



# Built to Last: Successful Habits of Visionary Companies

By Jim Collins, Jerry I. Porras

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**Built to Last: Successful Habits of Visionary Companies** By Jim Collins, Jerry I. Porras

"This is not a book about charismatic visionary leaders. It is not about visionary product concepts or visionary products or visionary market insights. Nor 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 Jim Collins and Jerry 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 out-standing 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

*Built to Last* became an instant business classic. This audio abridgement is read by the authors, who alternate chapters. Collins is a bit breathlessly enthusiastic, but clear and interesting; Porras, unfortunately, is poorly inflected and wooden. They set out to determine what's special about "visionary" companies--the Disneys, Wal-Marts, and Mercks, companies at the very top of their game that have demonstrated longevity and great brand image. The authors compare 18 "visionary" picks to a control group of "successful-but-second-rank" companies. Thus Disney is compared to Columbia Pictures, Ford to GM, and so on.

A central myth, according to the authors, is that visionary companies start with a great product and are pushed into the future by charismatic leaders. Usually false, Collins and Porras find. Much more important, and a much more telling line of demarcation between a wild success like 3M and an also-ran like Norton, is flexibility. 3M had no master plan, little structure, and no prima donnas. Instead it had an atmosphere in which bright people were not afraid to "try a lot of stuff and keep what works."

If you listen to this audiocassette on your daily commute, you may discover whether you are headed to a "visionary" place of work--and, if so, whether you are the kind of employee who fits your employer's vision. (Running time: two hours, two cassettes) --*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*

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### **From reader reviews:**

#### **Michelle Carlson:**

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