Microsoft Secrets: How the World's Most Powerful Software Company Creates Technology, Shapes Markets and Manages People

By Michael A. Cusumano

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Drawing on almost two years of on-site observation at Microsoft headquarters, eminent scientists Michael A. Cusumano and Richard W. Selby reveal many of Microsoft's innermost secrets. This inside report, based on forty in-depth interviews by authors who had access to confidential documents and project data, outlines the seven complementary strategies that characterize exactly how Microsoft competes and operates, including the "Brain Trust" of talented employees and exceptional management; "bang for the buck" competitive strategies and clear organizational goals that produce self-critiquing, learning, and improving; a flexible, incremental approach to product development; and a relentless pursuit of future markets.

Cusumano and Selby's masterful analysis successfully uncovers the distinctive way in which Microsoft has combined all of the elements necessary to get to the top of an enormously important industry -- and stay there.

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review
This is a "facts ma'am, nothing but the facts" examination of how Microsoft works, both internally, and in the marketplace. Unlike the raft of gossipy Bill-bios or sardonic and shrill pro- or anti-screeds, this book is focused clearly (if sometimes ploddingly) on one central question: the relationship between business strategies and software development. And, as Microsoft becomes increasingly focused on the Internet, it is essential reading not just for software companies, but for all Internet companies as well. Highly Recommended.

From Publishers Weekly
The authors of this surprisingly candid report interviewed 38 Microsoft employees, including chairman and CEO Bill Gates, other top executives, middle managers and software developers, and they were also given access to internal documents and project data. They provide a detailed look at how the software giant develops new products, competes and strives to improve its operations. Seven key strategies central to Microsoft's approach are identified, among them: continually improve products incrementally, with direct input from customers during the development process; organize small teams of overlapping specialists who formally share tasks; aggressively target emerging mass markets. Microsoft has retained much of its loosely structured, small-team culture, and this study helps to explain how the company is able to do so while designing and manufacturing tremendously complicated products. Although some chapters are targeted to people familiar with personal computer software, this pragmatic handbook provides instructive lessons for firms and managers in many industries. Cusumano teaches management of technology at MIT; Selby teaches information and computer science at UC-Irvine. Author tour.
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From Library Journal
With unrestricted access to confidential internal documents and through interviews with key staff members, Cusumano (The Japanese Automobile Industry, LJ 4/1/86) and Selby (Univ. of California-Irvine) provide an inside look at how Microsoft organizes, strategizes, develops products, and improves its organization. The authors' approach differs from that found in previous works (e.g., Gates, LJ 2/1/93, and Hard Drive, LJ 6/1/92), which focused on the firm's history and its noted founder. Instead, they devote a separate chapter to each of the seven operating strategies that have enabled Microsoft to dominate its industry. Managers will find helpful insights and approaches to apply within their own firm. This work effectively complements David Packard's The HP Way (LJ 6/1/95); highly recommended for business collections, managers, and informed readers.?J.P. Miller, GSLIS, Simmons Coll., Boston
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