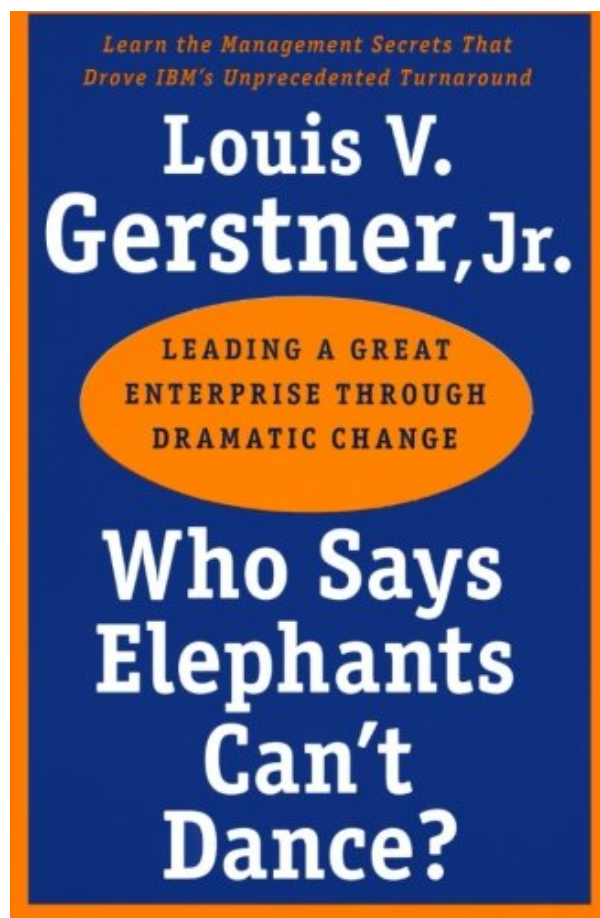


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LEADING A GREAT ENTERPRISE
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**Louis V.
Gerstner, Jr.**

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Who Says Elephants Can't Dance? sums up Lou Gerstner's historic business achievement, bringing IBM back from the brink of insolvency to lead the computer business once again. Offering a unique case study drawn from decades of experience at some of America's top companies - McKinsey, American Express, RJR Nabisco - Gerstner's insights into management and leadership are applicable to any business, at any level. Ranging from strategy to public relations, from finance to organization, Gerstner reveals the lessons of a lifetime running highly successful companies.

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A big case study on renovation

By Maxim Masiutin

The first part of the book is full of satire and is amusing. The rest four parts lack this satire and are a little bit boring. However, I've found some noteworthy quotation for my thesis "Image of a Manager" when I was working on in in the university. Also, the author writes how he dealt with journalists, and I've found it interesting.

The book not presents a case study of a company innovation but describes the history of IBM in nineties. For example, the author explains in detail why OS/2 was cancelled and why did they buy Lotus and didn't buy other companies.

It's very exciting to read how the CEO has diagnosed the problems of the company and which solutions did he find.

I would also recommend "Leading the Revolution" by Gary Hamel. It is a very serious examination on how companies innovate and why should they do it, with lots of remarkable examples. Gary Hamel uses plain friendly language.

The books of Chris Argyris about organizational learning are also about innovation. Although the language style is "academic", the books are interesting and somewhat unique.

5 of 7 people found the following review helpful.

A CEO's Account of an "Historic Turnaround"

By Robert Morris

At the outset, it is important to understand that this volume is not an autobiography; rather, in response to apparently substantial curiosity, Gerstner offers his explanation of how he and his associates achieved what he calls "IBM's historic turnaround." In process, he also explains how and why he became CEO, what his initial assumptions about the company were, to what extent they proved wrong (and why), and finally, what he had learned by the time he resigned as CEO after guiding IBM from April 1993 until March 2002. Having carefully observed Gerstner during the infrequent interviews to which he reluctantly agreed, the book seems to have been written by him without assistance except stenographic. The style and tone as well as the observations are clearly his. This is important. More often than not, a book bearing the name of a CEO as its author has been rigorously edited and thoroughly sanitized by one or more "manuscript doctors" before publication. Not so with this one.

Its title was perhaps suggested by that of a book written by Rosabeth Moss Kanter (*When Giants Learn to Dance*, 1989) and implies that it may be unlikely but is nonetheless possible for an organization as large and as cumbersome as IBM once was to become "quick on its feet" again. Soon after becoming CEO, Gerstner realized that IBM's culture -- not its core strategies -- prevented it from being able to "dance." As Gerstner observes, "[IBM's] decades-long run of uninterrupted success ties in with the other closely related, and vitally important, aspect of IBM's recent history. This is about its corporate culture -- specifically, the kind of culture that arises in an environment without intense competitive pressure or threats." By the time Gerstner had become CEO, the company and its people had lost touch with external realities. It was widely believed that what was happening in the marketplace was essentially irrelevant to the success of the company. "IBM's dominant position had created a self-contained, self-sustaining world for the company. IBM had ridden one horse, and ridden it well. But that horse could carry it only so far before it broke down.

This was the corporate culture which Gerstner encountered as he assumed his duties, a culture the product of two predominant forces: the runaway success of the System/360, and, the impact of the antitrust suit filed against IBM by the United States Department of Justice on January 31, 1969, the final day of the Lyndon B. Johnson administration. "For thirteen years IBM lived under the specter of a federally mandated breakup."

It would be a mistake to assume that most of the credit for what was accomplished at IBM during Gerstner's tenure as CEO should be given to him. He dedicated this book to "the thousands of IBMers who never gave up on their company, their colleagues, and themselves. They are the real heroes of the reinvention of IBM." This book explains how that was accomplished, a transformation whose objective was to re-establish "the high-performance cultured that animated IBM under both Watsons."

Having relinquished his duties as CEO to Sam Palmisano, Gerstner suggests that his successor has an opportunity to make connections to IBM's past which Gerstner had not. "His challenge will be to make them without going backward; to know that the centrifugal forces that drove IBM to be inward-looking and self-absorbed still lie powerful in the company. Continuing to drive change while building on the best (and [in italics] only the best) of the past is the ultimate description of the job of Chief Executive Officer, International Business Machines Corporation." It is probably too early to take full measure of Gerstner's performance in that position. However, now having his own account of those critically important years in IBM's history, we can at least appreciate the nature and extent of what he and his associates experienced...and what together they eventually accomplished.

Those who share my high regard for this book are urged to check out Kevin Maney's *The Maverick and the Machine: Thomas Watson, Sr. and the Making of IBM* as well as Thomas Watson, Jr. and Peter Petre's *Father, Son & Co: My Life at IBM and Beyond*.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful.

Five Stars

By Amazon Customer

Great presentation which shows how the author recovered bleeding IBM late 20th.

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