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Jack: Straight from the Gut

By Jack Welch, John A. Byrne



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Jack: Straight from the Gut By Jack Welch, John A. Byrne

As CEO of General Electric for the past twenty years, he has built its market cap by more than \$450 billion and established himself as the most admired business leader in the world. His championing of initiatives like Six Sigma quality, globalization, and e-business have helped define the modern corporation. At the same time, he's a gutsy boss who has forged a unique philosophy and an operating system that relies on a "boundaryless" sharing of ideas, an intense focus on people, and an informal, give-and-take style that makes bureaucracy the enemy. In anecdotal detail and with self-effacing humor, Jack Welch gives us the people (most notably his Irish mother) who shaped his life and the big hits and the big misses that characterized his career.

Starting at GE in 1960 as an engineer earning \$10,500, Jack learned the need for "getting out of the pile" when his first raise was the same as everyone else's. He stayed out of the corporate bureaucracy while running a \$2 billion collection of GE businesses-in a sweater and blue jeans-out of a Hilton in Pittsfield, Massachusetts. After avoiding GE's Fairfield, Connecticut, headquarters for years, Jack was eventually summoned by then Chairman Reg Jones, who was planning his succession. There ensued one of the most painful parts of his career-Jack's dark-horse struggle, filled with political tension, to make it to the CEO's chair. A hug from Reg confirmed Jack was the new boss-and started the GE transformation. Welch walks us through the "Neutron Jack" years, when GE's employment rolls fell by more than 100,000 as part of a strategy to "fix, sell, or close" each business...and how he used the purchase of RCA to provide a foundation for the company's future earnings. There were mistakes, too-and Jack confronts them openly. In "Too Full of Myself," he describes one of the biggest blunders: the purchase of Kidder Peabody, which ran counter to GE's culture. The riveting story of his last year-the elaborate process of selecting a successor and the attempt to buy Honeywell-is also told in compelling detail. This book is laced with refreshing interludes, such as "A Short Reflection on Golf," that capture Jack's competitiveness and the importance of friendship in his life. Destined to become a business classic, Jack: Straight from the Gut is a deeply personal journey filled with passion and a sheer lust for life.



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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

It's hard to think of a CEO that commands as much respect as Jack Welch. Under his leadership, General Electric reinvented itself several times over by integrating new and innovative practices into its many lines of business. In *Jack: Straight from the Gut*, Welch, with the help of *Business Week* journalist John Byrne, recounts his career and the style of management that helped to make GE one of the most successful companies of the last century. Beginning with Welch's childhood in Salem, Massachusetts, the book quickly progresses from his first job in GE's plastics division to his ambitious rise up the GE corporate ladder, which culminated in 1981. What comes across most in this autobiography is Welch's passion for business as well as his remarkable directness and intolerance of what he calls "superficial congeniality"--a dislike that would help earn him the nickname "Neutron Jack." In spite of its 496 pages, *Jack: Straight from the Gut* is a quick read that any student or manager would do well to consider. Highly recommended. --Harry C. Edwards

From Publishers Weekly

It doesn't matter whether you love or hate Jack Welch. Who can resist hearing the man tell his story? This abridged version of his recently published autobiography, featuring Welch himself, is quite entertaining. With his slightly raspy Boston accent, Welch discusses his childhood and his career. When he proclaims something, he gives examples to illustrate his point. For instance, he says his mother was the strongest influence on his life. He then recalls the time he threw a hockey stick across the ice in disgust after losing a game, and his mother stormed into the locker room as some teammates were changing to exclaim loudly, "If you don't know how to lose, you'll never know how to win." When discussing his long career at GE, Welch is equally detailed. While some listeners unfamiliar with the corporation may find some of the discussions tedious, most will be captivated by what appears to be Welch's brutal honesty. He talks about having to lobby for promotions because he didn't "fit the GE mold," and he's open about making some poor business decisions. He's not as forthright as it appears, though. He talks about his beloved wife, Carolyn, who provided a stable home while Welch was rising in GE's ranks, but barely mentions their divorce. Still, this audiobook will be interesting listening for anyone who has followed Neutron Jack's career. Simultaneous release with Warner Books hardcover.

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From Library Journal

In this fascinating personal and business memoir, Welch, recently retired CEO and board chair of the General Electric Company, reveals extensive inside details about his life and his 30-plus years with GE. During his 20 years as CEO, Welch built GE into a highly successful megacorporation, earning a reputation as one of the most admired business leaders in the world. Starting with poignant revelations of the importance of his mother in his life, he carries the listener through his early days of success in GE's Pittsfield, MA, office; his entry into the "big leagues" as CEO; the now famous "Neutron Jack" moniker from the time he reduced GE employment by over 100,000 in his strategy to "fix, sell, or close" each business; and the purchase of RCA to provide a foundation for future earnings. The stories of GE's buyout of NBC, the hard work to globalize the company, and the adoption of quality management principles help relate this powerful tale, read by Mike Barnicle and Welch, to listeners dealing with similar challenges in their own careers. The author's self-effacing personality, down-to-earth delivery, and focus on common sense all greatly add to this collection of Welch's intriguing anecdotes, which will likely be in strong demand. His thick Boston accent will occasionally catch listeners off guard and might steer some to the widely acclaimed

hard copy. Highly recommended for all public libraries and university libraries supporting a business curriculum. Dale Farris, Groves, TX
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