom -- both a new life-saving immunosuppressant drug, and a drug to combat the virus that causes AIDS. You will be hooked from start to finish, as you go from the labs, where obsessive, fiercely competitive scientists struggle for a breakthrough, to Wall Street, where the wheeling and dealing takes on a life of its own, as Boger courts investors and finally decides to take Vertex public. Here is a fascinating no-holds-barred account of the business of science, which includes an updated epilogue about the most recent developments in the quest for a drug to cure AIDS.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

From test tubes to the Wall Street IPO and beyond, this is the riveting true story of a start-up pharmaceutical company working to create an anti-AIDS drug. Scientifically accurate, yet written with an attention to plot, timing, dialogue, and development of character more characteristic of the best thrillers.

A startup pharmaceutical company is the focus of this intriguing look at the nexus of biotechnology

and high finance; features a new epilogue by the author. Copyright 1995 Reed Business Information, Inc.

Barry Werth's book provides a view of the high business and personal risks involved in developing drugs. \$ 100 million and much more are sought after to research and develop a drug that only has a promise and could easily do nothing or even worse cause harm. That's the business risk and the leaders have to put on a confident front and do whatever or say whatever to make sure the money keeps coming in. On the personal side many extremely bright and confident PhD/MDs battle it out to be the one that makes the discovery or get credit for it. Quite often this battle is in the same company between friends and colleagues who may not in the end remain as such. Much of it reminds you of high school but then again we probably never do leave that stage as much as we like to think. The constant use of molecule and target names and descriptions can make a difficult read but there is much more soap opera than science. One finishes the book wondering how we have come so far in medicine/pharmaceuticals but I guess the same competitive spirit that can so often get in the way of progress also can make it go further and its tough to know when its more trouble than benefit.

Chronicling the rise of Vertex, one of the first companies to dabble in rational drug design, the Billion Dollar Molecule follows the brilliant Josh Boger as he attempts to become the next Merck. The scope of scientific context and the way in which the author weaves together various players is both witty and insightful. However I couldn't help feeling that the author's journalistic prowess obscured and glossed over the actual science that Vertex and its counterparts were performing. As somebody who was hoping for a sort of Elegant Universe meets the pharmaceutical industry structured within a compelling narrative, I was disappointed. The narrative (specifically the sequence of causality dating back from the 1900s to the 1980s) is brilliant, but the science, the real red meat of a book like this, is largely absent.

I purchased this book when I was hired at Vertex. I realize the book is a bit dated now but it is extremely interesting to read about the beginnings of the company and talking to colleagues who worked side by side with some of the people mentioned. The drive and ambition paired with world class talent and intelligence of all the scientists and businessmen is almost unbelievable and should make anyone more motivated to do and be more. I highly recommend giving it a read especially if you are in the biotech field.

A fantastic book. Extremely well written. Characterizations are extraordinarily well done. The author DOES HIS HOMEWORK on this one. This is a fascinating investigation into the business and characters involved in a pharmaceutical startup and really the entire industry. Werth is Michael Lewis on steroids. Do yourself a favor and take an adventure with The Billion Dollar Molecule.

Barry Werth has revealed it all for the public - the inside story of the making of Vertex, a fledgling pharmaceutical start-up (which has now achieved much-deserved success and glory). Werth goes to the extent of discussing each individual's feelings and thoughts (anguish) in candid detail. The story is an adrenaline rush; expect to reach for a few extra cups of coffee while reading this book. The main players are from Harvard, Yale, Merck, the best of the best and all workaholics to the extreme. As the story - the rush to the finish-line - unfolds, you realize that Dr. Joshua Boger, is truly a brilliant, gifted man - both a scholarly researcher and a precocious businessman with a fantastic presence of mind. What's even more breath-taking is that the entire story is true - the toil, the sweat, the despair, the triumph. I enjoyed every minute while reading this book. I enthusiastically recommend this book to anyone who has a degree in the biomedical sciences.

I regretted buying this Book. Very poor written. The writer had no understanding of biomedicine himself. He just tried to put all stuff he collected into a stack of paper. For grade, I would give him, "F".

An insightful book into the rise and fall of a new pharmaceutical start-up. What fascinates me is the narrative as well as the emotions, motives and Drivers of each individual behind the sciences.

The book presents valuable insights into the life of a biotechnology company and the obligate drama associated with people working in the industry. I thought the text was tedious at times and the end was a bit abrupt.

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