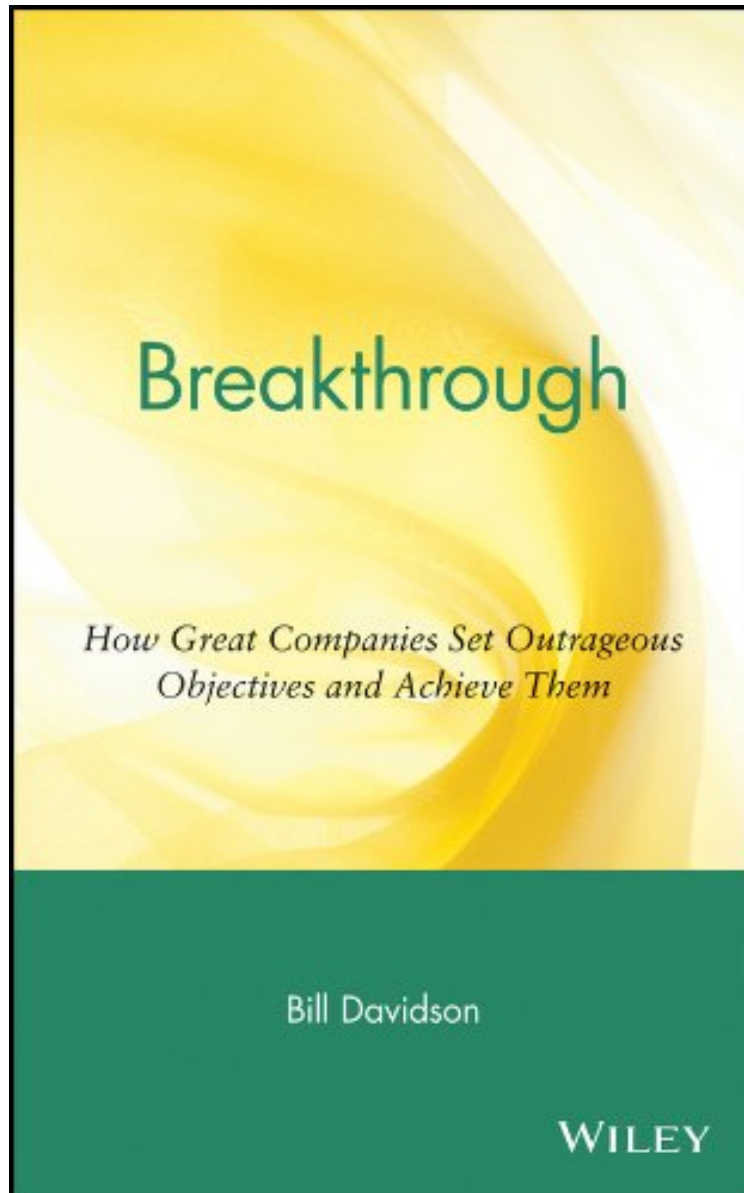


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Breakthrough: How Great Companies Set Outrageous Objectives and Achieve Them

Bill Davidson

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Breakthrough By A Customer This book contains an extraordinary amount of very valuable material in a short and readable format. There are several new ideas in here that capture critical emerging trends in management. The idea of enterprise strategy, and the leadership model that goes with it, is a key, contrarian take on what works in the world of business. The depth of research underlying the book gives great weight to what might otherwise be dismissed because it challenges our prevailing assumptions. There are many powerful examples described in detail, and the author brings you inside a number of fascinating organizations, with a close-up, real-time view of leaders in action. There are also two very useful frameworks - one for strategy formulation includes some new thinking on the difference between segments, niches and mainstream markets that sheds new light on strategic positioning. The author summarizes the experience of dozens of successful breakthrough companies in an AIM, Ready, Fire framework that captures their best practices. The final chapter on leadership also gives new thoughts on what it takes to lead a breakthrough company. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. A Good Read! By Rolf Dobelli This book aims to show CEOs how to achieve the impossible. Based on a study of 70 companies that managed to accomplish incredibly ambitious goals, it offers a straightforward and, for the most part, lucid set of guiding principles to reach breakthrough success. Author Bill Davidson anchors his prescription in the experiences of real companies and illustrates each point with copious anecdotes. Although he strays now and then into the jargon of the academic tribe, these digressions are rare and excusable. His case histories and tactical advice offer something of value to every CEO or senior manager. We recommend this book to executives whose companies are trapped in strategic dead-ends and desperate to blast out, or to executives who would rather act before a crisis really blossoms.

Breakthrough will help executives lead their teams to peerless, unsurpassed performance by helping them define a grand goal and engage the organization to pursue and achieve that goal, no matter how difficult the challenge seems. Based on a ten-year landmark study of more than seventy bold, breakthrough companies such as IBM, Dayton-Hudson, Progressive Insurance, EMC, American Standard, Charles Schwab, and Dell Computer, the book shows how these remarkable companies adopted outrageous objectives and then did what it takes to achieve remarkable results.

From Publishers Weekly Walking in the footsteps of Jim Collins's business bestseller Good to Great, Davidson (The Amazing Race) offers a prescription for corporate greatness based on his study of more than 70 high-performing companies. But while Good to Great focused on lesser-known firms, this volume looks to blue chips like IBM, Dell, Schwab, Caterpillar and ADS. Davidson's premise is that "breakthrough" companies achieve what they do by setting outrageous objectives and pursuing them with single-minded intensity. The go-for-broke, swing-for-the-bleachers approach that he favors means that there are plenty of intriguing innovations on display. For example, Progressive Insurance vowed to deliver the fastest claim resolution to auto policyholders and taking that idea to its "outrageous" conclusion broke the industry mold by putting claims agents in vans, ready to go at a moment's notice to meet a customer at the scene of an accident. However, the emphasis here is not on storytelling but on building a case for the "breakthrough" approach that can apply to the reader's own business. What's most impressive is that the companies cited are by and large established players who've radically transformed their operations, rather than startups that begin with a "clean slate." Overall, Davidson's argument is credible and logical; the trouble is, it's a little too familiar. So much has been written about corporate transformations through technology or re-engineering during and after the Internet bubble that it's hard to muster a sense of excitement or discovery. In the end, this is a worthy title, but one that lacks the "breakthrough" spark of visionary thinking to take it to the next level. Copyright 2003 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Booklist This research project began in 1992, when 18 of IBM's senior executives met for their annual strategy review. IBM had just completed an enormously successful decade, but the team was struggling with the fact that the current business cycle was coming to an end. As part of its effort to adapt to the rapid changes occurring in technology, Big Blue hired Davidson's consulting firm, MESA Research, to conduct a study of how other businesses had achieved successful transformation. The core tenet of Davidson's research is that success is based on innovative breakthroughs that focus the energy needed to achieve outrageous objectives. Breakthroughs on an enterprise scale can be significant enough to reshape entire industries as the insurgent business overturns the entrenched incumbents. During a 10-year period, MESA studied 70 companies that transformed their industries, including Progressive Insurance, Countrywide Mortgage, Southwest Airlines, Dell Computer, and .com. Davidson maintains the reader's interest by keeping the theory brief and focusing on the dynamic real-life stories of success and failure. David Siegfried Copyright copy; American Library Association. All rights reserved Walking in the footsteps of Jim Collins's business bestseller Good to Great, Davidson (The Amazing Race) offers a prescription for corporate greatness based on his study of more than 7 high-performing companies. But while Good to Great focused on lesser-known firms, this volume looks to blue chips like IBM, Dell, Schwab, Caterpillar and ADS. Davidson's premise is that "breakthrough" companies achieve what they do by setting outrageous objectives and pursuing them with single-minded intensity. The go-for-broke, swing-for-the-bleachers approach that he favors means that there are plenty of intriguing innovations on display. For example, Progressive Insurance vowed to deliver the fastest claim resolution to

auto policyholders and-taking that idea to its "outrageous" conclusion - broke the industry mold by putting claims agents in vans, ready to go at a moment's notice to meet a customer at the scene of an accident. However, the emphasis here is not on storytelling but on building a case for the "breakthrough" approach that can apply to the reader's own business. What's most impressive is that the companies cited are by and large established players who've radically transformed their operations, rather than startups that begin with a "clean slate." Overall, Davidson's argument is credible and logical; the trouble is, it's a little too familiar. So much has been written about corporate transformations through technology or re-engineering during and after the Internet bubble that it's hard to muster a sense of excitement or discovery. In the end, this is a worthy title, but one that lacks the "breakthrough" spark of visionary thinking to take it to the next level. (Nov.) (Publishers Weekly, November 3, 2003)