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How Google Works



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Synopsis

Google Executive Chairman and ex-CEO Eric Schmidt and former SVP of Products Jonathan Rosenberg came to Google over a decade ago as proven technology executives. At the time, the company was already well-known for doing things differently, reflecting the visionary--and frequently contrarian--principles of founders Larry Page and Sergey Brin. If Eric and Jonathan were going to succeed, they realized they would have to relearn everything they thought they knew about management and business. Today, Google is a global icon that regularly pushes the boundaries of innovation in a variety of fields. HOW GOOGLE WORKS is an entertaining, page-turning primer containing lessons that Eric and Jonathan learned as they helped build the company. The authors explain how technology has shifted the balance of power from companies to consumers, and that the only way to succeed in this ever-changing landscape is to create superior products and attract a new breed of multifaceted employees whom Eric and Jonathan dub "smart creatives." Covering topics including corporate culture, strategy, talent, decision-making, communication, innovation, and dealing with disruption, the authors illustrate management maxims ("Consensus requires dissension," "Exile knaves but fight for divas," "Think 10X, not 10%") with numerous insider anecdotes from Google’s history, many of which are shared here for the first time.In an era when everything is speeding up, the best way for businesses to succeed is to attract smart-creative people and give them an environment where they can thrive at scale. HOW GOOGLE WORKS explains how to do just that.

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Customer Reviews

"An informative and creatively multilayered Google guidebook from the businessman’s perspective."Ã¢â ¬â ¢Kirkus"An energized and exciting primer on creating a company and workforce prepared to meet an inspiring future."Ã¢â ¬â ¢Publisher’s Weekly

Eric Schmidt served as Google’s CEO from 2001 to 2011 and transformed it into a global technology leader. He is now Google’s executive chairman. Jonathan Rosenberg joined Google in 2002 and managed the design and development of the company’s consumer, advertiser, and partner products, including Search, Ads, Gmail, Android, Apps, and Chrome. He is currently an advisor to Google CEO Larry Page.

Eric and Jonathan cover a vast territory in their engaging discussion of Google’s leadership in our software driven era. While their Google specific comments are singularly informed and compelling, I suspect their most valuable lessons are those applicable to virtually any venture. Many of these are recurring thematics within discussions of modern leadership, but rarely have so many useful concepts been so well and accessibly summarized as in "How." Despite 30 plus years in the business I furiously jotted margin notes throughout the book, reminding myself for instance, of the primacy of purpose, as illustrated by the story of a company, beginning with why it is important that it exists; the defining competitive separation afforded by traction and momentum or, get big fast; speed kills; iteration informs. This is a great read; informative, smart and wise, as reflected by their admiration of John Wooden and his aphorism "it’s what you learn after you know it all that counts." For those interested I’ll summarize below my ’Top 10’ of the books many quality, illustrative elements. There are abundant actionable insights in this book and of course, the occasional tendril of presumption. Overall, my sentiment about the book is summarized by my ordering copies for my sons, nieces and nephews, regardless of the sectors they work within, or majors they are pursuing.My ’Top 10’ of appreciated observations:1. Crowded work spaces fuel contagious energy and spontaneity; the physical presence of team members matters.2. Keep management lean, with numerous direct reports per manager to assure leadership is crisp and micro-management rare.3. Ignorance is not bliss, knowledge is instructive; share virtually everything about the company’s business with all employees.4. Smaller teams for building products; larger to sustain and grow.5. Deliver transformative products, driven as much or more by insight as evident market demand. PS: platforms with leverage win.6. Leaders don’t delegate hiring; hire smart, curious learners and pay handsomely for impact.7. Be mindful of your career objectives; sketch the larger ambition, then plan

its execution, while remaining smartly opportunistic.8. Spend 80% of your time on the stuff that generates 80% of your revenues; the new is seductive, but keep your focus balanced.9. There are only a few truly important messages; assure they are heard: to quote Eric: "repetition doesn't spoil the prayer."10. It's what you do that counts.

Google, a company founded in 1998 by Sergey Brin and Larry Page, is worth $50-billion, has over forty-five thousand employees, and operates in over forty countries. ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“How Google WorksÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â• is the account of how this company grew into such a large and valuable organization.Author Eric Schmidt, who has a PhD in computer science, joined Google as its CEO. His experience at Sun Microsystems, Bell Labs and Novell, (where he had been the CEO,) was widely believed to be a way of bringing ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“adult supervisionÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â• to a chaotic place. The founders, however, hired Schmidt as much for his technological achievements as a Unix expert and a co-creator of Java, as for his business acumen.Co-author Jonathan Rosenberg, came from Excite@Home and Apple where he was a product advocate and innovator.As I have pointed out in this column before, great companies do not become great because they have good ideas, but because of the quality management that is designed into the business.Brin and Page started Google with the belief that the Internet was ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“the technology platform of the future and that search was one of its most useful applications.ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â• From the outset they believed that if they could offer superb products, the money would follow. They also genuinely believed that ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“their employees are everythingÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â•, and structured their company on that premise.The authors, too, understood that ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“the best way to achieveÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â| excellence was not via a prescribed business plan, but rather by hiring the very best engineers we could and then getting out of the way.ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â•With this approach, Google has been able to build excellent platforms and products that offer higher-quality services. Additionally, Google has made these services easily accessible and attractive to their customers. As a result, these services attracted advertisers who have provided the revenue stream for the company.With the ease of access to knowledge via the internet and the lower costs of producing products and services, competitive advantage has been compromised. Neither information nor distribution can be controlled - only consistently producing excellent products can ensure business success.To achieve this product excellence rapidly and consistently, the company could not be run using the stifling organizational structures of the past. ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“The only way to (achieve this product excellence rapidly and consistently), is to attract smart creatives and create an environment where they can succeed at scale.ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â•The company is designed to attract

ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“smart creativesÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â• who are encouraged to manifest their best ideas. ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“Smart creativesÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â• are those who possess deep technical knowledge and can see the route from technical expertise, to product excellence, to business success. These employees would be extremely difficult to manage because they cannot be told how to think. ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“If you canÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢t tell someone how to think, then you have to learn to manage the environment where they think.ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â•The managerial challenge is to create a place where smart creatives want to come every day, and so build a great company. Put in different terms ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â œ it entails creating a culture that will attract, retain and stimulate smart creatives. Culture, the authors explain, comes from the founders, ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“but it is best reflected in the trusted team the founders form to launch their venture.ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â•The following incident describes the value of culture succinctly. Larry Page was dissatisfied with the adverts that come up when a search is made. He placed a memo on a notice board on a Friday afternoon describing his dissatisfaction.The authors report that ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“Jeff and team werenÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢t even on the ads team. They had just been in the office that Friday afternoon, seen LarryÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s note, and understood that when your mission is to organize the worldÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s information and make it universally accessible and useful, then having ads (which are information) that suck (which isnÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢t useful) is a problem. So they decided to fix it. Over the weekend.ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â•It wasnÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢t the culture that turned the five engineers into problem-solvers whose solution changed the course of the company. It wasnÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢t the culture that turned the five engineers into employees who achieved this over a weekend, uninstructed. Rather, it was the culture that had attracted people with that initiative, enthusiasm and commitment to Google. That is the power of culture.Hippopotamuses are among the deadliest animals, unexpectedly fast moving, and capable of killing any enemy in their path. In Google, ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“hipposÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â• refer to a different, but no less dangerous phenomenon ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â œ the ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“Highest-Paid PersonÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s Opinion.ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â• As a meritocracy, at Google it is the quality of the idea that matters, not who suggests it. ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“HipposÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â• who cannot argue for their ideas are more likely to intimidate their way to success.Sridhar Ramaswamy, one of GoogleÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s ads leaders, tells of a clash of opinion he had with Sergey Brin. Brin initially suggested that as a compromise they try both ideas. After much debate about the relative merits of the competing ideas, SergeyÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s idea was discarded despite being the HIPPO in the room by a wide margin.To establish a meritocracy, a culture is needed that obliges people to dissent, not merely allows them to dissent. Some people feel uncomfortable about raising

dissenting views in a public forum, and that is why dissent must be an obligation, not an option.The book covers not only organizational culture, but how to create a ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“functional strategyÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â•, hire the right people, arriving at accepted decisions, effect real communication, and, of course, innovation.The value of this book does not lie in its description of a mighty company, but rather in the many thought-provoking ideas that are behind GoogleÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s success. Little of this book will have direct application to your business, unless you are a tech giant in Silicon Valley. It will, however, stimulate you into thinking about how your organization is managed, and how you can get even more output from your people, and they can get more input from your organization.Readability Light -+--- SeriousInsights High +---- LowPractical High -+--- Low*Ian Mann of Gateways consults internationally on leadership and strategy and is the author of Strategy that Works.

Good insight to how the Google monolith was built, how it fostered decision-making, tried different ideas and drove efficiency. It focuses on the high-level management styles but not so much of the day-to-day operations which is where the company vision gets realized. Google is the Rockfeller of the modern age - right place, right time and managed to get some things right to survive until it became an unstoppable acquisition M&A force. Furthermore, they've succumbed to a doctrine and groupthink that seems to have woven itself into the organization - seeking so-called diversity in staff representation while limiting diversity of thought. The pace of the book is good and it keeps coming at you from various angle to ensure interest. Some of the true insight and under-the-skin visibility I was looking for isn't there.

Very inspiring review of how a company like google works and why it is so different and successful. It is not about the free food and perks, but about Smart Creatives. A global team of incredibly amazing people who are given the freedom to innovate. It is at its core a large wealth of people given the opportunity to dream big. The result? One of most successful and meaningful companies ever created. Read this book for ideas on how to make your company great.

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