



## Built to Last

By Jim Collins, Jerry I. Porras, Jerry I. Porras as, James C. Collins



**Built to Last** By Jim Collins, Jerry I. Porras, Jerry I. Porras as, James C. Collins

"This is not a book about charismatic visionary leaders. It is not about visionary product concepts or visionary products or visionary market insights. Nor even is it about just having a corporate vision. This is a book about something far more important, enduring, and substantial. This is a book about visionary *companies*." So write James C. Collins and Jerry I. Porras in this groundbreaking book that shatters myths, provides new insights, and gives practical guidance to those who would like to build landmark companies that stand the test of time.

Drawing upon a six-year research project at the Stanford University Graduate School of Business, Collins and Porras took eighteen truly exceptional and long-lasting companies -- they have an average age of nearly one hundred years and have outperformed the general stock market by a factor of fifteen since 1926 -- and studied each company in direct comparison to one of its top competitors. They examined the companies from their very beginnings to the present day -- as start-ups, as midsize companies, and as large corporations. Throughout, the authors asked: "*What makes the truly exceptional companies different from other companies?*"

What separates General Electric, 3M, Merck, Wal-Mart, Hewlett-Packard, Walt Disney, and Philip Morris from their rivals? How, for example, did Procter & Gamble, which began life substantially behind rival Colgate, eventually prevail as the premier institution in its industry? How was Motorola able to move from a humble battery repair business into integrated circuits and cellular communications, while Zenith never became dominant in anything other than TVs? How did Boeing unseat McDonnell-Douglas as the world's best commercial aircraft company -- what did Boeing have that McDonnell-Douglas lacked?

By answering such questions, Collins and Porras go beyond the incessant barrage of management buzzwords and fads of the day to discover timeless qualities that have consistently distinguished outstanding companies. They also provide inspiration to all executives and entrepreneurs by destroying the false but widely accepted idea that only charismatic visionary leaders can build visionary companies.

Filled with hundreds of specific examples and organized into a coherent

framework of practical concepts that can be applied by managers and entrepreneurs at all levels, *Built to Last* provides a master blueprint for building organizations that will prosper long into the twenty-first century and beyond.

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## **Editorial Review**

### Amazon.com Review

This analysis of what makes great companies great has been hailed everywhere as an instant classic and one of the best business titles since *In Search of Excellence*. The authors, James C. Collins and Jerry I. Porras, spent six years in research, and they freely admit that their own preconceptions about business success were devastated by their actual findings--along with the preconceptions of virtually everyone else.

*Built to Last* identifies 18 "visionary" companies and sets out to determine what's special about them. To get on the list, a company had to be world famous, have a stellar brand image, and be at least 50 years old. We're talking about companies that even a layperson knows to be, well, different: the Disneys, the Wal-Marts, the Mercks.

Whatever the key to the success of these companies, the key to the success of this book is that the authors don't waste time comparing them to business failures. Instead, they use a control group of "successful-but-second-rank" companies to highlight what's special about their 18 "visionary" picks. Thus Disney is compared to Columbia Pictures, Ford to GM, Hewlett Packard to Texas Instruments, and so on.

The core myth, according to the authors, is that visionary companies must start with a great product and be pushed into the future by charismatic leaders. There are examples of that pattern, they admit: Johnson & Johnson, for one. But there are also just too many counterexamples--in fact, the majority of the "visionary" companies, including giants like 3M, Sony, and TI, don't fit the model. They were characterized by total lack of an initial business plan or key idea and by remarkably self-effacing leaders. Collins and Porras are much more impressed with something else they shared: an almost cult-like devotion to a "core ideology" or identity, and active indoctrination of employees into "ideologically commitment" to the company.

The comparison with the business "B"-team does tend to raise a significant methodological problem: which companies are to be counted as "visionary" in the first place? There's an air of circularity here, as if you achieve "visionary" status by ... achieving visionary status. So many roads lead to Rome that the book is less practical than it might appear. But that's exactly the point of an eloquent chapter on 3M. This wildly successful company had no master plan, little structure, and no prima donnas. Instead it had an atmosphere in which bright people were both keen to see the company succeed and unafraid to "try a lot of stuff and keep what works." --Richard Farr

### From Library Journal

What makes a visionary company? This book, written by a team from Stanford's Graduate School of Business, compares what the authors have identified as "visionary" companies with selected companies in the same industry. The authors juxtapose Disney and Columbia Pictures, Ford and General Motors, Motorola and Zenith, and Hewlett-Packard and Texas Instruments, to name a few. The visionary companies, the authors found out, had a number of common characteristics; for instance, almost all had some type of core ideology that guided the company in times of upheaval and served as a constant bench mark. Not all the visionary companies were founded by visionary leaders, however. On the whole, this is an intriguing book that occasionally provides rare and interesting glimpses into the inner workings and philosophical foundations of successful businesses. Recommended for all libraries.

*Randy L. Abbott, Univ. of Evansville Lib., Ind.*

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From [Booklist](#)

No tables, charts, or obfuscatory language interfere with the presentation and development of consultants Collins and Porras' premise that visionary companies withstand tests of time and fads. On the basis of five years of research, they pinpoint six characteristics of the best American institutions: (1) premier in their industry, (2) widespread admiration from businesspeople, (3) multiple generations of CEOs, (4) an indelible imprint on society, (5) multiproduct (or multiservice) cycles, and (6) pre-1950 roots. The authors' findings confirm a few management theories but contest many others. More important, they demonstrate the hows of good management in detail, with readable case histories (IBM, Merck, Motorola, Walt Disney, among others) and studies of contrasting corporations, and they include guidelines for those striving for long-lasting success. *Barbara Jacobs*

## **Users Review**

**From reader reviews:**

**Sheila Gallagher:**

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